

A Summary of the Gospel of Luke, Chapter One.

Rick Peterson

It has been said that repetition is the best teacher known to mankind. Therefore, I have prepared this brief summary-outline for you to keep in your Bibles, or wherever else it may be kept handy for you. My hope for you is that you will meditate on these things daily, and by doing so, be progressively transformed by the renewing of your mind.

- 1) Luke begins his Gospel with a dedication to “Theophilus,” which translated, means, “Lover of God.” This Gospel is dedicated to one man, but intended for the edification and instruction of all believers since all Christians are lovers of God. Luke’s central concern is that you have a thorough account of not just the historic facts, but also the Spirit-revealed truth, and thereby enjoy certainty about your place in the redemptive narrative.
- 2) Zacharias and Elizabeth are both actual, historic people, and also representative of the low spiritual state of Israel in the early hours of the first century. There had been no new word from God for 400 years. Religion had become routine and lifeless. The central truth here is it is quite possible to be meticulous in compliance to the commands and ordinances of the law, as were Zacharias and Elizabeth, and yet be spiritually barren due to unbelief. To give voice to unbelief is to increase its hold, so Zacharias is struck mute until the time of John’s birth.
- 3) The promise to Zacharias and Elizabeth of a child as announced by Gabriel, came about not as a reward for their scrupulous observances of the law, but because God is gracious, thus the child’s name would be “John,” which translated means, “God is gracious.” When Elizabeth conceived, she was also freed from the toxic religious shame of being barren. Superstition and toxic shame are always present wherever the word of God is not heard.
- 4) Gabriel’s announcement to barren Elizabeth, and a young virgin named Mary, further underscores the gracious dealings of God with the lowly and powerless. We can see a theme building here. It is the poor, the lowly, the powerless, and the humble to whom God reveals Himself as a perfect, complete Savior. Salvation is not defined as God assisting the good in order to become better; rather, salvation is defined as God doing for us what we could never do for ourselves. God saves and transforms the powerless sinner, and He does so completely (Phil. 1:6; Hebrews 7:25; I Peter 1:3-9).

- 5) The Gospel of Luke emphasizes the central role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the promises of God to Abraham and David to fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. Indeed, the redemptive life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth Himself was reliant upon the anointing of the “Spirit of the LORD” (Luke 4:18-19). How much more then are we reliant upon the power and the anointing of the Spirit to fulfill our mission to continue the work of the incarnation?
- 6) The song of Mary and the prophecy of Zacharias stand as testimonies to the character and ways of our Savior-God. The central point being: God keeps His promises.
- 7) The fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David is the creation of a redeemed, new covenant people of God (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6; I Peter 2:9-10); a people granted deliverance from their enemies in order to live without fear in holiness and righteousness, in His presence, all the days of their lives. The assurance of this outcome is as secure as God’s oath, which He swore by Himself because He could swear by no one greater; an oath mediated by the high priestly ministry of Jesus (Hebrews 6:13-20). And you, beloved of God, have been given the indwelling Holy Spirit as your assurance and seal of your place in this outcome, even today (Ephesians 1:13-14).

No mere words can fully express the glories of the new covenant promises fulfilled in the Person and work of our blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Yet, I do hope you are beginning to grasp the enormity of this great reality, and the certainty of your place in this redemptive story. We will continue this study with chapter two in Luke’s Gospel, on Sunday, September 30.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by the name 'Peterson' in a cursive script.