

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 1- Luke 1:5-13** 4 The Parents of the Baptist- Part 2

November 9, 2008

Luke 1:5-13

Now as we begin this morning's message- we need to pick up where we left off last week. Last week, Dr. Luke is introducing us to the people who begin his Story of Salvation- the parents of the forerunner of the Messiah. So I want us to read again **Luke 1:5&6:**

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

Now because we know from history the dates in which Herod ruled in Judea- we can know that this scene took place somewhere between 6 and 4 B.C. The calendar that we use now had a mistake in it and there were some years that were lost in the beginning- so the time frame in which we meet the parents of John the Baptist was between 6 and 4 B.C.

And so let's look again at what Luke tells us here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about the character of these two godly people. Luke says that Zacharias and Elizabeth were:

... both righteous in the sight of God

Now just what is Luke trying to tell us here? We know that the Bible clearly teaches that human righteousness can never be developed into being pleasing to God. In **Isaiah 64:6** the prophet says:

... all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment ...

And because that fact was written 600 years before Jesus was born tells us that Luke understood that as well. So what is Luke saying here? Some teach that John the Baptist's parents were born without original sin and that they were so good that they had more righteousness than what they actually needed to go to Heaven, and so their excess righteousness was placed into a Treasury of Merit that is used to help get other people out of Purgatory sooner than normal. But is that what Luke was teaching here? Not at all.

No, when you examine the tense of the verbs used in this verse- you can see very quickly that Luke was actually saying here that both Zacharias and Elizabeth were "made" righteous. This righteousness was not inherent within them and was not the product of them keeping the Law of God- but this righteousness was the Righteousness of Jesus Christ that had been imputed to them by the agency of faith alone.

You see, these two were not righteous in the sight of men- they were righteous in the sight of God. They were made to be righteous the very same way that every other saved person in both the Old and New Testaments were made righteous- by faith alone.

And so both Zacharias and Elizabeth were made to be righteous by faith and they were righteous in God's sight because of what Christ did for them on the Cross. But you say, *"Wait a minute, Brother Blair, Jesus had not even been born at this time and He would die for another 33 years- so how did Jesus make Zacharias and Elizabeth to be righteous in the sight of God by what He did when he was not even alive?"* And that's a good question- here's the answer.

The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus not only goes forward 2,000 years to save us today- but it also goes backward 4,000 years to the beginning of Man. So everybody is saved the very same way. Abraham was saved by faith alone just as we are today. And even though the people who lived under the reign of the Old Covenant all lived before Jesus was born- nevertheless- they were made to be righteous the same way that we were- by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished work of Christ alone.

So what does that mean that Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous? That means their sins were covered because the only way that God could declare someone to be righteous when, in fact, they are sinful was if He didn't impute their sins to them. So Luke is telling us

here that both Zacharias and Elizabeth were right with Him; their sins were covered- they were saved.

How did this happen with them? The very same way that it happens all the time. Turn and read **Genesis 15:6** with me:

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

And now please turn and read the Apostle Paul's complete explanation of what Moses wrote here in **Genesis 15** by reading **Romans 4:1-16**:

1 What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found?

2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.

3 For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

4 Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

6 just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

7 "BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED.

8 "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

9 Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS."

10 How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised;

11 and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them,

12 and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised.

13 For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified;

15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation.

16 For this reason *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all,

So the Bible says that God literally gives or imputes or credits Righteousness as a covering to those who believe Him. And Zacharias and Elizabeth believed in God. They believed in the one true living God. They believed the Word of God. They believed the Revelation of the Old Testament. They believed that God's holy Law was right and true and just and good.

And they also believed that they were transgressors of that Law and that they could not perfectly keep His Law. They knew they were sinners who fell short of the Glory of God and they knew that the Law of God called for penitence and repentance and they also knew that God was a God of Mercy and Grace and Loving-kindness. They believed all that, and so they saw the Law of God as being God's one true holy standard. And they realized that they fell short of it. They went to God with a penitent heart and they asked Him for Grace and Mercy. That's what the Old Testament reveals. That was what God said,

“Here's My Law, you can't keep it but I am a God of Mercy and I am a God of Compassion and I am a God of Loving-kindness and Grace and all you have to do is trust and believe.”

and Zacharias and Elizabeth believed that.

Now I'm sure that Zachariah and Elizabeth both knew **Isaiah 61:10**. They both knew what Isaiah the prophet had meant when he said,

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of

righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

And they knew that. They knew that even though they were sinful- they could be covered with Righteousness and that God would be Merciful and Gracious to them and would cover them with a robe of Righteousness so that when God looked at them- He didn't see their sins- He saw His Own Righteousness- that He had imputed to them and not their own sin.

Now the question that always comes up at this point is this:

How could God do that? How could God count them as being righteous when in fact they were still sinful? How could God do that and still be holy? How can a holy God be just and the justifier of sinners at the same time? How can God just cover up sin and still be holy?

And the answer, of course, is Jesus. The only reason that God is able to forgive us and to pardon our sins is because all of our sins have been paid for by Jesus' death on the Cross. You see, dear friends, Nobody gets away with sin- our sins have been paid for. The full fury of God's Wrath against our sins was poured out on Jesus and He took the Judgment and Condemnation that should have fallen on us.

So God remains Just- even though He pardons guilty sinners- because all of our sins were paid for. This allows God to be both Just in judging sins through Jesus Christ, and Merciful to sinners in pardoning them even though they are guilty.

And it is interesting to note that Biblical Christianity is the only religion in the history of Man that allows for this to be true. In every other false religion and philosophy of Man- God can only be Just or Merciful- but He cannot be both at the same time. And that is because no other religion on earth has Jesus except Biblical Christianity.

But that only covers forgiveness and pardon. Our sins are forgiven and we are pardoned because of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus- but how do we become righteous? You see, beloved, when we are lost- we have two problems- not just one. We are sinful and need forgiveness- but we are also unrighteous and we need to become righteous.

The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus solved the first problem as we receive forgiveness for our sins and we are pardoned and escape the damnation of God by the fact that God put all of our sins on Jesus and poured out His full fury on the Lamb of God. So the result of that is that we are forgiven and pardoned.

But because we were, in fact, sinners, and because we, in fact, did transgress the Law of God- we are unrighteous and even though we are forgiven- and even though we have escaped the damnation of hell- we still need to be made Righteous so that we can enter into Heaven.

You see, in order for anyone to enter into Heaven- they have to be just as Righteous as God is. No unrighteousness, at all, can ever, at any time, enter into Heaven.

So in order for those who have been forgiven to go to Heaven and stand in God's Presence- they have to be made Righteous- Just as Righteous as God Himself is.

And there are only two choices as to how we become righteous once we are forgiven:

1. We develop our own *personal* righteousness based on what we do
2. We are made fit for Heaven based upon the Righteousness of Jesus Christ being imputed to us by the agency of faith alone

Every false religion and man-made philosophy on earth chooses option #1 and so they work very hard to develop their own personal righteousness by being baptized or by speaking in tongues or by keeping Communion or by attending the Mass or by praying certain prayers or by giving money.

In the case of Islam- this demonic religion teaches that people can actually become righteous and go to Heaven if they fly airplanes through skyscrapers.

Only Biblical Christianity teaches that we can't ever develop our own righteousness to the point where it is good enough to deserve Heaven and so we must be declared righteous.

But where does the Righteousness that is imputed to us come from? From Jesus- but not His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. No, we receive forgiveness and pardon based upon the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus- but we receive Righteousness based on the sinless Life that Jesus led.

You see, by Jesus living a sinless life, by Him never sinning one time, by the fact that Jesus never even had a bad attitude for one millisecond- Jesus kept His Father's Law- perfectly- in thought, word, and deed. That makes Jesus to be perfectly Righteous. And so, it is correct to say that Jesus literally earned His Own Righteousness based on what He did and what He did not do.

And it is that sinless, spotless Righteousness that is imputed to us by faith alone that allows God to declare us to be righteous-even though we are, in fact, still sinners. So the Righteousness that allows us entrance into Heaven- is not ours- it is Christ's- and we didn't *earn* that Righteousness- but it was credited to us by faith.

So Jesus earned Righteousness and we are declared to be Righteous based on the sinless life of Jesus. So in order for anyone to be saved- we not only need the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus- but we also need His sinless life.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were as sinful as we are. And they both had the very same problem that we have today- they are sinners and they are unrighteous. So Zacharias and Elizabeth needed both parts of Salvation just like we do. They needed to first be forgiven and then they needed to be made righteous.

And so they trusted in what God promised to them through the prophet in **Isaiah 53**:

1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its
shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation,
who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the
transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?

9 His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His
death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His
mouth.

10 But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would
render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong
His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

11 As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it and* be satisfied; By His
knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will
bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the
booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was
numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And
interceded for the transgressors.

So based on this Promise from God- both Zacharias and Elizabeth
knew there was coming Someone Who would bear their sins, Someone
Who would bear their griefs, Someone Who would carry their sorrows,
Who would be pierced for their transgressions, and crushed for their
iniquities.

And the parents of John the Baptist believed that all of their
iniquity would fall on Him. And that's how God could cover them with
righteousness. How? Because someone else would bear their sin. Who
was that someone else? Whoever fulfilled **Isaiah 53**. And who was it
Who actually did fulfill **Isaiah 53**? The Messiah- Jesus Christ.

And that's why in **John 1:29**- when John first saw Jesus- when
John was down at the river in his ministry and Jesus showed up for the
first time, John didn't say, "*There's the Messiah, there's the King.*" No,
John said,

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John spent his entire life neck deep in blood in the sacrificial system over and over and over and over day after day after day, all through the year these orders of priests just slaughtered animals, slaughtered animals. And never ever did it take away one single sin. The people had to come back and make another one, another one, another one, another one all their life long. So John was looking for the final Sacrifice- the One Who would bear his sin. So John was believing that God would somehow one day provide a sacrifice. Now doesn't that sound just like Abraham- who took his son up on Mount Moriah way back in **Genesis** and trusted that God would provide a sacrifice?

So Zacharias and Elizabeth were both believing people. They believed in God; they believed in the one true living God; they believed in His Law. And they knew they fell short of it. So they were penitent in their hearts. And they cried out to God for Mercy and they knew that God had promised provision for their sin. Someone would come one day and would bear all their sin.

For decade after decade he labored under the inferior sacrificial system of the Old Law. Decade after decade he butchered and slaughtered- day after day after day after day after day- endless animals and rivers of blood and not one sin covered and not one sin forgiven- day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year- all the while pondering and hoping and praying about that Someone Who God had promised that was coming to forgive and cleanse them.

So you can imagine the exhilaration that everyone who truly believed and who was earnestly looking for Messiah had when they heard John cry out that day,

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Zacharias knew and trusted and looked for the One Who would die the death for sin which would fully satisfy the holy Justice of God. God knew that that sin would be covered so then He could take care of the sinner by covering him with a robe of righteousness based upon what Christ would do. That is justification by imputation.

Luke tells the story later in chapter 18 about a self-righteous Pharisee who went to the temple and the Bible says in verses 11&12 that this man prayed:

Luke 18:11b&12

11 ...‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’

Meanwhile there was a wicked and despised publican who also went to that same Temple and look at how the Bible describes this man in verse 13:

But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’

Now look at verse 14 and see what the Lord Jesus Christ said about the two men:

I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

So we know that Zacharias and Elizabeth were like the sinful publican who cried for mercy and not like the self-righteous Pharisee because Luke tells us that they were both righteous.

So although Luke says in verse 5 that Zacharias was just a “certain priest”- one among 18,000 other priests- they were both very remarkable people in that they were part of a holy remnant- true godly Jews- who trusted God for Mercy and Salvation- in the midst of an apostate nation of self-righteous Jews working real hard to make themselves holy.

And there were more. And we're going to meet more as we go through Luke's Story of Salvation- Joseph, Mary, Anna, the old lady in the Temple, Simeon, the old man...they were all part of the holy remnant. They were part of the remnant who probably were hanging on to Malachi's Words that the sun of righteousness was going to rise and hoping it would be in their life time.

So from all of this we can see that Zacharias and Elizabeth weren't just justified- justification and righteousness are the same

thing- but they were also Sanctified as well. Look at the last part of **Luke 1:6** with me:

... walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

Luke tells us here that both Zacharias and Elizabeth were walking blamelessly in all the Commandments and Requirements of the Lord. You see, when true Salvation comes to you- you are not just forgiven, you are not just declared to be Righteous- but you also have been given a new Divine Nature. Please turn to **2Peter 1:4**:

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Now turn to **Ephesians 4:22-24**:

**22 That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,
23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
24 and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of* God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**

This new Divine Nature is also called "the seed of Christ" in **1John 3:9** and it is what Salvation is all about. You see, when we are saved- we are recreated so that we now desire to follow after the Lord; we desire to love Him and to serve Him and to obey Him. Even though we are not always successful- all saved people always desire to love and serve Jesus Christ. And this is so true- dear friends- that we know that those who do not desire to love and serve Jesus have not been truly born from above.

So Luke tells us that both Zacharias and Elizabeth didn't just receive forgiveness and then sit on their double wides as though that was it- but Luke tells us that they walked blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

Now that doesn't mean they were sinless. The word that was translated here into English as "blameless" doesn't mean they were

perfect. It just means they were earnestly desiring and trying to be obedient. And they had a reputation for walking according to the Will of God- which at that time was the Law of God.

They were like Job of whom essentially the very same thing is said in **Job 1:1**. Job was a faithful and obedient man- earnestly and sincerely desiring and trying to obey God. So in that sense- Job was blameless; the Bible says that he was upright- fearing God and hating evil.

So that means that Salvation is Justification- being declared righteous because Christ cares for your sins. And it also means that after you are Justified by faith alone- you are sanctified- you begin to walk with God and obey God and to learn of God and to love God.

So holiness was imputed to them- it was also imparted to them because they were regenerated, They were converted, They were transformed, They were saved. All these different terms mean the same thing.

Psalms 19:7 says:

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul...

So both Zacharias and Elizabeth were recreated and made to be different people so that they could live in a godly way.

They understood the Mosaic Law. They grasped its perfections. And they knew they fell short. They came to God, they got His Mercy and His Grace, and the result of all of this is that they loved the Law of God and they had an ongoing internal driving desire to keep it.

And God gave them the capability of doing that by changing them. They were then able to obey **Joshua 1:8**, which says:

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

They were **Psalm 119** people. **Psalm 119:97** says:

O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Now, you might say, "*Brother Blair- why are you telling us all this stuff?*" Because I honestly believe that this is what Luke is trying to tell

us here and so we need to have this kind of solid foundation. And the reason that I know that we need to get this solid foundation before we go on into Luke is because so many people don't understand this properly.

For example- some teach that the Bible talks about two different religions: Old Testament Judaism and New Testament Christianity- but that is not true. The Bible is comprised of two Testaments or two Covenants that describe the very same religion- salvation in and by and through Jesus Christ. Abraham was not saved by works. Abraham was saved the very same way that we are saved- by faith.

Others teach that Zacharias and Elizabeth were sinless and they made themselves righteous by what they did in perfectly obeying the Law of God- and that we will become righteous the same way if we just put enough effort into it. But that isn't true because no one can perfectly obey the Law of God because of the frailty of our flesh.

So we need to get this right, dear friends, so that the rest of this Gospel account will make sense. Luke is giving us something here that is critical to the Gospel, and it's critical to the whole message of the Bible. By describing Zacharias and Elizabeth the way that he is- Luke is laying an essential foundation for the entire Story of Salvation.

So what Luke is telling you is that the Gospel is not in conflict with true faith in Israel- but it is in complete harmony with true faith in Israel. These people would accept the Gospel gladly because it's the next reasonable step because they're looking for their superior Sacrifice.

Contrast that with the Apostle Paul- who was a Pharisee and who was going around trying to establish his *own* righteousness and had to say about his entire life before Christ that it was nothing but dung.

So these people evidenced for Luke the fact that the New Testament message is not in conflict with true faith in Old Testament Israel. It's not a new religion. It's not a new way of Salvation. It's not a different way to God. And Jesus did not come to oppose the Old Testament Law or to oppose the Old Testament Sacrifice- but Jesus came to affirm them and then to fulfill them.

So everything that the Old Testament taught about Salvation, being right with God, confession of sin, repentance, faith, the substitutionary death of a sacrifice for sin, and obedience to God's Law- that is all taught in the New Testament. Jesus said in **Matthew 5:18:**

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

God's Law, Man's sin, faith in God, repentance from sin, justification which is imputed righteousness, sanctification which is imparted righteousness which changes you, obedience to God's Law, worship of the one true living God- that's all carried from the Old into the New completely intact. And that is what Luke is showing us here.

So Zachariah and Elizabeth were both **Psalm 119:1** people. That verse says:

How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD.

So Luke tells us here about two sinful people who were made righteous by the Grace of God and who after their Salvation- walked with God with earnestness and passion. These are the parents of John the Baptist. Wouldn't you love to have parents like this? Wouldn't you love to have children like this? Wouldn't you love to be like this yourself?

But even though they were made righteous by Grace through faith, and even though their sins were covered, and even though when God looked at them He didn't see their sin anymore- He only saw Christ's Righteousness- even though all of that is true- even though both Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous in God's Eyes- they were *not* righteous in man's eyes. How do I know that? Read **Luke 1:7**:

But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

Now this is fascinating. Although Elizabeth and Zacharias had this great and powerful Salvation and they walked with God and God had imputed Christ's Righteousness to them- they were despised and looked down on by Man. Why? Because Elizabeth had no child. She was barren and back then to be barren was a sign to society that God had forsaken and abandoned you.

In addition to society labeling them as being abandoned by God- they were both very old and had past their time of really doing anything important in the eyes of the people. So they had a double whammy- old

and barren- probably the most unlikely people in the world to be used by God to bring forth the forerunner of the Messiah.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus- during the first Century- the most severe shame that a Jewish woman would ever bear was to be childless. Nothing else even came close. So based on this fact- the conclusion of society would have been:

*"Well, you know what the Bible says in **Psalms 127**- that children are a heritage of the Lord- and that they are a blessing from the Lord. And you know what Scripture says in **Deuteronomy 28** that if you are cursed by God- God will shut your womb and you will be barren."*

And so although they were righteous in God's Eyes- both Zacharias and Elizabeth were not righteous in the eyes of Man, and they were scorned and ridiculed and cast off and disrespected as examples of God's curse- rather than His blessing.

And since there was no retirement age for a Jewish priests- they were at least 60 and could have been as old as 80 or even older. So all their life together- and they were probably married in their late teens because that was the custom for the priests in that day- all their life together they had born the stigma of no child, barren, cursed by God, unfruitful- and the people would whisper behind their back- *"I wonder what's wrong; I wonder what sin is in their life."*

The Old Testament rabbis used to say that a sure sign that God was against someone as a Jew who has no wife, or a Jew whose wife has no child. So back then- to be barren was a horrible burden for a woman to carry.

So here's this couple- righteous in the sight of God- yet unrighteous in the sight of Man. And as godly as they were- they bore the stigma of this reproach. But Luke wants us to know that her barrenness had nothing to do with sin in their life- and that's why he wrote verse 6- but it had everything to do with something God was planning. God had something planned for them that was way beyond their wildest dreams. To this old forsaken couple was to be given the forerunner of the Messiah- the first prophet in over 400 years- the last prophet of the Old Testament, and, listen to this- the greatest prophet who ever lived.

They would have only one child- a son- and he would be the greatest human who had ever walked the earth up until that time- and that is from the Words of Jesus Himself. So in their case- barrenness and old age was not Divine *punishment*- but this is Divine *planning*.

And you know- their situation was absolutely hopeless in the natural. And that's exactly what God often prefers. And then you know what happened? Come back next week and find out. But I'll give you a little hint- verse 11- **“And an angel of the Lord appeared to him...”**

Wow! God breaks in and this story gets really exciting.

Lets' come and pray.

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