

**Luke 1:5-25****11-27-05*****“The Promise of Little John!”*****1. Intro:**

- 1.1. **Q:** How did you announce the birth of your baby?
  - 1.1.1. Yet, this really isn't a **Birth announcement**, but a **Conception announcement!**
  - 1.1.2. At Hope Starr's 5<sup>th</sup> B-day party a few weeks ago(Desi's daughter) Hope stood before the family & friends & announced, *“Thank you for coming to my B-day party & my mommy has a baby in her tummy!”*
- 1.2. 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 important visits.

**2. THE PROMISE OF LITTLE JOHN! (5-25)**

- 2.1. **Zacharias in the Temple!** (5-10)
- 2.2. (5-7) **The days of Herod the Great** were not the best of days for the Jewish people.
  - 2.2.1. But this priest & his wife prayed & served God in spite of the discouragements.
- 2.3. **Zacharias** (Jehovah has remembered); **Elizabeth** (My God is an oath).
- 2.4. They were **both righteous** in the best sense of the word.
  - 2.4.1. Their righteousness was **in the sight of God** & not just in *appearance* as in the case of some Pharisees.<sup>1</sup>
  - 2.4.2. They **walked** in these things! – *Divine truth is important; yet if we know these things, happy are we only if we do them!* (Rev William Jay)
    - 2.4.2.1. **Practice is nothing w/o Principle!**
  - 2.4.3. **The worship of God**, in private prayer, in family devotion, in public exercises, is a serious & imp. part of a good man's experience.<sup>2</sup>
  - 2.4.4. **“Both”** for nothing could be more desirable & important than the **godliness of both parties!**
    - 2.4.4.1. **How can 2 walk together unless they are agreed?** (Amos 3:3)
- 2.5. **Blameless(6) yet barren(7)!**
  - 2.5.1. Barren like: Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, & Samson's mother.
- 2.6. (7) **Both advanced in years** – being past their childbearing age.
  - 2.6.1. Which points to the **human impossibility** of the coming events.

<sup>1</sup> New American Commentary; Robert Stein; Libronix.

<sup>2</sup> Pulpit Commentary; pg.20 of Luke.

- 2.6.2. (BBC News) The closest man has come so far was in Romania last December w/the 66 year old *Adriana Iliescu*. She holds the record of the oldest woman to **birth** a child. (She was artificially inseminated)
- 2.7. (8-10) **While he was serving** – His disappointment at not having a son **did not keep** Zacharias from **servicing** the Lord. (www)
- 2.7.1. This is the blessedness of duty!
- 2.7.2. We need to be faithful.
- 2.7.3. We never know when God's angel may arrive! 😊
- 2.7.4. Interesting, that Luke's **opening & closing scene** in his gospel takes place in the **Temple**. (See Lk.24:53)
- 2.7.5. So there we find Zacharias clothed in his **spotless robe**, w/his **head covered, shoes off**. This holy man & elect priest disappears w/in the golden doors of the Holy Place.
- 2.7.5.1. As he enters he sees only a few things in this room. The **golden candlestick**(menorah), the **table of show bread**, & the **altar of incense**.
- 2.7.5.2. On the altar is the sacred flame. Taking a censor full of incense he pours it on the perpetual altar-fire & says, "*Lord, let my prayer come before you as incense; & the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*" (Ps.141:2)
- 2.7.5.3. Smelled great! – Ex.30:34-38.
- 2.8. (9) **His lot fell to burn the incense** – (he was chosen by lot)
- 2.8.1. It was **the providence of God** That Zacharias was chosen to burn the incense, for this ministry came to a man once in a lifetime.
- 2.8.1.1. Providence? Why?
- 2.8.2. He was a priest. He belonged to the section/division of Abijah. Every direct descendant of Aaron was automatically a priest. They were divided into 24 sections. Only at Passover/Pentecost/Feast of Tab did all the priests serve.
- 2.8.2.1. For the rest of the year each course served a **week** at a time, **twice** a year.
- 2.8.2.2. Priests who loved their work looked forward to that week of service above all things; it was the highlight of their lives.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.8.3. A priest could marry only a woman of absolutely **pure Jewish lineage**. It was especially meritorious to marry a woman who was also a descendant of Aaron. (i.e. Elizabeth)
- 2.8.4. They guess some **24,000 priests** at this time! [All the duties were allocated by lot]

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<sup>3</sup> William Barclay

- 2.8.5. Before the **morning sacrifice** & after the **evening sacrifice** **incense** was burnt on the **altar of incense** so that, as it were, the sacrifices might go up to God wrapped in an **envelope of sweet-smelling incense**.
- 2.8.5.1. **Read Ex.30:7,8.**
- 2.8.6. It was quite possible that many priests would **never** have the privilege of burning incense all his life.
- 2.8.6.1. If it did fall upon him it was the greatest day of his life, the day he dreamed of.
- 2.8.6.2. **I remember in 8<sup>th</sup> grade I was asked to be in charge of all the altar boys in my Catholic church. I was honored. And my mama was proud!**
- 2.8.7. Thus, it was the providence of God That Zacharias was chosen to burn the incense, for this ministry came to a man maybe once in a lifetime!
- 2.9. (10) **Note**, Luke always highlights major events as always being associated with **prayer!**
- 2.10. **Birth Announcement!** (11-17)
- 2.11. **An angel of the Lord appeared** – Angels are mentioned **23 x's** in Luke.
- 2.11.1. Only 2 are named in Scripture – Gabriel & Michael.
- 2.12. **On the right side of the altar** – on the *favored* side. Between the altar & the Candelabra(Plummer/LKGNT).
- 2.12.1. It's quiet, private, no one else is allowed in there.
- 2.12.2. Then he just appears, not saying anything. (Ahhhh!)
- 2.13. (13) **After 400 years of Prophetic laryngitis, known as the Intertestamental period...finally words from heaven!**
- 2.13.1. And how gracious a word it is - "**Do not be afraid...**" (or, *fear not*)
- 2.13.2. This phrase is found many **7 x's** in Luke.
- 2.14. They **believed in & practiced** prayer!
- 2.14.1. "**Your prayer is heard!**"
- 2.14.2. Ps.130:6 "**My soul waits** for the Lord **More than those who watch for the morning - Yes, more than those who watch for the morning.**"
- 2.14.3. Matthew Henry – "**Prayers are filed in heaven, & are not forgotten though the thing prayed for is not presently given us. The time as well as the thing is the answer; & God's gift always transcends the measure of the promise.**"
- 2.14.4. This prayer will be answered but in a **richer sense** than Zacharias & Elizabeth **ever dreamed!**

- 2.15. **Call his name John** – Jehovah has been gracious. “*The Grace of God*”
- 2.16. (14) **Joy & gladness** – Just as **Jesus’** birth would bring **joy**, so did **John’s**.  
 2.16.1. This joy was not just **personal feeling**, but the **eschatological joy** brought by the arrival of the Messianic age.<sup>4</sup>  
 2.16.2. **Joy/Rejoiced** – 19 x’s in Luke.
- 2.17. **The Revelation:**  
 2.17.1. He will be called **John**(13,14)  
 2.17.2. He will be come a **Nazarite**(15)  
 2.17.3. He will serve as the **Messiah’s forerunner**(16,17)  
 2.17.3.1. He would have the **privilege** to introduce the Messiah to the nation! “**behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**”  
 2.17.4. 1<sup>st</sup> his **character** than his **conduct!**  
 2.17.5. John’s bio would read, “*forerunner, reconciler, reformer, preacher!*”
- 2.18. (15) **Shall drink neither wine nor drink** – Denoted any intoxicating beverage prepared from either grain or fruit.  
 2.18.1. In the original language – “*nothing from Jack Daniels to Boones Farm!*” 😊
- 2.19. **Nazarite vow?** (maybe, other requirements not mentioned/cutting hair, etc.);  
**Or**, referring to living an **ascetic life**(7:33 **he came neither eating or drinking**);  
**Or** in reference to Lev.10:8-11... “**Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: “Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.”**”
- 2.20. (17) The **importance** of this announcement is **evident** by its coming from an **authoritative messenger**, by its **allusions to Scripture**, & by its **later fulfillment**.  
 2.20.1. **Note:** Jesus is already called **Lord** here!
- 2.21. **Spirit & power of Elijah** - Elijah is mentioned **30 x’s** in the NT. [**10** relate him to John the Baptist]
- 2.22. **Zacharias, Faithful to Faithless, to Speechless!** (18-25)
- 2.23. (18) Zacharias had the **faith to keep on praying**; but when the answer came he **did not have** the **faith to accept it**.  
 2.23.1. He looked at **his limitations** rather than **God’s great power**.

<sup>4</sup> New American Commentary; Robert Stein; Libronix.

- 2.23.2. It was a situation & question similar to Abraham's (Isaac/Gen.17:17), but he lacked Abraham's faith!
- 2.23.3. The **angel's prophecy** must have seemed **too good to be true**.  
2.23.3.1. So he asked, "How can I be sure of this?"
- 2.24. **Q: What unbelief do you struggle with?**  
2.24.1. **Q:** Do you have your limitations or Gods great power in yur sights?  
2.24.2. **Q:** Why should have Zacharias believed? **Q:** Why should we?
- 2.25. (19) **I stand in the presence of God** – This statement gives additional weight & a sense of truthfulness to what Gabriel was saying.
- 2.26. (19,20) **Unbelief produces silence!**  
2.26.1. 2 Cor.4:13 **"It is written: *"I believed; therefore I have spoken."***(from Ps.116:10) **With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,"**  
2.26.2. **As unbelief produces silence; faith opens your mouth in praise to God!**<sup>5</sup>  
2.26.3. Interesting, the father of him who would be **"the voice" of one crying in the wilderness!**  
2.26.4. **But what was it that he couldn't proclaim?** – Yes about the miracle of his wife's pregnancy, they're going to have a man child!  
2.26.4.1. **But even worse, he couldn't herald the good news he's waited for his whole life(as all Jews had) the news that God was about to send the Messiah to the world!!!**  
2.26.4.2. Look at the emphasis about his Prophecy in **1:67-79**.  
2.26.4.2.1. Only 2 verses given for his boy.  
2.26.5. It was a "punitive miracle" but contained the promise **"which will be fulfilled in their own time."**
- 2.27. (20) **My translation!**(BBV – Brian Bell Version) – ***"You want a sign? I'll give you a sign!"***  
2.27.1. You **didn't believe what was spoken to you** by the lord, & **now you are unable to repeat it** to others.  
2.27.2. **"For the Lord will not employ unbelieving messengers."** (Spurgeon)  
2.27.3. **Q: Is there any unbelief in your life that has sealed your mouth shut?** (Is this why we don't share the good news as often as we should?)
- 2.28. **Which will be fulfilled in there own time** –  
2.28.1. Matthew Henry, **"We can depend on God to fulfill His promise, even when all the roads leading to it are closed."**

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Wiersbe; With The Word; pg.669.

- 2.29. (21,22) Upon leaving the temple, Zechariah is **unable to pronounce the priestly blessing** for the waiting crowd.
- 2.29.1. Often the priest would come to the railing, separating **the court of the priest** & the **court of the Israelites**, & pronounce a blessing upon the people after the evening sacrifice & after the incense had been burned.
- 2.29.2. **Luke 1:62** implies that he couldn't hear either.
- 2.30. (23-25) **5 months?** – no custom speaks to this.
- 2.30.1. **Q: What was going on in Zach & Lizzy's home during all this time?**
- 2.30.1.1. No altar to minister at, no neighbors to talk to, no tongue to even talk with! Wife with morning sickness? No words but what could be scribbled, glances of tears & smiles.
- 2.30.1.2. ***Screaming quietness!***
- 2.30.2. **"The Grace of God"**(John) Elizabeth's **holy secret!**
- 2.30.3. Some have suggested that she went into seclusion in order to avoid reproach from skeptical neighbors during the time when she "wasn't showing!"
- 2.30.4. **Even Mary was ignorant of her pregnancy(1:36).**
- 2.31. The barren Elizabeth soon becomes pregnant.
- 2.31.1. She already was experiencing, in anticipation, the **joy & gladness** of which Gabriel spoke.
- 2.32. Praise is addressed **to God** for what He has done..."**The Lord has done this for me**"(NIV).
- 2.32.1. Thus the emphasis on the **Blessor** rather than on the **Blessing!**
- 2.33. What an **honor** for this elderly couple to be the parents of the last & greatest of the prophets.
- 2.33.1. Lk.7:28 **"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist..."**