



# LUKE



**ERWIN KURTH**

*LESSONS 1-11*

**KERRY DAVID REESE**

*LESSONS 12-28*

**LIVING WAY**  
BIBLE STUDY

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# WELCOME TO LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY (LWBS)

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Our purpose is to help equip believers to live joyfully in God's redeeming love and to share with others God's plan of salvation.

It is our prayer that the Holy Spirit will use this study to help you grow in your knowledge and appreciation of our God and His Word. *"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18).

## STUDY STRUCTURE

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### LIVING WAY BIBLE STUDY SUGGESTS THIS FOUR-STEP METHOD

- 1. PERSONAL** – The student prays for guidance from the Holy Spirit and answers the Personal Application (P.A.) questions at home using only the Bible (no commentaries).
- 2. SMALL GROUPS** – The class meets for an opening and divides into small groups of 8–10 people. The small group leader guides the group through the P.A. questions, encouraging each to share their answers and discuss further as time allows.
- 3. THE MESSAGE** – The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** – The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

With this four-step method the student has the opportunity to study the particular section of Scripture covered by the lesson from four different approaches. This emphasizes the Bible text and gives the student an understanding and ownership for each section studied.

*Each lesson should be stapled together according to the number of the lesson in the right-hand corner of the page.* The P.A. questions for the next week should be attached after the author's narrative for the current week, as they will be the home study for the next class session.

The first meeting of the class is an introduction to the study. Since the members of the small groups have no P.A. questions to discuss at the first meeting, they may use the time to get acquainted or to tell what they hope to receive by studying this course. At the first meeting, the lecturer presents background information about the course, using the Introduction lesson as a guide.

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*Esther*

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*Ecclesiastes*

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Our beloved author, Dr. Kurth, was called home to be with the Lord on October 22, 1989 at the age of 91 years.

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Listed in WHO'S WHO IN RELIGION.

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*For the Son of Man came to seek  
and to save the lost.*

THE HEART-VERSE OF LUKE'S GOSPEL IS 19:10



#### **WHO WAS LUKE?**

Luke is the inspired writer of two companion volumes — The Gospel According to Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. In the first book he stated what “Jesus began to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). In the second, he presented what Jesus continued to do through His Spirit-filled church.

Both books are dedicated to an illustrious personage by the name of Theophilus, which means “one who loves God.” He was either a Roman ruler or a wealthy, influential aristocrat. He may have been the patron of Luke, commissioning him to sift through the various reports which were in circulation in that day and to come up with a complete and authenticated account of the life and mission of Jesus as Savior. Luke was ready to comply and seek out the facts. Moreover, he could draw on the profound knowledge of his mentor, Paul the Apostle, with whom he traveled for some years. Above all, there was the Holy Spirit to guide him into all truth.

Luke was Greek, probably from Antioch or Philippi, and probably converted under Paul's ministry. He is named as one of Paul's fellow workers in Philemon 24. Luke betrays an intimate knowledge of Greek culture, and his excellent literary style sometimes borders on the classical.

If Luke were a Jew, he'd be listed among those who were of the circumcision (Colossians 4:10-11). Instead he is mentioned separately as “Luke the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). We are not surprised, therefore, that he should list quite a number of healing miracles (4:38; 5:12; 6:6; 7:2; 8:50-56; 10:30-37) and describe these from a doctor's point of view.

## LUKE, THE MISSIONARY AND PAUL'S COMPANION

Luke accompanied Paul on his second missionary journey from Troas (at the western end of Asia Minor which today is Turkey) to Philippi in Macedonia (Acts 16:10–17). Luke includes himself six times in this passage he refers to the missionizing group as “we” and three times as “us.”

The “we passages” further indicate that Luke accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey from Philippi to Jerusalem. He was also with Paul as they traveled from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27:8; 28:16). During Paul's second imprisonment in Rome, the only one to stand by him was Luke: “Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:11a). Twice Luke is mentioned as Paul sends greetings: “Luke the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) and, included with others, “Luke, my fellow workers” (Philemon 23–24).

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF LUKE'S GOSPEL

1. Luke's Gospel has a special heart for Gentiles. Whereas Matthew had Jewish readers principally in mind when he wrote his Good News and declared, in effect, “Behold your Messiah,” Luke had in mind Gentiles as well. He portrayed Jesus as the Savior of the world. The grace of God in Christ Jesus is universal: “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (2:32); “and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (3:6); “everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God” (12:8); “and

that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (24:47).

The heart-verse of Luke's Gospel is 19:10: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” and that includes each one of us. Note: not all people will receive salvation, but all have been offered it!

Matthew traces the family tree of Jesus back to Abraham, father of the Jewish race (Matthew 1:1–17). Luke, however, traces the ancestry of the Christ back to Adam, the common progenitor of the human race, for Luke beams his Gospel to all mankind (3:23–38).

2. Another distinguishing feature of Luke's Gospel is the set of canticles he records:
  - The Magnificat of Mary (1:46–55);
  - The Benedictus of Zechariah (1:68–79);
  - The Gloria in Excelsis of the Angels (2:13–14); and
  - The Nunc Dimittis of Simeon (2:29–32).

The liturgical churches have incorporated these canticles into their orders of Service: Holy Communion, Matins, and Vespers.

3. As is true of each Gospel, Luke has unique material. For example, 16 of the 23 parables recorded by Luke are found only in his evangel, among them such well-known illustrative stories as The Good Samaritan, The Prodigal or Lost

Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus. Of the 20 miracles recorded by Luke, four are distinctive to his Gospel. All are described from the point of view of a doctor.

4. The subject of prayer is given more frequent treatment than the other Gospels:
  - Jesus prays while being baptized (only Luke records this in 3:21);
  - Christ's secret prayer in the wilderness (5:16);
  - His all-night prayer on a mountain (6:12);
  - Solitary prayer with His disciples (9:18);
  - Teaching His disciples to pray the "Our Father" (11:1–4);
  - Persistent prayer (11:5–8);
  - Promise of prayers being answered (11:9–13);
  - Power of importunate prayer (18:1–8);
  - Self-effacing prayer (18:9–14);
  - Jesus' prayer for Peter (22:31–34);
  - Christ's prayer in Gethsemane (22:39–46); and
  - Jesus' intercessory and commitment prayers on the cross (23:34–46)
5. Women are featured prominently in this Gospel. One recalls Mary of Magdalene, out of whom He drove seven demons; Joanna, wife of King Herod's steward; Susanna, and many others that ministered unto Jesus out of their income (8:2–3). There was the hospitality of Mary and Martha and the service of the women at His death and after His resurrection. There are the prophetic words He spoke to women recorded nowhere except in Luke (23:28–31). As you pursue the study of Luke's Gospel, you will surely notice further references to women.
6. Luke mentions the activities of the Holy Spirit before Pentecost in connection with Zechariah and Elizabeth and their yet-to-be-born child (1:13–15), the assurance given to the Virgin Mary (1:35), Elizabeth's filling "with the Holy Spirit" (1:39–45), Zechariah likewise (1:67), and the revelation of the Holy Spirit to Simeon (2:25–26).

In his Small Catechism (1529) Martin Luther, made plain the faith-begetting and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Note the opening words of his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed:

*"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith . . .*

*The narrative of Christ's life and mission is more complete  
in Luke than in any of the other three Gospels.*



Rejection or the quenching of the Holy Spirit is the one unpardonable sin, for thereby we block the one and only channel through which there is transmitted to us saving faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord.

7. Luke had the privilege of associating with Paul in the work of propagating the Gospel of reconciliation, even as Mark had a similar experience with Peter.

Paul's emphasis on justification (being made right with God) rubbed off on his co-worker and fellow-missionary, Luke (see the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in 18:9–14). Religions of the world tell how we are to earn salvation through our own good works. The Christian religion alone tells what God in Christ has done for our salvation (2 Corinthians 5:19; Acts 13:38–39).

8. In view of the many phobias or fears troubling mortals, it is refreshing and comforting to read Luke's compilation of "Fear nots." Some examples are the "Fear nots" spoken by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah (1:13), the angel to Mary (1:30), the herald angels to the shepherds on Bethlehem's fields (2:10), Jesus to Simon (5:10), Jesus to the ruler, Jairus (8:50), and Jesus to the little flock (12:32).
9. The narrative of Christ's life and mission is more complete in Luke than in any of the other three Gospels. "About half of the material in this book is not in the others" (Thompson). Luke's writing covers more pages than even that of the Apostle Paul.

Luke alone writes of Zechariah and Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist (1:5–24, 39–45, 57–80), the annunciation to the Virgin Mary (1:26–38), the detailed account of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (2:1–7), the experiences of the shepherds (2:8–20), the presentation in the temple (2:22–24), and the reactions of Simeon and Anna (2:25–38).

Luke includes the twelve-year-old Jesus, "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (2:41–50), obedience to parental authority and the four-dimensional growth of Jesus during the silent years (2:51–52), the beginning of His public ministry when He "was about thirty years of age" (3:23), and His lineage traced back to Adam (3:23b–38).

10. Though Jesus was interested in the wealthy and the strong, Luke portrays Him as being especially concerned about the least, the lowly, and the lost.

“And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them’” (15:2). He extended the promise of paradise to the dying thief on the cross to His right, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (23:42–43).

The heart-verse of his Gospel, as previously stated, is 19:10, “The Son of Man [a designation Jesus applied to Himself many times in Luke’s Gospel] came to seek and to save the lost.”

11. Luke mentions historical chronology, figures and events accurately. For example:

- “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah” (1:5).
- “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria” (2:1–2).
- “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar [Caesar Augustus was his predecessor, 17 BC – AD 14. Tiberius reigned from AD 14 – 37], Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness” (3:1–2).

What meticulous history!

12. Luke beamed his message to the world at large. If an American author explained where New York City, Chicago, New Orleans, and Los Angeles were located, you’d figure he had foreigners also in mind as his readers. We drew the same conclusion when we found Luke writing, “Zarephath, in the land of Sidon” (4:26), “Capernaum, a city of Galilee” (4:31), “the country of Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee” (8:26), and so forth.

Final Note: An outstanding characteristic of the Gospel According to Luke is that Dr. Luke presents a plenitude of stories with a paucity of words.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

LUKE 1:1-80

*O Lord God, enable me with my mouth to confess and with my heart to believe that Jesus Christ is my Savior and Lord. Help me willingly to accept the present, and joyously to face the future knowing I will be released out of this earth-bound tabernacle to the boundless plains of heaven's peace, by grace through faith in Jesus, my personal Redeemer. Amen.*

Luke 1:1-25

1. To whom was The Gospel of Luke as well as The Acts of the Apostles dedicated? (Acts 1:1) What does this name mean?

2. Noting Luke's salutations to other dignitaries, what leads you to believe that the recipient of the two documents was a VIP? (Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25)

3. Who were the parents of the forerunner of Christ? What was the father's vocation?

4. Zechariah and Elizabeth's childlessness remind us that circumstances are not always "rosy" for godly people. Is there some sadness that is your constant companion?

5. Why did the father-to-be doubt the fulfillment of the angel's prophecy?

6. What punitive sign did Gabriel impose upon the doubter?

7. Describe a time when you, like Zechariah, doubted the promises of God.

8. Why was Elizabeth ecstatically happy that she would be with child?

Luke 1:26-45

9. What astonishing prophecy had Isaiah made eight hundred years before the archangel Gabriel appeared to a virgin in the town of Nazareth? (Isaiah 7:14)

10. How did the angelic visitor greet the Virgin Mary?

11. Give Mary's reaction and the angel's response. How did Mary's reaction to the angel differ from Zechariah's?

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12. If an angel were to reveal God's plans for my future, I would probably (circle one/two):

- a. Ask a lot of questions.
- b. Rejoice that God could use me.
- c. Worry whether I could do it.
- d. Try to negotiate some changes.
- e. Object and say, "I'd rather not know!"

12. Give reasons why Mary might be particularly anxious to visit with her relative, Elizabeth.

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13. If you had some wondrous news to share, whom would you visit first?

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14. What was Joseph's initial reaction to the news about Mary and how was he finally convinced that Mary was chosen to be the handmaid of the Lord? (Matthew 1:18-21)

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Luke 1:46-56

15. Have you ever been moved to celebrate some happy occasion with a song or poem? Share with your group.

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16. Read Mary's song and make a listing of how God a) elevates lowly people and b) brings down lofty people. How does this double action illustrate what God is "up to" in our lives?

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Luke 1:57-80

17. We read in v. 66: "The hand of the Lord was with [John]." How do you suppose people could see this was true? Have you known any children about whom you thought: "God is going to do something special with this one"?

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18. Here is another song! This one, called the "Benedictus," is part of "Morning Prayer" and "Matins" in the *LSB*. The song divides naturally into two parts. Read and see if you can find the "break point." What is Part One about? What is Part Two about?

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# LUKE

ERWIN KURTH — LESSONS 1-11

LUKE 1:1-80

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*The boy grew up and became strong in spirit and his love for God.*



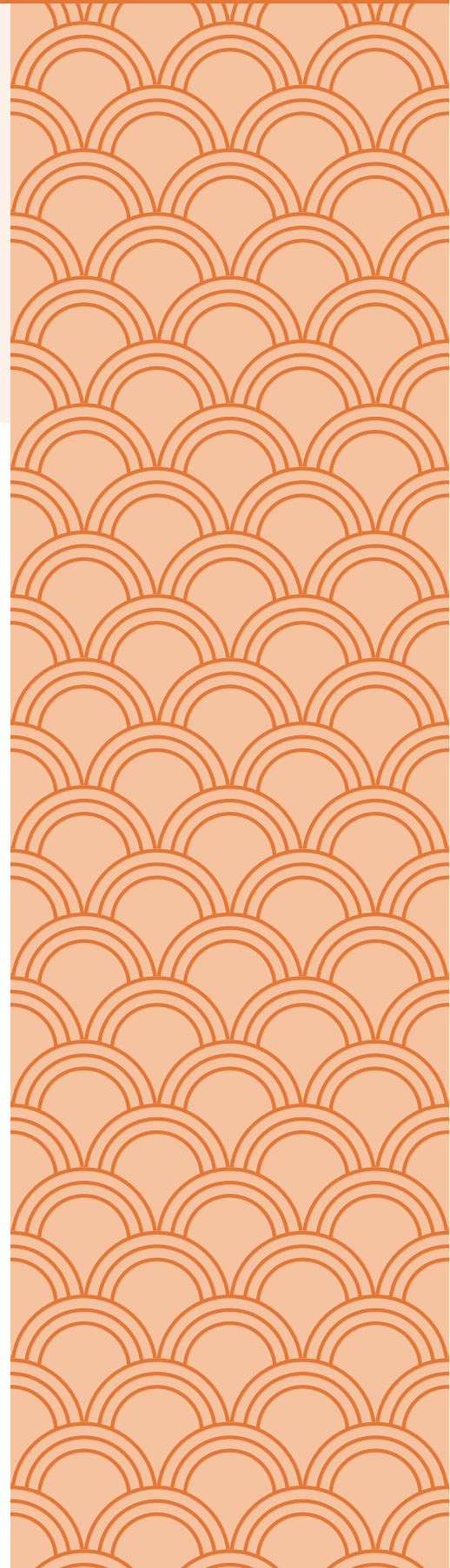
## DEDICATION TO THEOPHILUS

*LUKE 1:1-4*

Luke, the only Gentile writer in the Bible, a medical doctor by profession (Colossians 4:14), was converted probably under Paul’s ministry. He accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys and remained close to Paul to the end (2 Timothy 4:11a).

Luke dedicated two writings, the Gospel and the Acts, to a VIP named Theophilus, either a government official or a prominent, influential aristocrat. Luke addressed him respectfully as “most excellent Theophilus” (1:3) in the same manner as he addressed “his excellency the governor Felix” (Acts 23:26) and his successor “most excellent Festus” (Acts 26:25). Luke set himself the task of interviewing persons who were eyewitnesses of Christ’s ministry and proclaimers of the Word, examining the accounts being circulated concerning Jesus’ words and works, and arranging these in an orderly fashion so that Theophilus might have a complete and reliable summary in addition to what he had been taught previously (1:1–4).

Inasmuch as Theophilus means “one who loves God,” perhaps that was not his real name and Luke was using that cognomen to withhold the recipient’s personal identity. Be that as it may, the purpose of writing the story of Jesus and His love was not only to enrich the spiritual knowledge of Theophilus, but also to disseminate throughout the world the Good News of Jesus Christ as Savior.



### GABRIEL, ZECHARIAH, ELIZABETH, AND JOHN

*LUKE 1:5-25*

Zechariah the priest was a descendant of the first high priest of Israel, Aaron. Elizabeth was of the same lineage. Throughout their long lives they practiced what they believed. Their one great disappointment was that they had no child.

Zechariah was assigned the coveted task of burning incense on the golden altar in the Holy Place of the Temple. As he made ready to make his exit (for it was not allowed, not even for the high priest, to linger long in the Holy Place), an angel of the Lord stood on the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth . . . and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. . . And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” (1:13–17). Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God.” Then Gabriel told him in effect, “I’ll give you a sign which will daily remind you that you should have believed my words. For nine months, you shall not be able to speak. When the child is born, call him John (God is gracious).”

Meanwhile, the people waited. They had completed their prayers and now expected Zechariah to appear and pronounce the Aaronic benediction (Numbers 6:24–26). Finally Zechariah appeared, but he could not speak. Maybe he pointed to his mouth, then shook his head to let them know he could not pronounce

the blessing. He remained speechless until the promise of Gabriel was fulfilled and Elizabeth bore him a son.

### THE ANNUNCIATION BY GABRIEL TO THE VIRGIN MARY

*LUKE 1:26-38*

Six months after Gabriel appeared to Zechariah, the scene shifted to a home in Nazareth, to a virgin pledged to marry a local carpenter by the name of Joseph. Both were of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel came to her saying: “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you” (1:28).

When Gabriel announced that Mary would conceive and bring forth a son, to be called Jesus (Matthew 1:21), the Son of the Highest, Mary inquired, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” Gabriel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy — the Son of God” (1:26–35). So we confess in the Apostles’ Creed: “conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.”

The Virgin Birth! Who can understand it? Well, who expects to, when even the birth of a child is a mystery so deep as to move the simple of heart to wonder in unabashed reverence. The Son of God, “by whom all things were made,” subsumed Himself under biological processes, was “born of woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). The primal mystery of Christianity is that Jesus is the incarnation of God in history. “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity!”

Note the activities of the Holy Spirit. This, mind you, was before Pentecost. The Holy Spirit acted in the case of John (1:15), Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41), Zechariah (1:67), and Simeon (2:25–26).

## MARY VISITS HER KINSWOMAN ELIZABETH

*LUKE 1:39-45*

Mary had to tell her experience to someone that would accept it as true. Not to her mother, nor to Joseph, her betrothed (Matthew 1:18-19), but to Elizabeth, who would believe it because she herself had experienced the miraculous and knew from her own situation that “with God nothing is impossible” (1:7, 24-25). Mary must have been greatly comforted and cheered when Elizabeth assured her, “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” No one but Elizabeth could have given Mary such a stabilizing certainty of her place in the plan of God’s salvation.

Mary must have recalled and transmitted to her relative the angelic annunciation “The Holy Spirit will come upon you. . .” (1:35), and her response to Gabriel, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (1:38). Elizabeth had made Mary’s assurance doubly sure. Mary burst forth into a hymn of praise.

## MARY’S CANTICLE: THE MAGNIFICAT

*LUKE 1:46-56*

The canticle is so called because of the opening word in St. Jerome’s Latin translation: “Magnificat anima mea Dominum” (My soul magnifies the Lord).

This hymn of praise is in two strophes.

- a. Mary’s Hymn of Praise. God is glorified for who He is, Lord and Savior. There is joy in knowing Him and being blessed by Him. Mary in particular experienced a singular honor to be chosen for the Word to be made flesh (1:46-48).
- b. God’s Mighty Acts of Salvation. The Lord can do great things, for her and for all who reverence His name, for He is mighty, holy, and merciful. Generation after generation can expect Him to deal graciously with them if they acknowledge His supremacy, seek His righteousness, and comport themselves humbly before Him (1:49-50). The God of history has made it plain that they who exalt themselves, as if they were gods to lord it over others, shall be put to shame, but those of low station, the oppressed, the poor and hungry, shall come into their own (1:51-52). A pastor serving in a country where religious liberty was tyrannically restrained debated with himself whether he should publicly read this part of Mary’s hymn of praise for fear that spies present might report him to the governing head!

Mary remained with Elizabeth for three months. We do not know whether she left before or after the birth of John. These were three months of calm expectancy, awaiting the arrival of the Way-Preparer for the Messiah.

### THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIZER

*LUKE 1:57–66*

Elizabeth was delivered of a son. According to the covenant God made with Abraham, every man-child should be given a token thereof in the flesh, namely circumcision (Genesis 17:9–14). The giving of a name was also normally observed on the eighth day after birth. Neighbors and cousins suggested Zechariah, but the mother said “No!” Zechariah, speechless during the past nine months, motioned for a piece of parchment. On it he wrote, “His name is John.” The name had already been chosen by the archangel Gabriel: “You shall call his name John.”

Immediately Zechariah’s speech was restored. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the hymn of praise, named after the first word of its opening phrase in Latin, “Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel” (Blessed be the Lord God of Israel). It is used by liturgical churches in The Order of Matins.

### THE BENEDICTUS

The first strophe or stanza proclaims the arrival of the Messianic kingdom (1:68–75), and the second, the part which John the Baptizer would enact in heralding that kingdom (1:76–79).

A lucid paraphrase of the two stanzas is given by Kenneth N. Taylor in *The Living Bible* (1:68–79).

The main thoughts are (note the major words, phrases, and clauses):

- a. Jesus is the mighty Savior (the horn of salvation).
- b. He has come, as prophets of old predicted and as John will eventually proclaim: to save us from sin and for service.
- c. A new era of light and peace is about to dawn.
- d. Benedictus!

### THE DESERT IS JOHN’S HABITAT

*LUKE 1:80*

The boy grew up and became strong in spirit and his love for God. He lived in the desert until he appeared publicly and began his ministry to Israel.

## PERSONAL APPLICATION

LUKE 2:1-20

*Dear Jesus, let me, like Mary, treasure and ponder Your words in my heart and like the shepherds glorify and praise You forever. Amen.*

Luke 2:1-7

1. In which town, according to the prophecy in Micah 5:2, was the Messiah to be born? Where did Mary live? How far apart were these places?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How did the God of history arrange to bring Mary and Joseph to the right place? Besides registering the young men eligible for military service, what other purpose do you suppose was the census intended to serve?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Can you illustrate how events of “secular” history (wars or natural disasters, to cite just two examples) have shaped the course of your own life and faith?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In the eyes of the law, what was the relationship of Mary to Joseph? (See Matthew 1:19-20)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What phrases in the Apostles’ Creed articulate our faith in the incarnation of the Son of God? What’s the stated role of the Holy Spirit?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the meaning of the name Immanuel? (Matthew 1:23b)  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Mary wrapped the newborn Babe in “long, narrow bands of cloth.” What word is used in the ESV/KJV to describe this enveloping cloth?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Ponder the HUMILITY of this place! How does it fit with the way God works and the rest of Jesus’ earthly life?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Man’s religion holds that we are saved by character and good works. What does the Christian religion state?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 3:28  
\_\_\_\_\_Ephesians 2:8-9  
\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:8-20

10. The shepherds abiding in the field outside Bethlehem watched over no ordinary flocks. Their sheep were to be used in the daily sacrifices at the Temple. What message was imparted to the shepherds by the angel of the Lord?

11. The general reputation of shepherds in that culture was low. They were not regarded as reliable witnesses in court! Why do you suppose God would choose *them* to be the first witnesses of the newborn Savior? How might that shape the way you view *yourself* as a witness?

12. The canticle, which the multitude of the heavenly host sang in praise to God, a hymn which is sung to this day by liturgical congregations in The Order of the Holy Communion, is entitled The Gloria in Excelsis. Write out the text of this canticle (verse 14).

13. What phrase in v. 16 reveals the shepherds' excitement at the angels' message and their deep interest in the baby?

14. What were the reactions of:

The people who heard the shepherds' story?

Mary who learned from the shepherds what they had seen and heard?

The shepherds themselves?

15. How much "pondering" do you do with what you hear in church? With what you read in God's Word?