

## SESSION 1

Unit 1

# The Savior Comes

### Session Outcome

To believe that God acts to accomplish His will through those who are open and obedient to Him.

### Customize:

is the password to access expanded teaching helps at [SundayTeacher.com](http://SundayTeacher.com).

### Discover:



See *Illustrated Bible Life* for an insightful look at the history and duties of Israel's priests, and verse-by-verse commentary on the Scripture passage.

December

2

## JOHN'S BIRTH FORETOLD

*God miraculously sets into motion the fulfillment of Israel's hope.*

### THE WORD

**LUKE  
1:5-25**

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. <sup>6</sup>Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. <sup>7</sup>But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. <sup>14</sup>He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup>for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. <sup>16</sup>He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>**And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**"

<sup>18</sup>Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

### KEY VERSE







# Discussion Guide



## Connect to My Experience

In the 1984 movie, *The Karate Kid*, the karate student's (Daniel) teacher made him perform chores around the house like waxing the car, painting the fence, and painting the house. Even though these appeared on the surface to be nothing more than common chores, Daniel was surprised to discover that the movements he learned were the foundation of his karate training.

- Have you ever tried to do something new (a job, a new phase of life such as parenting, a new skill) and realized that your previous experience had prepared you more than you realized? Invite the group to share examples from their life.
- Has there been a time when you were asked to do something that at the time seemed unimportant, but in the end had a significant impact on your life? Invite the group to share examples from their life.

## Transition:

Zechariah's years of faithful service in the temple put him in the right place to receive a surprising visit from an angel of God and resulted in a significant role in the coming of the Savior.



## Connect to the Word

*Invite someone to read Luke 1:5-10, then discuss the following,*

Zechariah and Elizabeth remained righteous and faithful to perform their duties despite their inability to have children.

- Have you or someone you know ever gone through a time of questioning God's goodness when life did not go as you hoped or thought it should? If so, what did you learn from that experience?
- In difficult times like these, where do people find encouragement? Despite trials and setbacks, how do believers stay on the path of faithfulness?

One of God's covenant promises to those who served Him was descendants—children. Notice Zechariah and his wife are childless, even though they are "righteous before God." God chose to fulfill His promises on His timetable.

- What circumstances might we experience that would lead to feelings of disappointment and loss of expectancy of God's intervention?
- Why is it important for us to put our faith and trust in God's timing rather than our own?
- What words of encouragement can we speak into the lives of those who might feel discouraged spiritually or are close to giving up on God?

*Invite someone to read Luke 1:11-17, then discuss,*

God sent the angel Gabriel to appear to Zechariah, and Zechariah was "startled and gripped with fear." This is the first of several angelic messages to people in Luke. The angel's first words are, "don't be afraid." This is consistent throughout the angelic appearances.

- Zechariah experienced the fear of being visited by an angel. In what ways can other types of fear grip our lives, keeping us from experiencing what God has for us?
- What ways can we overcome those fears? (Prayer, Scripture, Christian counseling, talking to a mature believer)
- The angel visited Zechariah unexpectedly. Share a time when God showed up

## Insight

God works in and through the lives of faithful people, even if the timing seems a bit off. Zechariah and Elizabeth spent their whole adult lives living with the shame of being barren; yet when the time came, they were blessed to be the parents of a major prophet. God can and does redeem the time we think might be lost.

**in your life in a way that surprised you. What did you learn from that experience?**

According to Gabriel, John would be “filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.” Surely this promise and description exceeded Zechariah’s wildest imagination. In Luke’s gospel, the Holy Spirit is presented as a major mover and motivator, working in and through the lives of God’s people (and God’s Son) to accomplish God’s purposes.

- **Share a time when God worked in your life and exceeded anything you could imagine for yourself, either in the past or now. What did you learn from that experience?**

*Invite someone to read Luke 1:18-25, then discuss the following,*

Even in the presence of an angel, Zechariah was skeptical of God’s ability to fulfill His promises.

- **What are situations or circumstance that might cause people to become skeptical of God’s ability to fulfill His promises? How does faith and trust help us overcome our skepticism?**
- **Zechariah’s child was not just for him and Elizabeth, but for all the people of Israel. How might it change our prayers if we practiced bringing our requests before God in view of our whole community of faith and not just asking for what will benefit us personally?**



## Connect to My Life and the World

We all go through seasons of disappointment, through seasons of doubt, and through seasons of joy and celebration. We should remember that God’s plan might seem scary or confusing; however, we must allow God to help us move through the fear and the questions to obedience.

- **How can this group become a place where we can share our stories of disappointment, doubt, fear, and joy together? What might make it hard for us to share those stories? Spend some time now or this week connecting with an individual or group to listen to one another’s stories.**
- **What practices or disciplines of the faith help you to keep going when life isn’t going as it should? List some practices of your own or even some that you’ve heard others talk about. As a group, consider doing something together, such as a fast or praying at a specific time of day. Share your experiences.**

Zechariah and Elizabeth were open to God’s working in their lives, which in turn impacted the lives of others. God’s plan for our lives always involves other people—the community. God’s plan for redeeming the world goes beyond simply “Jesus and me.” God’s grace should always be moving through our lives on its way to others.

- **In what ways can we allow the redeeming grace of God to move in and through our lives this week?**

*Sessions 1-7 are written by Marissa Coblentz*

Marissa is the co-pastor, with her husband, of Countryside Church of the Nazarene. She has two kids and is a graduate of Olivet Nazarene University and Nazarene Theological Seminary.