LUKE 1

Nothing Will Be Impossible with God

a careful historian, a silenced priest, a willing virgin, and two songs that break four hundred years of silence

> *“For nothing will be impossible with God.”*
> LUKE 1:37

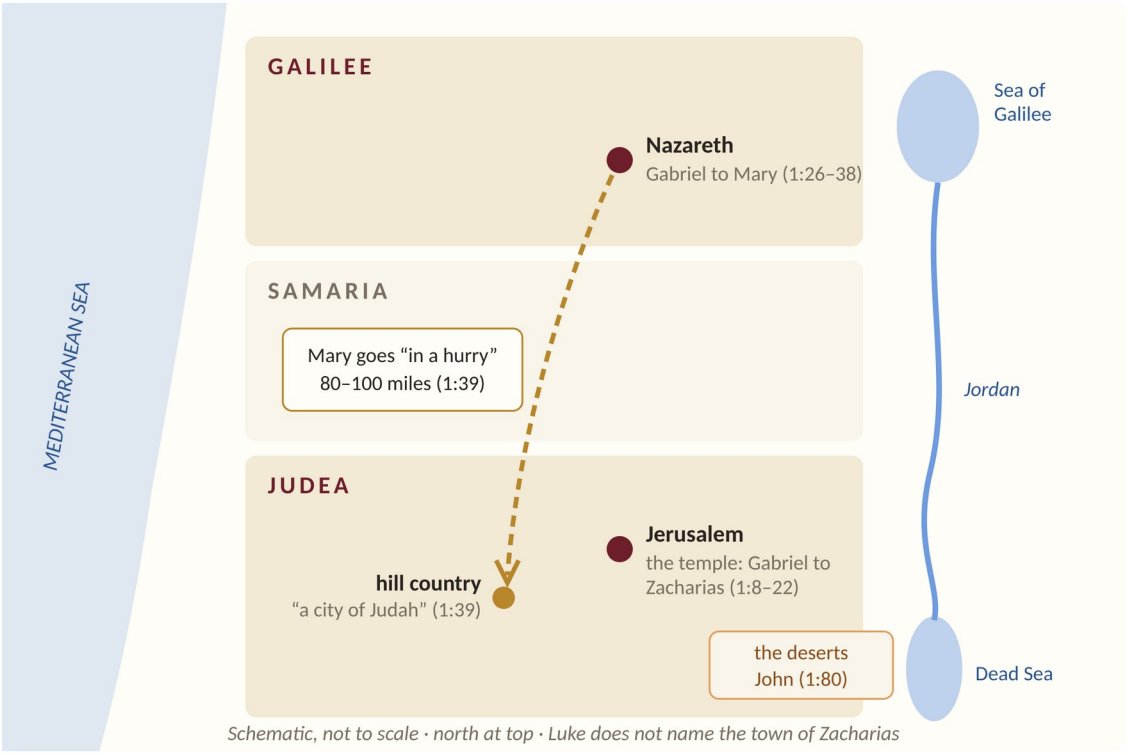
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where we are in Luke

1. Luke is the only Gospel writer who tells us how he worked.

2. The story opens “in the days of Herod, king of Judea” (v. 5) — Herod the Great, whom Guzik describes as “known for his spectacular building programs, but even more so for his paranoid cruelty.”

3. The scenes move between two places.



The Exact Truth

A physician-historian checks his sources for a man named Theophilus

LUKE 1:4

so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

DAVID GUZIK

Diligent research; the most comprehensive gospel; Theophilus an official.

R.C. SPROUL

Not an eyewitness but a historian who checks the sources.

MATTHEW HENRY

Religion teaches good manners; others' work should quicken ours.

αὐτόπται

AUTOPTAI · "EYEWITNESSES"

From autos (self) and the root of optanomai (to see): people who saw for themselves.

Your Petition Has Been Heard

A priest at the altar of incense, an angel, and the silence of unbelief

LUKE 1:17

"It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

DAVID GUZIK

Incense is a picture of prayer; unbelief kept him from enjoying the promise.

R.C. SPROUL

God remembers every promise; Abraham got mercy, Zacharias got justice.

MATTHEW HENRY

Incense without prayer is a shell without the kernel.

δέησις

DEĒSIS · "PETITION"

A specific request born of need, from deomai, to ask or beg.

Two announcements

ONE ANGEL, TWO ANNOUNCEMENTS · LUKE 1:5–38

	GABRIEL TO ZACHARIAS	GABRIEL TO MARY
WHO	an old priest, “advanced in years” (v18)	a virgin, engaged to Joseph (v27)
WHERE	the temple, by the altar of incense (v11)	a city in Galilee called Nazareth (v26)
THE NEWS	a son, John, the forerunner (vv13–17)	a Son, Jesus, Son of the Most High (vv31–33)
THE QUESTION	“How will I know this for certain?” (v18)	“How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (v34)
THE HEART	“you did not believe my words” (v20)	“blessed is she who believed” (v45)
THE OUTCOME	silent until the day it happens (v20)	“may it be done to me according to your word”

Guzik: “his question was asked in skeptical unbelief, and her question was asked in wonder-filled faith.”

Read across each row: the same angel, two questions that sound alike, and two very different hearts behind them.

Nothing Will Be Impossible

Gabriel in Nazareth, the Son of the Most High, and Mary's yes

LUKE 1:28

And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

DAVID GUZIK

Her question was wonder-filled faith; "let it be" fits every promise.

R.C. SPROUL

No virgin had ever conceived; Mary is a sinner saved by grace.

MATTHEW HENRY

A divine power undertakes it; nothing is to be despaired of.

κεχαριτωμένη
KECHARITŌMENĒ · "FAVORED ONE"

A perfect passive participle of charitoō, "to grace, to favor": one who has been, and remains, graced.

My Soul Exalts the Lord

Two mothers, a leaping baby, and Mary's song of the great reversal

LUKE 1:41

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

DAVID GUZIK

John responded to the Spirit; Mary knew God's Word; only sinners need a Savior.

R.C. SPROUL

The unborn child is a person; "He looked at me. He noticed me."

C.H. SPURGEON

Sing now — your song will spoil if you wait; you can all praise God.

MATTHEW HENRY

Praising work must be soul work; full of self, empty of Christ.

ἐσκίρτησεν
ESKIRTĒSEN · "LEAPED"

From skirtaō, to leap or skip for joy.

The great reversal

THE GREAT REVERSAL IN MARY'S SONG · LUKE 1:48–53

BROUGHT DOWN	LIFTED UP
"those who were proud" — scattered (v51)	"His bondslave" — He "had regard" (v48)
"rulers" — brought down from thrones (v52)	"those who were humble" — exalted (v52)
"the rich" — sent away empty-handed (v53)	"the hungry" — filled with good things (v53)

THE REASON: "HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION …" (v50)

Henry: "they come full of self, and are sent away empty of Christ"

Mary's song turns the world upside down — the proud, the powerful and the full go down; the humble and the hungry are lifted up.

The Sunrise from on High

“His name is John,” a loosed tongue, and Zacharias’ song of visitation

LUKE 1:63

And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished.

DAVID GUZIK

A second chance at faith; 400 silent years end; the desert trains prophets.

R.C. SPROUL

God visits in mercy or judgment; no one is neutral about Christ.

C.H. SPURGEON

The mercy of God’s heart; the dawn is the guarantee of the noon.

MATTHEW HENRY

Unbelief closed his mouth; believing opened it.

ἐπεσκέψατο

EPESKEPSATO · “HAS VISITED”

From episkeptomai, to look upon, to come and see about someone — to visit with care.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Faith stands on history.

Sproul: “The New Testament is committed to the historical foundation of the truth of our faith.”

2

Godly people still suffer.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were “righteous in the sight of God” and still barren (vv6–7).

3

Old prayers are not forgotten prayers.

Henry: “Prayers made when we were young and coming into the world may be answered when we are old and going out of the world.”

4

Unbelief is a moral problem.

Sproul: “Zacharias’ problem wasn’t an intellectual problem; it was a moral one.”

More to carry

5

Same question, different heart.

“How will I know?” (v18) and “How can this be?”

6

Grace received, not grace to give.

Kecharitōmenē (v28) is passive — Mary was graced.

7

The right answer to every promise.

“May it be done to me according to your word” (v38).

8

The unborn are persons.

Luke calls John in the womb a brephos, a baby (v41), the word he uses for Jesus in the manger (2:12).

Talk it through

1. Luke wrote so Theophilus could know “the exact truth” about what he had been taught. What do I believe about Jesus only because someone told me, and what have I checked for myself?

2. Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous and still carried a deep disappointment for years. What long-standing prayer have I stopped praying — and why?

3. When God’s promise came, Zacharias “looked at the circumstances first, and what God can do last” (Guzik). Where am I doing the same right now?

4. Mary called herself the Lord’s bondslave and said, “may it be done to me according to your word,” knowing what it might cost her reputation. What is God’s word asking me to say yes to that will cost me something?

5. Mary’s song says God scatters the proud and fills the hungry. Am I coming to God full of myself or hungry for Him?

CLOSING

Luke 1 begins with a careful historian and ends with a child in the wilderness, and in between God keeps every promise He has made. He hears an old couple's prayer, overshadows a willing virgin, and opens a silenced mouth in praise. Nothing will be impossible with God — so take Him at His word, and let the Sunrise from on high guide your feet into the way of peace.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Luke study page.