

Believe and not Doubt

Luke 1:1-25

October 20, 2007

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Context

1. **Author:** Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14) was a Gentile believer who traveled with the apostle Paul (Acts 16:10) and also authored the book of Acts.
2. **Date Written:** AD 58-60. Likely written before Acts thus prior to the execution of Paul and the fall of Jerusalem (AD 70).
3. **Characteristics of Book:**
 - a. Luke was a historian who carefully presented the facts surrounding the person and work of Jesus Christ. Fifty percent of the material given in Luke is unique to Luke. 7 miracles and 19 parables of Jesus Christ are only found in Luke. Ultimately, Luke gave a more comprehensive history than the other Gospels. It is the longest book in the New Testament!
 - b. Luke thoughtfully portrayed the compassionate mission of the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, who came to “seek and save the lost”, both Jews and Gentiles (Luke 19:10; note genealogy begins with Adam). He used the word “sinner” used 16 times. At the cross, God’s blessing is poured out to sinful humanity. Luke used the words “repent” (11:32), “turn” (1:17), and faith (5:20) to reveal how God’s blessing is received.
 - c. Luke mentioned women and children (vulnerable ones) more than the other Gospels.
 - d. Luke emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit, the importance of prayer, and how the good news brings joy and singing!
4. **Purpose:** To strengthen the faith of his struggling fellow Christian, Theophilus, by giving a detailed account of the life and work of Jesus. To also reveal that Jesus is the Savior for Jews and Gentiles alike (vv. 1-4). And that’s our focus tonight, that we may learn to *Believe and not Doubt*.

I. God Is Watching Our Walk (5-7)

A. God is mindful of our ways (5-6)

1. Even when it appears that God is not there; He is watching; mindful of our ways.
2. Israel was living in troubled times
 - a. Herod the Great was their king
 - a. Descendant of Esau
 - b. Chosen by the Roman senate by the counsel of Mark Antony
 - c. Great in accomplishments (buildings and battle) but small in stature
 - d. He was a wicked, cunning tyrant
 - e. He killed one of his wives and many of his sons to protect his crown.

Common saying, “It was safer being a pig than Herod’s son.”

- b. Their religious leaders were corrupt with the high priesthood being controlled by a Sadducee named Annas.
- c. God had been silent for 400 years! No prophet in Israel since Malachi!

Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord you God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”

Malachi 4:5-6, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

3. In the midst of this, God took note of His two servants; Zacharias (Yahweh remembers) and Elizabeth (My God is an oath)
4. Both were from the tribe of Levi
 - a. In such times, to marry was an act of faith

- b. To marry within the Jewish faith was a sign of deep devoted faith
 - c. To marry one of the daughters of Levi was a sign of God's favor
5. Like Noah in his day, Zacharias and Elizabeth stood out to the Lord as He surveyed the landscape of men.
- a. "Righteous in the sight of God"
 - b. "Walking blamelessly in all the commandments..."
 - c. They were not sinless, but they were devoted to the ways of the Lord

APPL – *It takes faith to live a godly life in a godless world! It takes a deep conviction to stand against the tide of this fallen world and for the things of God!*

ILLUS – **David before Goliath, Elijah before the priests of Baal, Daniel after the King's edict,**

B. God is aware of our problems (7)

- 1. Zacharias and Elizabeth were right in the middle of God's best and perfect will
- 2. Yet they had no child
 - a. Considered cursed of God; a death sentence
 - b. Cause for public criticism and rumor

Psalm 34:19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all."

APPL – *Why am I emphasizing this point?*

- *Because we must not think we are rejected by God when dreams are left unfulfilled...*

ILLUS – **Godly people who have never been married!**

- *Because we must not think we have God's favor when dreams are fulfilled!*

ILLUS – **Numbers are a sign of a healthy church (True or False?)**

2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."

Transition – What a comfort these opening words must have been to struggling Theophilus

II. God Is Working Out His Will (8-17)

A. God has set a time for everything (8-9)

- 1. We saw this when Abraham had no son. We saw this when Israel was enslaved in Egypt for 430 years!
- 2. Notice the hand of God
 - a. Of the 24 divisions, Zacharias's was scheduled – only served 2 weeks each year
 - b. Of the 750 priest in each division (18,000 total), Zacharias was chosen by lot to burn incense in the Temple (once in a lifetime)

APPL – *God knows how to keep time! I don't believe in coincidences! God is on the throne and is bringing all things together to reveal His magnificent character and will*

ILLUS – **Walking down memory lane with my parents in California**

Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord."

B. God will make His plan known (10-17)

- 1. It was 3 pm and all eyes were on Zacharias
 - a. He had memorized his duties to avoid the judgment that fell upon Aaron's sons (Lev. 10)
 - b. For the first time in his life, he walked into the dimly light Temple, alone! Or so he thought!
 - c. As he approached the altar of incense, suddenly an angel appeared right next to the place he had to minister at!
- 2. But look at the proclamation of the angel (13-17)
 - a. "Do not fear" – God's first words after 400 years of silence!

- b. God has heard your petition – which one?
 - 1. A son? A prayer from the past (v. 18)
 - 2. The coming of Messiah! (Both given)
- c. The child's description
 - 1. God given name (13) John - "Yahweh is gracious"
 - 2. Private and public response (14) - joy, gladness, rejoicing
 - 3. Position and character (15)
 - a. Great in God's eyes
 - b. No wine, but filled with the Spirit (devotion and urgency)
 - 4. Mission – a prophet (16-17)
 - a. Turn back many to Lord
 - b. In the spirit of Elijah as recorded in Malachi 4:5-6 to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord!

John 1:29, "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

ILLUS – Family restoration after reconciliation with God

APPL – *When we consider the times we live in, remember, God is not silent; He has revealed His will; we have a message... Jesus Christ is coming again so be reconciled to God!*

Ephesians 5:15-18

Transition – What was Zacharias's response to this marvelous word? See verse 18...

III. Don't Be A Sign

A. Silence is a sign of unbelief

- 1. Zacharias looked at himself and his wife and said "Prove it"!
- 2. Gabriel made him the sign!
 - a. Dumb – from the heart he did not believe

Matthew 12:43, "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart."

- b. Deaf (1:62) – Gabriel's words were the last he heard for nine months!

ILLUS – Paul struck blind by the Lord on the Damascus road

APPL – *When I reflect on the unbelief in my life, I am amazed that God has not struck me blind, deaf, or mute!*

APPL – *Yet could it be that unbelief has made us silent, deaf, and blind? Look at the witness of the early disciples...*

Acts 4:19-20, "But Peter and John answered and said to them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.'"

APPL – *Unbelief, sin, the worries of this world are silencing us. They are blinding us. They have deafened us! Turn back to the Lord!*

B. Be a faithful witness

- 1. Zacharias was supposed to pronounce the blessing of Numbers 6 when he departed but was unable to do so

Numbers 6:24-26, "The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace."

- 2. He had a message of God's blessing; God's grace; God's peace but he had to wait 9 months to share it!
- 3. Guard your heart and be a faithful witness!

Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

Conclusion

Has your faith become dampened by the worries of this life, the discouragements of dreams unfulfilled and prayers apparently not answered? Sin?

Repent!

Believe and don't doubt!

God is Watching

God is Working

Be a Witness

Come back to the Lord

2 Corinthians 4:13-14, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed, therefore I spoke,' we also believe, therefore also we speak; knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you."