

Introduction

We are starting a Christmas series this week from the Gospel of Luke. We will cover Gabriel's announcements to Zacharias and Mary today. Then, we will cover Mary's visit to Elizabeth. Third, we will cover the birth of John. On December 21 we will cover the birth of Christ. Then, on December 28, we will cover the dedication of Jesus. In January we will start back in the Gospel of John, picking up where we left off, with the betrayal of Jesus by Judas.

Christmas Series	
Nov 30, 2025	Gabriel's Announcements
Dec 7, 2025	Mary's Visit With Elizabeth
Dec 14, 2025	Birth of John the Baptist
Dec 21, 2025	Birth of Christ
Dec 28, 2025	Dedication of Jesus

On one of my walks a few weeks ago, a lady was planting flowers by her mailbox. I told her it was getting ready to turn colder and freeze, and she assured me that those flowers could tolerate cold weather. I stopped for a minute and we had a nice conversation. I told her that I was a pastor, and that led into a conversation about church. I was able to share with her the vision of our church, and how we were building according to the New Testament pattern. When I mentioned the New Testament, she made a comment that she does not like the Old Testament because she doesn't understand it. In our passage today, we will find that without the Old Testament, we would not understand the New Testament. The prophecies in the Old Testament instruct us about John's role as a forerunner of the Messiah, and how he would prepare the way of the Lord. The prophecies in the Old Testament tell us about the birth of the Jesus. We need the Old Testament, and we need the prophecies that were given so that we can better understand the messages in the Christmas series.

In our message today, we will be looking at why Luke starts with John, the necessity of beginning with John. Second, we will look at Gabriel's announcement to Zacharias of John the Baptist. Third, we will look at Gabriel's announcement to Mary of Jesus.

Gabriel's Announcements

1. Necessity of John
2. Announcement of John
3. Announcement of Jesus

1. Necessity of John (Lk 1:16-17, Mk 1:1-3, Jn 1:6-8,29-34)

Some may question why the Christmas series begins with an announcement of John the Baptist. It is a great question, and there are several reasons for it. First, God had spoken through a number of prophets in the Old Testament, and these prophecies had to be fulfilled. Second, John was the one that God had chosen to prepare the way of the Lord in the spirit of Elijah. Third, John was the one who was going to introduce Jesus, and to confirm that He is the Son of God, the Messiah. We will look at each of these separately.

a. God's prophecies had to be fulfilled.

The first reason for John to come was to fulfill prophecy. One of the things that I greatly appreciate and love about God is His faithfulness. When God tells us something, we can be fully confident that He will do exactly what He has promised to do. In Numbers 23:19, God tells us that He is not man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. If He has said something He will do it, and if He has spoken something, He will make it good. God always

does the things that He promises to do. We can confidently trust and rely upon God to carry out His promises.

(Nu 23:19) "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

In Joshua 21:45, we find that "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass." What a great testimony! God fulfilled every promise that He had made to Israel. He will also fulfill every promise that He has made to you and I, so we can fully trust Him to do what He has promised.

(Jos 21:45) "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass."

In regard to the coming of Christ, God had spoken to the prophets about His coming, His life and death, and His resurrection. In Luke 22:37, while Jesus was meeting with His disciples in the upper room, He spoke to them about His upcoming death. He said, "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me." Then, He told them that He would be crucified and number with transgressors. when Jesus was crucified between two sinners. Jesus knew what was prophesied about Himself, and He knew that it had to be fulfilled.

(Lk 22:37) "For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment."

In Matthew 26:54, when Jesus was being arrested, He told His disciples and those that had come to arrest Him, that it had to happen this way so that all the Scriptures would be fulfilled. Then, He told them that this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets. God always fulfills what He tells us He will do.

(Mt 26:54-56) "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way? {55} At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. {56} But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets." Then all the disciples left Him and fled."

In Luke 24:44, Jesus was on the road to Emmaus with two disciples and He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

(Lk 24:25-26) "And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! {26} Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

A few verses later, Jesus is meeting with the eleven apostles, and He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Everything written about Jesus in the Old Testament had to be fulfilled, because God always does what He said He would do.

(Lk 24:44) “Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

When we talk about the birth of Christ, we have to begin with the birth of John, who was going to come before the Messiah. God spoke this to the prophet, Malachi, saying, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me.

(Mal 3:1) “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me...”

And then, in Malachi 4:5-6, “Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He would restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” John’s coming had to precede the coming of Christ because God spoke that through His prophets. God always fulfills what He tells us that He will do.

(Mal 4:5–6) “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. {6} He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

b. John was going to prepare the way of the Lord

In Luke 1:16-17, Gabriel told Zacharias that his son would turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God, and would be a forerunner before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah. He would turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Gabriel was quoting what God had spoken through Malachi.

(Lk 1:16–17) “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. {17} It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

When John was born, his father, Zacharias prophesied, “And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways.” Again, he was prophesying what had already been prophesied by Malachi.

(Lk 1:76) “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;”

Matthew recorded a conversation that Jesus had with the crowds about John the Baptist. After asking them a few questions about what they were expecting to see, He said, “This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.’ ... and if you are will to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.” Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was the forerunner sent to prepare the way of the Lord in the spirit of Elijah; he was the fulfillment of the prophecy by Malachi

(Mt 11:7–14) “As these men were going *away*, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? {8} But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft *clothing*? Those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings’ palaces! {9} But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. {10} This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.’... {14} And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come.”

c. John was going to introduce and testify that Jesus is the Messiah

The third reason that it was necessary to talk about John first is that he was sent by God to identify Jesus, and to testify that Jesus is the Messiah. In John 1:6-8, we find that John came as a witness to testify about the light. He was not the Light, but came to testify about the Light.

(Jn 1:6–8) “There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. {8} He was not the Light, but *he came* to testify about the Light.”

In John 1:29-34, John identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God helped John recognize and identify Jesus through a dove settling on Jesus. He said, “I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’” Then, he said, “I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.

(Jn 1:29–34) “The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ {31} I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” {32} John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. {33} I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ {34} I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, when asked about the authority He had, or who He was, Jesus referred the Pharisees and religious leaders back to John. John played a crucial role in identifying and testifying that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and is the Son of God.

2. Gabriel's Announcement of John (Lk 1:5-25)

The first announcement made by Gabriel was to Zacharias. He was a priest, of the division of Abijah. In 1 Chronicles 24, David and Zadok had divided up the offices for duties, and there were twenty-four lots. The division of Abijah was the eighth lot. Zacharias had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them came from priestly descent. They were righteous in the sight of God and walked blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

(Lk 1:5–6) “In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was

Elizabeth. {6} They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”

(1 Ch 24:10) “the seventh for Hakkoz, the eighth for Abijah,”

Even though they were righteous, they had no children. Elizabeth was barren, and they were now both advanced in years. Their hope of having children was gone. This was a big thing for them. Later on, Elizabeth said, “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men.”

(Lk 1:7) “But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.”

(Lk 1:25) “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men.”

The same priests did not serve at the temple all the time. David had set up a lot, where the priests were chosen by lot by the order of their division. Zacharias was of the division of Abijah, which was the eighth lot. Zacharias had been chosen by lot, and he entered the temple to burn incense.

(Lk 1:8-10) “Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the *appointed* order of his division, {9} according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.”

There were a whole multitude of people in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. If you recall in the Old Testament, that two of Aaron's sons died because they offered up strange incense. The priests and others took this very serious, so they carefully followed the instructions of how to enter, and people gathered to pray outside.

(Lk 1:10) “And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.”

(Le 10:1–2) “Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. {2} And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.”

While Zacharias was inside the temple offering incense, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. The Greek word for angel is *angelos*, (Strong's G32), which means messenger. While angels do many different things, one of their primary duties is to bring messages to people, which is what this angel was sent to do. This is not just any angel; this is Gabriel. In verse nineteen, the angel identified himself as Gabriel.

(Lk 1:11) “And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.”

(Lk 1:19) “The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.”

When Zacharias saw the angel, he was troubled, and fear gripped him. Another function of angels was to bring judgment, as they did at Sodom and Gomorrah. The angel put Zacharias to ease, saying, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

(Lk 1:12-13) "Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. {13} But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John."

I don't believe that this is what Zacharias had been praying at that time. I believe that this was a prayer that he had prayed when he was younger. He had asked God for a son. He had probably asked God many times for a son. Sometimes our prayers are not answered on our timetable, but on God's timetable. God had a special purpose for the son he was going to give Zacharias and Elizabeth, and there was a very specific time that their son had to be born. Their age was not the main factor; the timetable of God's plan was the determining factor for God, and He could give them a child in their old age, just as He did for Abraham and Sarah.

Next, Gabriel told Zacharias some details about their son, John. First, they were going to have joy and gladness, and that many would rejoice at his birth. He was going to be great in the sight of the Lord. Every parent would love to hear that their son or daughter was great in the sight of the Lord. John was not going to drink wine or liquor, and he would be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. Not only did this bring encouragement to Zacharias, but it was also instructive. He would need to pass these words on to his son, so that he could obey them.

(Lk 1:14-15) "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. {15} For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb."

Then Gabriel spoke about John's calling. He was going to turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord. He would go as a forerunner before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Zacharias, being a priest, would have recognized the prophetic word from Malachi, and that his son was going to be the fulfillment of that prophecy.

(Lk 1:16-17) "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. {17} It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

After hearing all of this, Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." He was looking at the natural realm, and these things were impossible in the natural. He asked the question because he was having a difficult time believing what was being said to him. When God gives us a word, we need to believe God, even if we do not understand. Second, we need to consider that God has unlimited resources and abilities. Nothing is impossible for God. I have seen God miraculously provide for us many times, and it was not according to my abilities or resources; it was just God doing what only He could do.

(Lk 1:18) "Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."

Gabriel identifies himself, and that he stands in the presence of God, and had been sent to speak to him and to bring him this good news. Gabriel is under authority, and has great authority. He is very highly ranked; he is the arch angel. Then, Gabriel brought a consequence upon Zacharias for not believing what he had spoken to him. He said, "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

(Lk 1:19-20) "The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. {20} And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

Even though Zacharias was righteous and blameless in all the commandments and requirements, he had not believed what was told to him. All of are capable of having unbelief. If we find ourselves not believing God's word to us, we need to repent and ask God to help us in our unbelief. The discipline that Zacharias received was not permanent; his inability to speak would end when John was born.

When Zacharias came out of the temple, the people that had been praying were waiting for him, and wondering why it had taken so long. Zacharias was unable to speak, and they realized that something had happened, like seeing a vision. Zacharias kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

(Lk 1:21-22) "The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. {22} But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute."

When the days of Zacharias' priestly service were ended, he went back home. In 1 Chronicles 24:1-19, David and Zadok divided up the priests into twenty-four divisions. Since there were twelve months, each division had to serve two weeks. We gather from this that Zacharias probably had a two-week priestly service, and then went back home.

(Lk 1:23) "When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home."

After going back home, his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men." The name John comes from two Hebrew words, Jehovah (Strong's H3068), and chanan (Strong's H2603). Jehovah is a name of God. It is the way that God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 6:2. Chanan means God's graciousness, mercy or favor. For Elizabeth, God was taking away the social disgrace, and giving her grace and favor.

(Lk 1:24-25) "After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, {25} "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men."

3. Gabriel's Announcement of Jesus (Lk 1:26-38)

Gabriel's next announcement was to a virgin named Mary. In the sixth month Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin named Mary. She lived in Nazareth, a city in lower Galilee. She was engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, who was of the descendants of David.

(Lk 1:26–27) “Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, {27} to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”

In Luke 2:4, when Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem for the census, they went up from the city of Nazareth, which leads us to believe that Joseph was also living in Nazareth. After the birth of Christ, they went to Egypt, and when they returned, they came and lived in Nazareth. Matthew records that Jesus was to be called a Nazarene to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets.

(Lk 2:4) “Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David,”

(Mt 2:23) “and came and lived in a city called Nazareth. *This was* to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets: “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Gabriel came in and said to Mary, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” Those are two things that all of us want in our lives. We want God's favor on our lives, and we want to know that He is with us. When Gabriel greeted Zacharias, he was afraid and fear gripped him. When he appeared to Mary, we find that her response was very different; she was perplexed at the statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation it was. Some believe the greeting was meant to build her up, and in one sense, that would encourage and build up anyone. I do not sense that she was depressed or down. I gather that she was a very secure young lady. In verse thirty-seven, she refers to herself as a bondservant of the Lord, so I think she knew who she was in the Lord. She was also a virgin, and had walked in purity. I believe Gabriel stated a fact, that God's favor was upon her, and He was with her.

(Lk 1:28-29) “And coming in, he said to her, ‘Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you.’ {29} But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.”

Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid, and repeated his earlier greeting, “for you have found favor with God.” Then, he told Mary that she was going to conceive in her womb and bear a son, and she was to name Him Jesus. Jesus is from the Hebrew word, Yehoshua (Strong's H3091), which means Jehovah saves, or Savior.

(Lk 1:30-31) “The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. {31} And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.”

Jesus was going to be called great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” Gabriel was telling Mary that Jesus was the Son of God. He was telling her that He was going to be the King, since God was going to give Him the

throne of His father, David. He told Mary that Jesus would reign forever, and His kingdom would have no end. These were Messianic words.

(Lk 1:32-33) "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; {33} and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

In Isaiah 9:6-7, God said that a child will be born, and the government will rest on His shoulders. His name would be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There would be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom. Mary was probably aware of Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah, and she was probably linking Gabriel's words with Isaiah's words.

(Is 9:6-7) "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. {7} There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this."

Mary responded, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" I often wondered how her response was different from Zacharias' response. Zacharias wanted to know how he could know if this would happen for certain. It was a response of doubt. Mary's response was not if, but how was it going to happen. She did not doubt that it would happen; she just wanted to know how it was going to happen, which is a very different response. Since she was a virgin, she wanted to know how she was going to conceive and bear a son.

(Lk 1:34) "Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Gabriel proceeded to explain to her how it was going to happen. He said, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

(Lk 1:35) "The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God."

This was another fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies. He said that virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel, which means God with us.

(Is 7:14) "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

Then Gabriel told her about her relative, Elizabeth, and how she had conceived a son in her old age. She who was called barren is now in her sixth month. He ended by saying that nothing will be impossible with God. It was not impossible for Sarah to have a child at the age of ninety. It was not impossible for her relative Elizabeth to have a baby in her advanced years. It was not impossible for her, a virgin, to conceive and have a Son, who will have the throne of David, and His kingdom will have no end. All things are possible with God.

(Lk 1:36-37) “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. {37} For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Mary responded, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” What a fantastic response! She responded with humility, as a bondservant of the Lord. She responded with faith, to believe the impossible, that she would become impregnated by the Holy Spirit and conceive a Son while still being a virgin. She responded with a willingness to do whatever the Lord has spoken through Gabriel. When God tells us to do things, we should have the same response. We should humbly respond that we are His bondslaves. We should respond with a willingness to do whatever He tells us to do. We should respond in faith, to believe that whatever He tells us will happen. Then, Gabriel departed from Mary. Earlier we saw that Gabriel stands in the presence of God, so he probably went back to his position before God.

(Lk 1:38) “And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

Conclusion and Applications

1. Our Faith

When we look at the birth of Christ, we also have to consider the birth of John the Baptist. God spoke through His prophets and said that John would come and prepare the way of the Lord in the spirit of Elijah. God always fulfills His words and His promises. We can trust God to always do what He promises. I love what Paul wrote about Abraham. “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.” You and I can be fully assured that God will fulfill His promises. That should build our faith, just as it did for Abraham.

(Ro 4:20–21) “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

2. Our Works

God had a plan for John's life. He was to identify and testify that Jesus was the Son of God. God has a plan for your life and my life. He wants to use us, just as He used John. You have specific gifts and abilities that God gave you, and these pertain to the work he has for you. Paul wrote that we are His workmanship, created in Him for good works, that we should walk in. I encourage you today to use your gifts and abilities to serve God. If you are not sure about what He has called you to do, ask the Lord. Ask your pastor. Just as God spoke about John's purpose, He can also tell you about your life and purposes.

(Eph 2:10) “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

3. Our Responses

There were some real similarities and some contrasts in the responses to Gabriel's announcements. Both announcements were unexpected. Both of them spoke about a miraculous

birth. Zacharias and Elizabeth were advanced in years, beyond the normal age to have children. Mary was a virgin, engaged to Joseph, and she was told that she would have a Son. That was impossible, so both births were miraculous. Their responses were very contrasting. Zacharias was not believing, and asked, "How will I know this for certain?" Mary believed Gabriel's word, but was curious about how it would happen, and she asked, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" She did not ask if it would happen, but how. She believed Gabriel's word.

We learn from this about our responses. We should always respond with a willingness to do what God gives us to do. We should believe what God tells us. We may not understand what He says. We may not know how He is going to do it. But we can be assured that God will always do what He tells us, either in His word, through a message by an angel, or in some other way that He chooses to communicate with us. We need to believe, and our response should be like Mary, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."

(Lk 1:38) "And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for Luke and his detailed account. Thank You for all the prophecies through the various prophets, and for telling us in advance what You were going to do. Thank You for always fulfilling Your promises to us. We praise You because You are faithful and trustworthy. Help us to be people that are faithful and trustworthy. Help us to always follow through with our promises and commitments. Thank You for the example of John the Baptist, and how You had a specific work for him to do. Thank You for creating each one of us with unique gifts and abilities, and giving each one of works to do. Help us to faithfully carry out Your plans and purposes in our lives. Thank You for Mary's example, and how she responded in faith. Help us in our belief, and in our responses. Help us to be like Abraham, and grow in our faith. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- God always fulfilled His promises that He made through the prophets. What is the significance of that for our lives and our faith?
- Has God ever told you something that you had a difficult time believing?
- Has God ever told you something that was difficult to believe, but that you believed and saw it fulfilled?
- Do you know God's plan and purposes for your life? You are God's workmanship, created in Him for good works. Do you know the works that He has created you to accomplish?
- When you hear or read about God's promises or His commission to us, do you respond more like Zacharias or like Mary?
- What are some things that we can do to respond more like Mary?

- How was the cultural attitude about having children different now from how it was when Elizabeth became pregnant?

Gabriel's Announcements (Lk 1:5-38)**Introduction**

1. **Necessity of John** (Lk 1:16-17, Mk 1:1-3, Jn 1:6-8,29-34)
 - a. God's prophecies had to be fulfilled. (Nu 23:19, Jos 21:45, Lk 22:37, Mt 26:54-56, Lk 24:25-26, 24:44, Mal 3:1, 4:5-6)
 - b. John was going to prepare the way of the Lord (Lk 1:16-17, 1:76, Mt 11:7-14)
 - c. John was going to introduce and testify that Jesus is the Messiah (Jn 1:6-8, 1:29-34)
2. **Gabriel's Announcement of John** (Lk 1:5-25, 1 Ch 24:10, Le 10:1-2, 1 Chr 24:1-19)
3. **Gabriel's Announcement of Jesus** (Lk 1:26-38, Lk 2:4, Mt 2:23, Is 9:6-7, 7:14)

Conclusion and Applications

1. Our Faith (Ro 4:20-21):
2. Our Works (Eph 2:10):
3. Our Responses (Lk 1:38):