

PIERCING THE DARKNESS AND SHATTERING THE SILENCE

The Birth Announcement of John the Baptist – Part 2 Luke 1:15-22

INTRODUCTION

Luke 1:5-2:52 is The Gospel of the Infancy – abounds in dignity, beauty, and spirituality, historicity, and accuracy

READ Luke 1:15-25

Proposition: Outline is marked from the 3 Key Players:

- I. Gabriel's **Declaration**
- II. Zacharias' **Suspicion**
- III. Elizabeth's **Conception**

So That: We would trust God and take Him at His word.

I. Gabriel's **Declaration** **Luke 1:15-17**

Point – Angelic declaration of greatness, prophecy of hope

The **Quality** of John (Greatness)

The **Ministry** of John (Repentance)

A. The **Quality** of John **1:15**

Point – Simply put → Greatness

Proof – “^{15a}**For he will be great in the sight of the Lord**”

1:6 – **Zacharias** and **Elizabeth** are righteous in the sight of God

2 unique features of John the Baptist → **Discipline** and **Dedication!**

“^{15b}**and he will drink no wine or liquor;**” – strong negative

- There's no prohibition in the Bible against drinking wine.
- God did forbid priests from drinking wine while they were on duty.

Lev 10:8-9 – “The LORD then spoke to Aaron, saying, ⁹Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you may not die.”

It was a key element of the vow of a Nazirite.

Nazirite comes from Hebrew word meaning separated.

Num 6:1ff (it does not mean ‘from Nazareth’)

Separation - usually temporary, but **Samuel, Samson, and John the Baptist** were for life.

Discipline and Dedication:

Matt 3:4 – “John himself had a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.”

“^{15c}**and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother’s womb**”

Point – The concept of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is very significant in the Gospel of Luke, in general, and in the Gospel of Infancy of John the Baptist and of Jesus, in particular.

1:35 – “the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.’”

Setting the stage for the unfolding prophecy, conception, birth and ministry of Jesus.

John’s life, unlike any before or after, except for the Son of God, will be the embodiment of → **Eph 5:18** – “do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit”

Observation/Application → Human life begins at conception

- This is not a clump of cell tissue being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- This is human life.
- This is a baby.

→ The Bible teaches life begins at conception. **Luke 1:41, 44**

Jer 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;”

Gal 1:15 – “He who had set me apart, *even* from my mother’s womb”

4 More Truths surrounding John:

- 1) He is the **GOAT** (Greatest of all time)

Luke 7:28a – “I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John;”

Greater than: Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Samson, Gideon, David, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel.

- 2) But **You will be greater in heaven**

Luke 7:28b – “yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

- 3) And **Christ is infinitely Greater**

John is great. Jesus is even greater.

John is a prophet.

Jesus is the Messiah of Whom the prophets speak.

Jesus is not born of a barren old woman. He is born of a virgin.

Proof – 1:32 – “He will be great” without qualification (“in the sight of the Lord”) because He embodies the definition of greatness and is Lord

- 4) **Humility**

John wasn't associated with the priesthood, though he came in a priestly line. He wasn't associated with royalty.

Application – The prophet (preacher) who loves the sound of his own voice ... his voice will not be heard.

You cannot make much of Christ and yourself simultaneously.

Application – You may be great in your school, and great in your business, and great in your boss' eyes and great in your family's eyes, but what does God think of you?

B. The **Ministry** of John **1:16-17**

Point – A great revival based on repentance

Proof – “¹⁶And he will **turn back many** of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.” → **Repentance!!**

Notice the compassion of the Lord, even in their unturned state, God describes Himself as, “**their God**”

1) Prophecy

“^{17a}And it is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah,”

Mal 4:5 – “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet”

Is **John the Baptist** the fulfillment of this Promise of **Elijah**?
→ Yes and No.

John is from the mold of Elijah. **John** comes as the initial fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. But neither **angels, John himself, nor Jesus** thought of John as the final Elijah.

John the Baptist himself – **John 1:21** – “they asked him, ‘Are you Elijah?’ And he said, ‘I am not.’”

Jesus – **Matt 11:14** – “if you care to accept *it*, he himself is Elijah, who was to come.”

→ Did they accept it? No.

After the transfiguration → **Matt 17:10-13** – “And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” ¹¹And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; ¹²but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” ¹³Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.”

→ Yes and No

→ Already/Not Yet

2) Power → Divine Authority → **Power** of God – not only does God have a plan, He has the power to implement this plan!

There is a close tie between **Power** and the **Spirit** in Luke/Acts

Gabriel to Mary – **1:35** – “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”

3) Purpose

“^{17b}**to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous;**”

True spiritual reform strengthens the family ties.

Mal 4:6 – “And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers”

→ Notice the order and the priority → Salvation comes first (v. 16!) and a by-product of that salvation is a strengthening of the family. The restoration and harmony of the family is a byproduct of preaching the good news and salvation and new life.

Illustration – There are all kinds of ways man can try to patch things together in a family – with band-aids and string and scotch tape and cardboard.

But there is only one way of salvation and true regeneration and true reformation or revival within the family.

Application – If we make the byproduct the product, the devil/enemy has won a great battle. (If we don't understand what comes first and what the source is).

4) Product – a prepared people for the coming of the Lord
“^{17c}so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

The Product is a People Prepared for the Coming of the Lord.

Illustration – Some 60-70 years earlier, there were two priestly families in Israel. One was a couple and they name their son Zacharias/Zechariah – YHWH remembers. The other couple has a baby girl, they name her Elizabeth – the oath of Elohim.

Do you see the divine providential irony, better ... the divine providential beauty?

Application – Is your heart prepared for Christ?

II. Zacharias' Suspicion Luke 1:18-22

Point –

- A. Skeptical Doubt
- B. Towering Certainty
- C. Temporary Judgment

A. Skeptical Doubt

Point – We see the ugly flower of suspicion sprouting from the seed of skeptical doubt.

Proof – “¹⁸**And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.’**”

emphatic → “For I myself am an old man” (presbuterof)

We could say, John the Baptist and Zacharias the Presbyterian ☺

Zacharias asks, “**How shall I know this for certain**”

Mary asks, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” (34)

Zacharias asks for more evidence.

Mary asks for an explanation of the miracle without the seed of doubt. Difference: → Dumbfounded vs. Doubtful

Application– When we are assaulted by dark and distressing situations, isn’t it a temptation to doubt that God is working it out for our good? The temptation is to ask for more evidence, some extra measure of revelation to tell us that it is all going to be OK, rather than just trusting God and taking Him at His word.

B. Towering Certainty

“^{19a}**And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel’**”

Literally, the name **Gabriel** means “Mighty one of Elohim”

There are only 3 angels named in Scripture:

- **Michael**, the Warrior
- **Gabriel**, the Messenger
- **Lucifer**, before his fall, the Worshiper.

emphatic → “I myself am Gabriel”

- Zacharias’ cold skepticism is met with Gabriel’s towering certainty

“^{19b}**who stands in the presence of God;**”

Lit. – “the one standing before God”

Gabriel appears two other times:

- in **Dan 8:16** (ram and shaggy goat interpretation of a vision to Daniel of a vision Daniel had regarding Media, Persia, and Greece);
- **9:21** – “to give insight with understanding” (End Times Matter! – 70 weeks and the Messiah!);
- And now here in Luke **1:19, 26**

“^{19c}**and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news.**” – from the Greek word εὐαγγελίζω which we translate as the noun ‘evangelism’ in English

Matthew uses this same Greek word once in his gospel, **Mark** and **John** don’t use it at all but **Luke** uses it 10 times in his Gospel and 15 times in the book of Acts.

Psa 96:2 – “Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.” **Nah 1:15** – “Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace!”

Gabriel did not add one syllable to the words he’d been given. He didn’t distort the message in any way shape or form.

The unfallen angels, the elect angels (1 Tim 5:21), **ONLY** say what God sends them to say. They don’t embellish, they don’t add to the Word of God, they don’t take away from the Bible. They don’t attempt to repackage to make it more popular and appealing to a dying culture.

Application – Good lesson for all of us, especially for those of us blessed with the ministry of the Word.

C. Temporary Judgment (Sign)

“^{20a}**And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place,**”

A reminder of God's faithfulness and a reminder of his lapse in faith.

A merciful duration – temporary (contrast – God's judgment on David which was a permanent, at least for his lifetime)

“unable to speak” – literally – “not have the power to speak”. This is a reminder to us:

→ When we are weak, He is strong.

“^{20b}because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time.”

This is the chief sin of which the Spirit convicts. It is not the sin of adultery, robbery, or violence. It is the sin of **unbelief**.

The other sins are serious sins,
but unbelief is the mother of all other sins.

John 16:8-9 – “He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me;”

“²¹And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.”

Zacharias was in the Holy Place, the people were in the courts within the Temple. According to the Talmud, the priest would get in and get out as fast as possible. The longer you are in there, the greater the likelihood you might do something wrong and the greater possibility of death

Lev 16:13 – “he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on *the ark of the testimony*, lest he die.”

“^{22a}But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them;”

When the priest would come out, he would pray the benediction of **Num 6:24-26** – “The LORD bless you, and keep you; ²⁵the LORD make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; ²⁶the LORD lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace.”

When Zacharias came out, however, he was unable to speak.

“^{22b}**and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.**”

Illustration – a message of hope if you find yourself in a situation like this:

Noah got drunk, but he isn't painted in Scripture as a drunkard.

Abraham lied, but he is not painted in Scripture as a liar.

David committed adultery, but he is not characterized in Scripture as a unrepentant adulterer.

Peter cursed, blasphemed, denied Christ, but God does not describe him to us as a blasphemer.

Application – In the same way ... **Zacharias'** sin is unbelief, BUT **Zacharias** is not an unbeliever.

➔ Beloved, sometimes God will **mar you** in order to **mend you** 😊

Application– The choice is either accept the gift ... or embrace the judgment. The choice for anyone when it comes to Christ is to continue the path of rebellion and defiance, to mock or put aside the truth of Scripture and think we have plenty of time to 'yolo' (you only live once).

Do you bow the knee to Christ now joyfully and worship Him as your Lord and Savior who will adopt you into His family and adopt you into His presence in Heaven forever or do you defy Him and go to eternal destruction and perdition as well?

Next week:

III. Elizabeth's Conception

CONCLUSION

IN a sense, John the Baptist is the culmination of the Old Testament. God brings His chosen instruments through barren women → Sarah, Rebekah, Hannah. Isaac, Jacob, Samuel → John the Baptist

Beloved, the birth of John the Baptist is the fountainhead of all the other miracles and blessings that come with Christ.

You can think of a great dam holding back a massive wall of water. Normally, we think of this dam breaking in the context of death and destruction in a real flood.

From a biblical perspective, it is used as a solemn illustration of the wrath of Christ being stored up against sin in Rom 5.

Consider turn that negative picture upside down. There is a massive volume of blessings and promises stored behind this dam. All the promises of God in the OT hang their suspended.

The blessings and promises God gave to Abraham (land, Seed, blessing), to David (land, throne, name), Israel in the New Covenant (forgiveness of sin, indwelling Holy Spirit) ... the birth announcement of John the Baptist is the first little pin prick in the dam ... its walls are cracking ... the blessings, promises, and Messianic prophecy fulfillments are pressing up against the wall ... which is ready to burst 😊