

# ***FPFWC Christian Development***



## **God's Preparation**

December 2022

Fall Quarter

**December 10, 2022**

**Lesson #2 – Zacharias Speaks**

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 1:57-66, 76-79

**ICE BREAKER** –

1. If you lost your speech for a year, what would be your first words when you were finally able to talk again?
2. Why is it important for children to hear from their parents what God's place ought to be in their lives?
3. What can parents learn from Zacharias about passing on faith to their children?

***Key Verse: "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."—Luke 1:76***

**LESSON BACKGROUND**

The first chapters of Luke's Gospel tell the stories of two important births. Luke presents the events surrounding the births of John and Jesus in a way that connects them to each other. In both accounts, the angel Gabriel announced an approaching pregnancy and promised birth. Gabriel first appeared to a priest named Zacharias and prophesied regarding the pregnancy of his wife, Elisabeth, and the birth of their son, John (Luke 1:8–19; see lesson 1). Then the angel appeared to Mary and announced that she was "highly favoured" in the eyes of God (1:28) and that she would give birth to a son (1:31–33).

Mary and Elisabeth were related (Luke 1:36). Later, when Mary visited Elisabeth, the unborn John "leaped" in his mother's womb, and Elisabeth "was filled with the Holy Ghost" (1:41). Elisabeth proclaimed her relative to be blessed because of Mary's demonstration of faith and belief in God's words through Gabriel (1:45). The proclamation led Mary to rejoice through a song of worshipful adoration and prophetic expectation (1:46–56, lesson 4). Luke's Gospel emphasizes God's work in the world by way of Elisabeth, Mary, and their experiences while pregnant.

This lesson's Scripture depicts the second half of a type of pause that affected John's father. When Zacharias received Gabriel's revelation regarding Elisabeth's pregnancy, he questioned whether God's promise could come true (see Luke 1:18, lesson 1). Gabriel gave a sign to Zacharias: he would be mute until Gabriel's words were fulfilled (1:19–20). Zacharias would have to endure this sign for the length of Elisabeth's pregnancy.

Elisabeth recognized that God was at work in and through her pregnancy. She proclaimed that "the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men" (Luke 1:25). Would Zacharias feel the same on the other side of his dramatic pause?

## **LESSON COMMENTARY**

### **Birth and Naming of John by Elizabeth (1:57–66)**

**1:57–66.** The birth of John (1:57–58) was recognized by Elizabeth’s family and friends as a display of unusual **mercy** to her from the Lord. In accord with the custom of naming a child on the day of his circumcision (cf. Lv 12:1–3) and following the angel’s instructions (cf. Lk 1:13) Elizabeth named her son **John** (1:60b) instead of **Zacharias** after his father (as the relatives wanted to do, 1:59). Still pressing their case, the relatives inquired from Zacharias (that they **made signs** to him would suggest he was not only mute but deaf as well, 1:62), and to their surprise he confirmed in writing that the child was to be called **John** (1:63). Zacharias had turned from skeptic to believer, and thus he instantly regained his powers of speech and began **to speak in praise of God** (1:64). The first reaction of the people was **fear** (1:65a) because the whole event was awe-inspiring. Then the news of the event spread to the whole region (**the hill country of Judea** 1:65b) because the event was remarkable. Finally the people wondered about this child because it was clear that **the hand of the Lord was certainly with him** (1:66)—he was extraordinary.

**1:67–79.** With his restored powers of speech, and being **filled with the Holy Spirit** (a manifestation that in Luke’s writings always comes before a person speaks in some revelatory way; cf. Andreas J Kostenberger, “What Does It Mean to Be Filled with the Spirit: A Biblical Investigation,” *JETS* 2 [1997], 229–40), Zacharias immediately turned to praising God. This song—a work of poetry—was intended to be the answer to the people’s question in 1:66—**What will this child turn out to be?** The song, drawn mostly from quotations and allusions of the OT (e.g., 1:68 with 1Kg 1:48 Ps 41:13; 72:18; 1:69 with 1Sm 2:1, 10; Ps 18:2; 89:17; 1:71 with Ps 106:10; 1:73 with Gn 22:16; 1:78 with Mal 4:2; 1:79 with Is 9:2), is called the *Benedictus* (after the first word of Lk 1:68 in the Latin version). In one long sentence (1:68–75) Zacharias praised God for His work of fulfilling His covenant promises to David (1:69) and to Abraham (1:73). This work of “covenant fulfillment” was to be accomplished by the One whom John would one day announce and introduce to the world—this child (**you, child** 1:76). In the rest of the song (1:77–79) Zacharias highlighted the ministry of the coming One in terms of salvation, forgiveness, mercy, guidance, and peace.

**LESSON NUGGET** – Zacharias praised God for what He would do for His people, Israel. It was the dawning of a new day (vv. 78-79) because the Messiah was about to be born. God keeps His promises and is faithful to His covenants.

**Sources:** *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*