

# **The Art Of Becoming!**

If ever a man wrote a book filled with good news for everybody, Dr. Luke is that man.

Look at his key message is found in chapter 19:

**Luke 19:1-10** *Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus **who was a chief tax collector**, and he was rich. **And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.** And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him,*

***“Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”***

*So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”*

*Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”*

*And Jesus said to him, **“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”***

If we've come here to “see Jesus today, God sees that, and His desire is to stay at our house. Why, because His primary mission is to “seek and save that which is lost”. Isn't this what the Christmas message is all about? Therefore, we will look into the Gospel of Luke for the next six weeks as we see the Christmas story from His eyes.

He presents Jesus Christ as the compassionate Son of Man, who came to live among sinners, love them, help them, and die for them.

In this gospel we will meet:

- Individuals as well as crowds,
- Women and children as well as men,
- Poor people as well as rich people,
- and Sinners along with saints.

It's a book with a message for *everybody*, because Luke's emphasis is on the universality of Jesus Christ and His salvation:

**Luke 2:10** *Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*

I will regurgitate this message . . . If you are hear to meet the Lord Jesus, Do Not Be Afraid! Why? I desire to bring you Good Tidings of Great Joy which will be to All People . . . **Alter call . . .**

Dr. Luke is named only three times in the New Testament: in

**Colossians 4:14** *Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*

**2 Timothy 4:11** *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*

**Philemon 24** *as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, **Luke**, my fellow laborers.*

He traveled with Paul (*note the “we” sections in Acts 16:10–17; Acts 20:4–15; Acts 21:1–18, and Acts 27:1–28:16*).

Most scholars believe he was probably a Gentile:

He was also trained as a physician.

**Colossians 4:14** *Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*

He is the writer of the Book of Acts. Let’s compare the beginning of these two books:

**Luke 1:1–4** *Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, **to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.***

**Acts 1:1-3** *The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

This is probably why he began his book with detailed accounts of the births of two important babies! No wonder he emphasized Christ’s sympathy for hurting people!

Look at how his mind and heart worked together:

- He wrote with the mind of a careful historian
- And he wrote with the heart of a loving physician.

There are four kinds of people in the ministry . . .

- 1) **Those with a strong mind and no heart**
- 2) **Those with a caring heart but no mind for the ministry**
- 3) **Those with neither**
- 4) **Those with both**

*(Pray that we are the latter . . .)*

The gospel of Luke was written for Theophilus:

**Theophilus** = **Θεόφιλος** *Theophilos* = *A friend of God.*

He could have been a Roman official who had trusted Christ and now needed to be established in the faith.

It’s also possible that Theophilus was a seeker after truth who was being taught the Christian message, because the word translated “instructed” in Luke 1:4:

**Instructed** = **κατηχέω** *katēcheō* = *To indoctrinate by informing, instructing and teaching.*

In other words, this is someone who is being taught the basics of Christianity. It's where we get our word for "**catechism**".

The bottom line is that Luke wrote his gospel so that his readers might have an accurate and orderly narrative of the life, ministry, and message of Jesus Christ. He had carefully researched his material, interviewed eyewitnesses, and listened to those who had ministered the Word. Most important, he had the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The phrase *from the very first* (Gk. *anōthen*) can be translated "from above," as it is in John 3:31 and John 19:11. **It speaks of the inspiration of the Spirit of God on the message that Luke wrote.**

But let's continue on by looking at a priest named Zacharias who is going to point us to the person of our High Priest, Jesus the Christ, our Messiah!

### **Becoming Faithful!**

**Luke 1:5-7** *There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.*

This was a dark time for the nation of Israel. The people had heard no prophetic word from God for four hundred years, not since Malachi had promised the coming of Elijah:

**Malachi 4:5-6** *Behold, I will send you **Elijah** the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

The spiritual leaders were stuck in tradition and, in some instances, corruption; and their king, Herod the Great, was a tyrant. He had nine (some say ten) wives, one of whom he had executed for no apparent reason. But no matter how dark the day, God always has His devoted and obedient people. (just like Boaz)

Many believe this coming of Elijah was not going to be only a reincarnation of Elijah, (although God did do that as we seen in Matthew chapter 17 on the mount of transfiguration, and in Revelation chapter 11 with the two witnesses) But also He was going to send someone who was "like Elijah" or one of the prophets preceding the birth of the Mesiah:

**Matthew 16:13-14** *When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "**Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?**"*

*So they said, "**Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."***

This was going to take two special people to have this special "forerunner" to Jesus:

**Zacharias** = Ζαχαρίας *Zacharias = Jehovah has remembered.*

**Elizabeth** = Ελισάβετ *Elisabet = God is my oath.*

They were a godly couple who both belonged to the priestly line. The priests were divided into twenty-four sections:

**1 Chronicles 24:5-19** *Thus they were divided by lot, one group as another, for there were officials of the sanctuary and officials of the house of God, from the sons of Eleazar and from the sons of Ithamar. And the scribe, Shemaiah the son of Nethanel, one of the Levites, wrote them down before the king, the leaders, Zadok the priest, Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and the heads of the fathers' houses of the priests and Levites, one father's house taken for Eleazar and one for Ithamar.*

*Now the first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizzez, the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah.*

***This was the schedule of their service for coming into the house of the LORD according to their ordinance by the hand of Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.***

Each priest served in the temple two weeks out of the year. The thing that I wanted us to notice here, is that in spite of the godlessness around them, Zacharias and Elizabeth were faithful to obey the Word of God and live obediently.

The one thing that made them sad however, was that they had no children, and they made this a matter of constant prayer. *(there are many there today and we should seek the Lord on their behalf also)*

Little did they know that God was going to answer their prayers and give them, not a just a priest, but a prophet! And he was going to be no ordinary prophet, for their son, *(whom eventually they would name John)* would be the one who prepared the way the coming King, Jesus!

### **Becoming Fearful!**

**Luke 1:8-17** *So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

*But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

Whatever priests were on duty, they had to draw lots to see which ministries they would perform, and Zacharias was chosen to offer incense in the holy place. This was a high honor that was permitted to a priest but once in a blue moon. The incense was offered twice daily . . . before the morning sacrifice and after the evening sacrifice, and one of these services was assigned to Zacharias.

We'll just pause for a moment and noticed that many times God blesses individuals that are already in the process of serving Him:

- **Adam was naming the animals when God brought Eve to him.**
- **Both Moses and David were caring for sheep.**
- **Gideon was threshing wheat.**
- **Peter and his partners were mending nets when Jesus called them.**

*“It is difficult to steer a car when the engine is not running. When we get busy, God starts to direct us.”* Warren Wiersbe

Then God sent His messenger to issue the calling:

Dr. Luke mentions **angels** twenty-three times in his gospel:

**Angel** = ἄγγελος *aggelos* = *A spiritual messenger who brings tidings.*

And in case you were wondering . . .

**Tidings** = εὐαγγελίζω *euaggelizō* = *To announce or declare good news, especially in connection with the gospel.*

There are innumerable but a limited number of angels (Rev. 5:11), only three of which are actually named in Scripture:

- Lucifer (***Isaiah 14:12***)
- Michael (***Daniel 10:13 and 21; Daniel 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7***)
- Gabriel (***Daniel 8:16; Daniel 9:21; Luke 1:19 and 26***).

When Gabriel, (*who's going to name himself in Luke 1:19*) appeared by the altar, Zacharias was “troubled”, for the angel’s appearance could have meant divine judgment.

**Troubled** = ταρασσω *tarassō* = *Uncertain. Like a tumultuous bed of water.*

***Psalms 42:7&9*** *Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me. . . . I will say to God my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”*

But to those who are the Lords, as well as Zacharias, the answer from the angel came back:

**Do Not Be Afraid** = φοβέω *phobeō* = *Frightened or alarmed undeservedly. (this is where we get our word for “phobia”.*

This statement is repeated a lot in the gospel of Luke. Here are just a few:

- **Zacharias** = **Luke 1:13** *But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.*
- **Mary** = **Luke 1:30** *Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*
- **Shepherds** = **Luke 2:10** *Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.*
- **Simon Peter** = **Luke 5:10** *and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”*
- **Ruler of the Synagogue Who’s Daughter Had Died** = **Luke 8:50** *But when Jesus heard it, He answered him, saying, “Do not be afraid; only believe, and she will be made well.”*
- **The Disciples** = **Luke 12:7** *But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*
- **The Disciples** = **Luke 12:32** *Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

I will repeat this . . . Do not be afraid . . . WE HAVE THE **LORD!** And He hears and love us! This is great news!

Imagine how excited Zacharias must have been when he heard that he and Elizabeth were to have a son! Good news brings joy! Amen?!

Gabriel then instructed Zacharias to name his son John:

**John** = Ἰωάννης *Iōannēs = Jehovah is gracious.*

- Once he was born, Zacharias was to dedicate the John to God to be a Nazarite all of his life. (read Numbers 6:1–21 for further information on the Nazarite vow).

- He would be filled with the Spirit before birth:

**Luke 1:41** *And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.*

- He would be God’s prophet to present His Son to the people of Israel (**John 1:15–34**).

- God would use John’s ministry to turn many people back to the Lord, just as Isaiah had promised:

**Isaiah 40:1–5** *“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” Says your God. “Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, That her warfare is ended, That her iniquity is pardoned; For she has received from the LORD’S hand Double for all her sins.” **The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”***

## **Becoming Faithless!**

**Luke 1:18-22** *And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”*

*And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."*

*And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.*

You would think that the presence of an angel and the announcement of God's Word would encourage Zacharias's faith, but surprisingly they did not as he reasoned in the flesh . . . ***"How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."***

Instead of looking to God by faith, the priest looked at himself and his wife and decided that the birth of a son was impossible. (if anybody should have hid the account of Abraham and Sarah in their hearts, a priest and his wife should have been at the top of the list) As a leader of a ministry, it's important to believe what we're telling others to believe!

*"This reasoning in the flesh, of course, was unbelief, and unbelief is something God does not accept. Zacharias was really questioning God's ability to fulfill His own Word! Did he think that his physical limitations would hinder Almighty God? But before we criticize Zacharias too much, we should examine ourselves and see how strong our own faith is.*

*Faith is blessed, but unbelief is judged, and Zacharias was struck dumb . . . When he left the holy place, he was unable to give the priestly benediction to the people or even tell them what he had seen. Indeed, God had given him a very personal "sign" that he would have to live with for the next nine months." Warren Wiersbe*

### ***Becoming Favored!***

**Luke 1:23-25** So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among people."

Zacharias could hardly wait to return home so that he and Elizabeth could have a baby!

God kept His promise and Elizabeth conceived a son in her old age.

Not only was she to have a son, but the birth of her son was evidence that *the Messiah was coming . . . But we'll get to that next week!*