

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING

Luke 1:1-56

12/18/05

Most of us have been busy the last couple weeks preparing for Christmas.

Putting up lights, baking Christmas goodies, buying and wrapping presents, and sending out Christmas cards.

God too was busy 2000 years ago preparing for the first Christmas.

1. **Luke Wrote To Give An Accurate Account Of The Events Surrounding The Life Of Christ. 1:1-4**

He investigated everything carefully.

He gathered information from eyewitnesses.

He wrote it out in consecutive order.

He carefully communicated the truth.

2. **An Angel Announced The Coming Birth Of The Messiah's Forerunner. 1:5-25**

5-7 Elizabeth and Zacharias were a godly couple of priestly lineage.

They were elderly and childless

Zacharias means "Yahweh remembers"

Elizabeth means "Consecrated to God"

8-10 Zacharias had the chance of a lifetime

He was one of an estimated 8,000 priests living in Palestine at the time.

They were divided in 24 orders or divisions each numbering about 300 priests.

Zechariah's group would have served two one-week periods each year.

LOT- There were so many priests that the privilege of serving inside the temple was chosen by lot.

The honor of offering incense was the grandest event in all his earthly existence.

Many priests never had the privilege, and no priest was allowed to offer it more than once.

Picture old Zechariah as he is serving in the heart of the temple.

The sacred ambience overwhelms him.

The light of the golden candlestick reveals the rich embroider hues of the cherubim on the veil of the Holy of Holies.

The golden altar of incense glistens as it gives off its fragrant aroma of worship.

Then suddenly something terrifying occurs.

11-12 The angel Gabriel appears to Zechariah

We don't know whether he appeared in the conventional image of man or assumed a dramatic form like the pyrotechnic display of the angel who appeared to Samson's father, Manoah. (Judges 13:19-22)

But we do know that the angel's appearance was dramatic because of the extreme fear that fell upon Zechariah.

13-17 The angel prophesies that they will have a son

No prophecy had come from God in over 400 years.

The last time Gabriel had appeared was 500 years earlier to the prophet Daniel.

13-14 Zechariah is told that he and Elizabeth will have a son in their old age.

God had heard and answered their prayer.

God often waits until we give up hope in our own abilities so that we will know that the answer is truly from Him. (Sarah, Manoah's wife, Hannah)

John means "God is gracious."

15 He will be a great and godly man.

Great in the sight of the Lord

He will be consecrated as a Nazarite from birth

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before birth.

Jesus said of John:

Matthew 11:11a "Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen *anyone* greater than John the Baptist!

16-17 His ministry was prophesied in the Old Testament

John will be the long awaited forerunner to the Messiah.

A forerunner was a person who went before a king or dignitary announcing that he was on his way and that people should properly prepare themselves to receive him.

Gabriel quotes part of the final two verses of the OT- Malachi 4:5-6

John will minister in the same spirit and power as Elijah.

Matthew 17:11 And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; 12 but 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." 13 Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

He will so affect the hearts of his people that it will revolutionize the way they live in their homes.

18-20 Zechariah responds in unbelief

21-25 The prophecies are fulfilled

3. **The Angel Gabriel Announces To Mary The Coming Birth Of The Long Awaited Messiah 1:26-56**

26-30 "*favored one*"- One richly blessed

She is the recipient of grace, *not* bestower of grace

No other woman who has ever lived on earth has been so blessed by God.

She is in fact the most blessed of all women.

She was chosen to carry and nurse God's Son

Her face was the face the young Jesus looked to as an infant and as a child.

Jesus carried Mary's genes and probably bore a close physical resemblance to her.

Though we must not think too highly of her as some do, we must be careful not to think too little.

31-33 Notice the names and titles of this child

Jesus means Jehovah Saves

Matthew 1:21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Son of the Most High- God's Son cf Isaiah 9:6

Matthew 1:23 Immanuel- God with us

Throne of his father David- fulfiller of the Davidic Covenant

He will reign over the house of Jacob forever (no end)

The promised Messiah

Note what Mary heard.

"You are going to become *pregnant*; you are going to call your son's name *Salvation*, he is going to be the *Son of God*; and he will be the *Messiah*."

What an earful!!

34-37 virgin- "Know no man"

Mt 1:23- parthenos- virgin

35 *By God the Holy Spirit*

36-37 *Nothing is impossible with God.*

38 Mary's response- ***"Behold the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."***

Mary knew instinctively that her story would be questioned.

Try going home and telling mom and dad that one.

Joseph himself first doubted it. Matthew 1:19

She knew that in the OT God prescribed the death penalty for adultery

Although it was no longer carried out

She was willing to submit to God:

In spite of the social disgrace

In spite of jeopardizing her marriage to Joseph

In spite of the fact that her life could be at stake or at the least she probably would never marry.

She was willing to obey God no matter what the apparent cost or consequences. (Abraham)

“Behold the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.”

She could have replied to Gabriel, “Thanks, but no thanks. Count this girl out.”

But Mary was willing to submit to God even in this.

Mary is a great example of faith.

She is a model of submission

We can't grow in our relationship with Christ or mature in our Christian lives without totally surrendering ourselves to Him.

Have you ever said, ***“I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said?”***

These are the words that bring God's blessing.

This is the way Jesus taught us to pray.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, let your will be done right here, just as it is in heaven itself.

39-45 The responses of Elizabeth and her baby

vv. 46-56 Mary praises God for choosing to use such a lowly and insignificant person as she.

47 She recognizes that God is the one who saves.

48ff God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble cf James 4: 6; I Pet 5:5

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

Zech 4:6

IF THESE THINGS ARE TRUE . . .

(And I believe they are)

- a. Eye witness evidence
- b. Archeological confirmation
- c. Over 300 fulfilled OT prophecies bring me the conclusion that Jesus alone matches the profile of the promised OT Messiah.

1. We too should ***rejoice***.

There is a God who mercifully and miraculously answers prayers and keeps His word.

2. We too should be ***astonished***.

God did some amazing and unusual things to get our attention so that we will listen to Him.

3. We too should ***fear***.

God exists and is presently involved in the affairs of life.

His power and ways are infinitely beyond ours.

We are accountable to Him.

He is coming again, and this time to judge, rule, and reign. cf Acts 1:11; II Pet 3

4. We too should ***ponder*** these things.

These things impacted ordinary, intelligent, skeptical people like you and me.

5. We too should seek ***salvation***.

This is the purpose of His coming.

Matthew 1:21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

This is not an issue that we should take lightly.

Christ came to seek and to save the lost.

Christ is the only one that can save you and I from the coming judgment. cf John 14:6

We cannot say that we have not been warned.

John 5:24 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 6:28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."