

RELATED SCRIPTURES

Matthew 11:11–13 | Luke 1:41–44 | Isaiah 40:1–8

STUDY FOR SERMON FROM 12.1.24

SUMMARY

Jesus said of John the Baptist that none greater has ever appeared than him and that the Law and the Prophets ruled until John (Matthew 11:11–13). And with John's birth, the Lord broke his silence as it had been four hundred years since the last prophecy had been uttered in Israel. John's father was a priest named Zechariah, divinely chosen to burn incense before the Lord. While performing his priestly duties, suddenly, Zechariah was filled with fear as an angel appeared before the altar. In his old age, he prayed for the privilege of having offspring with his wife, Elizabeth; the angel informed him that the Lord would answer his prayers. He and his wife would have a son, and though it was customarily the father who would choose the child's name, the angel told Zechariah his son's name would be John. The child would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (v. 15) and turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord in spirit and power of Elijah the prophet (vs. 16–17). This angelic pronouncement marked a new era in redemptive history that would prepare the way for the Messiah. Understandably, Zechariah was filled with doubt, and for his doubt, Zechariah would not be permitted to talk until the birth of his son.

Elizabeth gave birth to John, and on the eighth day, as was the custom, they took the child to be circumcised—and at the protest of relatives, they named the child John at Zechariah's insistence and obedience. The Lord opened Zechariah's mouth, and with his newly loosened tongue, he offered praise to the Lord. These were extraordinary actions, all preparing the way for an extraordinary Savior.

GROUP QUESTIONS

Share something that surprises, encourages, or troubles you from the sermon or your direct reading of Luke 1:8–20, 57–66.

Zechariah was a man of God chosen for a particular service. Yet, when he sees an angel, he's filled with fear and doubts about the angel's message. Why do you suppose the Lord silenced him?

What was John the Baptist's mission and purpose? Why was his role such a necessary one in redemptive history?

If there's one thing Jesus would want you to walk away believing and receiving as a result of this portion of Scripture, what is that thing?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

As you pray, be sure to include today's themes in what you bring before God.