

Week 3

Immanuel: God with Us

This week, we contemplate the miracle of hope breaking through in the First Advent, as God miraculously worked in the lives of ordinary people like Mary, Joseph, Zechariah, and Elizabeth to enter into the world as Immanuel—God with us.

**YOU WILL CONCEIVE AND
GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND
YOU ARE TO CALL HIM JESUS.
HE WILL BE GREAT AND WILL
BE CALLED THE SON OF THE
MOST HIGH. . . . HIS KINGDOM
WILL NEVER END.**

Luke 1:31–33



12/18 THE LIGHT AND THE KING

BY JAY Y. KIM

Isaiah 9:2-7; 40:1-5
Luke 1:57-80; 3:1-6

**AND YOU, MY CHILD,
WILL BE CALLED A
PROPHET OF THE MOST
HIGH; FOR YOU WILL
GO ON BEFORE THE
LORD TO PREPARE
THE WAY FOR HIM.**

Luke 1:76

Zechariah and Elizabeth named their baby John, which means *God is gracious and has shown us favor*. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Zechariah prophesied over his son: “You will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:76-79).

When we fast-forward to John the Baptist’s adult life, we see he does exactly that. Luke records,

He went into all the country . . . preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation.’” (3:3-6)

These ideas from Isaiah about reshaping valleys, hills, and roads to prepare the way were, in the ancient world, associated with the arrival of royalty. And, indeed, John’s ministry focused on this one thing: declaring that a king was on the way.

Zechariah’s prophecy over his newborn includes a paraphrase of another passage from Isaiah: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (9:2). The people who heard Zechariah prophesy these words would have known exactly what this Isaiah passage was about: the promise of a coming king. It’s part of the same familiar passage that declares, “For to us a child is born . . . He will reign on David’s throne” (vv. 6-7).

This offers such immense hope for us. As much as we may like to believe that we can create the peace and joy we desire through our own efforts, the story of John the Baptist and the words of Zechariah and Isaiah emphatically declare that the peace and joy every human longs for will not be realized until the king arrives. John the Baptist literally gave his life to proclaim this truth—to help people see that a light was about to break through the darkness.

*This article is adapted from a sermon Jay Y. Kim preached on December 9, 2018.
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CONSIDER LUKE 1:57-80 ALONGSIDE ISAIAH 9:2-7; 40:1-5; AND LUKE 3:1-6.

Which parts of Zechariah’s prophecy stand out to you? How do these passages convey the hope of Advent?



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ADVENT: LIVING HOPE

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