



A People Prepared

Luke 1:1-25, 57-80

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Overview: The Gospel According to Luke is the product of an inspired historian whose stated aim was to provide certainty concerning the things that have been taught about Jesus. It begins with the announcement of the birth of a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth. Although they walked faithfully with the Lord, their hope for having a child had been postponed until late in life. This announcement came to Zechariah through Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, who also revealed the name and mission of the child yet to be born. Zechariah's initial disbelief incurred temporary discipline, yet the promise was still fulfilled. The birth of John caused a stir among the people in anticipation of a greater work of God resulting in forgiveness of sins and serving the Lord without fear.

01. God may delay His blessings for reasons known only to Him. We are still called to walk humbly before Him, serving Him out of love and by faith.

02. God has given us His Word to provide certainty about Jesus. We no longer need angels or prophets to reveal God's plan of salvation.

03. God still shows mercy to the undeserving, redeeming and forgiving all who turn to Him. We have a message to share and it truly is good news.

Eyewitness of Christmas

1. When you read the gospels, are you convinced of their truthfulness? Does the fact that a historian researched this information and included eyewitness accounts add to your certainty regarding the things that are taught? Why or why not?

2. Luke's reference to the righteousness of Zechariah and Elizabeth indicates that her barrenness was not a punishment, as others in that day may have interpreted her situation. Instead, it is clear that God was preparing them for this moment all along. Consider how similar situations occur in the Bible (i.e., Genesis 21 and 1 Samuel 1-2). Are you encouraged by their example to continue praying even when it seems there is no human reason to hope for a different outcome?

3. John is not the only biblical figure who is set apart from birth (see also Judges 13 and Jeremiah 1:5). What is the overall significance of John the Baptist's ministry (1:15-17)? How is his ministry reminiscent of Elijah? Why was a forerunner appropriate for preparing the people of Israel to receive the promised Messiah? See Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 for further insight.

4. Compare Zechariah's response to Gabriel in 1:18 with Mary's response in 1:34. Why does Zechariah receive a rebuke and punishment while Mary's question is affirmed and answered? How is his situation resolved in 1:67? Since Gabriel silences Zechariah for his lack of faith, what does this suggest to us about the importance of believing the Word of God?

5. Carefully read through Luke 1:68-79. What attributes of God are present in this song of praise? Can you outline the gospel using this song of praise?

For Further Reading: Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Zondervan, 2010).

Eyewitness of Christmas