

connect 360

**BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
LARGE PRINT EDITION**

GSI:

*Gospel Story
Investigator*

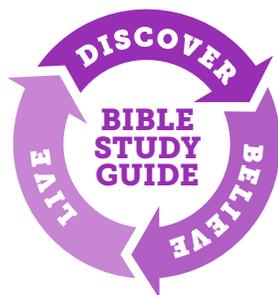
**A STUDY OF THE
Gospel of Luke**

Pam Gibbs

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Leigh Powers



 **BaptistWayPress**
Dallas, Texas

*GSI: Gospel Story Investigator (A Study of the Gospel of Luke)—
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide— Large Print Edition*

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How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further

thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all of the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.

- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
- If all of your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
- Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
- Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.

B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide

practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.

- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the "Teacher Helps" tab.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
- F. Additional teaching plans are also available in electronic format (PDF) by calling 1-866-249-1799. The price of these additional teaching plans for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Teaching Plans* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or

see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.

Do you use a Kindle?

This Connect 360 *Bible Study Guide*, along with several other studies, is available in a Kindle edition. The easiest way to find these materials is to search for "BaptistWay" on your Kindle, or go to www.amazon.com/kindle and do a search for "BaptistWay." The Kindle edition can be studied not only on a Kindle but also on your smartphone or tablet using the Kindle app available free from amazon.com/kindle.

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A Study of the Gospel of Luke

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Introducing

GSI: GOSPEL STORY INVESTIGATOR

A STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Crime scene investigators (or forensic scientists), perform a valuable task. Their careful and detailed work of collecting, preserving, and identifying evidence can explain, solve, and prevent crimes. They insure that information is properly documented and disseminated. These skilled professionals write detailed reports about their discoveries and often provide expert testimony in criminal trials.

In a similar manner, Luke serves as a “Gospel story investigator” through his account of the life and ministry of Jesus. Luke was a physician, and a friend and traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. In both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, he provides detailed accounts of the birth, life, and ministry of the Messiah, as well as the birth and advance of the Church.

Luke relies on eyewitness testimony as he constructs his Gospel account and speaks to the comprehensive nature of his research when he states, “Therefore, since I myself

have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the **certainty** of the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:3–4, NIV).

Luke wanted to present the facts about Jesus so that people would place their faith in the Messiah. Luke carefully presents evidence about Jesus through accounts of the Savior’s teachings and miracles, as well as his involvement with people from all strata of society. May your heart be warmed as you consider Luke’s work (Luke 24:32).

Each winter our Connect 360 Bible Study series focuses on a Gospel. For a complete list of our studies see www.baptistwaypress.org.

Background on the Gospel of Luke

Most scholars believe that the precise account of Jesus’ life and ministry found in the Gospel of Luke was written around 60–61 A.D. Luke’s audience included Theophilus (whose name means “one who loves God” or “friend of God”), Gentiles, and other people scattered around the ancient world. The Gospel of Luke is the longest of the four Gospel accounts (in verses), and when this Gospel and the Book of Acts are combined, Luke contributes the most verses to the New Testament by a single author.

Luke’s purpose in writing was to provide a well-researched, accurate account of Jesus’ life and to present Jesus as the

perfect man and Savior. He wanted his history of Jesus to be able to stand up to the scrutiny it was sure to face. Luke also wanted his readers to know how to respond to Jesus and he presented many examples of those who encountered Jesus and their responses of fear, joy, skepticism, rejection, and belief.

The Gospel of Luke also contains several parables that are not found in the other Gospels. These include some of the most well-known parables of Jesus: the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the shrewd manager, and the rich man and Lazarus.

A thematic outline of Luke reveals a focus on the following content areas:

1. **Jesus Christ the Savior**—Luke described how God entered human history, grew, resisted Satan, ministered to and taught people, was betrayed and deserted by his followers, was tried and executed as a criminal, rose from the dead, and ascended back to heaven.
2. **History**—as a historian and a physician, Luke included a large number of dates and details in his writing. This helped to connect Jesus to events and historical people. Luke's goal was for his readers to be confident in their faith.
3. **People**—Luke reveals that Jesus was deeply interested in relationships. Jesus took a personal interest in people and he treated them with care and concern. He took the initiative to reach beyond established boundaries

to secure relationships with all people. Particularly evident in the Gospel of Luke is Jesus' value and respect for women, in a culture where they were often devalued.

4. **Social Concern**—Growing out of his love for people, Jesus exhibited tender care and sympathy for those who were hated, hurt, poor, and sinful. His compassion for the crippled and the outcast were evident in his compassion which also crossed racial, religious, and ethnic lines.
5. **The Holy Spirit**—Luke makes specific mention of the Holy Spirit's presence at Jesus' birth, baptism, ministry, and resurrection. Jesus depended on the Spirit and Luke carries the emphasis on the Holy Spirit to his writing in the Book of Acts.¹

The Gospel of Luke in Our Day

Darrell Bock offers several suggestions to us as we consider applying the truths found in the Gospel of Luke to our lives. Here are a few of his thoughts:

1. **Jesus' teachings, particularly about sin and forgiveness, must impact our understanding of our humanity and our worth and role in creation.** It will not always be easy to live as a Christ-follower in today's world. We too will encounter pain and rejection, but we can be assured of the Holy Spirit's power and presence with us as we seek to live a life worthy of our calling.

2. **In terms of worldview, its theology, and practical principles, the Gospel of Luke explains how we can serve God better.** Luke addresses money, fear, persecution, the way in which races and genders interact, prayer, praise, and joy. These ancient words speak directly to issues in our contemporary lives.
3. **The characters in Luke’s Gospel tell us about how people respond to Jesus, as well as what values can prevent their response to him.** This emphasis on personal response becomes a mirror for us to use to examine our priorities and those of others we are seeking to reach with the gospel.²

People today want truth they can trust. They are also seeking compassion and encouragement, regardless of their age, race, or social status. May this study of the Gospel of Luke warm your heart and motivate you to seek and serve others in Jesus’ name.

Note: Since the time of the first release of these materials includes the Christmas holiday, a Christmas lesson is included to meet the needs of churches who wish to have an emphasis on Christmas at this time.

FILE #1: BACKGROUND

Lesson 1	Two Miraculous Promises	Luke 1:1–38
Lesson 2	A Savior is Born	Luke 2:1–20
Lesson 3	Jesus’ Developmental Journey	Luke 2:39–52

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FILE #2: PREPARATION

Lesson 4	A Message of Repentance and Anticipation	Luke 3:1–20
Lesson 5	A Trial of Temptation	Luke 4:1–13

FILE #3: PURPOSE

Lesson 6	Purpose Revealed, Promptly Rejected	Luke 4:14–30
Lesson 7	A Catch and a Call	Luke 5:1–11
Lesson 8	Life in the Kingdom	Luke 6:17–46
Lesson 9	The Sweet Smell of Forgiveness	Luke 7:36–50
Lesson 10	A Merciful Father and a Sour Son	Luke 15:1–2, 11–31
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FILE #4: DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Lesson 12	Tried and Crucified	Luke 23:1–26, 32–49
Lesson 13	Resurrected and Reunited	Luke 24:1–12, 33–49
Christmas Lesson	Seekers of the King	Matthew 2:1–12

Additional Resources for Studying GSI: Gospel Story Investigator (A Study of the Gospel of Luke)³

Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary—Abridged Edition: New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994.

Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman. *Life Application New Testament Commentary*. Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001.

Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996.

- Darrell L. Bock. *Luke*. Volume 1. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1994.
- Fred B. Craddock. *Luke*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990.
- R. Alan Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke." *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Volume 9. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.
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- Richard Rhor. *The Good News According to Luke*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Group, 1997.
- A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament: Concise Edition*. Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 2000.
- Robert H. Stein. *Luke*. The New American Commentary. Volume 24. Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Publishing Group, 1992.
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NOTES

1. Bruce Barton, Philip Comfort, Grant Osborne, Linda K. Taylor, and Dave Veerman, *Life Application New Testament Commentary* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2001), 238–240.
2. Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary - Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 26–27.
3. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BAPTISTWAY PRESS® with all of its comments.

FILE #1

Background

File #1, “Background” contains three lessons that provide foundational information for the main subject of the Gospel of Luke: Jesus Christ. Lesson one describes the promise of two miraculous births (John the Baptist and Jesus), and reveals how these promises were part of God’s redemptive plan for humanity. Lesson two chronicles the unlikely circumstances that surrounded the birth of our Savior. Lesson three traces the developmental journey of Jesus and recounts a memorable trip to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

FILE #1: BACKGROUND

Lesson 1	Two Miraculous Promises	Luke 1:1–38
Lesson 2	A Savior is Born	Luke 2:1–20
Lesson 3	Jesus’ Developmental Journey	Luke 2:39–52

lesson

Two Miraculous Promises

MAIN IDEA

The promise of two miraculous births was part of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

For what miracle are you waiting?

STUDY AIM

To trust God's provision and his timing

QUICK READ

God chose two faithful women and performed amazing miracles in their lives. The miracles were a calling for them to participate in his plan of redemption.

Introduction

Chad and Lyndsey dreamed of parenting a big family. It was a topic of discussion before they were married. They both came from large families and shared the goal of raising a large family of their own. After they had married, Chad and Lyndsey tried several years to get pregnant. They endured surgeries, infertility clinics, medications, and finally a diagnosis that Lyndsey would never be able to bear a child.

Using an adoption agency, Chad and Lyndsey adopted a beautiful baby boy. It was a long and expensive process, but the couple knew it was worth it all to have Gabriel. The day they celebrated Gabriel's first birthday was the day the couple found out they were pregnant—with twins. Their dream of having a large family became a reality. Chad and Lyndsey are now the parents of eight children. Four of them are adopted.¹

Luke 1:1–38

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. **7** But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13** But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. **16** Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **20** And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. **25** "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. **31** You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. **37** For nothing is impossible with God.”

38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Then the angel left her.

Recounting the Miracles (1:1–4)

Luke, the Gospel writer, was a second-generation believer. He was not one of the twelve apostles who personally witnessed the teachings and miracles of Jesus. The apostles and others of that day did not need a book to learn about Jesus; he was with them in the flesh. Luke believed in Jesus because he heard their amazing stories, and he wanted to spread the word about Jesus. He wrote a detailed account of Jesus’ life, acknowledging at the beginning of his Gospel that many had tried to do so.

Creating this Gospel was an arduous task that required research, interviews, and writing. Luke, a highly-educated man, wrote an organized, insightful, and well-investigated letter in impeccable Greek—using nimble sentence structure. Although Luke directed the letter toward one man, Theophilus, it was intended for circulation to the well-educated residents of the area. Luke’s purpose was to show Christianity’s place in world history. He did not write merely

to relay facts about Jesus; he wrote using a warm and personal voice to encourage believers and capture the hearts and minds of those who did not believe Jesus was the Son of God.

Luke substantiated the reliability of his writings by stating he had carefully investigated everything. He used writings from those who were eyewitnesses, as well as information gleaned from others who attempted to chronicle the life of Jesus. Oral tradition was an integral part of the culture of the day. It was common for stories and information to be handed down, not in written form, but by orally recounting the events of the past.

For example, there is a close resemblance between Mark's Gospel and Luke's account. Matthew's Gospel shares close connections as well. Most likely, Luke used Mark's account, along with those of others, as he wrote his Gospel. Eyewitnesses living in Luke's day could have authenticated the accuracy of these writings. Therefore, Luke would have quickly been exposed as a fraud if he had been a purveyor of "fake news."

It is unclear if Theophilus was a believer or merely someone interested in knowing more about the life of Jesus. Luke wrote his Gospel to give Theophilus the facts about Jesus and to lead him to believe in Jesus as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. Luke wanted Theophilus to embrace the accuracy of the historical and eternal information about Jesus. Theophilus heard many details about the life of Jesus, but he appeared to lack a thorough grasp of them. Luke assured Theophilus he could trust that the

facts about Jesus were infallible. The Greek word he used for the verb “know” means *a deep and thorough knowledge*. Luke wanted Theophilus to know the truth—in his mind as well as in his heart.

The Miracle of John the Baptist (1:5–25)

Zechariah, whose name means *Yahweh remembers*, was a Jewish priest who was married to Elizabeth. Her name means *God is my fortune*. Selecting wives for priests involved a careful process, with personal character and family lineage playing significant roles. It was preferred for a priest to marry a woman of another priestly line. Zechariah married a rock star when he married Elizabeth, a descendant of Aaron. Luke described them as righteous because they kept the Lord’s commands and decrees. However, they were unable to have children.

In describing their character, Luke made it clear their lack of children was not a result of their sin but rather a part of God’s plan. The law of God taught that children were signs of God’s blessing on a married couple. Many believed childless couples were cursed, and shunned them as a result. The blame usually rested on the woman. Luke mentioned Zechariah and Elizabeth were older—well beyond child-bearing age. To have a child after such a long time of barrenness, meant God had taken away the curse.

The priestly divisions were divided into families and provided specific religious functions. In addition to serving

during the festivals, each group of priests was required to provide services in the temple two weeks out of the year. On the day the angel arrived, Zechariah was serving as the chief official for his division (1:8). His duties required him to go into the temple, burn incense as an offering to God, and then fall prostrate in prayer. This duty was a dangerous time, as the priest drew near to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. During this offering, the people stood before God, and the priest served as the mediator.

During Zechariah's priestly service, an angel appeared and informed him Elizabeth would have a son. The original Greek word Luke used for "appeared" indicates a real angel and not a dream. This incident is reminiscent of when God appeared to inform Abraham that even in their advanced years, he and Sarah would have a son. Zechariah responded as most people in the Bible responded—with fear. The angel told Zechariah not to be afraid. (Angels often responded this way because their appearance could be frightening.)

The angel brought good news. God had heard Zechariah's prayers for a child. It was not likely that Zechariah prayed for a child during his time in the Holy of Holies; however, it was a constant prayer he and Elizabeth had prayed for years. God had withheld children from the couple, not as punishment, but rather so his power could emanate through their son. Their son would be a joy to them and many others because of God's calling on his life. He would be a prophet who would announce the coming of the Messiah. He would call the people of God back from a life of sin to a love relationship

with God. The angel also promised that this son would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth.

One might assume the mere appearance of an angel would be enough to prove the validity of the angel's message. However, Zechariah asked for another sign. In response to his expressed doubt, Gabriel struck Zechariah mute. This action was not only discipline but was designed to remove Zechariah's unbelief. Gabriel continued to state the prophecy and was adamant it would come to pass.

Customarily when the priest exited the temple, he would speak a blessing over the people. The fact Zechariah was mute led the people to realize something supernatural had happened in the temple. Zechariah continued with his priestly duties, unable to speak, which left the people without answers as to what had happened to him in the temple. They would have to wait to hear what God said to the priest.

Zechariah went home, and Elizabeth became pregnant. Although the reason is unstated, Elizabeth stayed in seclusion for five months. Perhaps because of her barrenness, she avoided the public and wanted to wait until she was obviously pregnant to let people see her. As far as the people knew, this pregnancy was the result of natural marital relations. They had no idea it involved the prophecy of God.

The Miracle of Jesus (1:26–38)

Daniel 8:15–17 and 9:21 reveal God sent this same angel, Gabriel, to Daniel 500 years before his appearances to

Mary and Elizabeth. God sent the angel Gabriel to Mary and Elizabeth to announce their miraculous pregnancies. Mary was engaged to Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. During those days, people could get engaged as early as twelve years of age, and a typical engagement lasted one year. An engagement was as legally binding as marriage in Jewish culture. The woman carried the same privilege as a wife, but the couple did not live together.

It was important for Luke to show the connection between Joseph and King David because it was prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:12–16 that the Messiah would come from the kingly line of David. Paul called attention to this truth in Romans 1:3. Matthew, in the first chapter of his Gospel, provided the genealogy of Jesus to show Jesus as a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father. Luke traced Jesus' lineage through Mary in chapter three of his Gospel. Jesus is a descendant of David, by adoption through Joseph, and by blood through Mary. Various Scriptures also refer to Jesus as the Son of David.

Gabriel greeted Mary with a statement, not a wish. This greeting was designed to prepare the recipient for a calling from God. It also gave Mary assurance God would be with her. God was not calling Mary to do something on her own. Mary was a faithful servant of the Lord, but there is no indication in these verses that God chose Mary because she was sinless. Mary was blessed because God chose her to be the mother of the Messiah, according to *his* plan.

The name Jesus means *Yahweh saves*. The title “Son of the Most High” reveals the father-son relationship between Jesus and God. This father-son image also appears in 2 Samuel 7 regarding King David and his son Solomon. David’s kingdom would last forever, as long as his descendants stayed faithful to God. Eventually, the Deliverer, Jesus, came from this lineage. He would rule as king as a descendant of David, and he would rule over God’s people—the house of Jacob.

Like Zechariah, Mary asked how this would happen. Her response further indicated that she and Joseph did not have sexual relations. Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would *come over her*, which is the same phrase used at Pentecost to describe the coming of the Holy Spirit. He also made it clear the power of the Most High would overshadow her. This same terminology can be found in the Old Testament to describe God’s presence over the tabernacle.

Gabriel used the story of Elizabeth to confirm his words, even though Mary did not ask for confirmation. She quietly and humbly accepted the call of God in her life. She gave the proper response of any faithful servant upon hearing God’s call to service. Although she did not have all the details, she willingly obeyed.

Implications and Actions

An interesting contrast exists between Elizabeth and Mary. Elizabeth prayed for years, along with her husband, for a child. Mary most likely knew she wanted children, but it was

not a matter of concern at that point in her life. She simply and faithfully served the Lord. The call of God and miraculous pregnancies connected these two women.

God will accomplish his will on this earth. He is looking for faithful servants to join him. If we are obedient, we will receive blessings, perhaps ones unrequested.

Son of Man

Scripture reveals Jesus was fully human. One of the most vivid passages pointing to his humanity is Matthew 8:20: "Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.'" The title "Son of Man" was used to make a point of his humanity. Jesus' preferred title for himself was Son of Man. He used it to highlight his earthly ministry, his crucifixion, and ultimately his resurrection and exaltation as judge and savior. It pointed both to his human identity as a servant, and to Daniel's vision of the future Son of Man, who would come in judgment and authority.

In Daniel 8, the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel to interpret a vision. Gabriel referred to Daniel as "Son of Man." The vision was concerning the end times. The Old Testament used the term in Hebrew and Aramaic to identify human beings in general. This title also pointed to the fact that Jesus was both God and man.

Praying in Faith

Here are some questions to consider when you are praying and waiting for God to answer:

1. Do I trust that God can grant my prayer request?
2. Am I willing to accept God's answer to my prayer?
3. What can I do while I am waiting for an answer?
4. What lessons has this experience taught me about God?
5. What lessons has this experience taught me about myself?
6. What is missing in my life that this prayer request will fill?

Questions

1. How is infertility viewed today as compared to Luke's day?

2. What is the difference between Zechariah's response to Gabriel and Mary's?

3. What lessons can we learn from Zechariah and Elizabeth regarding patience and persistence?

4. How can you use this story to encourage couples who struggle to have children?

5. Can you name a miracle God performed in your life?

6. The name Jesus means *Yahweh saves*. What are some of the things God saves us from today?

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations in lessons 1–3 are from the New International Version (1984 edition).

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