

Luke 1.5-25 “Do Not be Afraid...Your Prayer has been Heard”

Where do you BEGIN to tell the Greatest Story ever Told?

Matthew starts w Jesus’ Genealogy, Son of Abe & King greater David

Mark no time for Birth Narrative > begins w Jesus’ Baptism & Ministry

John “in the beginning” // Genesis > Jesus w Father from Eternity, Creator

Luke 2nd Gospel preserved in Scripture Written – Mark, Luke, Matt, John

Written to Roman Patrician: Theophilus (lover of G), Patron, Seeker?

Begins Temple > Old Covenant Sacrifice by humble, old Priest

Weaves 2 Narratives – Boy Cousins – Jesus / John – Parallel Stories

Birth Announcements / Mother’s Meet / Birth, Circumcision, Naming

Prophecy & Greeting re. John by Zech // re. Jesus by Simeon/Anna ch 2

Both announced by A. Gabriel – Births Miraculous – Great Destinies

1. Decline of the Old Covenant

a. Political Corruption v. 5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea

LITTLE MEANING TO US TODAY / REVULSION TO THE JEWS

Not True Jew IDUMEAN - Descendant Esau - Generational HATRED

"KING" by Roman Senate: Vassal of Caesar's to HUMILIATE JEWS

15th yr Tiberius Caesar -- Pontius Pilate gov Judea, Herod tetrarch Galilee, Phillip tetrarch of Iturea & Traconitis, Lysanias tetrarch Abilene... Lk 3.1

LIST OF ROGUES > Names, REMIND People of Corruption & Evil

LIGHT OF GOSPEL SHINES AT DARKEST POLITICAL HOUR

LUKE / NT Writers / Jesus or Apostles / Focus on Politics of their Day

Foolish Decisions – Excessive CORRUPTION – Boyfriends & Girlfriends

Gospel is Good News for Sinners – Politicians & People they EXTORT

b. Religious Formalism v. 5 priest named Zechariah, division of Abijah. And he had a from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth

BOTH - "descendants of Aaron" – JEWISH PRIESTLY ROYALTY

You Think been DOING Church for Long Time?? Memorized SONGS?

People of ISRAEL been REPEATING Rituals for 1500 years

1000's of PRIESTS / equiv of GOV'T Workers – Steady Job & PENSION

24 divis Priests / 300 Priests in each division / 56 chosen serve in Temple

Zech chosen by Lot – Sovereign God – enter Holy Place / not most Holy

Lampstand, Table of Bread, Incense altar – 40 in hi – enter 2 times daily

Bring coals from outside to burn on altar of incense – prayers rise up

FINAL OT Proph: Empty Ritual: Malachi “blind animals...shut doors”

c. Surprised by Grace v. 11-13 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. 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.

Zech Never enter again / Once in Lifetime – Biggest day of Life/ Career

Sees inside of Curtains – purple, blue, gold – only heard of them

Alone, dark, except minora candles burning

SOLEMN MOMENT - "Alter of Incense" part of Most Holy Place

Zechariah entered w/ 2 Attendant Priests - Outer Room

Probably Rope tied to Ankle if Collapsed – Pulled Out from OUTSIDE

More than just Another Boring Sunday!! ANGEL GABRIEL shows up!

Reason why 1st Thing Angels say: “Do Not be Afraid” / Fierce Warriors

Should NOT have been SURPRISED – Be EXPECTANT and READY..

GOD – does NOT Know HOW to LIE – has PROMISED His PEOPLE

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant w/ the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Jeremiah 31.31

Israel > Many Opportunities to Know God / Continual Sin & Rebellion

GOD CONTINUED TO EXTEND HIS GRACE

"where we see the Word of God preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms in many faults"

John Calvin

2. Doubt and its Consequences

a. Obedient v. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

UPRIGHT..OBSERVING..BLAMELESSLY

MAN AND WOMAN WHO WERE DIFFERENT FROM SOCIETY...

b. Suffering v. 7 they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

TODAY - Many Couples, Children seen Burden – Inconvenient Expense

BIBLE Days Childless = CURSE OF GOD: Shame, Ridicule, Gossip

Bible - Bad things happen to Good People, Good things - Bad People

SOVEREIGN PURPOSE / PLAN OF GOD

We look Backward trying to see Cause / God points Forward in HOPE

ELIZ & ZECH. Lived with LONELY SHAME for MANY, LONG Years

DESPITE their SUFFERING they REMAINED...

c. Faithful v. 8 he was serving as priest B4 God, his division was on duty

"on duty....serving" / Old Priests Mocked: Ready to be Called to SERVE

TRUE of Us?? > Young or Old READY to Serve LORD of HARVEST

vs. 23,24 time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these days his wife Eliz conceived, and for 5 months she kept herself hidden

Trusting, WAITING DURING PREGNANCY / Zechariah is MUTE

ME trying to Communicate in CHINA – Master of the PANTAMIME

He asked for a writing tablet & to everyone's astonishment he wrote "His name is John"

Luke 1:63

Contrary to Naming CUSTOMS of Jews > Obedient to God's Command

d. Disciplined v. 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."

Mute Zech Could not give Benediction at Exit from Holy Place

Loyal Jew did not speak God's Holy Name – Yahweh – Covenant Lord

Normally called God ADONAI – Lord

When priest Exited Holy Place pronounced Benediction > YAHWEH

1 time in Life Proclaim Covenant Name YAHWEH, Exit Benediction

Miss out on Opportunity to Declare and Delight in God

Zech looking at Self, Wife, Situation: This aint gonna happen

Biology was Correct – But Theology Wrong – Nothing too hard 4 God

Fails to understand that this is God's World – He is Lord of all Life

Ironic – In Temple of God, Angel of God, Word of God, Presence of God

Promises of OT – Gabriel – Daniel 8 & 9 – reveals mysteries, makes

Read Word – Hear Sermon based on Word – God speak to You!

Do we Forget who we are Talking To?

"Silent...did not believe" Need be HUMBLed to Rightly GLORIFY God

Always more LESSONS TO LEARN - Greatest in Kingdom CHILD

He who is not busy bein' born is BUSY DYIN... Bob Dylan

it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD...Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him Lamentations 3.26,28

3. Desire for the New Covenant

a. Prayer v. 13 angel: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, prayer been heard..."

OFFERED Many Prayers over LONG YEARS of Service

Maybe Eliz – Gonna meet God, go in and ask for a child!! End Shame!!

FATHER – for Child (stopped?) / PRIEST - Redemption of Israel

God answers Both Prayers – Surprising Way – thru ONE BABY BOY

SON – Prepare Way of Lord – Set into MOTION Plan of REDEMPTION

LUKE - GOSPEL FILLED WITH PRAYER Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. Luke 6.12

Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18.1

being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground
Luke 22.44

IF JESUS NEEDED TO PRAY - HOW ABOUT US?

Little Boy TIRED of Praying for This Family & Getting No RESULTS

Aunt Harriet NOT Married, Uncle Bill NO job, Dad's hair still falling out!

Thank God Zech & Eliz NOT RETIRE from Praying and SERVING

When Zechariah OPENS his MOUTH it is to PRAISE - NOT CURSE

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.
Luke 1.64

b. Grace v13 “wife Eliz will bear U a son & U shall call his name John”

NAME "John" = THE GRACE OF GOD

John Pointed People to REDEEMER > GRACE OF REPENTANCE -

Men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.
Lamentations 3.31-33

GOD Fulfills His SAVING PURPOSE for WORLD > Ordinary People

We PREPARE OURSELVES so that we can INVITE others to COME!

We're His Ambassadors of Advent – Servants of King > Kohala, Creation

c. Great (*Privilege*) v. 15 for he will be great before the Lord

Greatness of John – Many Followers > GREATER is Jesus

Ch 2 Jesus is Christ the Lord! / John not worthy to untie Jesus' Sandals

John had a Great OPPORTUNITY to See JESUS > Old Covenant prophet

the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating
1 Peter 1.10,11

"I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he"
Luke 7.28

Greater Privilege – Finished Work of X – Complete Canon of OT & NT

Greatest Blessing of Old Covenant –Embrace Fulfillment– We See HIM

Jesus: “Blessed R UR eyes because they see & UR ears because they hear. many prophets & righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it & to hear what you hear but did not hear it” Matthew 13.16,17

Recent Gathering in Seoul, Korea – Lausanne 4 – 5k from 200+ nations

Getting Close to Every Tongue and Tribe hearing Good News of Jesus

190 out of 240 countries in the world are considered engaged

43 countries w very small Xtian pop.: less than 8%, 3 Unengaged

Not be GREAT Before the Lord in Blessing if they’ve NEVER HEARD

d. Spirit - LUKE - GOSPEL OF HOLY SPIRIT

400 yrs of Prophetic Silence – None since Malachi - Holy Spirit QUIET

v. 15 he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb

Mary: “Holy Spirit will come upon you, & the power of the Most High will overshadow you; the child to be born will be called holy, Son of God” Luke 1.35

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit Luke 1.41

John’s father Zech was filled with the Holy Spirit & prophesied Luke 1.67

John: "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Luke 3.16

We NEED this Baptism – We Received when BELIEVE in Jesus Savior / He is Spirit-Baptizer & Savior from Sin / We are FORGIVEN & FILLED

e. Restoration > v. 16,17 “he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God & he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

Fulfills Promise of Malachi - He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers... Malachi 4.6

Church follows PRINCE of PEACE > Should be PLACE of PEACE

Church BJ: African Xtian Student> brot Roommate THAI Buddhist >

P4N Sri Lanka: Thai to Classmate from Sri L “church prayed UR nation”

Many Sundays: African Xtian, Thai Buddhist, Sri Lankan Muslim sitting

e. Joy – what is ON Everyone’s Christmas LIST this YEAR!

v. 14 you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth

Joy NOT from SUBSTANCES – END of the BOTTLE or the NEEDLE

TRUE, LASTING, ETERNAL JOY > JOY OF SALVATION >>

Christian PRAY that God will Keep you Joyful in Him – RESTORE!

JOHN THE BABY - As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Luke 1.44

JOHN'S BIRTH - Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy. Luke 1.58

“The 72 returned w joy: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”... rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Lk 10.17,21,22

“While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. Luke 24.50-53

Congregational Prayer / “Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates.” / by Pastor Georg Weissel 1623

It is estimated that twelve million people died across Central Europe during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Twenty percent of the people of Germany died during the conflict that ripped their land and people apart. Just a year before conflict broke out, Georg Weissel returned to the University of Konigsberg to prepare for pastoral ministry. He completed his studies and was ordained at a Lutheran church in Konigsberg and he would served as a pastor until his death in 1635.

His ministry took place in the midst of death and destruction. Yet, Weissel was a prolific writer of hymns of joy. During the dark days of the never-ending war, he write this beloved Advent hymn “Lift Up Your Heads Ye Mighty Gates.” It is based on Psalm 24 which was written by King David. This hymn was a celebratory call to the people of Jerusalem to welcome the return of the Ark of the Covenant. Like David, Weissel applies the text to God’s people preparing for the coming of the true King of glory.

During this Advent season, it seems that the darkness is overtaking the light. The days are short and the nights long. The disdain for the King of glory is as apparent today as it has been in the past. But we joyfully lift up the gates and the doors to welcome the King of glory, whose first Advent we remember and whose second Advent we await.

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates,
Behold the King of glory waits;

The King of kings is drawing near,
The Saviour of the world is here;

Life and salvation He does bring,
Wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
 We praise Thee, Father, now!
Creator, wise art Thou!

The Lord is just, a Helper tried,
Mercy is ever at His side,

His kingly crown is holiness,
His sceptre, pity in distress,

The end of all our woe He brings;
Wherefore the earth is glad and sings:

We praise Thee, Saviour, now,
Mighty in deed art Thou!

Oh bless the land, the city blessed,
Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!

Oh happy hearts and happy homes
To whom this King in triumph comes!

The cloudless Sun of joy He is,
Who brings pure delight and bliss:

O Comforter Divine,
What boundless grace is Thine!

Fling wide the gates of your heart,
Make it a temple set apart

From earthly use for Heaven's employ,
Adorn'd with prayer and love and joy;

So shall your Sovereign enter in,
And new and nobler life begin:

To Thee, O God, be praise,
For word and deed and grace!

Redeemer, come! I open wide
My heart to Thee,--here, Lord, abide!

Let me Thy inner presence feel,
Thy grace and love in me reveal,

Thy Holy Spirit guide us on
Until our glorious goal is won!

Eternal praise and fame
We offer to Thy name. Amen.