

# Talk It Over

## The Certainty (Week 2) “How Can I Know This?”

### SMALL TALK

1. Do you know the meaning of your name? What is your nickname and how did you get it?

### VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Luke 1:5-26.** What stands out to you about Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5-7)? Since many priests never had this opportunity, what feelings might Zechariah have had in preparation for this?
3. Why do you think Zechariah said, “How can I know this?” Why do you think Gabriel responded as he did? Which is more surprising to you, Zechariah’s disbelief in view of (1:6), or Gabriel’s assessment and response?
4. **READ Luke 1:57-80.** What belief did Zechariah come to when his child was born?

### GETTING PERSONAL

5. When was the last time you doubted God? What caused your doubt? What came of it?
6. Where do you think you are on the road map to certainty when the markers are 1) Hear, 2) Believe, 3) Live, 4) Know?
7. How is John’s mission like our mission today? How might you “prepare” people for the Lord?

### PRACTICE!

- a. What are you grateful for?
- b. What is something God has been showing you this week (in His Word or some other way)?

- c. About the people you are interacting with who do not yet follow Jesus, how can we join you in prayer?
- d. What is keeping you from having a better answer to questions a - c?

February 7, 2021

## The Certainty

### **week 2- "How Can I Know This?"**

Have you ever asked yourself, "How can I know if this is true?"

I have, but it was a long time ago. It was the summer of 1982, my first full time ministry employment 39 years ago. I asked the question as unsettling doubts crept in.

I did something I will never regret. I called my dad. He suggested that I investigate the resurrection, the one miracle that is not only the most important miracle, it is the essential truth of our faith. It is the miracle that matters most! We need not be afraid of this kind of investigation.

Investigating to know the truth is what Luke was about. This is what this whole series is all about. Knowing the truth is what I invite you to be about. It is why Luke wrote.

**Luke 1:4 (CSB)** *so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.*

Last week we learned that the roadmap to certainty has 4 markers along the way:

HEARING → BELIEVING → LIVING → KNOWING

We learned that it is a particular kind of knowing, it is not "knowing about", it is a relational knowing, and in a covenant relationship as offered to us by God.

The first thing Luke does in his orderly report is introduce us to someone who asked this question:

**Luke 1:18 (CSB)** *"How can I know this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years."*

Zechariah was a believer in God. He was a priest. And yet he also was filled with doubt instead of certainty. We see precisely where he came off the road of certainty. He heard, but he could not believe what he was hearing, even though the Angel terrified him, and spoke clearly about what was going to happen.

Zechariah was in for a bumpy ride.

## I. It's **EVERYONE'S** question

Zechariah's question "*How can I know this?*" (1:18) is the question all skeptics have when they are first confronted with the supernatural.

Luke brings his orderly report of how things went down by beginning with an announcement from the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, then moves directly the angel Gabriel to Mary. The two reactions in wording are very similar, however what is going on in their hearts is very different. We won't be spending much time on Mary's reaction today, I only tell you this to compare and contrast, because it would be good if our reaction was more like Mary's and less like Zechariah's. Zechariah had to go through a bumpy detour on his road map to certainty.

All of this by way of introduction leads us to the skeptic's question, which is Zechariah's question. "How can we know this?"

Doesn't it seem odd to you that if Luke is to build a case about certainty that he begins here with what seems so strange to any skeptic? I mean, come on, angels appearing, giving prophecy, then, in Zechariah's case, because he doubts it, Gabriel says he will strike's him mute. He will be made dumb for being dumb about it....?

Does this build confidence in a case for certainty for you? It seems like an odd place to start doesn't it? Luke makes no apologies for reporting the supernatural, and here's why: It's unavoidable!

These are not “extras.” These are not “accessories” that are unbelievable. The breakthrough of the supernatural world into ours is at the heart of the Gospel and cannot be avoided. Without the supernatural there is no Gospel.

Luke (who was not a Jew) had to navigate a strange change in his worldview, just like any of us have to. Luke had to work his way back to the beginning from the standpoint of the resurrection.

Luke introduces the greater context he himself had to come to terms with as an educated Greek thinker. Without context, the cross seems like foolishness. Luke takes the time to bring us up to speed in a Jewish context. There has been detailed preparation for this event now for two thousand years. The promise, the nation, the kingdom, the prediction of failure, the failure, more promises, silence, and now, the next big news before the biggest move yet.

*And still, even with all that preparation, even for a Jewish priest...*

## **II. It is a big step from HEARING to BELIEVING**

The supernatural in the past explains the supernatural now, and hope in the supernatural for the future. And so, Luke begins with context, and that context began in Genesis, and it carries through the entire Old Testament, and now coming into focus here in our text are the central events of History.

It was a culture foreign to Luke until he came to terms with it through his investition. Jesus’ arrival is the fulfillment of Temple, and former announcements by angels, and prophets, and promises, and fulfillments!

This is a breathtaking leap forward in God’s long range plan, and a long awaited promise was about to be fulfilled.

Our culture wants Luke to prove by our standards of investigation alone. But how do you prove what is by nature supernatural? Only the supernatural anchor will assure you.

So, we read the rest of the history to see if anything comes of what appears to be unbelievable. It all comes together after the resurrection of Jesus!

So, that is why Luke starts where he does, with the skeptics question that everyone is asking, including the believing Zechariah: **How can I know this?**

**We must keep reading, to see if it is believable.**

*Luke 1:20 (CSB) Now listen. You will become silent and unable to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."*

**Although it shouldn't have been that big of a step for Zechariah because of so many previous steps, it was a challenge to him. Let's ponder this:**

- Zechariah believed the Scriptures. God had done great things like this before! Abraham and Sarah were older than Zechariah and Elizabeth! Abraham was nearly 100! And He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness!
- **YET Zechariah didn't believe?** He was a priest not an Atheist; a believer not a skeptic, and yet when the promise came close to home he doubted.
- He was terrified by this supernatural encounter, and yet doubted. Why?
- Was it because the surprise hit so close to home?!

**Was fear the source of his doubt?** *"I'm having a baby now?! And the baby is going to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah!? How can that be, when I have one foot in the grave already and the other on a banana peel?!"*

- Can you imagine the strained conversation once Zechariah got home.
- He writes a note, then another, then a third....and then...
- Elizabeth says, “The angel said what!?”
- Did she believe it!? It’s a big step.

- Do you have a problem with God’s silence? or
- Do you have a problem with what God has said?
- Doubts have a way of cornering you in a no win situation.

- This is a reminder to us: Even when God seems silent or unresponsive, he is working out his plan and He will be faithful.

It was a big step, but by God’s grace they both arrive on the believing stretch of the road map, But they get there by way of a bumpy detour!

### III. Not taking this step produces a **BUMPY RIDE**

*Luke 1:6–7 (CSB) Both [Zechariah and Elizabeth] were righteous in God’s sight, living without blame according to all the commands and requirements of the Lord [not perfect, but on the right road, in a right relationship] . 7 But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years.*

Zechariah was on the right road, until he doubted. Then he was on a painful bumpy detour. Ever been on those? It’s common.

Hearing  
     doubting,  
     repenting,  
 Believing  
 Living  
 Knowing

Sometimes our understanding of God's merciful love grows during the detour, and what God does to turn us back. Our faith is forged stronger for it.

Zechariah's back on the road of certainty!

**Luke 1:67 (CSB)** *Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:* [Zechariah prophecies in the next 12 verses about God's great move.]

Friends, when you stumble, turn back to God ASAP, and get back on the road. God will be honored. By the way, this ROAD is called "the Way" in Acts.

If you haven't started it yet, jump in no matter where you are on the roadmap... Read Luke and Acts.

Hearing → Believing → Living → Knowing

What's your next step?