

The Promise of the Messiah

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Date: 09 December 2018

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[0 : 00] We are beginning in Luke, and so we will be starting a new book of the Bible. So if you guys can turn to Luke chapter 1. If you have a blue Bible, it's on page 855, and there are blue Bibles in the middle area right here for you to use.

Page 855 in the blue Bible, Luke chapter 1. We're going to read verses 1 through 38. If you don't own a Bible, we do have some white ones at the middle tables as well for you to take home with you.

Luke chapter 1. In as much as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us.

It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah, and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

[1 : 19] And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

Now while he was serving as priest before God, when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

And a whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said, Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been 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 before the Lord, and he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

[2 : 25] And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared.

And Zechariah said to the angel, How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel answered him, I am Gabriel.

I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. And 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. And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days, his wife Elizabeth conceived, And for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.

[3 : 46] In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And he came to her and said, Greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And Mary said to the angel, How will this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

[4 : 51] Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived a son. And this is the sixth month with her who is called barren.

For nothing will be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. This is the word of the Lord. Good morning. My name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, if you're visiting here for the first time.

And we just concluded a 21-week series through the book of Jeremiah. And by word count, Jeremiah is actually the longest book in the Bible. So if you've been with us for the whole series, you should feel pretty accomplished.

And the book of Jeremiah concluded with the fulfillment of God's judgments and a reminder of God's promises of restoration of the kingdom of God through the Messiah, who would come from David's line.

[5 : 55] And that brings us to today, the second week of Advent. Looking forward to celebrating the life, death, the birth, life, and the death, and the resurrection of our Savior King. And that's what the book of Luke deals with.

And at the beginning of each sermon series, I introduce the book to kind of as an orientation toward the series. And Luke 1, chapter 1, verses 1 to 4, is a great introduction for that.

Please read with me. It begins, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who, from the beginning, were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Now, this tells us several important things about the book. First, the author takes care to note that the Gospel of Luke is not a novel undertaking. Many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have happened already.

So Luke is not innovating. He's building on the foundation that others have laid. And this is also not fiction. It's an account, it says, of the things that have been accomplished among us.

[7 : 09] And that's significant because these things were not accomplished in secret. Many founders of religions have claimed a private divine encounter that no one can independently verify. But Jesus, the things that were accomplished by Jesus were accomplished among us in public for all to see and judge.

And then it says, those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us. Now, deliver is a technical word that conveys the official transmission of the authoritative apostolic Gospel.

So the first eyewitnesses and some of them who became the ministers of the Word handed down the Gospel to the next generation. And the author of this book is a recipient. He's part of that second generation because he says, those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us.

So Luke is part of that second generation. We know that Luke is the author because of the unanimous testimony of the church fathers from as early as second century A.D. and he was a companion of the Apostle Paul as we know from Paul's letters.

In fact, a third century Greek historian Eusebius reports that the Apostle Paul sometimes quoted from the Gospel of Luke saying, according to my Gospel.

[8 : 21] So Paul's authoritative apostolic witness is behind the Gospel of Luke. It's because he was the source really for much of Luke's writing. And having received the apostolic transmission, Luke says, it seems good to me also having followed all things closely for some time past to write an orderly account for you.

He has followed all things related to the Christian movement, not just some things, and he has followed them closely or carefully, not haphazardly or casually, and he has done this for some time past.

So literally the phrase means from above or from the top. So for example, when we say, hey, like the music ministry team is practicing here and say, hey, let's take it from the top. That means let's start over from the top, right?

So from the beginning. So it means to start over. Luke has gone back to the very beginning, origin of Christianity, and he's investigated the matter carefully, and he is now writing an orderly account, an organized, systematic treatment of the person and work of Jesus Christ for the benefit of his readers.

And this book has a recipient. Verse 3 says, This is like a dedication page in a book.

[9 : 36] The fact that it's dedicated to Theophilus who may have been the patron who funded this project. We don't know that for sure. But the fact that it's dedicated to him doesn't mean that it's not written for anyone else.

It's written for all of us. As 4th century pastor Ambrose put it cleverly, because the name Theophilus means lover of God. He said, If you love God, it was written to you.

So you should receive it as God's word written for you. And Theophilus needed to grow in certainty regarding these matters, Luke writes. That's why he wrote this. So if you are someone who is uncertain or seeking, searching the truth as well, then this book is a great place for you.

And I hope you stay with us for the whole series. The book of Acts is the sequel to the Gospel of Luke, even though they're separated in our New Testaments. We know that because Acts 1.1 begins this way.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. So the main theme of Luke Acts, it's a series, is that God fulfilled his salvation promises to Israel by creating a body of believers from both Jews and Gentiles.

[10 : 49] The entire Gospel of Luke is a movement toward Jerusalem, where Jesus dies and is raised from the dead for our sins. And the entire book of Acts is a movement away from Jerusalem with the apostles, the followers of Christ, taking the Gospel from Jerusalem to all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

And the Gospel of Luke follows a similar Gospel outline with the birth and preparation for Jesus' ministry, the ministry in Galilee, the journey to Jerusalem, and then the suffering and resurrection.

It will take us about 29 weeks to get through the Gospel of Luke, which will bring us to the beginning of summer. And it has been two years now since we were last in one of the four Gospels.

And I'm eager to get back to a Gospel because the Gospel of Jesus, it's about Jesus, right? Of course, the whole Bible is about Jesus.

And we learn about him and the things that he did and the significance of all those things for our lives. But in the Gospels, we encounter the person of Jesus himself, his life, the things he said, how he interacted with people.

[11 : 55] And I think as early 17th century writer or 19th century pastor J.C. Ryle said that he who wants to be conformed to Christ's image and become Christ-like should acquaint themselves with the life of Christ.

This should be precious to us, everything that we find about Christ in this book. Today's particular passage teaches us that we should be, we should believe the word that God has graciously sent Jesus as the messianic king.

That's the main point of this passage. And first, we see the promise of a prophet and then we see the promise of the king in verses 26 to 38. Verse 5 gives us the historical backdrop.

So read with me. It says, In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Abijah and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth.

So Herod, here called the king of Judea, is what history calls Herod the Great. He was appointed to rule over Judea by Mark Antony, the general of Julius Caesar. Now, Herod reigned from 37 to 4 BC and he was the one who kind of styled himself as this messianic Davidic king.

[13 : 12] And so he engaged in massive building projects including expanding the temple of God and for this reason because of how he saw himself when he heard that a baby named Jesus whom some claimed were the promised Messiah was born, he ordered the massacre of the innocents killing all newborn male babies two years or younger from that region as Matthew 2 talks about.

So he is not so great after all. And during the reign of this Herod, he says there was a priest named Zechariah of the division of Bija and so Zechariah was a priest but not only was Zechariah a priest, verse 5 tells us also that he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron and her name was Elizabeth.

Aaron and his descendants were set apart for the priesthood in Exodus 28 and the rest of the members of the Levitical tribe, the Levites, became assistants in the temple.

And because of this, there was provisions for a priest to not marry, commands not to marry a prostitute or woman who has been defiled and it was considered particularly good for them to marry their own people among the priestly tribe, the Levites.

In chapter, Leviticus 21, 14 talks about that. So the fact that Zechariah, a priest, is married to Elizabeth, a woman of priestly, Aaronic ancestry, is a sign of special privilege and piety.

[14 : 40] So in other words, this is an exceptionally good pedigree. If any good is going to come, if anyone great spiritually, of great spiritual stature is going to come, it's going to come from this family.

That's kind of what this is laying down for you. This is a family tree worth bragging about in short. And not only were Zechariah and Elizabeth a priestly lineage, they carried on a great spiritual legacy. Verse 6 tells us that they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and the statutes of the Lord.

So not only were they well-bred, they were well-raised and grown, and they were righteous. Not in the legal, technical sense that they're blameless entirely before God, or perfect before God, but that they walked with Him and were faithful to Him to the degree that any sinful human being can.

So they lived moral lives. And so they are a spiritually exemplary couple, but they lacked one thing. Verse 7 says, But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

So the word but kind of signals that contrasting, those two contrasting realities. Because throughout the Old Testament, motherhood is viewed frequently as a, actually, motherhood is seen as a crowning joy and achievement of a woman's life.

[16 : 03] And for that reason, infertility was viewed frequently as a sign of divine disfavor. And childless married women were viewed with contempt. But, this wasn't the case with Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Well, they did receive contempt, but they weren't cursed by God, because it says they were righteous before Him. Elizabeth's barrenness was not a sign of God's judgment. And this unfortunate situation is intended at this point to remind us of many great Old Testament saints who had experienced prolonged infertility, but God intervened in a dramatic way to give them children.

We can name several off the top of our heads. Like Isaac, for example, from Abram and Sarah. Samson, from Manoah and his wife, in Judges 13. And then Samuel, the great prophet and the last judge of Israel, born to Hannah, who had no children.

And, and, and Isaac's comparison is particularly relevant because it says that Abraham and Sarah, when they had Isaac, were old and advanced in years, exactly the same way that Elizabeth and Zechariah are described here.

So this current account fits the pattern of how God has intervened at critical junctures in human history to, so it kind of builds up the expectation as we're reading this gospel.

[17 : 20] It's God's preparing something great through this infertile couple. Verses 8 to 9 continue the story. Now, while he, Zechariah, was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Israel's priesthood was divided into 24 divisions in the first century and priests from each division were expected to serve two one-week periods per year at the temple and the custom was to choose by lot which one of those many priests would actually enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

So this was a special honor that a priest would receive at most once in his life and Zechariah is here performing the greatest really act of his priestly ministry, greatest act of service that he can render to God as a priest.

And then verses 10 to 17 tell us what happened during this momentous occasion. As the people are waiting outside praying, Zechariah is offering the incense and Angela the Lord appears on the right side of the altar of incense and that understandably fills Zechariah with fear it says he was troubled which is a typical human response to something that we don't know, we're not familiar with and that's the typical response we see throughout the Bible when a divine being or an angelic being appears.

But the angel reassures him in verse 13, do not be afraid Zechariah for your prayer has been answered for your prayer has been heard and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son and you shall call his name John.

[18 : 54] Zechariah, like the crowd waiting outside the temple was probably praying on behalf of his nation as he was offering incense on their behalf but this is not the only prayer that has been heard.

Zechariah and Elizabeth's personal prayers for a child over the years have also been heard in this answer that God brings through his angel Gabriel. So Elizabeth will bear a son whose name shall be John which means the Lord has been gracious.

And it says in verse 14 and you will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great before the Lord. Not only will John bring joy to Zechariah many will rejoice at his birth because for he will be great before the Lord.

Later in chapter 7 verse 28 Jesus says in fact that John is very great he says among those born of women he says none is greater than John.

But note well that this is a greatness before the Lord not before men. John is definitely not great by worldly standards. He was imprisoned and decapitated and yet before the Lord he was great.

[20 : 09] and that's the greatness that truly counts that we should seek. And how is John great before the Lord? John is set apart for a special God-given mission and for that reason verse 15 says that he must not drink wine or strong drink and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

In the Old Testament Nazarites people who had taken a special vow of service to God were commanded to abstain from drinking for their entire lives. And much like Prophet Samuel who was dedicated by his mother in this way John will have a special commission from the Lord and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

So this shows that John is kind of a transitional figure. In the Old Testament people the great people of God prophets the priests and the kings were filled by the Spirit of God at particular moments to do the great things that God was calling them to do.

But they were not indwelt by the Spirit of God permanently. And here John seems to be filled with the Spirit of God from birth in a more permanent way. And that too will be superseded by the Pentecost when all believers are filled by the Spirit of God.

And so this filling of the Holy Spirit is necessary because of the divine calling that John has which is of unprecedented importance. It says in verses 16 to 17 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of their fathers and to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

[21 : 43] John's mission is to go before God in the spirit and power of Elijah to call the people of Israel to repentance to make ready for the messenger the Lord to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

This is a fulfillment of Malachi chapter 3 verse 1 which said that a prophet like Elijah would come to prepare the way before God. He's the one who goes before God in the spirit and power of Elijah.

So the Lord is coming to save Israel and John's mission is to go before him to prepare the people of God like a servant that goes before the king to lay down the red carpet so to speak to announce his coming to make way for the king.

And it's because of this that not just Zechariah and Elizabeth will rejoice but many will rejoice because John because of what he represents he's the forerunner to the Lord himself.

The words joy and rejoice occur frequently throughout the gospel of Luke and they are particularly associated with the joy that's produced by Jesus' mission of seeking and saving the lost.

[22 : 52] So that's what's going to happen and John is the forerunner of that announcing that and preparing the people by bringing reconciliation repentance and reformation among the people of God.

But Zechariah responds to the angel with skepticism in verse 18. How shall I know this? For I'm an old man and my wife is advanced in years.

Much like Abraham and Sarah who doubted God's promise of a son because they were old and advanced in years Zechariah is doubtful and he's asking for a sign. He said how shall I know this?

What you're telling me sounds really good but let's be real here. My wife and I are well past childbearing age so how can I know for sure that this will indeed happen?

Give me some kind of sign. So throughout the gospels asking for a sign is usually frowned upon. It's the same in the gospel of Luke as well. It's an evidence of unbelief.

[23 : 57] And so the angel kind of takes this personally. He takes personal offense to this question. He answers in verse 19 I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

How can you know for sure? You have any idea who I am? I am Gabriel an angel of God in fact I just came from the very presence of God. He was the one that told me to tell you this God you know him the creator the one who made you yes for this unbelief the angel rebukes Zechariah and inflicts him with the temporary judgment that will be a sign to him that the word will come true.

The angel says in verse 20 and behold you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their time.

God does grant Zechariah a sign but it's a sign that's also a judgment of his temporary loss of speech until John's birth. It seems likely that he lost hearing also because people have to use a sign to communicate to him in chapter 1 verse 62.

So the unbelieving Zechariah becomes unhearing and unspeaking until the words of God are fulfilled in their time. The concept of fulfillment and the appointed time is significant throughout the gospel of Luke.

[25 : 24] They speak of the truth that God in his sovereign perfect timing fulfills all of his purposes. Even though things might not happen on our timetable God's timing his appointed time always is perfect it's fulfilled it will be fulfilled.

So Zechariah goes home as a mute man after completing his temple service and verses 24 to 25 tells what happened afterward. After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept herself hidden saying thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among people.

After becoming pregnant Elizabeth keeps herself hidden for five months because she had borne so much reproach and scorned from other people due to her barrenness.

It's hard to imagine nowadays because people especially Massachusetts actually has the people in Massachusetts have children the latest of all the places in the country.

Childbearing is not really prioritized in this part of the country and so it's hard for us to imagine but childbearing was such a significant thing in this time ancient world.

[26 : 41] it was like I said the crowding achievement of a woman's life and so you could imagine the talk and the reproach that they bear from people the neighbors that woman Elizabeth she hasn't given her husband that godly priest of a husband a child she hasn't given him a son let alone any children what a useless wife Elizabeth she acts all pious and put together on the outside but she must be hiding something terrible on the inside because she's infertile she must be cursed by God every family gathering when all the relatives have gathered around with their children and grandchildren around the table there would be Zachariah and Elizabeth alone with some chatty relatives giving unsolicited advice hey have you have you tried this herbal medicine you're not trying hard enough have you consulted a fertility specialist all that pent up sorrow shame reproach gone as Elizabeth says thus the lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among people she knows the people won't believe her so she waits for five months which is about how long it takes for first time moms to develop an unmistakable baby bump this account reveals the wonderful kindness of god right here is god bringing the good news of salvation to the nations he's unfolding his cosmic salvation plan that's been in the works for thousands of years and as he's doing that as he's preparing the way for the messianic kingdom this high and mighty god looks on lowly

Elizabeth he looks on her with kindness it takes away her reproach god's not too busy for us he's intimately involved in your lives and he looks on you with kindness if you belong to him god sees you when you are lonely and isolated god sees you when you are sleep deprived from seemingly endless studies god sees you when you're exhausted from taking care of children when you feel sad and depressed when you feel rejected and worthless when you are wronged and taken advantage of god sees you in all those situations things he looks on you so when you cry out to him you can know that he will hear and answer god answers every single prayer that his people pray to him he may say no and redirect you to a better way he may say not yet and make you wait for the word of the lord to be fulfilled in his time but you should never doubt that God hears and he cares that he's looking upon you as he did for Elizabeth Elizabeth is proof of that reality so that's the promise of a king now we see the promise of the king the promise of the prophet that was now we see the promise of the king in verses 26 to 28 verses 26 to 27 tells the context it's in the sixth month of

Elizabeth's pregnancy so now the news is out and it says a city in the city of Galilee the angel sent Zechariah to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David and the virgin's name was Mary we learned two important details here about Mary first she is a virgin so she is a desolate woman she is a chaste I mean she is a chaste woman she hasn't been she hasn't known a man and second she is betrothed for Jews during this time the marriage process had two stages the first stage was the betrothal an agreement to marry which was formalized by the presence of witnesses and the exchange of the bride price after that first stage this engagement the woman was considered to legally belong to to her husband and they were called husband and wife but it would be another year until their marriage would be consummated in a wedding ceremony and that would be the second stage of the marriage process and so before that though if you break off the engagement it was still considered the divorce which is why in Matthew 119 Joseph finds that Mary's pregnant and considers quietly divorcing her so the betrothal the first stage of the marriage process that's where Joseph and Mary are currently but the wedding is still probably a ways off usually took about a year and we also learned something about Joseph in this verse it says that Joseph was of the house of David since Jesus is born of the virgin Mary Jesus is technically not Joseph's biological son but because of Mary's marriage to Joseph Jesus's lineage will be traced through Joseph and he will be counted as as belonging to the house of David he's a descendant of King David and the angel greets Mary this way in verse 28 greetings oh favored one the Lord is with you the word favor is the same word that's often translated in the New Testament as grace it refers to unmerited favor a favor shown to someone who does not deserve it this word is repeated again in verse 30 when the angel tells Mary that she has found favor with God and and the word greetings actually also looks and sounds very much like the word grace in Greek so there's this alliteration and repetition that really emphasizes this idea of grace

Gabriel's message to Zechariah earlier was an answer to his prayer but Gabriel's message to Mary comes unsolicited it's an act of divine grace unmerited favor and verse 29 tells us that Mary was greatly troubled at the same and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be what does it mean that I found favor with God what does it mean that I have received his grace and the rest of the conversation reveals the meaning of that verses 30 to 33 please follow along as I read 30 to 33 and the angel said to her do not be afraid Mary for you have found favor with God and behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end there are many intentional parallels between the two birth announcements in this chapter so in both cases right it was Gabriel that came from God in both instances with Zechariah and Mary were troubled uh it says and filled with fear then Gabriel assures them both and tells them do not be afraid and then he gives he gives a reason why they should not fear and then the births then are promised and Gabriel tells them what the names of the baby will be and Gabriel also says that both of them will be great and explains their significance so very similar accounts of the birth and because of this intentional parallelism the differences between the two strike us even more and it's intended to because if you compare them side by side there's some notable differences Luke is highlighting by doing this the superiority of Jesus to John the announcement of

John's birth was amazing but the announcement of Jesus's birth is even more amazing when Zechariah first encounter the angel he was troubled but after hearing the angelic greeting it says Mary was greatly troubled John was born of a barren woman Jesus is born of a virgin woman John's name means Lord is gracious Jesus's name means the Lord saves John's described in verse 15 as great before the Lord but verse 32 simply says that Jesus will be great in the old testament no one but God is described as great in an absolute sense in the for example Moses is described as great but it's qualified he's great in the land of Egypt in the side of Pharaoh's servants and in the side of the people it's Exodus 11 3 likewise Mordecai is described as great in in the in Esther but it says that he's great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers but only God is great period stop only God it's like an attribute of God only he is great in who he is and that's all so

[35 : 56] Jesus is described in those significant terms he has unqualified inherent greatness and John was described as a Nazarite as a prophet set apart for the Lord in verse 15 but verse 32 says that Jesus will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give him the throne of the father his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end most high is a title that's exclusively applied to the one true God and here Jesus is described as the son of the most high it's another way to say what's what he says in verse 35 that he'll be called holy the son of God Jesus who is a son of God is also a son of David and he will reign as the Davidic king this is in fulfillment of 2nd Samuel chapter 7 verses 12 to 14 God had promised this to David he said I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom he shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son so this language of sonship is a fulfillment of that messianic promise and in an immediate sense of course that prophecy was fulfilled in the reign of David's son Solomon who built the temple of God but the kingdom that Solomon built as well as the temple came tumbling down as we saw in the book of Jeremiah so in an ultimate sense

Solomon did not fulfill this promise the one who fulfills this prophecy in an ultimate sense is King Jesus who's the one who alone establishes an eternal kingdom that will last forever and that's why it's significant that Joseph's lineage is traced as his as an adoptive earthly father of Jesus traced back to King David as we saw in verse 27 so in every sense John's making a point Jesus is superior to John and John is the servant prophet and Jesus is the king Jesus is the hero and John is the sidekick that's the point that Luke is driving home with these announcements but John and Jesus are not the only people who are being compared in this passage because verses 20 34 to 38 also compare Mary's response to the angel with Zechariah's response to the angel like Zechariah who asked the angel a question in verse 18 Mary too asks a question she says in verse 34 how will this be since I am a virgin that's a sensible question right the angel's announcement suggested an immediate pregnancy which would have doubtlessly been alarming for a betrothed virgin my wedding day is still kind of far off right so how will this happen right will something happen to me will Joseph do something to me before our marriage right I mean that's the question right he's asking how will this happen and the angel reassures her in verse 35 the holy spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called holy the son of God the son of God that's the answer baby Jesus will not be conceived through physiological means but by spiritual means and there's a threefold structure in verse 35 that reveals a wonderful redemptive activity of the triune God the holy spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you therefore the child to be born will be called holy the son of God the three persons of the trinity we see that their redemptive activity through the virgin birth and early in verse 20 gabriel said to zachariah and behold you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place and zachariah's muteness was the sign that this will surely take place and here in verses 36 to 37 gabriel provides sign to mary as well saying using the same introductory phrase and behold your relative elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren for nothing will be impossible with God so the fact that elizabeth mary's old and barren relative is now pregnant serves as a sign for mary that nothing will be impossible with God and she will surely have a child as a virgin a dutch theologian comments on this verse he says the laws of nature are not chains which the divine legislator has laid upon himself they are threads which he holds in his hand and which he shortens or lengthens at will God as his as the creator is not bound by the laws of nature and that's what he intends to do to bring about a virgin birth and mary's response is exemplary in verse 38 she says behold i am the servant of the lord let it be to me according to your word this is an extremely humble and faith-filled response right she refers to herself as a servant of God a bond servant a slave expressing total submission to him and his word because conceiving a child in this way would have been a no small risk for mary think about it right she was risking being accused of promiscuity and infidelity and being pregnant with an illegitimate child the marriage that she was looking forward to could have been called off as in fact joseph

tries to do until he is stopped by the lord and in spite of all of and if that had been broken up she would have had to bear the shame of a prostitute for the rest of her life and yet knowing that she responds in faith and submission and says behold i am the servant of the lord let it be to me according to your word that's what it means to be a servant of the lord that's what it means to be a follower of jesus christ are you willing to obey and submit to the will of god as mary did even a significant pain and cost to yourself are you or are you only willing to obey god when his will suits your will and preferences i pray that all our church members will be characterized by as mary's kind of humble submission and humility and unconditional allegiance to god so we say in whatever situation let it be to me according to your word and mary's faith forms a stark contrast with zechariah's unbelief because remember zechariah asked for a sign and even though they both ask a question the tone of their questions are completely different right because zechariah was asking us for a sign to know for sure that this is going to happen mary believes that it will happen as as god had told her he would but she wants to know how it will happen so zechariah's question stems from unbelief as the narrative notes but mary's question stems from faith that is now seeking more understanding she asks questions from a place of belief and faith so becoming a christian likewise doesn't automatically mean that you fully understand everything about god and about the christian life but it does mean that you believe god and you take him add his word as mary does and you from that place of faith you seek to grow in further understanding not unbelief that's the main point that this passage is driving home here that we should believe the word that god has graciously sent jesus as the messianic king we celebrate christmas uh every year so it's easy for us to take this revelation for granted but let's reflect briefly as we close on how momentous of an announcement this is because the announcement of the birth of this messianic king was something that the jews have been earnestly and eagerly waiting for and praying for for 600 years after being conquered by the babylonians under nebuchadnezzar and then after uh being after being taken over by the persians under cyrus and then by the macedonian greeks under alexander the great and then after that by the roman republic which later becomes the roman empire for 600 years the israelites have known subjugation and oppression and the worship of god had been in disarray and the worship and people have been doubting and have been falling away from the lord and they were waiting come oh come emmanuel come messiah deliver us hosanna come and establish your kingdom forever that's what they've been waiting on i was watching um lion king yesterday with my daughter while uh hannah was away at a birthday party and it reminded me of this right the illegitimate king the the tyrant scar takes over the kingdom of pride lands everything is terrible people animals are dying right there's no food they're about to get wiped out and it's the rightful king simba who must take the throne to bring restoration he is the promised king the one that was to rule and that's really all of these stories great stories

lord of the rings another example all these great stories about kings who return to take their throne is a type it points to the story the ultimate story of jesus he is the ultimate king the promised king the messianic king who finally comes to establish the kingdom for a people that have been trampled on for many many years but this messianic king established his kingdom in a surprising way turns out that he has bigger fish to fry than these wimpy kings and emperors ephesians 2:2 tells us that we were all once following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience all of humanity that's not under the lordship of christ are under the tyranny of satan and they are enslaved by their sins to his power and jesus saves them rescues them to form a kingdom of his own by dying on the cross for the sins of his people and paying the penalty of sin and redeeming them from their slavery and defeating satan decisively once and for all on that cross and now he reigns from heaven as the resurrected and ascended king and that's what it means to be a follower of christ to say that's my king i don't serve the kings of this earth anymore that's my king and that's the vow that we have the privilege of seeing some of our own people make today in getting baptized they're renouncing the world they're renouncing their lives as they go into the water it symbolizes their death to sin death to their old life and they rise again with new life united to jesus that's my king you