

**ANNOUNCEMENTS
THAT WILL
CHANGE
YOUR LIFE!**



LUKE 1:1-4:31

BIBLE

STUDIES

TERM 4, 2016

Joy to the world!

Joy is a word we associate with Christmas, even if we don't always feel it. In the mad rush of end of year parties, shopping and everyone looking just a little bit insane (at least until boxing day), it's hard to remember why this little word is so important.

As Christians we know why Christmas is about joy. Even then, we can get tricked into looking for joy in the wrong places. Christmas trees, LED lights, presents, Christmas carols, family meals and even that strange buzz that's in the air can make us happy and excited. In themselves these are good things. And yet if we look for our joy in them they will ultimately let us down. Sometimes we can think we are doing Christmas Christianly but really we're just caught up in the fun mayhem of the season.

The people we meet in the first chapters of Luke are filled with overwhelming joy. It isn't the joy that comes from a fleeting (remember Ecclesiastes!) Christmas card or present. It's a joy that bursts out naturally from their hearts as they hear announcement after announcement of the overwhelming reality that the world has changed forever. God has sent someone so marvellous that every human on the planet is effected by his arrival. Even the angels can't contain their happiness! Those who come into contact with Jesus are so excited that they can't help but tell others the good news of what God has done.

As you read these passages listen carefully to the great announcements that are made. Look at the responses of those who hear the announcements. Reflect on why they react in the way they do. Learn from them and see afresh why the arrival of Jesus means joy to the world.

Most of all, pray! Pray that as you read you will discover and rediscover that same joy. Pray that you'll find your true joy in God. Pray that your joy will overflow in a desire to let others know about the one who has come to bring real, lasting joy. Pray that you will genuinely want to join in the song of the angels as they sing. "Glory to God".

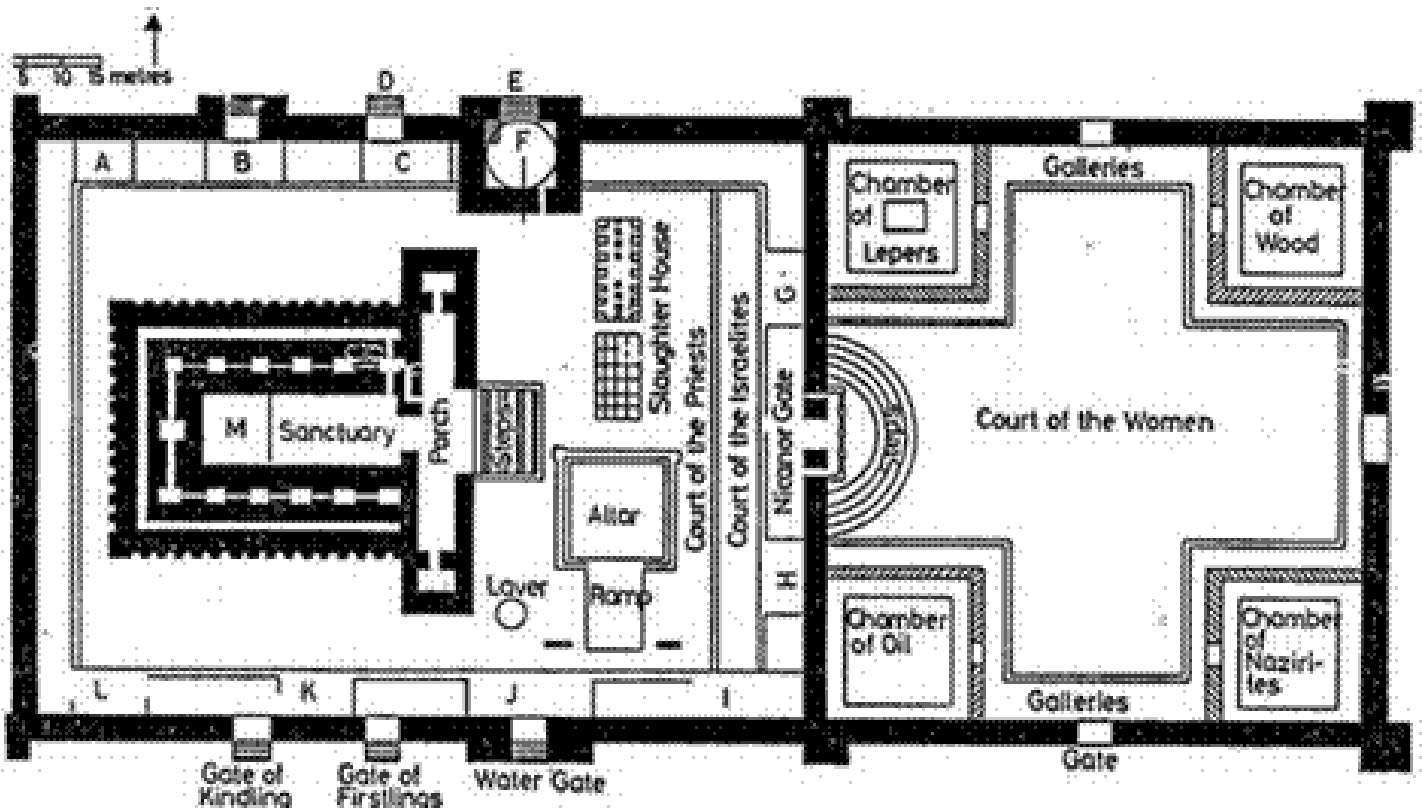
Study 1 – Luke 1:1-25

Getting Started

1. When have you been most tempted to doubt God's kindness?

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 1:1-25. Here is a layout of the temple¹ so you can get a feel for where the action took place. Zechariah was in the sanctuary burning incense:



2. What does this passage tell us about the character of Zechariah and Elizabeth? (v3-5)

3. What is significant about the child who they will have according to these verses:

a. 14

¹ Source: <http://www.talkingrockroadbaptistchurch.com/temple-presentation>

b. 15

c. 16

d. 17

Old Testament Background

Read Malachi chapter 4, which is the last chapter of the Old Testament. It is the last thing God said to his people for about four hundred years (until God sent Gabriel to Zechariah).

4. On the day the of the Lord what will happen to:

a. evil doers?

b. Those who fear God

5. What will the new Elijah prophet do?

6. Why does God want to send Elijah?

Back to Luke...

7. Compare the Luke and Malachi passages. How will John fulfil the prophecy in Malachi 4?

8. John means "God is Gracious". How is God being gracious through John?

9. Read Ezekiel 33:11, 2 Peter 3:3-4 and 8-10. How do they confirm what we've seen of God in this study?

Thinking it through

10. What about God's character that we've seen in this study would comfort you when you're tempted to doubt his goodness?

11. What about God's character is both good news and a warning to unbelievers?

12. What about God's character would you be excited to tell people about this Christmas?

Pray that God would open doors for you to tell people about him this Christmas.

Study 2 – Luke 1:26-38

Getting Started

1. Besides God, who is the most trustworthy person you know? What makes them so trustworthy?

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 1:26-38

2. Why should Mary not be worried (v28-30)?
3. What five things is Mary told about Jesus?

Old Testament Background

By the time of 2 Samuel 7 God had brought security and stability to the people of Israel. David was a good king who trusted God. He had defeated their enemies. He had captured Jerusalem and made it the nation's capital. One day David got very worried that the ark of God was still in its tent while he was living in a fine palace. After all, the tent was meant to be for when the people were wandering in the wilderness. Now God had established them in one place. David wants to build a permanent house (temple) for God, but God has far better things in mind for David.

Read 2 Samuel 7:11b-16

4. What does God promise King David?
5. What are the similarities between this coming ruler and Jesus as he's spoken of in our Luke passage?

Read Isaiah 9:2-7

6. What should be expected when this king rules on David's throne?

7. What's so significant about this kingdom never ending?

Back to Luke...

For David and Isaiah the coming of this king was a very distant event. Not so for Mary!

8. Compare how Gabriel responds to Zechariah and Mary (1:18-20, 34-37). What does this suggest is different about Mary's attitude to Zechariah's? See also verse 38.

9. Why is Mary right to have this response? (v37)

Thinking it through

10. What does this passage tell us about God's character?

11. Why might it be considered joyful to trust God's promises?

12. From this passage, what good news would it be exciting to tell people about this Christmas?

Pray that God would open doors for you to tell people about him this Christmas.

Study 3 – Luke 1:39-56

Getting Started

1. How would you respond to someone who says, “God helps those who help themselves”?

Over the last two weeks we looked at God’s great fulfilment of his Old Testament promises. This week we see people’s responses to his kind actions. By the time of today’s passage Elizabeth is six months pregnant with John the Baptist (See Luke 1:36. That means her husband hasn’t spoken a word for six or seven months!). Mary has only just found out about the baby God will put in her.

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 1:39-56

2. What is baby John’s attitude to Jesus and Mary?
3. What is Elizabeth’s attitude to Jesus and Mary?
4. Some people over emphasise Mary, even to the point of treating her as more important than Jesus. Some say that she never even sinned – (Mark 3:21, 31 would suggest otherwise). The Bible doesn’t give any grounds for this overemphasis. Nevertheless, in this passage Elizabeth does commend her greatly for one specific attribute. What is it? (v45. Compare the response of Elizabeth’s husband Zechariah)
5. In verses 46-55 what attitudes towards God are commended? How does Mary fit into these? What attitudes are condemned?

6. Given the emphasis on attitudes what is being emphasised in verse 53? Is it inherently good to be poor and inherently bad to be rich?

7. What do these verses say are great about God?

Thinking it through

8. In what ways are you proud towards God? How does this show itself in your actions?

9. The right response to the blessings of God, as shown in the passage, is joyful praise of God. Over the last week when could you have naturally praised God, either publicly or privately?

10. From this passage, what good news could you naturally tell someone who doesn't know Christ?

Pray that God would open doors for you to naturally speak about his goodness (glorify/magnify him) to others this Christmas.

c. v78-79

5. According to verse 78, why will John do these things?

6. Read Psalm 107:10-16. What similarities do you notice with this Luke passage?

Thinking it Through

7. What does this passage teach us about God?

8. From this passage, what does God want his people to do?

9. What's the right emotional response to God as he's described in this passage?

10. What would be natural to tell people about God from this passage?

Pray that God would give you opportunities to tell people about his goodness and faithfulness.

Study 5 – Luke 2:1-20

Getting Started

1. Why is following Jesus so unpopular/uncool/definitely not trendy?

Understanding the Passage

Read Luke 2:1-7

2. What do v1-2 say about the Jewish political situation?

3. What do v3-7 say about Joseph and Mary's social power and status?

4. Given what we learned about God's promises to David back in study 2 what is significant about how Luke says verse 4? (In other words, why doesn't he just say they went to Jerusalem?)

Read Luke 2:8-20

5. How important do you think the shepherds are in society (think about people are treated today who have jobs where they have to stand outside all through the night)?

6. In verse 9 why might the shepherds be afraid (see Romans 3:23, 1:18)?

7. Why does the angel tell them not to be afraid?

Old Testament Background

In the Old Testament defeat in battle had nothing to do with the size or training of your army (remember Gideon?). Israel were defeated by enemies purely because of their sin. God was punishing them and teaching them to trust him and no-one else.

Read Micah 5:1-5

8. What does God promise Israel?

Back to Luke...

9. In verses 11 and 14, how does Jesus fulfil this Old Testament promise?

10. What emotions do you see in this passage? Where do you see them? Why are they there?

11. What is the shepherd's reaction to all this? Why is this natural?

Thinking it through

12. Given the very natural emotions and reactions of the angels and shepherds towards God and others (v14, 17, 20) what do you think is the natural response to this passage?

13. There's nothing trendy or cool, and no hint of worldly power in this passage. Sometimes Christians try to make ourselves cool or try to control worldly power. What is the real power in this passage?

Pray that God would give you:

- **the natural right emotional response to this passage, and**
- **the natural actions towards God and others that flow from it**

Study 6 – Luke 2:21-52

Getting Started

1. What situations in life make people crave some kind of hope?

Everything so far in chapter 2 has been big and exciting, but it hasn't been very public. A few shepherds and whoever they could tell have heard about Jesus. Now, though, Jesus is thrust on to centre stage at the religious heart of the nation – the temple in Jerusalem.

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 2:21-52

2. Showing your answers from the passage, what do you discover about the godliness/character of:
 - a. Mary and Joseph
 - b. Simeon
 - c. Anna
 - d. Jesus
3. What is Simeon waiting for?

Old Testament Background

In the Old Testament God had taken Israel from being a prosperous, powerful nation to being the plaything of empires. he makes it very clear that he does it because of their sin.

4. Look at Isaiah 25:7-9, 40:1-2 and 52:8-10. How would you describe what Simeon is waiting for?

Back to Luke

5. How does Simeon describe Jesus? Who will benefit from Jesus?

6. Why will some not enjoy Jesus? (See 1 Corinthians 1:21-24, 1 Peter 1:6-10)

7. Why is Anna so excited? How does her personal situation illustrate the situation for Israel (See Lamentations 1:1, Isaiah 9:17 and Isaiah 54:4-7)?

8. v48 is the first time we hear Jesus in the Gospel. What does he tell Mary and Joseph (and us) about his a) relationship with his Father and b) his mission?

Thinking it through

9. How would you summarise what people were hoping for in Jesus? How is that hope still relevant today?

10. Even from what we've seen so far, how is Jesus perfectly equipped to fulfil that hope?

11. The people in this story are good people, but they still put their hope in Jesus. How can their testimony help you as you tell others about Jesus?

12. What can we learn from Anna and Simeon's emotional and verbal responses upon seeing Jesus?

Study 7 – Luke 3:1-20

Getting Started

1. What sort of news is the news about Jesus? Good news? Bad news? Indifferent?

Old Testament Background

2. In study 1 we looked at Malachi 4 to see what the job of John the Baptist would be. Read that chapter again. How would you summarise the message of the chapter?

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 3:1-20

3. What is the main message John is preaching (v3)? What does it mean?
4. According to John what is everyone about to see (v4-6)?
5. What does John say is the crowd's problem (v7-9)? What do they need to do? What will happen if they don't do it?
6. In v10-14 John gives advice to three different groups. What does all his advice have in common?
7. What will the Christ do when he comes (v15-17)?

8. How is Herod's response to John similar to many other people's (even if they don't have the power to put someone in prison)?

Thinking it through

9. What from this passage tells you that John is NOT saying you're saved just by being a good person?
10. Can you be saved if you DON'T repent and start doing good? Give reasons from the passage?
11. What would you say to someone who says "I'm fine with God because Jesus is my saviour and I'm forgiven so it doesn't matter how I live"?
12. What would it be loving to tell someone who isn't yet a Christian from this passage?

Pray that God would give you opportunities for you to warn people about the wrath to come.

Study 8 – Luke 3:21-4:13

Getting Started

1. A representative speaks or acts on our behalf, like when a sports team wins and you yell from the sidelines, “we won!” or when a politician speaks up on your behalf. Who is someone you really appreciate as your representative (or someone you wish wasn’t your representative but is)?

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 3:21-4:13

2. In v21-22 who is Jesus associated with (hint: there’s more than one answer)?
3. Who is the other son of God in this passage?

Jesus is linked to both humans and God. He’s baptised along with the other humans. He has a human ancestry that goes all the way back to Adam. And yet he also has a special relationship as the Son of God. In this sense he’s like Adam - the representative or king of all humans. Adam’s choices have set the direction for the entire human race. Jesus is a new representative of humanity.

There is another level of meaning here as well. Jesus’ legal ancestry runs through the kings of Israel. Israel’s kings were known as Sons of God (based on 2 Samuel 7). Also, Israel as a whole nation is known as the son of God (see Exodus 4:22). Jesus is both one with the nation (he’s just been baptised with them all and he shares their ancestry) and he is about to become their representative. Like them, he is about to go into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan.

4. v3-5. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-3. Israel didn’t feed themselves in the wilderness. How was Israel fed? Who was feeding them?

5. Read Exodus 16:2-4 and 13-29. How did Israel go at obeying God? How is Jesus different?

6. In v7-8 Jesus refers to Exodus 20:2-3 and Deuteronomy 10:20 (look them up if you've got time). Jesus is going to be king of the world by obeying God. How is Satan's way far easier and more tempting?

7. v9-12. Have a look at Deuteronomy 6:16 and Exodus 17:1-7. How is Jesus better than Israel?

8. For Jesus, who sets the agenda of his life?

Thinking it through

9. Read Romans 5:15-19. How is Jesus, the Son of God, better than Adam, the Son of God?

10. Why should this passage in Luke humble us? Why should it make us rejoice?

11. What good news can you share with someone who's despairing about humanity?

Pray that you would have opportunities to share the good news of Jesus, our representative.

Study 9 – Luke 4:14-30

Getting Started

1. As we approach Christmas, how do you see Jesus being portrayed around the place? What do you think this says about people's understanding of who Jesus is?

In our passage today Jesus returns victorious from the wilderness in the power of the Spirit. Luke records for us here, not his first sermon, but one that characterises his ministry.

Understanding the passage

Read Luke 4:14-30

2. Jesus says he has the Spirit of the Lord (v18). From this passage, what does the Spirit do? How does this compare with other times we've seen him act in Luke (1:14-17; 1:35; 1:41-45; 1:67; 2:25-32; 4:1, 14)?
3. In your own words, what is it that Jesus has been sent to proclaim (v18-19)?

A lot of Christians have used Jesus' words in this passage to say our main mission as Christians is to heal disease and fight for human rights on behalf of the oppressed. These are good things to do and Christians should be involved in them, but they aren't what Jesus is talking about here. To understand what he's saying, we need to go back to the Old Testament again.

Old Testament background

4. Read Isaiah 42:18-25. Who are the deaf, poor, blind, oppressed captives? Why are they in that condition (v20, 24).
5. Read Isaiah 61:1-7. God is telling his people something far more significant than that he is coming to set up soup kitchens (as good and noble as they are!). What is God really announcing?

Back to Luke

6. What is the significance of Jesus' statement in v21?

7. The people think Jesus is a good public speaker but they have doubts about him as a person. What's the biggest source of their doubt (v22)?

8. In v23-27 what is the main point of Jesus' warning?

9. How does the people's response expose what they really believe?

Thinking it through

10. According to this passage, what is the most exciting news around? How should this change/effect your attitude and actions in regard to gift giving this Christmas?

11. What is the warning to those who treat Jesus as a plastic baby in a manger in a shop window or a silhouette LED Christmas light? What are they missing out on?

12. How might your attitude to Jesus be seen to be different to the world's attitude this Christmas?

Pray that people would see the way you live in relation to Jesus, be intrigued and ask searching questions.