

THE GOOD NEWS ACCORDING TO LUKE*

(Written in Caesarea, 57-59 A.D.)

Luke's Foreword

Dear Theophilus:

1 Many people have tried to give us a written account of the things that have happened here in our land. **2**And the people who saw and heard all this from the very beginning have become the caretakers of this information, and they have passed it all on to us.

3And since I have also studied all these things very carefully, going all the way back to the very beginning, your honor, I thought it would be a good thing to write it all down for you just as it happened, **4**so that you can be sure that you know the truth about the things you have been taught.

John the Baptist's Birth Announced

7/6 B.C.

5During the time when Herod was the king of Judea* there was a priest by the name of Zechariah. He belonged to the Abijah family,* and his wife was a member of Aaron's family.* Her name was Elisabeth. **6**Both of them were perfectly holy in God's sight,* and they tried to keep all of God's commandments and laws as perfectly as possible. **7**But they didn't have children, because Elisabeth couldn't have any, and at that time both of them were very old.

8One day Zechariah was doing his work as a priest during the week when his group was on duty at God's house. **9**In those days the priests used to shake the lot* each day to see which job each man was going to have. And on that day Zechariah was chosen in this way to go into the Lord's Temple* to burn the incense. **10**And while the incense was being offered,

*Helpful notes for Luke begin on page 762

the whole crowd of worshipers stood outside praying.

11But while Zechariah was in the Temple, he saw one of the Lord's angels standing on the right side of the incense altar. **12**When Zechariah saw the angel, he was very excited and afraid. **13**But the angel said to him, "You mustn't be afraid, Zechariah, because God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elisabeth is going to have a little boy, and you must call him 'John'.

14He will bring you joy and happiness. And many people will be very happy when they hear that he has been born.

15"For he will be a great man in the Lord's eyes. He will never drink any wine or liquor at all, but he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he's born. **16**And He will turn many of the Israelites back to the Lord their God. **17**In fact, he's the one who will go out ahead of the Lord to get things ready for Him, like another Elijah. He will also work with the power of Elijah 'to make the fathers love their children',⁺ and the disobedient change their ways by making them think like those who do what God wants. It will be his job to get people ready for their Lord."

18But Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? After all, I'm an old man, and my wife is very old."

19And the angel answered, "I am Gabriel, the angel who stands at God's side. I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. **20**But now I must tell you that because you didn't believe what I said, you will hear no sound and you won't be able to speak until the day when all this happens. And when the right time comes, it will all come true."

21While all this was going on, the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering why he was staying in the Temple for such a long time. **22**And when he did come out, he wasn't able to speak to them.

⁺Verses quoted in Luke begin on page 876

But they finally realized that he had seen something strange there in the Temple. He kept on trying to "talk" to them by using his hands and shaking his head, but he still couldn't speak or hear anything. ²³And when his week of service at the Temple was ended, Zechariah went back home.

²⁴Some time later his wife Elisabeth became pregnant, and she didn't leave the house for five months. ²⁵"The Lord has done this for me," she said. "He has looked down on me in mercy, and has taken away the reason why I have always felt so ashamed when I was with other people."

God Announces the Birth of Jesus to Mary 6/5 B.C.

²⁶About three months before Elisabeth was going to have her baby, God sent the angel Gabriel to the city of Nazareth, in the district of Galilee.* ²⁷He was to go to a young girl named Mary, who was a member of David's family, and she was the promised wife of a man whose name was Joseph.

²⁸When the angel came into her house, he said to her, "Good morning, my dear. The Lord is always watching over you."

²⁹But Mary didn't understand what he meant, and she was wondering why he had spoken to her like this.

³⁰Then the angel said to her, "You mustn't be afraid, Mary, for God loves you very much. ³¹Now listen carefully! You are going to become pregnant and have a Son, and you must call Him 'Jesus'. ³²This child will be a great man, and He will be called the 'Son of the only true God'. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³He will be the King over Jacob's family forever and ever. Yes, His kingdom will never end".⁺

³⁴"But how can this be?" said Mary to the angel, "since I am a virgin."

³⁵The angel answered,

"The Holy Spirit will come over you,
and the power of the only true God will cover you.

And therefore the holy child which is born
will be called 'God's Son'.

36"And now I'll tell you something wonderful about your cousin Elisabeth. Even she has become pregnant and is going to have a son in her old age. People say that she can't have any children, but her child will be born in three months. **37**You see, 'There is nothing that God cannot do'."[†]

38And Mary said, "Just think! I'm the Lord's slave! I pray that everything happens to me just as you have said." And then the angel left her.

Mary Goes to See Elisabeth

6 B.C.

39Then Mary packed her things and went to a town in the hill-country of Judah,* **40**where she went to Zechariah's house and said 'hello' to Elisabeth. **41**And as soon as Elisabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby inside of her jumped, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42**She gave a loud shout and said to Mary, "God has made you the greatest of all women, and given you the greatest child ever born! **43**But why should this happen to me, that my Lord's mother should come to visit me? **44**You see, as soon as I heard your greeting, something strange happened. The baby inside of me jumped for joy. **45**And how happy the woman is who believes that the things the Lord has told her will come true."

Mary's Song of Praise

46Then Mary said,

" I keep on telling myself,
"How wonderful the Lord is!"!

47 And 'when I think of God, my Savior,'
my heart 'is filled with joy,'[†]

48 because 'He has looked down in mercy
on His slave in her lowly position.'[†]

Just think! From now on people of all ages
will speak of how happy I am,

49 because the Almighty has done great things for me.
And He is Holy;

50 and from age to age His mercy and kindness

will keep on reaching out to those who fear Him.

- 51** He does powerful things with His arm.
He destroys the proud
by the thoughts of their own hearts.
- 52** He throws mighty rulers down from their thrones,
and gives the lowly ones a high position.*
- 53** He fills the hungry with good things,
and sends the rich away with empty hands,
- 54a** He helps His servant Israel,
55a as He promised our forefathers,
54b to remember and be merciful
55b to Abraham and his family forever."*

56 And Mary stayed with Elisabeth about three months,
and then she went back home.

The Birth of John the Baptist

6 B.C.

57 So the time came for Elisabeth to have her baby,
and she gave birth to a son. **58** And when her neighbors
and relatives heard how wonderfully kind and merciful
the Lord had been to her, they were as happy as she
was.

59 Then on the eighth day they came to circumcise*
the child. They were going to call him Zechariah after
his father, **60** when his mother spoke up and said, "No,
he must be called John."

61 And they replied, "There's nobody in your family
who has that name." **62** So they asked his father, using
sign language, what name he wanted to give the child.

63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His
name is John." And they were all astonished.

64 But as soon as he wrote the words, Zechariah's
mouth was opened and his tongue was untied, and he
began to talk, singing praises to God.

65 When Zechariah's neighbors saw this, they were
all filled with fear; and all over the hill-country of
Judea people were talking about all these things.
66 Everyone who heard about what had happened kept
on thinking about it. "What do you suppose this child

will turn out to be?" they said, for the Lord's power was plainly at work in his life.

Zechariah's Song of Praise

67 Then Zechariah, the child's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke as a prophet.*

68 " 'Praise the Lord, Israel's God',"⁺ he said,
"because He has looked down upon His
people in mercy,
and has set them free.

69 He has raised up His saving power
in the family of His servant David,

70 just as He said He would,
when He spoke through the mouths of
His holy prophets⁺
from the beginning of time.

71 He said He would save us from our enemies,
and from the power of all those who hate us.

72 He told our forefathers that He would be kind
and merciful to them,
and that He would remember His
holy agreement,*

73 by the oath* which He swore to our father
Abraham.*

74 In this agreement He promised that
after we had been rescued from the power
of our enemies,
He would allow us to serve Him in His presence
without fear,

75 by living holy lives and doing what God says
is right as long as we live.

76 And you, my child, will be called
a prophet of the one true God,
for you will go out 'ahead of the Lord
to get the roads ready which He will use'.⁺

77 You will tell God's people what they must know
about their salvation,
that their sins are taken away,
because our God's heart is full of mercy
and pity.

And because of this, the rising sun
 will shine forth upon us out of heaven,
 79 'to give light to those who are sitting in the
 darkness
 and in the shadow of death'.⁺
 and to guide our steps onto the road of peace."

80 And the child grew and became a man of great
 spiritual strength. Then he lived in the desert until
 the time came to show the people of Israel who he was.

The Birth of Jesus

6/5 B.C.

2 About the time John was born the Roman Emperor
 Augustus* sent out an order that they must take
 a census of the whole Roman Empire. 2 This was the
 first census, and it was taken while Quirinius was the
 Governor of Syria. 3 So everyone went to his own home
 town to have his name listed on the records.

4 Joseph was a member of David's tribe and family.
 So he went up from the city of Nazareth, in the district
 of Galilee,* to David's city, which is called Bethlehem,
 in the district of Judea,* 5 to have his name listed
 on the records there. And Mary, his promised wife
 who was going to have a baby, went along with him.
 6 And while they were there in Bethlehem the time
 came for Mary to have her baby, 7 and she had a son,
 her first child. She wrapped him in soft cloths, and
 made a bed for him in a feed-box for the sheep, because
 the second floor guest room was full.*

God Gives the Good News to Some Shepherds

8 There were also some shepherds out in the fields
 around the village, standing guard over their flock
 during the night. 9 And suddenly one of the Lord's
 angels was standing beside them, and the Lord's shining
 heavenly brightness was flashing all around them,
 and they were terribly afraid. 10 "You mustn't be afraid,"
 said the angel. "Listen carefully to what I'm going
 to tell you, because I'm bringing you good news about
 something which will bring great joy to all the people

of Israel. **11**Your Savior was born today in the city of David - the Messiah,* the Lord! **12**And this is how you will know Him. You will find a baby wrapped in soft cloths, lying in a feed-box for the sheep."

13Then all of a sudden there was a great army of angels standing beside the first angel, singing praises to God.

14 "Glory and honor to God in heaven," they said, "and on earth peace for all people, because of God's good will". *

15When the angels had left them and gone back to heaven, the shepherds began to talk among themselves. "Come on," they said, "let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, and which the Lord has told us about." **16**So they went as fast as they could, and hunted around until they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feed-box.

17When they saw the baby, they told Mary and Joseph what the angel had told them about this child. **18**And all the people who heard their story were astonished at the things the shepherds told them. **19**Mary especially remembered everything they said, and kept on thinking about these things.

20Then the shepherds went back to their flock, praising God for all the things they had heard and seen. It was all just as the angel had said.

Jesus is Circumcised and Given to the Lord

21And on the eighth day, when the baby had to be circumcised,* they gave Him the name 'Jesus', which the angel had given Him before His mother became pregnant.

22And when the period of time had passed when Mary was "unclean"* according to Moses' Law, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to give Him to the Lord, **23**as it says in the Lord's Law, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be given to the Lord!"⁺ **24**They also

went to offer a sacrifice, as the Lord's Law says — "A pair of doves, or two young pigeons".[†]

25 And now listen to this! There was a man by the name of Simeon living in Jerusalem. He was a God-fearing man who was perfectly holy in God's sight, and he was waiting for the One who would bring comfort and courage to Israel. He was also filled with the Holy Spirit. **26** In fact, the Holy Spirit had told him that he wouldn't die until he had seen the Lord's promised Savior.

27 And on that same day that Mary and Joseph went to the Temple-yard* to do the things the Law required them to do for their child, Simeon also came to the Temple-yard, because the Spirit had told him to go there. **28** And as soon as they came in, Simeon took the child in his arms and gave thanks to God.

29 "Master," he said, "You have kept Your promise. Now You are letting Your slave go free in peace.

30 For with my own eyes I have seen Your Salvation,
31 which You have prepared and set out for all the nations of the world to see.

32 I have seen that Light which is to be shown to the people of the other nations,* and will be the glory of Your people Israel."

33 And Jesus' father and mother continued to be astonished at the things Simeon was saying about Him.

34 Then after Simeon had asked God to bless Jesus' parents, he said to Mary, "Listen carefully! This child will cause many people in the nation of Israel to stumble and fall. He will also raise up many of them to a new Life. He will be a sign from God, but many people will say nasty things about Him. **35** And in this way the inner thoughts in the hearts of many people will be uncovered. And as for you, a sword will be plunged into your heart."

36 There was also a prophet* by the name of Hannah in the Temple-yard that day. She was the daughter of Phanuel, and belonged to the tribe of Asher, and

she was very old. She had been married for seven years, ³⁷and then she had lived as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the Temple-grounds. Day and night she worshiped God, going without food* and praying. ³⁸She came up while Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph. And then she began to praise God and talk about the child to all those who were waiting for the time when Jerusalem would be set free.

³⁹And when Mary and Joseph had finished doing all the things that the Lord's Law required, they went back to Nazareth, the city in Galilee where they had been living. ⁴⁰And the child kept on growing. His body grew strong, and His mind became filled with wisdom, and in every way God showed how much He loved Him.

Jesus Goes to the Temple at Age Twelve

8

⁴¹Jesus' parents always went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover festival.* ⁴²And when Jesus was twelve years old* they all went up to Jerusalem, since everyone was supposed to go to the Passover. ⁴³And after they had stayed the whole eight days, the parents started home. The boy Jesus, however, stayed behind in Jerusalem, but His parents didn't know this. ⁴⁴They thought he was with some of the others in their group, and so they travelled for a whole day. Then they began to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵But when they couldn't find him, they started back to Jerusalem, looking everywhere for Him. ⁴⁶And it wasn't until the third day that they found Him in the Temple-yard.* He was sitting in a group of rabbis,* listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And everyone who heard Him was amazed at how much He knew and the answers He was giving. ⁴⁸When His parents saw Him there, they didn't know what to think. It was His mother who spoke to Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? You must know that your father and I have been worried sick. We've been looking all over for you."

49 Jesus answered, "What do you mean, that you were looking all over for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?" **50** But they didn't understand what He was talking about.

51 Then Jesus left Jerusalem with them and went back to Nazareth, and He kept on doing whatever they told Him. His mother however remembered all these things that He had said, and kept on thinking about them. **52** So Jesus "kept on growing," both in mind and body. And "God loved Him more and more, and so did the people who knew Him".⁺

John the Baptist Begins His Work Spring, 26

3 **1a** In the fifteenth year of the rule of the Emperor Tiberius,* **2b** God spoke to Zechariah's son John, while he was in the desert. **1b** At this time Pontius Pilate* was the Governor of Judea, Herod* was the ruler of Galilee, his brother Philip was the ruler of the district of Iturea and Trachonitis, Lysanius was the ruler of Abilene, **2a** and Annas and Caiaphas were the Head Priests.* And when God spoke to John **3** he went all up and down the Jordan river valley spreading the news that the people must change their minds and their way of living and be baptized, so that God would take away their sins. **4** And this was exactly what God said would happen in the book of Isaiah the prophet -

"Someone's voice is calling out in the desert,
'Get the Lord's highway ready!

Make His roads straight!

5 Fill up every valley,
and cut down every mountain and hill!

The curves must be straightened out,
and the rough roads must become paved
highways!

6 Then every person will see God's Salvation'.⁺

7 And when the crowds of people came out to be baptized, John said to them, "You're a nest of rattlesnakes! Who warned you that you should try to escape from God's holy anger which is coming? **8** You must