

Introduction

When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? I heard a story once of a little boy whose parents told him that he could be anything he wanted we he grew up. So, he responded that he wanted to be a fire truck when he grew up.

To varying degrees, most people wonder what their purpose is in life. Unless you think that everything is an accident (which is unbiblical), then it is right to question why you were created. Perhaps you still wonder what your purpose is in life.

Why were you created? I want to propose to you that you were created to glorify God by looking to Jesus and pointing others to Jesus. [Luke 1:39-80](#) focuses on the birth of John the Baptist. However, his birth is overshadowed by Jesus, who would come after him. May our lives be overshadowed by Christ.

Mary visits Elizabeth

The first half of [Luke 1](#) focuses on the prophecies of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. The second half focuses on John's birth.

Sometime around Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, Mary visits her. Their interaction highlights that the births of John and Jesus fulfill OT prophecy of redemption through the Messiah.

John's reaction to Mary

When Mary visits Elizabeth, John and Elizabeth are filled with the Holy Spirit and acknowledge that she is bearing the Messiah, the Lord.

[Luke 1:39-40](#) "39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth."

Where did Zechariah and Elizabeth live? They lived in a town of Judah in the hill country. This does not specify which town. Mary lived in Nazareth, in Galilee. *Some scholars estimate the trip was 50-70 miles (Liefeld), which would take 3-5 days (Keener).

Why did Mary visit Elizabeth? Elizabeth and Mary were related. To give Mary assurance, Gabriel had told her that Elizabeth, who was barren and old, had conceived.

[Luke 1:41-45](#) "41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the

sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.””

How did John respond to Mary's voice? He leaped in the womb. If we compare this with [Luke 1:15](#), we see evidence that human life begins before birth. John was filled with the Holy Spirit.

How did Elizabeth know that Mary, a virgin, was going to have a baby? Before she spoke about Mary's child, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit ([Luke 1:41-42](#)). This suggests that God revealed Mary's conception to Elizabeth. Elizabeth also knows that Mary's child is her Lord ([Luke 1:43](#)) and that God had revealed a prophecy to Mary ([Luke 1:45](#)). *In Luke, the filling of the Holy Spirit is usually related to prophetic speech (Tenney).

Mary praised God

Mary responds to Elizabeth's blessing with a song or prayer of praise. Mary's praise closely parallels Hannah's prayer in [1 Samuel 2:1-10](#). The focus of Mary's praise is God's justice and mercy.

[Luke 1:46-50](#) “46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. 50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”

In verse 48, for what does Mary praise God? Mary praises God for his favor toward her in her humble state. She realizes that future generations will acknowledge God's blessing to her.

What “great things” has God gone for Mary? God provided her with a child, who would be the Son of God. *[Luke 1:50](#) is an allusion to [Psalm 103:17](#) (Keener).

[Luke 1:51-56](#) “51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; 53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. 54 He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, 55 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.”

How has God treated those who are proud, mighty, and rich? God has humbled the proud and mighty ([Luke 1:51-52](#)) (cf. [Isa 2:11-17](#)). *How has God treated the humble and poor?* He has exalted the humble and poor. *Why does Mary's prayer/song focus on justice and mercy, rather than just the gift of a son?* Jesus was not just a son. His birth was the expression of God's justice and mercy.

What about the present situation shows that God has remembered his word to Abraham?

Jesus's birth is the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. [Gal 3:16](#) points out that God's promise was to Abraham's descendent, not descendants (cf. [Gen 22:18](#)). Jesus inherits God's covenant with Abraham.

How long did Mary remain with Elizabeth? Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months before returning to Nazareth. Gabriel had appeared to Mary in Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy ([Luke 1:26](#)); therefore, Mary left sometime around John's birth.

John's birth

John's birth reminds us that the Redeemer is coming. John's miraculous conception was for a purpose. John would prepare the way for the Lord.

John's name

[Luke 1:57-60](#) "57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John.""

What did the neighbors intend to call Elizabeth's child? They planned to call him Zechariah after his father. * Jewish boys were circumcised on the eighth day according to [Genesis 17:12](#) and [Leviticus 12:3](#).

What did Elizabeth insist on naming the child? Elizabeth said he should be named John. When he appeared to Zechariah, Gabriel told him to name the child John ([Luke 1:13](#)). Perhaps Zechariah had indicated that to Elizabeth or perhaps God revealed it to her.

[Luke 1:61-66](#) "61 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him."

How did Zechariah indicate that the child should be named John? Zechariah wrote on a tablet that he should be called John.

Why was Zechariah unable to speak? When Zechariah questioned Gabriel concerning how he and Elizabeth could have a child in their old age ([Luke 1:18](#)), Gabriel said that Zechariah would be mute until the child was born ([Luke 1:20](#)).

What did people conclude about John because of the miraculous events around his birth? They concluded that the Lord was with him. These miracles also led them to fear. It was clear that John's birth was God's work.

Zechariah's prophecy

Now that Zechariah can speak, the Holy Spirit fills him and gives him a prophecy about John and Jesus.

[Luke 1:67-75](#) “67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, 68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, 70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, 71 that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; 72 to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, 73 the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us 74 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, 75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

*In verse 68, what did Zechariah say God had done for His people? God had visited and redeemed His people. According to verse 69, **how** had God redeemed His people? He had raised up salvation in the house of David.*

Who is the “horn of salvation” from the house of David? This refers to the birth of Jesus. [Luke 1:26-27](#) “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.” [Luke 1:32](#) “32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,”

Why does Zechariah mention the descendent of David at his son's birth (John was a Levite - what did this have to do with him)? John would prepare the way of the Lord ([Luke 1:16-17](#)). Therefore, his birth indicated that the Messiah was coming. Additionally, God had revealed to Elizabeth that Mary's child was her Lord ([Luke 1:41-42](#)).

What did Zechariah say Jesus's birth showed that God had remembered? God had remembered His covenant with Abraham. This reiterates Mary's praise that Jesus's birth was the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham ([Luke 1:55](#)).

[Luke 1:76-80](#) “76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, 77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high 79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”

What did Zechariah say John would be called? John would be a prophet of God that prepared the way of the Lord. This was Gabriel's word to Zechariah ([Luke 1:16-17](#)) which fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi ([Mal 3:1; 4:5-6](#)).

What knowledge would John give to God's people? John would point them to salvation through the forgiveness of sins. This indicates that Jesus's coming was not political salvation; it was spiritual (eternal) salvation ([John 8:31-36](#)). The people of Israel had difficulty accepting a spiritual savior because they anticipated a political savior.

Who are those who sit in darkness to whom God will give light? To some degree, this refers to all people. The Jews who were separated from God by sin (all of them) were in darkness ([John 9](#)). Throughout Isaiah (which is the likely background of this statement), light shines upon all nations. [Isaiah 9:2](#) "2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone" (cf. [Isa 9:6-7](#)). At Jesus's circumcision, Simeon refers to Jesus's birth as a light to the nations ([Luke 2:32](#); cf. [Isa 42:6; 49:6](#)).

Where did John live until he began preaching? John lived in the wilderness. This fulfilled the prophecy of [Isa 40:3-5](#) that the forerunner of Jesus would be a voice in the wilderness.

Conclusion

The second half of [Luke 1](#) focuses on John's birth. It is significant that this section says so much about Jesus. John was born for a purpose beyond himself. John was born to prepare the way for the Lord. He was born to point people to Jesus, which he did.

What is your purpose in life? You were born and born again to glorify God by looking to Jesus and pointing others to Jesus.

Closing Scripture: [John 3:25-30](#) "25 Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. 26 And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.' 27 John answered, 'A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. 28 You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' 29 The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.'"