



SERIES OVERVIEW

Each gospel account of Jesus' birth focuses on a different aspect of its significance. Matthew roots Jesus' birth and early days into the history and experiences of ancient Israel. John depicts the incarnation in cosmic and eternal terms. But Luke focuses his account of Jesus' birth on the **literary and prophetic expectations of the Old Testament**. Picking up on imagery, themes, ideas, and language from Israel's Scriptures, Luke attempts to show the truth of Jesus' statement that "everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44).

Thus, as we explore the experiences of the witnesses to the events of Jesus' incarnation, we can see that the hopes and expectations they express are not theirs alone. They are continuing the hopeful expectation of all the people of God who have come before.

WEEK 1 - WAITING FOR SALVATION (ZECHARIAH) OVERVIEW

The book of Luke opens on a rather unremarkable character: an elderly priest named Zechariah. Although he and his wife were "righteous in God's eyes," they had been unable to conceive a child. Yet it is this priest who is told by an angel of the Lord that he will soon have a child destined to become the long-awaited prophet heralding the coming of God to the earth. Echoing the story of *another* elderly childless couple (Abram and Sarai), Zechariah must work through his initial doubt to come to a place of faith that God really means what he says.

Upon meeting his newborn son, John (a.k.a. "the Baptist"), Zechariah taps into the language and imagery of Israel's prophets to declare poetically what God is going to accomplish: salvation from Israel's enemies, a prophet who will prepare the way for the Lord, and a light for those who sit in darkness (all promises from the prophet Isaiah). All his life Zechariah had been waiting for salvation to come. Now, through his unexpected son it was about to be inaugurated.

Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace."

Luke 1:78-79

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are you waiting for? Share about a time in your life (now or in the past) that you would say is/was a time of waiting.
2. Describe the *world behind the text* and the *world of the text* of Luke 1-2.
3. Read [Luke 1:11-17](#). How do these verses link to the Old Testament passages: [Isaiah 9:2](#), [Jeremiah 29:11](#), [Isaiah 11:10](#), [Malachi 3:1](#), [Isaiah 40:3](#), [Malachi 4:5-6](#)?
4. What was Zechariah waiting for?
5. Read [Luke 1:78-79](#) (part of Zechariah's prophecy for his son).
 - a. How is our waiting fulfilled by the coming of Jesus? Is it?
 - b. What did Barry mean when he said that, as Christ-followers, we live in the "now" and the "not yet"?
 - c. Where is God's light shining in your life or in your situation?