

#### ► Read Luke 1:1-25.

1. How does Luke assure Theophilus that what he has been taught is based on historically accurate events and facts? (vv. 1-4)
2. Describe the couple Luke introduces us to in verses 5-7.

#### *Most excellent Theophilus*

“A real person and indeed one of high official rank. Most probably he was a procurator or governor in some province of... the Roman Empire.... ‘a man of distinction and probably also of wealth’... [I]t might be concluded that [he] would see to the publication and dissemination of this Gospel narrative and would bear the expense of it.”<sup>1</sup>

*Timing* is an interesting element in this week’s passage. The angel talks about his word coming to pass at the “proper time,” and Zechariah is serving at the temple because of a schedule that had been established all the way back in 1 Chronicles 24:10, 19. Also, burning incense was a once-in-a-lifetime event for a priest.<sup>2</sup>

3. How does Zechariah end up being the one chosen to go in and burn incense on the altar on this particular day?<sup>3</sup> (v. 9; Prov. 16:33)

4. There had been 400 years of silence since Israel had last heard from the Lord. How is this period of silence broken? (vv. 11-13a, 19, 25)

5. Why do you think Zechariah was “startled and gripped with fear” (v. 12) when he saw the angel of the Lord? (📖\* Judg. 6:22–23)

6. What promises, dating back over 400 years, was God going to fulfill by the birth of this child to Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Mal. 3:1a (v. 17a; Lk. 7:24–27)

Mal. 4:5–6 (v. 17; Mt. 3:1–3)

Take a look at the promise in ***Isaiah 40:3*** written 700 years earlier! This is the promise that Matthew quotes.

7. What barriers stand in the way of God’s promise being fulfilled? (vv. 7, 18)

8. We often make promises that may be well-intentioned but that we are unable to keep. Why are God’s promises fundamentally different than ours?

Lk. 1:36–37

Mt. 19:26

Job 42:2

Jer. 32:17

Rom. 4:20–21

9. As you read over verses 13–17, what do you see as John’s calling in life? (📖 Jn. 1:6–8)
10. John’s name means *the Lord is gracious*. How do you see God being gracious here at the beginning of Luke?
11. Though obviously excited, Zechariah is not able to speak after his encounter with the angel, Gabriel. What will eventually loose his tongue? (vv. 13, 19–22)
12. How do the circumstances in Zechariah and Elizabeth’s life provide the backdrop for God’s glory to be put on display? (vv. 7, 13, 23–25)
13. Even though an angel has been sent from the presence of God, Zechariah’s faith wavers because he is too focused on earthly limitations (v. 18). What keeps you from taking God at his word?
14. Luke begins his gospel by stating that “things...have been fulfilled among us” (v. 1). How does this opening story of God’s faithfulness encourage you?

15. Are there ways you've seen God demonstrate his faithfulness in your life? If so, take time to note some here.

16. Zechariah was promised something that was absolutely impossible from an earthly point of view. What promises of God are difficult for you to believe?

As you consider this challenge and also anticipate studying the gospel of Luke this year, use this prayer to lay your need before the Lord:

"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief." (Mark 9:24)

Now take a moment to thank God that his will and purposes do not depend on your faith but on his faithfulness!

\*📖 For further study

<sup>1</sup> Norvel Geldenhuys, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951; repr. 1972), 54.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. Luke* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 68.

<sup>3</sup> Casting of lots (similar to our tossing a coin or drawing straws) is mentioned in the Old and New Testament. It was a simple way to determine God's specific will, trusting his control of the outcome. (See how lots were used in Luke 1:9 and 23:34 for a dramatic contrast.)