

Introduction:

- Luke 1:5-17
- “The Bible is the best-selling book in history, yet it is amazing how ignorant the world seems to be of its content. Even those who claim to believe that the Bible is the standard for Christian faith and practice are often unfamiliar with those aspects of the Bible that prove those claims. For example, did you know that the Bible has an incredible track record when it comes to revealing the future? From Daniel’s prediction of the sequence of the next four Gentile world powers to Jesus’ prediction that His crucifixion would draw the whole world to Himself, the Bible is filled with incredible prophecies about future events that eventually came to pass. There are prophecies about Gentile nations, cities, and individuals, as well as prophecies about Israel and the godly line. Amazingly, nearly 25% of the Bible was prophetic when it was written, so we’ll need to narrow our focus to just one line of prophecy—to the central focus of the Bible’s prophetic vision, the coming of Jesus. From the writings of Moses in the 15th century B.C. to the writings of Malachi in the 5th century B.C., Jesus’ coming was described, with 320 details being given. It’s important to note that it is undisputed among Bible scholars that the entire Old Testament was completed hundreds of years before Jesus was born. I point this out because when the untrained are introduced to these prophecies, they often assume they had to be written after the time of Christ. But the fact is, with the aid of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we have actual in hand copies of the Old Testament that precede the birth of Christ by at least one-hundred and fifty years.
- Of the 320 details the Old Testament reveals about Christ, here's a sampling:
 - That the Christ would present himself as Messiah by humbly riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9);
 - That the Christ would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13)
 - That the Christ would be unfairly judged and condemned to die (Isaiah 53:8-9),
 - That the Christ would be abandoned by his disciples (Zechariah 13:7-9);
 - That the Christ would be rejected by his own people (Isaiah 53:3);
 - That the Christ would be crucified (Psalm 22:11-16) as an offering for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-6);
 - That the Christ would rise from the dead (Isaiah 53:10-12)
 - That the Christ, although a Jew, would become a light to the Gentiles, and bring salvation to the whole world (Isaiah 49:5-6). Mitchel Dillion; Illustration Exchange 20171224.
- John the Baptist was a key prophetic voice that not only prophesied the coming of the Lord but prepared people for His coming.
 - We are celebrating the birth of Christ in this season but we must also be aware of the importance of preparation.
 - John’s birth was very prophetic. He was raised up to be the announcer! The Forerunner. A preparer of lost people for the Lord.

I. God Prepared the Preparers!

- A. Zechariah was chosen by lot to serve in the temple by burning incense.
 1. One might think of this as gambling. But the Jews saw it as the hand of God in all things. It was not a game to them. As believers we no longer need 'lots' because we have the Holy Spirit.
 2. Burning of incense had to do with daily prayers. Twice a day incense was added to the altar. The Altar of incense is a type of Christ, whose prayers were to always go up for His people. He forever lives to make intercession. Hebrew 7:25
 3. It also had to do with keeping the fire on the altar going.
- B. God prepared the preparers of the preparer.
 1. God called Zechariah and Elizabeth to be the preparers of the preparer!
 - a) Zechariah means: Yahweh remembers. God had been silent for over 400 years. That is a long time. Yet Yahweh remembers His people.
 - b) Elizabeth means: God is my oath (covenant). In the OT - Elisheva is the wife of Aaron. Interesting that is mentioned at the start of chapter 1.
 2. God chose them to raise this prophet up in the Lord. God was not going to pick just any person for this job of raising a forerunner.

II. Why All The Rejoicing? We are joyful and rejoice because...God is about to speak after 400 years of silence. When the Good News finally hits you as the Good News you get really happy!

- A. *"And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,"* (Luke 1:14, ESV)
 1. Zechariah and Elizabeth will have joy because the curse of barrenness is removed and they will also be the parents of God's messenger, John.
 2. Many will rejoice at his birth! Why?...because of who he is and what he will do will in making their hearts glad before God.
- B. There are four reasons for the joy, gladness and rejoicing that the angel gives Zechariah.
 1. He will be great before the Lord! This is a very big statement!
 - a) John is great in Jesus' eyes. *"This is he of whom it is written, " 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."* (Luke 7:27-28, ESV)
 - b) The word 'Lord' embodies both power and authority...sounds like Jesus.
 - c) John is a 'big deal' before the Lord, Jesus.
 - d) And He shall not drink strong drink. Prophets and priests could not come before the Lord having drunk wine or strong drink. Their message must not be

skewed. John never drank and was criticized for it. Jesus did drink wine and was called a drunkard.

- e) John will be great before the Lord. Maybe a good study would be "Why was John great before the Lord and how can I be like him?"
- 2. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth
 - a) This is new to scripture! The pattern had been that Holy Spirit was upon the people of old. Now something changes in the working of God. John would be born filled with Holy Spirit. Maybe this is why he was great before the Lord. But Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - b) This would make Zechariah and Elizabeth glad. John has this special relationship with God. Others would be glad, because his preaching would have fire on it!
 - c) Those hearing would be touched by the Holy Spirit; called by the Holy Spirit, drawn by the Holy Spirit.
- 3. He will turn many to the Lord
 - a) John is forerunner! He is a prophet declaring the voice and activity of God. Ie. Forerunner is one who ran before the bridegroom to announce the coming of the bridegroom for his bride.
 - b) He is preparing people, telling them to get ready for one greater than him is coming after him. *"For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."* (Amos 3:7, ESV). 10 virgins...five wise (they were prepared) five foolish they had no extra oil.
 - c) He will turn many back to God so that they are ready to both hear and receive Messiah.
- 4. He will go before Messiah
 - a) in the spirit of Elijah - *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."* (Malachi 4:5-6, ESV)
 - b) to turn fathers to children - Dt 6:4-7 teach them diligently.
 - c) to turn disobedient to wisdom - heart of children turning to Father is wisdom.
 - d) to prepare a people for Messiah
 - (1) Repentance was John's message. *Repent and bear fruit* in keeping with repentance. Matthew 3:8
 - (2) *"Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."* Matthew 3:2
 - (3) These were the hungry ones who repented and began looking for the Messiah.

C. What Does John Know about Jesus? He has revelation of Messiah/Jesus.

1. He knows Jesus is Lord! John 1:23, Jesus is "the Lord." John identifies himself as the voice crying in the wilderness, "**Make straight the way of the Lord.**" Isaiah 40:3
2. He knows Jesus is so great that he is not worthy to untie his sandals. John 1:27
3. He knows Jesus is "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." John had probably discovered this in meditating on Isaiah 53:6-7.
4. He knows that Jesus is going to baptize people with His Holy Spirit. John 1:33
5. He knows Jesus is the son of God. "**And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.**" (John 1:34, ESV)
6. He knows that Jesus must become greater and he must become less. John 3:30

III. Called To Break The Silence

- A. There are many people today who have never heard the message of salvation.
 1. To them the voice of the Lord is silent or has been silenced.
 2. They do not know there is a thing called salvation.
 3. They do not know that Jesus was born to die for...them.
- B. Break the silence. So what can we do about it?
 1. We must seek to be great before the Lord!
 - a) A servant of all.
 - b) Motivated by love.
 - c) Equipped to minister.
 2. We must be filled with the Holy Spirit!
 - a) God in us.
 - b) His gifts of Holy Spirit working in us.
 3. We must turn many to the Lord!
 - a) Get them to change direction in life.
 - b) Lead people into a repentance.
 4. We must go before Messiah before He returns! We do this knowing that Jesus will come again therefore we live to bring as many people to Christ as we can.