

Lesson 42: God Foretold the Birth of John and Jesus

Intro:

Rather than just appear on earth one day, or “beam down” like in Star Trek, Jesus entered this world in the most orthodox of ways: childbirth. Jesus’ appearance is known as the Incarnation, or what the Gospel of John calls Jesus “becoming flesh.” And you need to know this—Jesus’ incarnation, becoming flesh, and being born as a baby in Bethlehem did not mark his beginning. It marks his entrance physically into our world, but he was already in existence from all eternity. In fact, the scriptures tell us that everything that was made was made by Him and for Him, the universe and all the galaxies, and the tiniest bit of matter was made by Him, and in Him all things hold together. Try to wrap your head around that—He holds everything, all matter, every particle, every atom, he holds all things together.

With this lesson today, we begin the story of God coming to earth in human form, and unlike the created gods of man in other religions, the One True God, El-Shaddai, Yahweh, the Lord God Almighty, humbled himself and became as one of us. His becoming as one of us shows his humility. He chose to be born in a stable among animals. His birth was not announced to all those who lived in palaces, but to lowly, smelly shepherds tending to their sheep out under the stars. Shepherds were the on the lowest run of the social ladder. Most people looked down on shepherds. But here’s the thing I want you to see - -- men don’t create gods like this who are born of the most despised race of people, the Jews. Men don’t create a god whose birth is announced first to lowly shepherds before anyone else hears about it. This is why the Bible is the Word of God. Only God could write this story. Only God could do something like this.

So many missed Yeshua, the Savior, the first time around because they were looking for a Superman, a Super-Hero, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound. They were looking for a god who would conquer and defeat their enemies. But this first time around, God came as a baby born to a virgin of humble means, and His purpose was to conquer sin and death. He had to be born and live a sinless life so that he could be our redeemer and cover our sins with the perfect blood offering on the cross. As John the Baptist, his cousin declared, He was “the Son of God who takes away the sin of the world.”

A. Introduction

The last prophet to speak for God was a man called Malachi. Notice the blue arrow pointing to Malachi on the chronological chart. Do you see Malachi, almost in the center, and then to the right where the red arrow is pointing, is **the 400 yrs of silence which followed the book of Malachi**.

Let’s turn in our Bibles to the Book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi reminded the Jews that God’s promised Deliverer would come to save them.

- He also told them that, before the Deliverer came, God would send another prophet.

Jesus was born at the opportune time, the right time, when the Greek language common to many parts of the world and distant cities were linked together with the roads that the Romans had built.

God dispersed His people to many different countries where they built synagogues and taught from His Word.

- This prophet's work would be to teach the people so that they would be ready for the coming Savior.
- **Malachi 4:5-6 (NLT)** speaks of the coming of John the Baptist, starting at v. 5.
⁵ "Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the LORD arrives.
⁶ His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse."
- Before John the Baptist was born an angel of the Lord predicted that he would minister "in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" ([Luke 1:17](#)).

After Malachi, however, four hundred years passed during which God did not speak through any prophet. This was a period of silence. But, just as we studied in our last lesson, God was still at work during this time which is often referred to as "the silent years."

Once again, notice the Red Arrow pointing to "THE SILENT YEARS" ON THE CHRONOLOGICAL CHART.

Quietly, unnoticed by most men, God was making vast preparation for the fulfillment of His great promises to send a Savior for the whole world.¹

The time had come. God was ready to do what He had first promised in the garden.

Let's look at the prophetic writings of Malachi.

Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

¹ "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

We are now going to begin our study in the New Testament with a story of an elderly Jewish couple who believed God and were awaiting the fulfillment of His promises.

B. God promised that Zacharias and Elizabeth would have a son.

Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and be saved.

Theme: Man can come to God only according to God's will and plan.

READ Luke 1:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ 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.

⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, were Jews who trusted in God and believed His Word.

- They offered sacrifices at the temple, just as God had commanded Moses.
- Because they trusted in God and came to Him the way He had told them, God accepted them just as He had accepted Abel and all others who had trusted in Him from the beginning of the world.

READ **Luke 1:7-10 (ESV)**

⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

To be a woman in those days and not to be able to bear children was a disgrace. Some thought that it meant that God was displeased with you. It was a shame that the woman had to bear because to have children was a blessing and meant that you were helping provide a son who would carry on the family name, and also sons who could help their father in the field or whatever trade he engaged in.

Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were now old, but they had never been able to have any children.

Luke 1:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,

⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.

Zacharias was one of the priests in the temple in Jerusalem.

- **Theme: God communicates with man.**

Listen to what happened to Zacharias while he was doing his work as a priest in the temple.

Here's that scene depicted in the Nativity Story.

God's angel promised Zacharias a son and told him he must name his son John.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART: POINT TO THE NAME "JOHN." I've placed a **red arrow** pointing to John on the chronological chart.

C. John was given the work of preparing the way for the Deliverer.

Theme: God is everywhere all the time; He knows everything.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes.

One day while John's father, Zechariah, is serving at the Jerusalem Temple, Gabriel appears to him and announces that although Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, is barren and can't get pregnant, God is going to give them a son who will prepare the way for the Messiah, God's Deliverer for the Jews.

Zechariah is dumbfounded—literally. Because he doesn't believe Gabriel, Gabriel makes him "dumb" or mute so that he cannot speak until John is born.

- The Lord knew all about Zacharias' son even before Elizabeth became pregnant.
- Everything is known to God before it ever happens.
- God knew all about us, too, before our parents knew we would be born!
- God had foretold about Zacharias' son, John, through the prophet Malachi.

Not only did God foretell many things through His prophets, but everything that He promised, He also fulfilled.

Malachi 3:1 (ESV)

¹ “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Four hundred years before John was born, God told Malachi to write this about God's messenger, John.

Theme: Yeshua is God.

Zacharias' son would be the prophet who would prepare the people to receive the coming Deliverer.

The angel said that Zacharias' son, John, would go ahead of the Deliverer to prepare the way for Him.

The angel called the coming Deliverer “the Lord.”

The coming Deliverer, the Savior of men, was to be God Himself!

Luke 1:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying,

²⁵ “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to **take away my reproach** among people.”

Elizabeth knew that God was the one who had made it possible for her to conceive.

Here's what I want you to see—God knows us when we are in the womb, before we are ever born, we have an identity and a purpose. That's why abortion is so wrong, because it's not the removal of some tissue, it's killing the unborn child that God has placed in the mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13-16 (ESV)

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

- Elizabeth was very thankful and happy.
- In those days, the Jewish people looked down on couples who weren't able to have any children.
- Now Zacharias and Elizabeth were going to have a son in their old age!

D. God promised Mary a son.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes.

It was now God's time to fulfill all of His promises regarding the Deliverer.

Listen to what God says.

Luke 1:26-31 (ESV)

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,
²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"

²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

Here's that very scene depicted in the film, The Nativity Story.

Mary was just an ordinary young woman who, although she was a sinner, trusted in God to send the Deliverer. Mary was also poor and worked in the fields and did the laundry. She was just in her late teens when God calls her.

Six months after Gabriel's announcement to Zechariah, Gabriel goes to Nazareth to tell Mary that she too will have a son. Mary will become pregnant with Jesus while she is still a virgin. Mary finds out about her unusual pregnancy when she is visited by the angel, Gabriel, who declares:

The angel Gabriel wraps up his announcement to Mary by saying, **"Nothing is impossible with God."** That's good news for us today. If you put your trust in the Lord, "nothing is impossible with God." Whatever you're facing that seems insurmountable or impossible, it's not impossible with God. Nothing is impossible with God. That's so important for us to remember because all the time, we're facing things that seem impossible, and Satan wants us to be defeated and throw in the towel, but the good news is that "nothing is impossible with God."

Mary visits Elizabeth and immediately upon hearing Mary's voice, the baby John inside of Elizabeth starts kicking and jumping for joy. She says to Mary, "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what He said."

Here's that scene from The Nativity Story....

And here is Mary's song of praise to the Lord:

Luke 1:46-55 (NLT)

⁴⁶ Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.

⁴⁷ How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!

⁴⁸ For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me

blessed.

⁴⁹ For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.

⁵⁰ He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him.

⁵¹ His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.

⁵² He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful.

⁵⁵ For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.”

Folks, let me just say that Mary is an example for all of us as to how we ought to be praising God. This young girl had a real relationship with God and it's evident in her words. She knows what God has done. She knows His character and she is in awe that He has chosen her to help fulfill his promise to Abraham. What a mighty calling!! She's praising God because He is keeping His promise to His people and He's using her to do it!! This is an example of how we should be praising and glorifying God in our lives for the great things He has done and continues to do every single day!

Theme: God is supreme and sovereign.

God chose Mary to be the mother of the Deliverer because God does whatever He wants to do.

God is sovereign. He doesn't ask anyone or have to answer to anyone for what He does.

Theme: God is faithful; He never changes. Theme: God is loving, merciful, and gracious.

Mary's son was to be the promised Deliverer.

E. Mary's son would be both man and the Son of God.

Theme: Jesus Christ is God. **Theme:** Jesus Christ is man.

The angel Gabriel also told Mary some amazing things about her future son.

Luke 1:35 (ESV)

³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

His name was to be Jesus, which means Savior, or Deliverer of the Lord Saves. God had never forgotten His promise to send the Deliverer. In Matthew 1:21, Gabriel informs Joseph that “Jesus will save his people from their sins.” (Matt. 1:21)

The angel said that God the Holy Spirit would perform this miracle.

Theme: Jesus Christ (Yeshua) is holy and righteous because He was born without a human father. He was not born with a sinful nature. The SIN DNA was not in his genetic makeup.

Theme: Jesus Christ (Yeshua) is God.

Yeshua's Name was given by an angelic messenger from ADONAI, THE LORD, and reveals the special relationship and ministry he has with his Jewish People. After Jerusalem was sacked by the Romans in 70 AD, and Constantine's conversion in the 3rd century, there was a concerted effort to divorce followers of Yeshua from the Jewish roots of the Messiah, and thus, they used the Latin transliteration, Jesus.

Yeshua means **"The Lord's Salvation"** or literally **Yahweh saves**. From this point on, I will be using Yeshua interchangeably with Jesus, although I believe it is much more accurate and biblical for us to use Yeshua, even as it is more accurate to refer to Him as the Messiah or Anointed One, rather than "the Christ" which is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, Messiah.

Hence, we arrive at Jesus Christ, or Jesus, the Christ which is due to the Hellenization of Christianity where the Greek influence sought to divorce or separate Christianity or the Way from its Jewish roots. And, this has been a great stumbling block for Jews ever since. And needlessly so. Instead of sharing the Good News with Jews and pointing to Yeshua as their long-awaited Messiah, we have forced Jews to convert to Christianity—to become Christians.

I don't want to get into too much detail right now because I'll have more to say on this when we come to the book of Acts. But we need to remember that the first Christians were Jews, just as Jesus was a Jew. The apostles were Jews, and the initial missionary thrust of the church was to those who were Jews. It was obviously natural for the early Jewish believers to continue to follow Jewish traditions. They continued to gather in the temple and the synagogues during the regular times of worship. It appears that many continued to observe the Sabbath, the annual Jewish feasts, and the hours of daily prayer. They saw no reason to leave their traditional places and forms of worship since they were still worshipping the same God and had now come to know their Messiah, Yeshua.

Even when they gathered outside the synagogue, the Jewish Christians still conducted their assemblies in a manner quite similar to that of the synagogue. Just as in synagogue worship, the focus was upon the reading of Scripture, exposition and/or instruction, chanting of the Psalms, and prayers. Even the Scripture of the early church was the Jewish Old Testament since the NT was still in the process of being written.

Jesus, Yeshua, would be born without a human father, He would be born sinless.

God loved the whole world, and He wanted sinners to be delivered from the punishment they deserve.

No descendant of Adam is holy and righteous.

- Every person in the world inherited Adam's sin.
- We are all sinners because the sin of Adam was passed down to us.
- God is perfect and holy, without sin.
- Jesus would not inherit Adam's sinfulness!
- Jesus was the perfect Son of God, holy and sinless!

Adam=Sinner

GOD—Holy

JESUS, Son of God—Holy, Without Sin

Theme: Jesus Christ is God.

Theme: Jesus Christ is man.

The angel Gabriel also told Mary some amazing things about her future son.

Mary's son was not only to be truly her son, but He would also be the Son of the Highest, that is, the Son of God. Six hundred years earlier, God had announced these things to His prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah prophesied these words about the coming Messiah 500 yrs before his birth in Bethlehem.

As the Son of God, Jesus or Yeshua had many names.

Yeshua was His name as a man—His human name. But he has over 200 different names in the Bible.

Here are just some of His names:

- Ancient of Days
- Apostle and High Priest
- Shepherd of Your Souls
- Author of our Faith
- Creator of All Things
- Door of the sheep
- Eternal Life
- Finisher of Our Faith
- Father of Mercies
- God of All Comfort
- God the Judge of All
- Holy and Awesome
- King Over all the Earth
- Light of the World
- Lord God of Truth
- Lord Strong & Mighty
- Maker of All Things
- Mighty One of Israel

- My Fortress
- My Helper
- My Hope
- My Rock of Refuge

Do you see that each name gives you a different picture of God and His character. The more we get to know the different names for God, the more we get to know Him—who He is and all that He is. We can worship and praise His name with greater understanding because we know Him even more intimately through his various names, and each name speaks of what Jesus can do in our lives in various circumstances as well as our spiritual well-being. If I am in trouble, **He is my “Rock of Refuge.”** If I am in despair, **He is my Hope.** If I am in need, **He is my Helper.** If I am afraid, **He is My Fortress, and the Lord Strong and Mighty.** If I am walking in darkness and need understanding and direction, **He is the Light of the World who will light my path.** If I am in need of finances, **He is Jehovah-Jireh, my Provider.** He is also **Our Daily Bread and the Bread of Life.** He supplies our daily sustenance.

- Jesus was the perfect Son of God, holy and sinless!

GOD—Holy

JESUS, Son of God—Holy, Without Sin

Theme: God is all-powerful.

Consider:

It was impossible for a virgin to have a child, just as it was impossible for Elizabeth, the mother of John, to have a child in her old age. Nevertheless, with God all things are possible. God can do anything!

God created the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the ground, and God gives life to every person. It was not difficult for God to give this child to Mary without the baby having a human father. And neither was it hard for God to give Elizabeth a child in her old age. God can do anything! The God who created the universe and the galaxies that stretch out into eternity, is the same God who can cause Mary to have a baby without ever having had sex with Joseph or anyone.

Theme: Man must have faith in order to please God and to be saved.

Here’s the other thing that we don’t often think about: Even though God’s hand was upon Mary, and He had chosen her to give birth to God’s son, she endured much pain and rejection. People talked about her as a harlot, as a young woman who was pregnant with another man’s baby, and she should be ashamed of herself. Her neighbors probably felt sorry for Joseph that he was engaged to such a sinful woman as Mary who was carrying another man’s child. Do you see something of what Mary had to endure? The gossip mill. All the people talking behind her back. What could she say, “I’m pregnant with God’s son?” Who’s going to believe that? Joseph didn’t even believe it and he wanted to divorce her quietly, so that she might retain some dignity, but he was planning to get rid of her until one night, the angel Gabriel appeared to him in a dream.

And here's that scene from The Nativity Story.

G. Conclusion

Who was this Savior to be? Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus.]

- The one announced in the Garden of Eden - Descendant of David
- The Deliverer - The Savior
- The holy Son of God - God the Son
- The Anointed One, the Messiah
- God in a human body—the holy, sinless Son of the holy, sinless God.

In Lesson 43: The Circumstances Surrounding the Birth and Early Life of Yeshua, Jesus, the Messiah

QUESTIONS for REVIEW:

1. What name was Zacharias to give to his son? **John.**
2. What was John's work to be? **John's work would be to prepare the Jews to receive and trust in the Deliverer.**
3. Of whom was Mary's son to be a descendant? **Of David the king.**
4. Why did the Saviour have to be born of the line of David? **Because God had promised David that the Deliverer would be one of his descendants.**
5. Why did the Savior have to be born of a virgin? **So that He would not inherit Adam's sin nature as we have.**
6. What was Mary's child to be called? **Yeshua.**
7. What does the name Yeshua mean? **Jesus means Savior or Deliverer.**
8. Who is the Anointed One? **Yeshua. The name Jesus is a transliteration and it's the Greek pronunciation for Yeshua. But if you want to refer to the Lord by His proper name – it is Yeshua, and instead of calling him "The Christ", He is the Messiah, The Anointed One, Our Deliverer.**
9. Who is the Author & Finisher of our faith? **Yeshua. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and said that Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, [which means 'ADONAI saves'] because he will save his people from their sins."**
10. Who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning & the End? **Yeshua.**
11. Was Yeshua to be more than just man? **Yes, Jesus was to be God the Son whom God planned should come down from Heaven to be born as a human baby.**

12. How could Jesus be given life without a human father? **God is all-powerful. He can do anything He wishes to do.**

13. Was Yeshua to be the promised Savior? **Yes, Jesus was to be the Deliverer whom God first promised in the Garden of Eden.**

14. Who is the author of the New Testament? **God.**