

Sunday Morning Bible Study
Sunday, November 28
Luke 1:1-24

Author, Date, and Purpose of the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke was attributed to Luke, one of Paul's travelling companions, early in the history of the church. In addition to being a companion of Paul, we know that Luke was a physician. Many scholars believe Luke was written in the early 60s A.D. Luke composed his gospel to provide an orderly historical account of the things God accomplished through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke did not witness the events he describes in his gospel, but bases his account on eyewitness reports. Luke shows a special interest in showing how Jesus' ministry was good news for the Gentiles and others on the fringes of society.

For more detailed background information on the Gospel of Luke, watch The Bible Project's video on [Luke 1-9](#) and read the introductory material in a good study Bible such as the [ESV Study Bible](#) or the [NIV Study Bible](#).

Luke 1:1-4: Introduction | God Reveals Himself to His People by His Acts of Salvation

Christianity is a faith rooted in the historical saving acts the Lord has accomplished on behalf of his people. We do not have to figure out what God is like. Instead, we learn who God is by witnessing what God does. This is true in both the Old and New Testament accounts of God's story of redemption. One powerful Old Testament example of this truth is found in the life of Moses when God calls him to return to Egypt to lead God's people out of slavery.

¹³Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" ¹⁴God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" ¹⁵God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15, ESV)

Who is God? He's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and he's also the God who is going to display his power in delivering his people from slavery. Moses did not have to imagine what God is like. God would reveal himself to Moses and his people through what he would do on their behalf.

In verses 1-3, Luke begins his gospel by stating that he is writing an orderly account of Jesus' life and ministry based on eyewitness accounts. His goal is to help Theophilus, and others who would read his gospel, have certainty about the things they had heard about Jesus.

During the season of Advent, we often read and focus on passages of Scripture that are very familiar to many of us. If we are not careful, we will lose sight of the truth that our faith is rooted in the saving acts God accomplished through real world events in the lives of normal people like you and me. The birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus are not sweet stories that were made up to give us artificial feelings of joy and peace during this season of the year. Instead, they are factual accounts Luke recorded to provide certainty for our faith and to help us learn more of who God is.

1. How does Luke's description of his account as an orderly account based on eyewitnesses impact the way you think about the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus?

2. How have you seen the Lord at work in the events of your life over the years? How has your understanding of God's character been shaped by the things he has accomplished in your life?

Luke 1:5-7 | An Unlikely Couple

In verses 5 through 7, Luke introduces us to a couple named Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah is a priest and Elizabeth is a woman from a priestly family. Luke also describes both Elizabeth and Zechariah as righteous people who walk blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. From Luke's description in verse 5-6, it is clear that Elizabeth and Zechariah would have been voted "Most Likely to Be Blessed by God."

But, verse 7 paints a different picture. Elizabeth and Zechariah have no children, Elizabeth is barren, and they are both advanced in years. The people of Luke's day would assume this couple has not experienced the full measure of God's blessing in their lives because they are unable to have children. And due to their old age, most would assume that Zechariah and Elizabeth are no longer candidates to have children.

Luke's introduction of Zechariah and Elizabeth invokes stories of other people in the Bible who seemed to be unlikely candidates to be used by God for his purposes in the world. Abraham and Sarah are one couple that immediately come to mind. In Genesis 12, God promises to make Abraham and Sarah into a great nation. But, there is one problem. They, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, are both well advanced in years and Sarah is barren.

Today, we are prone to judge people and their fitness to be used by God in the same manner as people did in Luke's day. We assess other people and even ourselves based on worldly measures of power and strength and conclude who is likely to be used by God and who is not. However, as we will see in the opening chapters of Luke, God often chooses to work through the most unlikely people to accomplish his plans and purposes in the world.

1. How are you prone to judge others based on worldly measures of blessing and fitness to be used by God?
2. How are you prone to view your own shortcomings and inadequacies as things that would disqualify you from being used by God's purposes in the world?

Luke 1:8-17 | An Unlikely Birth Announcement

Zechariah was chosen to serve as the priest to burn incense in the temple of the Lord. According to commentators, this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Zechariah. It would be hard to overestimate how significant this time would have been for Zechariah. Then, out of nowhere, an angel appears to Zechariah and announces that he and Elizabeth would have a special child who would be used to turn the hearts of God's people back to the Lord. Zechariah is overwhelmed by the appearance of the angel and the message he hears.

Luke 1:18-23 | An Understandable Response

I identify with Zechariah's response to Gabriel's birth announcement. He asks Gabriel how he can know these things will take place. Like Zechariah, I am prone to evaluate circumstances from a purely human vantage point. But, Gabriel's response is a reminder that the people of God must look at things with eyes of faith.

Gabriel informs Zechariah that he will be unable to speak until the day John the Baptist is born because of his unbelief.

1. Do you often assess situations from a merely human vantage point? Do you consider possibilities based on the resources you and others possess or do you believe that God can do all things through imperfect people and seemingly inadequate resources?
2. How would your Christian life be different if you believed in God's power to do all things regardless of the circumstances?

Luke 1:24-25 | God Makes Good on His Promise

Luke records that Elizabeth conceives a child. The Lord makes good on the promise he made to Zechariah and Elizabeth. As we will see again next week, our God is a God with whom all things are possible.

As we enter the season of Advent, ask the Lord to give you a greater belief in God's ability to do all things and to make you sensitive to the ways he might want to use you to accomplish his plans and purposes in this world.