

THE STORY BEFORE THE STORY

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Jesus came as light in darkness. Because God remembers us and keeps His promises, we need to be humble, wait on the Lord, and serve Him where we are.

INTRODUCTION

How is the Christmas story often misunderstood? Why is there a much bigger story?

Pastor Greg explained that “the story behind the story” of Christ’s birth was Israel’s long night of spiritual darkness. When considering the biblical timeline of the events between the Old and New Testaments (prophecy, 400 years of silence, Roman rule, etc.), why can the coming of Christ be described as “Heaven’s Light breaking” (John 1:4-9; Galatians 4:4-7)? How has the light of Jesus come into your life (John 8:12)?

UNDERSTANDING

READ LUKE 1:5-10

Zacharias was a humble man. How are Zacharias and Elizabeth described, and what insight does this give as to why God chose to use them (James 4:6)? Considering how Zacharias means “God remembers” and Elizabeth means “My God is an oath,” how did their names have prophetic meaning?

Zacharias was a faithful man. Pastor Greg said, “God often speaks to His people when they are busy doing their daily tasks.” How is this seen in Zacharias’ life? How does this give perspective about the way God calls and leads us, and how we are to be faithful (Romans 12:6-8)?

READ LUKE 1:11-25

Zacharias and Elizabeth were godly and blameless people. How did they exemplify faith and integrity? As seen in the answer to Zacharias’ prayer, why are “God’s delays not necessarily His denials”?

Zacharias was human and flawed, just like us! How can we live by faith and not by feelings, taking God at His Word? How can we have confidence that God remembers us and keeps His promises?

Why is John the Baptist identified as the greatest of the Old Testament prophets (Matthew 11:9-11)? What was John the Baptist called to do, and how did it affect him (John 1:29-34; 3:30)?

APPLICATION

Pastor Greg shared the following lessons we can learn from the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth. How are you learning...

- **To be humble, wait on the Lord, and serve Him?**
- **To keep praying and not give up?**
- **To believe what God tells you and act in faith, not by feelings?**

What do you think Zacharias learned through his experience of being temporarily mute? (As Pastor Greg did in his message, have someone in your group give their best impersonation of Zacharias trying to share the news about John the Baptist). Similarly, what life lessons have you learned through silence or waiting?

How does the “story behind the story” reveal how the biblical characters were quite ordinary, hopelessly human, and remarkably unremarkable? How does this provide perspective about the ways God can work in your life, and how you can be available and obedient to God’s call?

PRAYER

Give thanks that the light of Christ shines in darkness. Praise God that He hears your prayers and answers them according to His will and timing. Pray for strength in your serving, patience in your waiting, and conviction in your believing.