

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE

(God for You in Christ)

Studies in Luke

Background

Review:

The gospel of Luke was written by a Gentile physician / historian around AD 60. His biography of Christ is volume 1; Acts is volume 2 of his story about the establishment of Christianity in the 1st Century AD. It is likely that Luke had the gospels of Matthew and Mark (probably written in the early AD 50's) for reference as he wrote. His primary sources were as many of the apostles (especially his friend Paul) who were still accessible to him and many eye-witnesses who were still available for interview. His writings are in classical Greek style like the superior literature of Greek and Roman philosophy. The Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the 'Septuagint' (or the LXX – Roman numerals for '70' the number of translators involved in the production of this 3rd Century BC literary masterpiece) was also available to Luke. Luke writes both of his narratives at about the same time as the apostle Paul's first Roman imprisonment (AD 60-62). It is believed that as Paul wrote his prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon) that Luke was with him completing his gospel (from data accumulated in Palestine during Paul's imprisonment there from about AD 58-60). At this time he was also interviewing Paul for much of the information he used in composing 'Acts'.

So, What Do You Expect?

(Thanks for coming today, but what are you doing here?)

Maybe you came out of curiosity or to fulfill a friend's invitation. Maybe you came because some difficulty or disappointment makes you want to get closer to God. Some of you may have a ministry responsibility. Still others came because that's what you do on the Lord's Day and it's part of your lifestyle. Any of these reasons will do, but what do you expect to happen now that you're here? In the today's passage, **Luke 1:5-12**, we meet a man who went to worship for a lot of the same reasons mentioned above, but that day was different – the presence of the Almighty was awesome to him and his life was never the same. Would you like today to be more than just another routine day in church? If so, then believe God is actually here, walking in our midst, stopping by your seat, wanting you to sense His presence. Go ahead and whisper a prayer to Him; something like 'I'm here Lord, You know me inside out. You have a plan for my life. In this time, in this place, let me sense Your presence as I worship You today.'

When Times Are 'A Changin'

(God's Ways when Winds of Change Begin)

Luke 1:2-13

'Transitions' – Changing Seasons of 'HIStory'

"There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea..." 1:5

Adam to Abraham

? – about 2000 BC

Innocence, Conscience,
Government

(creation of the world)

Abraham to Jesus

2000 – 4 BC

Faith-Promise & Mosaic Law

(creation of the nation Israel)

1st to 2nd Coming

4 BC – AD 2000+

Redemption in Christ

*(creation of the Church
& the Church Age)*

Kingdom to

Eternity

(20?? + 1000 yrs)

Reign of Christ
(Millennium)

Transitions from one era to the next occur due to a break-down in humanity's willingness to obey the existing dispensation. Transition eras are marked by escalating debauchery in humanity and increasing wickedness of its leaders. Transitions are also marked by a small remnant of very righteous people, married couples and families whom God uses during these turbulent transition times.

(Adam & Eve, Noah's family; Abraham & Sarah, Amram & Jochebed; Zacharias & Elizabeth, Mary & Joseph)

Transition People

(Zacharias / ‘Yahweh remembers’ & Elizabeth / ‘God has vowed’)

“...a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was a daughter of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.” **1:5-7**

Transition Places

(Service in the house of the Lord)

“So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.” **1:8-10**

Transition Purposes

(Sensing prophetic fulfillment of God’s promises)

“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is 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. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” **1:11-17**

DEVOTIONAL SUGGESTIONS for this WEEK:	
MON	Transitioning from the weekend to the workweek can be challenging. With all the economic troubles, you may have to transition to a more moderate lifestyle in the days ahead(?). Read Luke 1:5-6 from Sunday’s Bible study. Pray for God’s grace to be like this couple in dealing with transition. Remember Philippians 4:11-13 .
TUE	Do you remember why Zechariah and Elizabeth were disappointed with their life? See Luke 1:6-7 . They were sad about not getting to be parents but it didn’t keep them from living righteous lives and faithfully serving God. Being committed to God’s work (even when everything hasn’t worked out the way you hoped it would) keeps you in fellowship with Him so He can bless you eventually (1 Corinthians 15:58). Are you involved in at least one regular ministry at CBF?
WED	The altar of incense in the temple was the ‘neutral zone’ between the ‘holy place’ and the holiest of holies in the temple. It was located in the former room but belonged to the later location. It was the place where Zechariah met with and prayed to God (Luke 1:8-10). Special things can happen to the one who draws close to God through prayer. Have you, like a priest, spent time at the altar of prayer today? (Hebrews 4:16)
THU	Angels don’t usually appear except during dispensational (theological eras) transitions. Now during this Church Age (between Pentecost and the Rapture), God, the Holy Spirit, moves upon our hearts and minds during Bible study and prayer to know His will. Like the angel in Luke 1:11-17 , the Holy Spirit inaudibly speaks to hearts about God’s plan for us. Take a few minutes to read, pray, and listen for His small still voice today (John 16:12-15). What is God saying to your heart?
FRI	Read Luke 1:15-17 about God’s plan for Zechariah’s son. Do you know that God has a very specific plan for your life? Psalms 139:16 says that God has ‘the book’ on you and the full potential of what He can do through you if you’re totally surrendered to His Lordship. How could your lifestyle be made better so He can bring out even more of the best of you today (Ephesians 4:14-16)? Also, pray for parents of God’s kids at CBF-- that they will raise them for God’s glory.
SAT	Don’t you hate it when someone doesn’t believe you’ll do what you promised? It is such an insult when others doubt you and question your integrity. Doubting God’s message through an angel got Zechariah in a lot of trouble (Luke 1:18-20). When you pray today, don’t doubt that God will do it somehow, some way, some day according to His will (James 1:5-8). Prove you believe God. Thank Him in advance for His answer and don’t doubt, no matter what! Pray about church tomorrow, OK?