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# SEEING *the* LIGHT *of* CHRISTMAS

7-DAY DEVOTIONAL  
ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



# SEEING THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

When many people think of the Christmas story, they turn to Luke 2. After all, it is here in Luke 2 that we read of the birth of the Savior. But the beauty of that story is set against the backdrop of promises fulfilled. There are rich characters in Luke 1 who help us see the longing for redemption.

In Luke 1, we see cynicism. We see doubt. We see hurt and shame. We also see repentance and beautiful pictures of faith. Ultimately what we see are promises fulfilled.

Here are seven devotions from Luke 1 (and a few Old Testament passages here and there) to help us see the light of Christmas and relish in the promises of God being fulfilled.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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## Christmas Is Also for the Jaded

*“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. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.” (Luke 1:5–7)*

“In the days of Herod, king of Judea...” There is much history behind that statement. Herod had built a splendid temple for the Jews. In some ways, it was the glory days. But Jerusalem was also occupied by Rome. Perhaps what Dickens said could be applied here as well, “It was the best of times it was the worst of times...”

But this story isn’t about Herod. I really like how one commentator put this:

The ruins of Herod’s buildings are still today more impressive than anything, ancient or modern, that visitors to Israel are likely to see. Nevertheless, despite his influence on the history, politics, and architecture of the first century, Herod lacked greatness of character and spirit and as a consequence did not change history. Herod sought in vain to immortalize himself and his reign, but at his death in 4 B.C. an angel announces the dawn of a new kingdom that will have no end (1:33).

The focus immediately shifts to a priest named Zechariah and his wife named Elizabeth. And unlike Herod, Zechariah has character. He is righteous. The text calls him “blameless.” That doesn’t mean that he never sinned it simply means he was one who followed the Lord. He was like the tree planted by the streams of living water we read about in Psalm 1. So, what do you expect to happen in verse 7? Do you expect the couple to be thriving and flourishing?

It’s not good news. “But they had no child.” Elizabeth is barren. In that culture that is synonymous with being cursed. It would have been a point of deep shame for the couple. And the fact that they were “advanced in years” means that it was not able to be remedied.

But our text tells us that Zechariah is being given a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. There were so many priests in his division and the task only happened on occasion, that this opportunity to “enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense” likely only happened once or twice. If the lot fell upon you, you would leave your family for a couple of weeks and serve in the temple.

Picture the scene. Imagine all of your prayers are put into a bowl. All of your aches, all of your longings, hopes, dreams, etc. In that bowl would be all of



the shattered pieces and the things that are seemingly put together. And you give that bowl to the priest—that would be Zechariah on this occasion—and he dumps it all at the Lord’s feet. “Hear our prayer, O LORD...”

How many times do you think Zechariah went to the temple and prayed that his wife would have a baby? How many times did Elizabeth say, “O, sweet, Z when you go to appear before the Lord...when you make our aches known... will you remember me?”

How many times had they been praying that all those promises in Isaiah about a deliverer coming? How many times did they pray for it to be fulfilled? How many times did they pray for God’s kingdom to come? And how many times did their situation echo that of the Egyptian slaves, where things only got harder for them and now they’d have to make bricks without straw?

When such disappointment happens, you tend to carry on with your religious duties but it loses some of its fervor. Zechariah, it seems, has become jaded. That’s why it’s not surprising to see his somewhat doubting response to the angel he meets face to face.

The angel tells him the good news. All your prayers are answered Zechariah. Not only your prayer for a child but also your prayer for deliverance. His response in verse 18 (which is meant to contrast with that of Mary) is jaded. “How shall I know this?”

He’s telling the angel, “Give me a sign and then I’ll believe you. *Then* I’ll get excited. *Then* I’ll believe the promise. *Then* I’ll hope again. But I’m not going to play the fool again and get my hopes up for them only to be disappointed.”

When we read this text, we aren’t meant to bash Zechariah. We are meant to identify with him. Sometimes promises are slow in coming. And we can become jaded. Yes, it’s telling us to not be like Zechariah. But it also realizes that quite often we *are* Zechariah. And just as the angel gives Zechariah a severe mercy, so also God often provides redemption in spite of our jaded spirits.

Are you jaded and cynical? Perhaps, today see yourself in this Christmas story. And know that God *is* bringing redemption. May this kindness lead you to repentance.

### DAY 3

## Christmas Is about Redeeming the Deepest Hurts

*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*



Sing? That feels cruel to say to one in such pain. But Isaiah's point there isn't to cause pain but to point to a deeper joy. He isn't glossing over all the pain, he is taking those places of deepest sorrow, and singing over them.

What is your place of deepest shame? It may be something that you've done. It might be something that was done to you. It might even be a combination of both. Now, do you feel the jolt of verse 1?

*"Break forth into singing and cry aloud."*

Isaiah 54:1–3 is very much in the background of a story like this. This is God doing the impossible. He is restoring. He is taking away Elizabeth's reproach. Her faith seems to be far better than Zechariah's. She's not as jaded.

What we are seeing in this passage is the beginning of a fulfillment of Isaiah 54. How can we sing over our deepest hurts and our most staggering shame? The barren woman rejoices because the gospel conquers. It's greater than her ache. It's bigger than her story.

Christmas is a reminder that God is redeeming even our deepest of hurts.

#### DAY 4

### When Your Christmas Doesn't Make Sense

*And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (The Holy Bible: English Standard Version)*

I'm not sure how Christmas is meeting you this year. Are you experiencing one of your deepest seasons of fulfillment? Is it met with pain, sorrow, and loss? There are times when the holidays are not a time for festivities but a time for sadness. As we saw in the story of Zechariah, Christmas can bring out our doubts.

But there are really two types of doubts. And Luke intentionally contrasts the story of Zechariah with that of Mary. Both are told by angels of an unbelievable story. But the response between Zechariah and Mary are different. It's subtle, but it's huge.

Zechariah says something like, "show me, then I'll believe." But Mary is saying, "I believe, show me. Care to tell me how I'm going to have a baby if, I've never been with a man?" It's as if she is saying, "I'm not sure how you're going to do this but I know you are..."

What a great testimony of faith. And our text helps us see that this too is God's work. Mary found favor. It wasn't because she was righteous, or her faith was so amazing or anything like that. God didn't pick Mary because she was awesome. Mary responded like this because God had picked her for this

job. It's a testimony of grace.

There are two different types of doubts. Zechariah's doubt is cynical. Mary's doubt is a trusting and a hoping type of doubt. She was trusting in His goodness even if she didn't understand. Those are two entirely different faith responses.

There is one more difference in the story of Zechariah and Mary that Luke wants us to see. It's the difference between John and Jesus. John is the forerunner to the Rescuer. Jesus is the Rescuer. He's the king. John is the servant to the king.

You see, there is something that Zechariah, Elizabeth, John, Mary, every human in this story has in common. They aren't able to bring about God's promises. They aren't the Rescuer. They have doubts. They have sin. They have brokenness. They are impacted by the fall of humanity.

But there is one in this story...born of a virgin...who is the Rescuer. It is upon him that we pin our hopes, even in those times when it doesn't make sense. How can a virgin be with child? I'm not really sure. But I trust the One who said it.

## DAY 5

### Christmas Tells Us How Redemption Will Happen

*Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.*  
(Luke 1:42-45)

In Luke 1, there are multiple characters. But they all have one thing in common. They are longing for redemption. They hope to be found in God's favor, to inherit God's blessing, to live in peace, and for all things to be made right. They want all the bad things to be overturned and for God to rule and reign. But how is that going to happen?

If you're the religious leaders of the day, you answer that by saying, "if our nation and our people will just believe the right things and do the right things and follow the Law, THEN God will rescue us."

And their strategy isn't crazy. Think about this. God is holy, right? He is powerful. He is mighty. He is a righteous King and Judge. What turns the head of such a mighty God? To whom will he look? Maybe that's a question that you are asking. Am I enough to turn God's head? Does he care? Does he







