



PREPARING for CHRISTMAS

Christmas Through the Eyes of Angels – part 2

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Are you ready for Christmas?

2,000 years ago, the people of Israel were ready for...

- *a Messiah, but not Emmanuel*
- *a Revolutionary leader, but not a redeemer infant*

Let us prepare for the Savior...

Luke 1:5-25 (page 1012 in Sanctuary Bible)

⁵ In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

⁸ Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at 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; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

Luke 1:5-25 (cont'd)

¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. ¹⁶ He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

¹⁹ The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

Luke 1:5-25 (cont'd)

20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. **25** “The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”

BITTER or BETTER

(vv. 5-7)

❖ **Despite disappointments, Zechariah and Elizabeth faithfully served God.**

“They were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commandments and regulations blamelessly.” (v. 6)

❖ **Bitterness = anger, frustration, joy-killer**

❖ **Become better by trusting and depending on God to find fulfillment.**

GOD BREAKS HIS SILENCE

(vv. 8-13)

❖ **God had been completely silent for 450 years.**

“Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.’” (v. 13)

❖ **“Do not be afraid!”**

“For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.” (2 Chron. 16:9)

GOD'S TIMING IS PERFECT

(vv. 13b-17)

❖ **Zechariah was rewarded on God's timetable!**

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD." (Jer. 29:11-14)

❖ **Not only was Z & E blessed with a son, this would be a special child.**

PREPARE FOR JESUS

(vv. 18-20)

- ❖ **Zechariah's first response is not one of joy but of doubt.**

"How can I be sure of this? After all my wife and I are too old to have children?" (v. 18)

- ❖ **Unbelief carries serious consequences.**

"I (Gabriel... 'the mighty one of God') stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news." (v. 19)

- ❖ **The Christmas story should inspire us to have confidence rather than doubt!**

- ✓ **Circumstances should not determine our faithfulness.**
“If you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.” (1 Pet. 4:19)
- ✓ **Circumstances are not a sign of God’s displeasure with you.**
“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed...so the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body.” (2 Cor. 4:7-10)
- ✓ **God often uses our difficulties to shine the light on His power.**
“That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:9-10)
- ✓ **God is faithful regardless of the circumstances.**
“I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.”(Ps.37:25)

REFLECTION:

1. “What is God saying to me?”
2. “What am I going to do about it?”
3. “Are you ready to accept Jesus as Lord & Savior”

NEXT WEEK: *Participating in Christmas*

(Matthew 1:18-25)