

Prelude to Jesus' Birth

(Readers: Narrator #1; Narrator #2; Angel #1; Angel #2;
Zechariah; Elizabeth; Marry; People; OT Voice)

Lk.1:5 During the time when Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's group. His wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. 6 Zechariah and Elizabeth were both good people who pleased God. They did everything the Lord commanded, always following his instructions completely. 7 But they had no children. Elizabeth could not have a baby, and both of them were very old. 8 Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his group. It was his group's time to serve. 9 The priests always chose one priest to offer the incense, and Zechariah was the one chosen this time. So he went into the Temple of the Lord to offer the incense.

Lk.1:10 There was a large crowd outside praying at the time the incense was offered. 11 Then, on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord came and stood before Zechariah. 12 When he saw the angel, Zechariah was upset and very afraid. 13 But the angel said to him,

"Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard by God. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a baby boy, and you will name him John. 14 You will be very happy, and many others will share your joy over his birth. 15 He will be a great man for the Lord. He will never drink wine or beer. Even before he is born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 John will help many people of Israel return to the Lord their God. 17 John himself will go ahead of the Lord and make people ready for his coming. He will be powerful like Elijah and will have the same spirit. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will cause people who are not obeying God to change and start thinking the way they should."

Lk.1:18 Zechariah said to the angel,

"How can I know that what you say is true? I am an old man, and my wife is also old."

Lk.1:19 The angel answered him,

"I am Gabriel, the one who always stands ready before God. He sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. 20 Now, listen! You will not be able to talk until the day when these things happen. You will lose your speech because you did not believe what I told you. But everything I said will really happen."

Lk.1:21 Outside, the people were still waiting for Zechariah. They were surprised that he was staying so long in the Temple. 22 Then Zechariah came outside, but he could not speak to them. So the people knew that he had seen a vision inside the Temple. He was not able to speak, so he could only make signs to the people. 23 When his time of service was finished, he went home. 24 Later, Zechariah's wife Elizabeth became pregnant. So she did not go out of her house for five months. She said,

Lk.1:25 "Look what the Lord has done for me! He decided to help me. Now people will stop thinking there is something wrong with me."

Lk.1:26 During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin girl who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary. 28 The angel came to her and said,

"Greetings! The Lord is with you; you are very special to him."

Lk.1:29 But Mary was very confused about what the angel said. She wondered, "What does this mean?" 30 The angel said to her,

"Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you. 31 Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor David. 33 He will rule over the people of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Lk.1:34 Mary said to the angel,

"How will this happen? I am still a virgin."

Lk.1:35 The angel said to Mary,:

"The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High God will cover you. The baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God. 36 And here's something else: Your relative Elizabeth is pregnant. She is very old, but she is going to have a son. Everyone thought she could not have a baby, but she has been pregnant now for six months. 37 God can do anything!"

Lk.1:38 Mary said,

"I am the servant of the Lord God. Let this thing you have said happen to me!"

Then the angel went away. 39 Mary got up and went quickly to a town in the hill country of Judea. 40 She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the unborn baby inside her jumped, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she said to Mary,

"God has blessed you more than any other woman. And God has blessed the baby you will have. 43 You are the mother of my Lord, and you have come to me! Why has something so good happened to me? 44 When I heard your voice, the baby inside me jumped with joy. 45 Great blessings are yours because you believed what the Lord said to you! You believed this would happen."

Lk.1:46 Then Mary said,

Lk.1:47 "I praise the Lord with all my heart. I am very happy because God is my Savior. 48 I am not important, but he has shown his care for me, his lowly servant. From now until the end of time, people will remember how much God blessed me. 49 Yes, the Powerful One has done great things for me. His name is very holy. 50 He always gives mercy to those who worship him. 51 He reached out his arm and showed his power. He scattered those who are proud and think great things about themselves. 52 He brought down rulers from their thrones and

raised up the humble people. 53 He filled the hungry with good things, but he sent the rich away with nothing. 54 God has helped Israel--the people he chose to serve him. He did not forget his promise to give us his mercy. 55 He has done what he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

Lk.1:56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then went home. 57 When it was time for Elizabeth to give birth, she had a boy. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord was very good to her, and they were happy for her. 59 When the baby was eight days old, they came to circumcise him. They wanted to name him Zechariah because this was his father's name. 60 But his mother said,

"No, he will be named John."

Lk.1:61 The people said to Elizabeth,

"But no one in your family has that name."

Lk.1:62 Then they made signs to his father,

"What would you like to name him?"

Lk.1:63 Zechariah asked for something to write on. Then he wrote,

"His name is John."

Everyone was surprised. 64 Then Zechariah could talk again, and he began praising God. 65 And all their neighbors were afraid. In all the hill country of Judea, people continued talking about these things. 66 Everyone who heard about these things wondered about them. They thought,

"What will this child be?"

They could see that the Lord was with him. 67 Then Zechariah, John's father, was filled with the Holy Spirit and told the people a message from God:

Lk.1:68 "Praise to the Lord God of Israel. He has come to help his people and has given them freedom. 69 He has given us a powerful Savior from the family of his servant David. 70 This is what he promised through his holy prophets long ago. 71 He will save us from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us. 72 God said he would show mercy to our fathers, and he remembered his holy agreement. 73 This was the promise he made to our father Abraham, 74 a promise to free us from the power of our enemies, so that we could serve him without fear 75 in a way that is holy and right for as long as we live. Now you, little boy, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go first before the Lord to prepare the way for him. 77 You will make his people understand that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven. 78 With the loving mercy of our God, a new day from heaven will shine on us. 79 It will bring light to those who live in darkness, in the fear of death. It will guide us into the way that brings peace."

Mat.1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah happened. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph. But before they married, he learned that she was expecting a baby. (She was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.) 19 Mary's husband, Joseph, was a good man. He did not want to cause her public disgrace, so he planned to divorce her secretly. 20 But after Joseph thought about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said,

"Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to accept Mary to be your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son. You will name him Jesus. Give him that name because he will save his people from their sins."

Mat.1:22 All this happened to make clear the full meaning of what the Lord said through the prophet:

Mat.12:3 "The virgin will be pregnant and will give birth to a son. They will name him Immanuel." (Immanuel means "God with us.")

Mat.1:24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel told him to do. He married Mary. 25 But Joseph did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And he named him Jesus.

Lk.2:1 It was about that same time that Augustus Caesar sent out an order to all people in the countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that everyone's name must be put on a list. 2 This was the first counting of all the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 Everyone traveled to their own hometowns to have their name put on the list. 4 So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea. It was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because he was from the family of David. 5 Joseph registered with Mary because she was engaged to marry him. (She was now pregnant.) 6 While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have the baby. **TO BE CONTINUED**