

6 m series  
all Luke

THE CERTAINTY OF A DOCTOR'S FAITH  
Luke 1:1-4

Intro: Between now and the 14th of December I want to take up chapter 1 of Luke, and chapter 2 through verse 14. This will give us the background for the birth of Christ as recorded by Luke.

Although Luke is not mentioned as the author of either the Gospel which bears his name, or the book of Acts, those who have given time to the study of this problem seem to agree almost without exception that Luke was the writer. There seems no question but that the same man wrote Luke and Acts.

Luke is only mentioned three times in the NT: Col. 4:14; Phil. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11.

But the "we" passages in Acts help to give us more information about him. They are Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:17; 27:1-28:16.

But we are not attempting to study Luke, nor his life; we are interested in the results of his study concerning the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to know that he was a doctor. Paul calls him, "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

This would mean that he was one of the best educated men of his day, a student of science, and a cultured man. The Romans were very demanding of their doctors, and very severe with them when they did anything wrong.

Furthermore, we can assume that he was a Gentile (although there are some who think that he was a Jew). But he is listed separately from the Jews in Col. 4. The way he begins his Gospel is definitely Gentile in character, i.e., the intro.

Then, from Luke 1:1-4, we know that he was not an eye-witness of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He was a historian and an apologist - one who argues in the defence of the Chr. faith.  
From the standpoint of apologetics it is important to have the testimony of eye-witnesses. This we have in the Gospels of Matthew and John. But it is also important to know if some person who was not an eye-witness can take all of the evidence and still be convinced that our faith has a firm foundation!

AND WHO  
CAN DENY  
BUT THAT  
LUKE WROTE  
FOR THE  
ENTIRE  
CHR. WORLD.

This we have in the Gospels of Luke and John Mark.

In addition, it is interesting to note that both the Gospel of Luke were written for one man, called here, "most excellent Theophilus." Who Theophilus was, we do not know. Robertson has suggested as a result of his research that Luke may have

originally been a slave, and that Theophilus as his patron had freed him before either knew the Lord. But whoever he was, a great official or not, he was certainly tremendously important to Luke.

So with the eye-witnesses, and Luke, and Theophilus, we have a situation similar to that mentioned by Paul in 2 Tim. 2:2.

We have three things here:

- (1) The writings of the "many." Cf. vv. 1, 2.
- (2) The writings of Luke. Cf. v. 3.
- (3) The reason for Luke's writing. Cf. v. 4.

#### I. THE WRITINGS OF THE "MANY" (vv. 1, 2).

By his very beginning Luke means to indicate that he has something of great importance to write about: "Forasmuch."

Who these "many" were, we have no idea. But it adds to the testimony of the Gospel that there were not a few who not only believed the Gospel, but they were intent on preserving the Gospel for future generations.

And their writings seem to have followed a general pattern. They were all "to set forth in order," i.e., to give an orderly presentation of the ministry of Christ—from start to end.

"Most surely believed" should read which have been fulfilled, or fully accomplished, among us.

That is, with the ascension of Christ (and Luke is the only one who deals with this in any detail), the record was complete. It could be reviewed in its every aspect, and its future, its credibility, could be established.

The "they" refers not to the "many" of v. 1, but to the "eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word" mentioned in v. 2.

Notice the plurals: "eyewitnesses and ministres of the word."

Thus, we have not just the testimony of one or two, but of many.

Cf. Heb. 2:3; 1 John 1:1-3; John 1:18.

"Ministers of the word"—The Gk indicates that this is what they became—as of Peter, and John, and others in the book of Acts. For "from the beginning" see Acts 1:21, 22.

It is no wonder that Luke's own faith was strengthened.

- (1) He had talked to eye-witnesses.
- (2) They confirmed their experience concerning Christ with the word of God, the doctrine of the Messiah in the OT.
- (3) Many witnesses had indicated an amazing unity to the account.
- (4) Many shared with him the conviction that these things were true.

So we have

## II. The writings of Luke (v. 3).

"Having had perfect understanding" means literally having traced the course of all things accurately,\* that is, "going into minute details" (Robertson, II, 6). This was Luke's preparation from the human standpoint.

"From the very first" means from above. This is Luke's qualification from the divine standpoint. His research was carefully superintended by divine revelation so as to keep him from error.

"In order," i.e., with a purpose, a theme, and proceeding from a starting point and moving on to a conclusion. This is no haphazard presentation, but an orderly, purposeful book.

III. I used to read history almost without question, but my whole attitude toward history changed when former President Harry Truman started his historical exploits. Historians can re-write history, or they can write from a biased point-of-view. BUT NO HISTORY THAT HAS EVER BEEN WRITTEN IS SO WELL DOCUMENTED AS THE HISTORY OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST. It confirms or exposes all other histories.

But why did he write? Was it not enough for him to discover these things for himself? The Gospel does not leave us this way. Cf. Acts 4:19, 20; 2 Cor. 5:14 ff.

## III. The reason for Luke's writing (v. 4).

Theophilus has "been instructed." By whom, or when, we do not know, but he had had instruction in the things that concern Christ. This probably means that he was a believer.

But Luke wanted him to "know" fully that, lit., there was no slip in the historical record, but that that which he had already heard about the Lord Jesus rested on the most reliable historical foundation!

"Things" = words. So Luke is concerned with teaching, the very words used to instruct people concerning the Person and the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Concl: Now turn to the last chapter of Luke (24:36-48).

Can we not see, especially from v. 47, that which moved the heart of Luke?

No only was he concerned about "all nations," but without hesitation or fear of contradiction he would proclaim the Gospel of Christ knowing that no message in all the world stood on a more reliable foundation.

THE ANSWER TO A PRIEST'S PRAYER  
Luke 1:5-25

Intro: Tonight we begin the first part of Luke's research.  
It is a most unusual story, and for that reason needs to be confirmed.

Basically it was an account given by one man: Zacharias, a priest.

But, what Zacharias told about this experience could be checked in two ways:

- (1) First: Did it come to pass? It was a solemn thing to pretend to speak for the Lord.
- (2) Second: Is there any OT basis for the appearance of such a person as John the Baptist?

Luke had evidently faced both of these possibilities.

(Read the account.)

Notice the four things which Gabriel declares about John.

I. THE EFFECT OF HIS BIRTH AND MINISTRY (v. 14). Note:  
"thou" and "many."

It had been a long time since Israel had had anything to rejoice over. They were in bondage, and it had been about 400 years since the last prophet ministered among this ancient people. Their hope had all but disappeared.

But now all of that was to be changed by an angel speaking about the last revelation God had given--over 400 years before.

Luke had evidently seen the evidence of this through the ministry of John.

II. THE MAN JOHN HIMSELF (v. 15).

Every father believes that his son is "great." But this word means that John was to have a prominent, an important place, in the plan of God. Cf. John 1:6; Matt. 11:11.

Cf. v. 32 about our Lord.

Only time could prove this. But, again, it did. Notice that this verse is given in reverse order chronologically.

It speaks of what God did (the first and third statements), and it speaks of what John did (the middle statement--cf. Num. 6:1-21).

### III. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF JOHN'S MINISTRY (v. 16).

It is safe to say that Israel had never seen anything like it before.

Cf. Matt. 3:1-6.

He became so outstanding that a delegation of "priests and Levites" came to see him. Cf. John 1:19-24.

Even Andrew and John were men he brought to the Lord.  
Cf. John 1:35-40.

He had a complete disregard for the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matt. 3:7-12. For once, even they had to listen!

But now we come to that which is the proof of the above, practical evidence which Luke must have seen in Israel after he had come to the Lord.

### IV. THE QUALITY OF JOHN'S MINISTRY (v. 17).

Four things could be said.

- A. The way in which John resembled Elijah. This out to lead us to a study of the lives of these two great men of God—one OT; the other, NT.

Luke undoubtedly did this!

Their fearlessness was similar. Their times were similar. Their results were similar. They preached for the same purpose: to bring Israel back to the Lord.

- B. The effect it had on the homes of Israel.

Deut. 6 is the key chapter for families in the OT. The Pharisees gave lip service with their phylacteries. BUT ACTUALLY THE HOMES OF ISRAEL WERE FALLING APART. It was a day much like our own. And it is interesting to see how it is stated here. He "shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children."

The departure from the Lord was parental!

John, who as far as we know was not married, by his preaching revolutionized the homes of Israel. If fathers, if parents, are not concerned about the relationship of their children to the Lord, it is doubtful if the children will be concerned.

Do you think that Matt. 19:13-15 was the result of John's ministry? It seems that it might be.

*Here Luke goes back to a 400 year old prophecy.*

*"Turn" (as under III above)*

*"Turn" = They had been with the Lord; they had turned away; now they will be turned back.*

But in what way were the hearts of the fathers being turned to the Lord?

- C. "The disobedient to the wisdom of the just." It seems that he is still talking about the fathers.

What makes a person disobedient?

Cf. Rom. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:22.

Disobedience is a refusal to believe the Gospel. When the fathers got right with the Lord, they got concerned about the salvation of their children.

This is "the wisdom of the just." Wisdom here means the ability to reach our goals in the right way. There is nothing more difficult than to make an unregenerate child do the right thing, unless it is for an unregenerate parent to be trying to do it!

Cf. Acts 2:39; Matt. 23:37; 27:25.

Zacharias and Elizabeth "were both righteous before God" (v. 6), so they knew what the means to the end was, and undoubtedly John learned it from them. Don't say that old parents are bad parents; these two did a tremendous job.

But, what did all of this lead up to?

- D. To make ready a people who would be receptive to the Lord.

This is what happened to Andrew and John, the Apostle. When the Lord came on the scene, John had to move off.

It could very well be that the multitudes who followed our Lord were in many instances directly traceable to John's dynamic ministry.

Concl: No one ever studies the Word without learning great lessons. Such must have been Luke's experience. The evidence confirmed his faith everywhere he turned, BUT SO ALSO DID HIS HEART BEGIN TO BEAT WITH THE JOY THAT COMES FROM SEEING THE TRUTH UNFOLD BEFORE US.

The account of Zacharias was confirmed, first, by John himself; secondly, by the prophecy of Malachi—the word of God; and, thirdly, by the results of John's ministry—which could only confirm that the hand of God was upon him.

Let us confirm our faith, and let us learn the lessons which God was seeking to teach His people then.

FOURFOLD SONSHIPS OF JESUS CHRIST  
Luke 1:26-38

Intro: Luke, the apologist, is presenting to us the testimony he has received, either from or concerning, certain individuals—and then he is going to see how they harmonize with each other.

So we have first Zacharias.

Then we have Mary.

In the first case Elisabeth did not know about it originally; in the second, Joseph did not know. Matthew makes this clear.

Both announcements were completely unheard of by all of those living, and no word had come from God in about 400 years.

We must remember that Luke, being a Gentile, would probably never have been led to research all of this if there had not been some striking evidence that these things were true.

What did he learn from Mary? (It is very possible that he could have received this information directly from her.)

She went back to the time before she was married, to the time when she lived in Nazareth, and the sudden appearance of the angel, Gabriel. She was engaged, but not married.

(Luke tells us that it was Elisabeth's sixth month, but Mary knew nothing about it at the time.)

What the angel said to Mary all had to do with sonship, and four things are indicated.

- I. MARY WOULD HAVE A CHILD BEFORE SHE WAS MARRIED (v. 31).  
Cf. v. 34. This was to be "a virgin birth."

LUKE DOES  
NOT EXALT  
MARY, BUT  
MARY'S SON.

No interpretation is given to the name, "Jesus" (as in Matthew), but see its fulfillment in 2:21. Notice how Mary continued to be amazed at all the events which accompanied the birth of Christ.

There had been miraculous births before, but never anything like this.

- II. HIS SECOND SONSHIP: "Son of the Highest." Cf. v. 32a.

This sent Luke back to the OT Scriptures. He would have found that this name was used for God in Gen. 14:18-22. He would have seen it also in Deut. 32:8. In the first



instance we have one who was not related to Abraham, and who therefore could be considered a Gentile. He was the one who first used this name for God.

In the second (Deut. 32:8), we see its application to the nation Israel.

So it is a title for God which involves both the Jew and the Gentile, and speaks of God's sovereign purpose for all peoples of the earth.

Therefore, it would have been of interest to Luke.

Cf. Luke 1:76. "Son" would indicate identity of nature, cf. John 5:18.

But this was not all. In the same verse we have

III. THE THIRD SONSHIP: "The throne of his father David."

In order to claim this our Lord had to be a direct descendant of king David. This is why Luke begins as he does in v. 27.

This must be established, or the whole thing is a fraud. Cf. Luke 20:39-44.

The differences between the genealogies in Matthew and Luke seem to indicate that Matthew gives the legal side through Joseph, and Luke gives the blood relationship through Mary.

Now we must not overlook v. 33. THIS WAS THE POINT WHERE EVEN THE DISCIPLES EXPERIENCED THEIR GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT. They felt that the Lord would establish His earthly kingdom.

But Luke is the only one who gives us the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and then what He did with the disciples later—both having to do with the OT prophecies of the Messiah.

It is very likely that Luke understood the two phases of the Lord's return before any others. At least His death held no contradiction for him concerning the kingdom. Cf. Acts 1:3.

Finally

IV. THE FOURTH SONSHIP: cf. v. 35. Lit., that which shall be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.

The second sonship indicated deity. This confirms it! But

ANSWER  
TO MARY'S  
QUESTION

it does more. IT DECLARES MESSIAHSHIP!

Cf. Matt. 16:16; John 20:31.

Note the unusual way His birth is referred to in the beginning of the verse. Overshadowing indicates an experience similar to what the disciples had on the mount of transfiguration. Cf. Luke 9:34, 35. It speaks of the overshadowing presence of God. Moses also had a similar experience.

John was filled with the Holy Spirit; our Lord was conceived by the Holy Spirit. So, even though John was "great"—the Lord Jesus Christ was to be even greater!

Concl: Without telling Mary at this point why, the angel simply mentions that her cousin, Elisabeth, was also going to have a child—and then we have in v. 37 a verse which must have taken Mary (and it certainly reminded Luke) back to Gen. 18:14.

Therefore, the stories continue to fit together, and there is abundant confirmation from the OT. If this had been just a fabrication, it would never have come to pass. But Luke is writing after it all had taken place, more convinced than ever that this was all of God.

"How shall this be?"

The answer convinced Mary, and it also convinced Luke. Let us not join those who try to put a human explanation to these words, and so destroy the whole story. The events which followed only added to the truth of all that had taken place up to this point because "with God nothing shall be impossible!"

May we accept the evidence and be confirmed in our faith! Or, if any here have not received the Lord, the evidence is without question. Therefore, this is an event of the greatest possible significance, and it demands a response from every person.

"What then will you do with Jesus who is called Christ?" (Pilate in Matt. 27:22).

THE SONG OF MARY

Luke 1:39-56

Intro: We continue tonight looking at the results of the research which Luke made into the events surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. He writes as one firmly convinced that all of the evidence make it imperative that we believe these things to be true.

So far we have the testimony of Zacharias, and of Mary--both of them having received a special revelation from the angel, Gabriel.

Now He is going to cite the evidence from Mary's song which she said, or sang (we do not know) at the house of Elisabeth.

Note first all that led up to it in vv. 39-45. Luke undoubtedly cites them here because he had every reason to believe that they were true.

Then comes the song. Its similarity to Hannah's song has been noticed by all who are familiar with the Word of God. Cf. 1 Sam. 2:1-10.

But why is this important in the record which Luke is giving to us? Simply because it gives added confirmation that this was all of God.

How?

By briefly summarizing the history of the OT and showing that the very manner in which Jesus Christ would be born was characteristic of the ways God had worked in the past. IF THERE HAD BEEN A CONTRAST INSTEAD OF A SIMILARITY, THEN LUKE WOULD HAVE HAD CAUSE TO BE DOUBTFUL OF THE WHOLE ACCOUNT. God's ways never change. Cf. Psa. 103:7.

Here they are:

- I. God has always chosen to work through lowly people. Cf. vv. 46-48.

If this had not been the case, with Mary, she would have been disqualified. This is one of the strongest arguments against the Deity of Mary or any of the other things which certain people have claimed about her to exalt her. Luke makes no suggestion of Mary's greatness. The opposite is just the point, and it could not be clearer than it is in v. 47 where we read, "God, my Saviour." By this she means (1) that she needed salvation, (2) that she had placed her faith in God for salvation, and (3) in so doing she was declaring that salvation was a divine work, not human.

It was nothing short of amazing for such truths concerning salvation to be made by anyone in Israel when salvation had become so garbled by the religious leaders of the day.

But, then, notice how she confirms what God is doing by her OT references in vv. 52, 53.

God has by-passed the mighty potentates and the rich only to use "them of low degree" and "the hungry." Israel's history is full of this.

Cf. Saul and David.

Remember also what Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:26-31.

- II. God has always chosen to work so as to display His power, and thus to open the way for His holiness and His mercy.

So many people stumble at the miraculous in Scripture. What would you expect from God?

Surely the virgin birth of Christ is a miracle, and the birth of John the Baptist was a miracle, but is the OT not filled with miraculous things which God has done from creation right on down to the birth of Christ.

In fact, would much of anything have been done through Abraham and his descendants if God had not worked, and worked miraculously?

Isaac would never have been born.

Israel would never have come out of Egypt.

The Israelites would never have survived the desert.

They would never have gotten into the promised land.

The Gospel would never have survived as a message if God had not raised up men who stood against all of the trends of the day.

So, there is nothing inconsistent about the miraculous birth of Christ (although it was the greatest miracle). From an understanding of the OT you would really expect it.

Read vv. 49-53—all speaking of the display of God's power.

- III. God has always remembered "his mercy," i.e., the promises of His mercy to be fulfilled in salvation.

Again Luke would be sent back to the study of the OT.

Notice how it is expressed in vv. 54, 55.

"Helped" means that God had laid hold of Israel time and time again because of His promises. "Israel" suggests what He made them from "Jacob," and "his servant" narrows it down to the people of the nation who believed His Word and sought to do His will. If it had not been for His help, all would have been lost hundreds upon hundreds of times!

"As He spoke."

- (1) "To our fathers"--cf. Heb. 1:1-3, from generation to generation the promise was renewed and enlarged.
- (2) "To Abraham"--where the first details were given.
- (3) "To his seed": Christ. Cf. Gal. 3:16.

Mary knew the Word of God well enough to know that this was just what God had promised.

And this Luke could certainly check!

Concl: I have just touched on the bare details tonight. It is for all of us to take the OT to find confirmation of these truths which Mary has pointed out for us. Luke had done this, and he was convinced.

It is important for us to see in these days of skepticism that very few people have really examined the evidence. If anyone will, and do it honestly, he will be forced to realize that his conclusions must be the same as Luke's, and that Jesus Christ was virgin-born--the only way our Redeemer could become a man still be God, so as to be able to provide redemption for us through His death and resurrection.

THE PROPHECY OF A PRIEST  
Luke 1:57-80

Intro: We have been learning from one who was not an eye-witness of Christ, nor of His ministry, the things which he had thoroughly investigated--and found to be true!

In this passage we find some evidence which we must not miss!

First of all, the prediction had been that a woman, Elisabeth, who was too old to have children, would have a child.

Here she has a child.

Secondly, the prediction had been that she would have a son.

Here she has a son, not a daughter.

Thirdly, it had been ~~predicted~~ <sup>announced</sup> by the angel that his name was to be John.

With reference to this we have seen that for nine months Zacharias had not spoken a word, and the implication in v. 62 is that he was also deaf.

Now, when the time for circumcision had come, a dispute arose within the family as to what the child's name would be. They said, "Zacharias," but Elisabeth, remembering what the angel Gabriel had told her husband, said, "John." When they indicated to Zacharias what the dispute was about, he wrote, "His name is John."

And then another miracle took place. Read v. 64.

All of this would have a profound influence on anyone who was investigating all of these circumstances!

See the effect that it had on all who were present. It is very possible that Luke talked personally with many who were there at the time and who could confirm that this actually happened!

Vv. 67 ff. may be what he said in v. 64.

But now we are ready to look at this prophecy. Remember that prophecy is primarily a setting forth of the truth of God, or preaching--not just a prediction of the future.

There are two divisions to this prophecy, or psalm of praise:

- (1) In vv. 68-75 he speaks of what God has done.
- (2) In vv. 76-79 he speaks of the part that John, his son, now an infant, would have in the ministry of the Messiah.

But, for all, God is given the glory.

Let us look at:

- I. The section which has to do with God: "the Lord God of Israel (vv. 66-75).

It is very clear that he is speaking as a Jew who had longed for the liberation of his people. Now, after 400 years, it had become clear to Zacharias that God had finally "visited" His people for the purpose of redeeming them!

Nothing could have delighted him more.

It would be interesting to know how Zacharias had spent those months waiting for his son to be born. You would certainly think that he had spent a great amount of time going back to search the Messianic promises of the Old Testament Scriptures. See how he mentions:

- (1) David (v. 69).
- (2) The "holy prophets" (v. 70).
- (3) Even Abraham (v. 73)--remembering that God not only promised salvation to Abraham, but that he confirmed it with an oath! Cf. Heb. 6:17, 18.

But be sure to notice also that Zacharias gives expression to the hope in the OT which was uppermost in the hearts of all of the Jews who looked for the Messiah. Read:

- (1) V. 71, "that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us."
- (2) V. 74, "That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear."

This idea prevailed after His death (Luke 24:21), and even up to the time of His ascension (Acts 1:6).

To the Jews the great obstacle standing in the way of their relationship with God was ROME! But this was not the case. THEIR REAL PROBLEM WAS SIN!

See how easy it would be to be mistaken by such a verse as Isa. 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given (His first coming), and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . ." (His second coming to the earth to reign).

All that Zacharias says in these verses is absolutely true. BUT MAY I MAKE A SUGGESTION? During those days of silence Zacharias had time to listen to God as he searched and searched the OT Scriptures--and he made a discovery which

very few Israelites had made. He discovered why the Messiah had to have a forerunner! Do you know? It is very apparent as we consider the next section.

- II. The section which has to do with his infant son, JOHN, whom he calls, "child." Cf. vv. 76-79.

If we are thinking about the fulfillment of prophecy, we might feel that Luke would have found the first loophole in his investigation with such verses as vv. 32, 33 and 68-75. JESUS CHRIST HAD BEEN BORN, HE HAD DIED, HE HAD BEEN RAISED, HE HAD GONE BACK TO THE FATHER—AND ISRAEL WAS STILL A SUBJUGATED NATION UNDER THE HEEL OF ROME!

What would Luke do with that problem?

Perhaps Zacharias helped him to understand. How amazing for Zacharias to talk TO an eight day old baby with such a message! BUT LUKE COULD KNOW THAT vv. 76-79 HAD PROVED TO BE THE TRUTH. This is the way that God used John.

Here is the reason the Messiah had to have a forerunner:  
THERE HAD TO BE ONE WHO WOULD REVIVE THE TRUTH THAT ISRAEL'S GREATEST NEED WAS FOR DELIVERANCE FROM SIN (NOT ROME), AND THAT THIS DELIVERANCE WAS ON A PERSONAL BASIS (NOT NATIONAL).

No one would understand the ministry of the Messiah IF THEY DID NOT KNOW WHY HE HAD COME! God raised up John to revive this truth.

- A. He would proclaim to Israel what the "knowledge of salvation" really meant (v. 77).

Man does not even get started with God until he experiences the forgiveness of his sins. This why John the Baptist preached, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

This why he said to the Pharisees and to the Sadducees (according to Matt. 3:7) and to the multitudes of Israel (according to Luke 3:7), "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father; for I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

It is doubtful if anyone ever had a tougher ministry than John did because he had to tell his fellow Jews that the fact that they were Jews meant nothing toward getting them into good standing with God.



- B. He would proclaim to Israel what the basis of their salvation would be (v. 78a).

"Through the tender mercy of our God." Cf. Tit. 3:5.

Zacharias had learned this, and John was going to preach it. "Tender mercy" indicates that God has a merciful heart toward man, and that this is the reason why Christ came--not because man deserved such a divine provision.

You did not hear the Jews saying much about mercy, about grace. But God was bringing this truth to light again.

- C. He would proclaim to Israel that salvation would come through a Person (v. 78b).

"Dayspring" is a word which indicates the approach of the dawn, like the rising of the sun in the morning.

The world is enveloped in spiritual darkness, and Israel had turned away from David, and the Holy Prophets, and from the oath given to Abraham--and so they were in even greater darkness. Cf. Matt. 6:23b, "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

Do you remember that which the Lord said to the Roman centurion, a Gentile? "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. 8:10).

His appearance would be like the rising of the sun, and no one needed it like Israel did!

V. 79a is related to this point.

- D. He would point the way to "peace" (v. 79b).

Peace was just one of the many blessings that the Messiah would bring.

Cf. Psa. 29:11, "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

Cf. Psa. 85:10, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Cf. Rom. 5:1.

Concl: Our Lord had silent years. And so did John as v. 80 indicates.

And the same was true of the Apostle Paul. Cf. Gal. 1. Why?

In the case of John and Paul it was to establish with them, and to preserve, the Gospel of the grace of God.

Luke had investigated it all, and had not only found it to be true, but had come to know the One who could meet his needs before God.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST--A CONFIRMATION OF FAITH  
Luke 2:1-20

Intro: This is the sixth Sunday evening that we have been considering together Luke's account of the events which led up to the birth of Christ.

We have seen that he had not been an eye-witness of any part of the earthly ministry of our Lord. (Of course, none of the Apostles were Apostles at this time.)

Luke's purpose is stated in 1:1-4. He writes as an historian. His purpose was to establish or to expose (if the facts did not bear out the claims which were being made).

Being a man of medicine, he was thorough in his research. He gives us facts not mentioned in the other Gospels, which can only point to the thorough way he carried on his work.

The result: He became thoroughly convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that He had come to provide salvation for all men--and he received the Lord as his Savior!

In his writings we can profit from the investigations which he made.

I am concluding this present series tonight, but, if anything, we have the capstone of all the evidence which has preceded it.

One thing we need to notice: Luke does not pay a great deal of attention to the Old Testament prophecies. This would seem to prove that he wrote for Gentiles. Matthew, on the other hand, does not seem to miss a chance to refer to the Old Testament (which seems to prove that he wrote for the Jews. E.g.,

- (1) When Matthew mentioned the virgin, he quoted from Isa. 7:14. Luke does not.
- (2) When Matthew mentioned the birthplace of our Lord, Bethlehem, he quoted from Micah 5:2. Luke does not.

Luke seems more intent on putting all of the events, the angelic appearances, together with the people involved, to determine whether or not it was true.

The Spirit of God obviously had a hand in this. If a person wants to look at the birth of Christ from the prophetic point-of-view, he should read Matthew. If he wants to look at it from the historical point-of-view, he should read Luke. Together, the evidence is indisputable!

Now let us consider Luke's account.

I. LUKE'S ACCOUNT OF THE PLACE WHERE JESUS WAS BORN (vv. 1-7).

Perhaps he was not even aware of Micah's (5:2) prophecy. If he was, this was certainly not his main concern. HOWEVER, WE CANNOT PASS OVER THIS MIRACULOUS FACT: JUST BEFORE MARY WAS READY TO GIVE BIRTH TO HER CHILD, A GOVERNMENTAL DECREE MADE IT NECESSARY FOR THEM TO LEAVE NAZARETH AND GO ABOUT SIXTY OR SO MILES SOUTH TO BETHLEHEM--THE PLACE WHERE MICAH PREDICTED ALMOST 700 YEARS BEFORE THAT THE MESSIAH WOULD BE BORN.

Without knowing it, Caesar Augustus was fulfilling prophecy!

Surely this may be one of the reasons why Isaiah began his redemptive section (40-66) by showing the insignificance of the nations of the earth when God gets ready to carry out His purposes.

What depth of meaning there is in those words in Luke 2:1, "And it came to pass, in those days." They were days when men did as they were told, even though a woman were in the condition that Mary was in.

But Luke does not seem concerned about this.

What is he concerned about?

We know--because he mentions it three times. Cf. vv. 7, 12, 16.

EVIDENTLY THE THING WHICH ATTRACTED THE GENTILE MIND OF LUKE WAS THE TERRIFIC CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LOWLY CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LORD'S BIRTH IN COMPARISON WITH THE UNIVERSAL CONSEQUENCES.

LUKE DOES NOT MISS EITHER -- "SHE BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN SON" -- NOT A DAUGHTER.

This was no way for a king to be born! It certainly was no way for One to be born who was destined to reign over all the world! It was humiliating enough for the Son of God to become a man, but for Him to be born in such surroundings seemed humiliating beyond degree-- and at such a time in human history!

As far as the world was concerned, nothing could have been of less interest that night than the birth of the baby Jesus. But Luke's curiosity had been aroused by circumstances which were so completely out of character with all that was eventually to take place.

But, note another thing.

## II. THE EXPERIENCE OF THE SHEPHERDS (vv. 8-20).

Luke is the only one who gives us this story. Where did he get it? He may have heard it the first time from Mary. Possibly he went looking for the shepherds and heard it confirmed from them. It was all a part of the research which he did.

Several things are of interest.

- A. It was for them an unexpected experience (vv. 8, 9). When the angel of the Lord appeared to them, they were afraid. "The glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were very much afraid."
- B. The message was one that could be tested (vv. 10, 11).

Do not forget how salvation, salvation from sin, has been emphasized through these events--by Gabriel, by Mary, and then by Zacharias after the birth of John.

This angelic announcement not only confirmed what we have already seen in chapter 1 with respect to His work, but it confirmed also what has been said about His person. The child was God incarnate, and He was being born to bring salvation from sin "to all people."

Luke had uncovered these truths before by his investigations, but when he talked to the angels they said the same things.

Can we measure his excitement when all of these details began to fit together? With what confidence Luke could write out Peter's message in Acts 2:22-24--"Jesus of Nazareth . . . crucified and slain . . . raised up . . . because it was not possible that he should be held by it." WHY? Because He was the Lord!

Luke was going to be the major historian to give us the record of the thousands who received salvation by putting their trust in this one of lowly birth. His birthplace is so insignificant that "Bethlehem is never mentioned in the N. T. as the site of any event in the ministry of our Lord or in the church of the first century" (NSRB, p. 51).

But this is not all.

- C. The shepherds were given "a sign"--a distinguishing characteristic (v. 12).

There might have been other babies born in Bethlehem that night (although this is doubtful), but no other newborn infant would have a manger for a cradle!

Note that the "sign" was given without being requested because of the unusual importance of this event, and because the angels wanted it put to the test.

This would have been enough, but there is still one more thing:

- D. The message of "the heavenly host"--an innumerable company of angels (vv. 13, 14).

Do you remember that we have seen that the Gospel had become obscured? How difficult it would have been for a Gentile to know how to be saved if he were trying to find out from the Jews! Cf. the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8.

But here it is--in the message of the angels. No salvation can be the true salvation which does not:

- (1) Glorify God--as the Savior FIRST.
- (2) Bring peace to men--peace with God, peace of heart and mind.
- (3) "For God takes pleasure in men" seems to be the emphasis here. It is though the angels were saying that this salvation is for men, for ALL men, BUT NOT FOR ANGELS!

Conclusion: Read vv. 15-20. Luke is careful to tell us that the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found the mother and the child just exactly as the angels had told them.

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Very clearly Mary was not a part of a conspiracy. She was just as amazed as anyone else was at all that had taken place.

What an encouragement this is to those of us who know the Lord! This is what Luke meant it to be for Theophilus--and for us. But, it also should awaken others, as doubtless it awakened Luke, to the realization that this is something which God did--and He did it that man might be forgiven of his sins, and receive the gift of eternal life.