Answer: Let’s start by looking again at verse 11 of Luke 1.

> *Luke 1:11-17 (ESV/NIV blend):*
> “And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great before the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

These are the words the angel spoke to the elderly Zechariah about the child to be born—John the Baptist. The child would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth, would minister in the spirit of Elijah, and would turn many Israelites back to God. Most importantly, he would “give understanding to the rebels” — that

is, he would bring wisdom and insight to those who are disobedient, leading them toward the righteous.

Before diving deeper into what it means that John “gave understanding to the rebels,” let’s first consider how he “made ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Remember, some of Jesus’ disciples were first disciples of John the Baptist—like Andrew and Peter’s brother (John 1:35-41). These men were already spiritually “prepared” before they began following Jesus, so it was not hard for them to believe or understand Jesus’ message. This is what it means to make “a people prepared for the Lord.”

Now, back to the second part: “to give understanding to the rebels.”

Here we see two groups:

1. The rebels — the children of Israel who rebelled against God’s law and abandoned Him (see 2 Chronicles 29:6).
2. The understanding (or “mind”) of the righteous.

When the verse speaks of the “understanding of the righteous,” it implies there is also the “understanding of the unrighteous” — the mindset of those who do not know God. The “understanding of the righteous” is the kind that enables a person to see their Creator in holiness and purity. It’s the kind of understanding John refers to in Luke 3:8-14, where he calls people to genuine repentance and righteous living.

> *Luke 3:7-14 (NIV):*
> “John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.’ ‘What should we do then?’ the crowd asked. John answered, ‘Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.’ Even tax collectors came to be baptized. ‘Teacher,’ they asked, ‘what should we do?’ ‘Don’t collect any more than you are required to,’ he told them. Then some soldiers asked him, ‘And what should we do?’ He replied, ‘Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people

> falsely—be content with your pay.’”

The “understanding of the unrighteous” teaches only religious identity — that they are Jews, descendants of Abraham, and therefore chosen. But the “understanding of the righteous” teaches that being a child of Abraham is not enough. True acceptance by God requires repentance and deeds consistent with faith.

Many responded by repenting and returning to God with their actions.

Similarly today, we need the “understanding of the righteous.” We cannot simply claim to be Christians with big church affiliations and fancy biblical titles while living in a way that contradicts the essence of our faith. We must gain the mind of the righteous.

May the Lord help us.

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