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**INTRODUCTION**

<sup>1</sup> Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. <sup>2</sup> They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. <sup>3</sup> Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, <sup>4</sup> so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

**THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST FORETOLD**

<sup>5</sup> When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron. <sup>6</sup> Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations. <sup>7</sup> They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. <sup>8</sup> One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. <sup>9</sup> As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying. <sup>11</sup> While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar. <sup>12</sup> Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you

a son, and you are to name him John. <sup>14</sup> You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. <sup>16</sup> And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly." <sup>18</sup> Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years." <sup>19</sup> Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! <sup>20</sup> But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time." <sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. <sup>22</sup> When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary. <sup>23</sup> When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months. <sup>25</sup> "How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

**THE BIRTH OF JESUS FORETOLD**

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. <sup>28</sup> Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" <sup>29</sup> Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. <sup>30</sup> "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! <sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" <sup>34</sup> Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." <sup>35</sup> The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup> What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup> For the word of God will never fail." <sup>38</sup> Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

**MARY VISITS ELIZABETH**

<sup>39</sup> A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town <sup>40</sup> where Zechariah lived. She

entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. <sup>43</sup> Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? <sup>44</sup> When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. <sup>45</sup> You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

**THE MAGNIFICAT: MARY'S SONG OF PRAISE**

<sup>46</sup> Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. <sup>47</sup> How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! <sup>48</sup> For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. <sup>50</sup> He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. <sup>51</sup> His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. <sup>52</sup> He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. <sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. <sup>55</sup> For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever." <sup>56</sup> Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.

**THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

<sup>57</sup> When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. <sup>58</sup> And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup> When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. <sup>60</sup> But Elizabeth said, "No! His name is John!" <sup>61</sup> "What?" they exclaimed. "There is no one in all your family by that name." <sup>62</sup> So they used gestures to ask the baby's father what he wanted to name him. <sup>63</sup> He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone's surprise he wrote, "His name is John." <sup>64</sup> Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. <sup>65</sup> Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. <sup>66</sup> Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

**ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY**

<sup>67</sup> Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy: <sup>68</sup> "Praise the



Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. <sup>69</sup> He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, <sup>70</sup> just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. <sup>71</sup> Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. <sup>72</sup> He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant—<sup>73</sup> the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham. <sup>74</sup> We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear, <sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live. <sup>76</sup> And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. <sup>77</sup> You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins. <sup>78</sup> Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, <sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace." <sup>80</sup> John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.



## JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. <sup>15</sup> He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. <sup>16</sup> When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. <sup>17</sup> The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: <sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, <sup>19</sup> and that the time of the Lord's favor has come." <sup>20</sup> He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. <sup>21</sup> Then he began to speak to them. "The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!" <sup>22</sup> Everyone spoke well of him and was amazed

by the gracious words that came from his lips. "How can this be?" they asked. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" <sup>23</sup> Then he said, "You will undoubtedly quote me this proverb: 'Physician, heal yourself'—meaning, 'Do miracles here in your hometown like those you did in Capernaum.' <sup>24</sup> But I tell you the truth, no prophet is accepted in his own hometown. <sup>25</sup> Certainly there were many needy widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the heavens were closed for three and a half years, and a severe famine devastated the land. <sup>26</sup> Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them. He was sent instead to a foreigner—a widow of Zarephath in the land of Sidon. <sup>27</sup> And many in Israel had leprosy in the time of the prophet Elisha, but the only one healed was Naaman, a Syrian." <sup>28</sup> When they heard this, the people in the synagogue were furious. <sup>29</sup> Jumping up, they mobbed him and forced him to the edge of the hill on which the town was built. They intended to push him over the cliff, <sup>30</sup> but he passed right through the crowd and went on his way.



### JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH LEPROSY

<sup>12</sup> In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. “Lord,” he said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.” <sup>13</sup> Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened. He said, “Go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy. This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.” <sup>15</sup> But despite Jesus’ instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

### JESUS HEALS A PARALYZED MAN

<sup>17</sup> One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord’s healing power was strongly with Jesus. <sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, <sup>19</sup> but they couldn’t reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. <sup>20</sup> Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, “Young man, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>21</sup> But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, “Who does he think he is? That’s blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!” <sup>22</sup> Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? <sup>24</sup> So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!” <sup>25</sup> And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. <sup>26</sup> Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”

