

The Word That Cannot Fail — Fulfilled in Its Season

Series: Luke: An Orderly Account - Dr. Randy White

I. A Questioned Word Still Fulfilled (vv. 18-25)

Unbelief Asked For Additional Proof

- Zacharias asked, **“Whereby shall I know this?”** He made age and barrenness weightier than God’s revealed word.
- His question asked for a confirming basis by which he could know. The context and Gabriel’s rebuke identify it as unbelief, not merely innocent inquiry.
- Gabriel answered from divine authority: **“I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee.”**
- Gabriel’s earlier appearances in Daniel connect this announcement with Israel’s prophetic expectation; the reliability of the message rested on the God who sent him.
- Zacharias received a sign and a discipline: he would be unable to speak **“because thou believest not my words.”** Yet those words would still **“be fulfilled in their season.”**
- The choice of silence is significant and worth pondering. God might have struck Zacharias blind, lame, or leprous, but instead made him **“dumb, and not able to speak.”** After roughly four hundred years of prophetic silence, God had spoken again; Zacharias’s unbelief brought silence upon him until the promised word was fulfilled. The text does not state that this symbolism was God’s intended reason for the sign, so it should be regarded as a suggestive connection rather than a declared interpretation.

The Promise Moved Into Fulfillment

- The people saw the consequence of the vision, and Zacharias completed his Temple service even while unable to speak.
- Their waiting outside placed the private revelation within a public, observable sequence. They did not see Gabriel, but they witnessed the resulting sign.
- Elisabeth conceived, hid herself five months, and praised the Lord for taking away her **“reproach among men.”** Fulfillment rested upon God’s faithfulness rather than flawless human faith.
- Luke does not explain Elisabeth’s seclusion, so privacy, caution, or worship should not be asserted as fact. Her reproach was a social stigma, not God’s verdict; she had already been called righteous.
- Zacharias’s silence made unbelief visible; Elisabeth’s pregnancy made God’s faithfulness visible.

II. The Promised King Announced (vv. 26-33)

Divine Favour Came To Nazareth

- In Elisabeth’s **“sixth month,”** God sent Gabriel from Jerusalem’s Temple setting to obscure Galilean Nazareth.
- Mary was a virgin espoused to Joseph **“of the house of David.”** Her virginity will become a major part of the narrative and foundational to understanding the identity of Jesus as God incarnate in the flesh.
- Betrothal was a binding legal relationship, stronger than modern engagement, though the marriage had not been consummated. Here **“of the house of David”** grammatically identifies Joseph.
- Mary was **“highly favoured”** and had **“found favour with God.”** She was the recipient of divine grace, not its source or dispenser.
- Mary was troubled at the greeting and **“cast in her mind”** what it meant. Luke presents thoughtful reflection rather than credulous or unthinking acceptance.
- The fact that Joseph was a carpenter and Mary an obscure Galilean virgin shows how far the Davidic line had descended from royal status to “commoner” status over time. The Davidic throne was in great need of restoration.

David’s Everlasting King Was Revealed

- She would conceive, bear a true son, and call His name **JESUS**—the divinely appointed name declaring that the LORD saves.
- The sequence of conception, birth, and naming announces a real human birth; the divinely assigned name marks a life and saving mission declared by God beforehand.
- Jesus is **“the Son of the Highest.”** He will receive David’s throne, reign over **“the house of Jacob for ever,”** and possess an endless kingdom. These promises name Israel and David’s throne, not the church.
- The promise gathers up the Davidic covenant (2 Samuel 7:12–16) and the royal Son of Isaiah 9:6–7. Christ’s universal dominion does not erase the specifically named house of Jacob.

III. The Impossible Accomplished By God (vv. 34-37)

Mary Asked How The Word Would Be Performed

- Mary asked, **“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”** Unlike Zacharias, she did not demand an additional ground for belief, and Gabriel answered without rebuking her for unbelief.
- **“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,”** and the power of the Highest would overshadow her. The virgin conception is divine action, not ordinary generation concealed beneath religious language.
- The child would be truly human, **“that holy thing which shall be born,”** and uniquely divine, **“the Son of God.”**
- The virgin birth is the manner in which God chose to **“become flesh”** as God incarnate. Through the virgin birth Jesus is both God and man.

No Human Impossibility Could Defeat It

- Elisabeth’s sixth month supplied a confirming sign: the woman called barren was already carrying the promised son.
- **“Cousin”** meant a female relative broadly; Luke does not give the exact relationship. Elisabeth’s Aaronic ancestry does not by itself establish that Mary belonged to Levi.
- **“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”** Neither an aged barren womb nor a virgin womb places God’s declared purpose beyond His power.
- The saying guarantees that no word from God will prove powerless. It is not a slogan promising success for every undertaking a person imagines.
- Elisabeth’s conception confirmed Gabriel’s word; it did not explain Mary’s conception. The power of the Highest would perform what nature could not.

IV. The Word Received By The Handmaid (v. 38)

The Handmaid Received The Word

- Mary answered, **“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.”** Her privilege produced humble submission rather than self-exaltation.
- **“Be it unto me according to thy word”** is faith’s response to revelation. Mary’s faith did not create the promise; it received the word God Himself would perform.
- Her willing submission did not cause the incarnation or make her a co-redeemer. She received God’s act as the Lord’s servant despite its personal cost and still-unexplained details.

The Word Remained When Gabriel Departed

- Submission did not guarantee an easy path. The calling would expose Mary to misunderstanding while placing her within God’s purpose for Israel and the promised Son.
- Gabriel departed, but the word remained. What God had announced would move into history because His word cannot fail and His promises are fulfilled in their season.
- Zacharias faltered and Mary submitted, but in both accounts the decisive certainty was the same: God would perform what He had spoken.