

**LUKE 1:1-38**  
**“NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD”:**  
**INFANT PROPHET AND INFANT KING- Pt. 1**

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

***Insignificant births!***  
***Humbling circumstances!***  
***Obscure places on the map!***

***God is intervening into history to fulfill the promises of salvation to Israel and to the world!***

**Introduction**

Hundreds of years of oppression for Israel, the called and elected people of God! Israel had been waiting upon the promises of God to be fulfilled in His people. Some had forgotten, some had been diverted, and some still had great hope that God would one day intervene in history and save and deliver his people.

God had been silent for more than **300 years!** Silence, nothing but silence from God. Had God forgotten his people? Perhaps it was up to his people to save themselves, to rise up and get themselves out of this oppression? Perhaps it was up to Israel herself not only to preserve herself, but to save herself?!

Israel had no king to rule them (not a king that was fully an Israelite of the House or Dynasty of David), nor a prophet to speak to them (not a prophet sent by God to the House of Israel). It was not a good time for Israel. What was the bleak situation like?

Israel had not been fully restored from exile as the prophets had promised; she was still ruled by foreign pagan kings. Israel's temple was built by a “half-Jew” named King Herod (Luke 1:5) who all the people despised and it was built for his glory, rather than the glory of God. Israel's Word, the Scriptures had effectively been negated by unbelieving teachers and leaders in Israel, even to the point that the traditions of these teachers had taken the same level as the Word of God (cf. Matthew 15; 23).

In the midst of this ongoing story, one seemingly without a good ending, God finally sends an angel, His own Gabriel (who stands in the presence of God) to Zechariah, a priest of the House of Aaron. God heard the prayers of the faithful, and answered in ***two insignificant births, in humbling circumstances, and in obscure places on the map!***

God sends hope and salvation masqueraded as ***insignificance, humility, and obscurity just so that all men would know their total dependence upon God for hope, salvation and deliverance!***

Israel was in a situation where she could not save, or help herself- -only God could save if he intervened and made the impossible- **-possible**. *For nothing will be impossible with God!* (Luke 1:37).

*God was providing salvation in two infants to be born with supernatural help, apart from any help of man. God was revealing the power of God unto salvation for all who believe by faith alone, apart from any works of man.*

**Elizabeth's delivery of the infant Prophet John would be the birth of the one to proclaim the coming of the One Who will deliver all who believe from death!**

**Mary's delivery of the infant King Jesus would be the birth of the One to deliver all who would believe from death!**

This passage in Luke 1 is very much *theologically-thematically* similar to John's proclamation in the first chapter of his gospel:

John 1:12-14: But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

***Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

God was breaking into history, but not as everyone had expected an anticipated it!

***GOD WAS BREAKING INTO HISTORY POWERFULLY, YET GRACIOUSLY IN THE WOMBS OF TWO WEAK WOMEN. AND IN THOSE WOMBS, GOD WOULD BRING THE PROPHET AND KING HE HAD PROMISED TO DELIVER ISRAEL AND ALL THOSE WHO WOULD BELIEVE THEIR WORDS OF HOPE, SALVATION, AND DELIVERANCE!***

***Do you believe?***

Luke 1 is in many ways a contrast between Zechariah and Mary. Angels visit Zechariah and Mary, then Mary and Zechariah respond in what has come to be called the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus* (we will look at these prayerful praises next week!).

## **I. LUKE'S HISTORICAL ROOTING OF THIS STORY IN THE OLD COVENANT AND REAL HISTORY**

- A. Luke situates us in real history- - a linking of the Old Covenant Story and the fulfillment in the New (Luke 1:1-4)**

**B. Notice the rulers of the world identified immediately!**

This is a summary of the situation of the times- -there is no Messianic Ruler over Israel and the Nations as had been promised by God.

**C. Luke's Historiography:** This is a kind of Greco-Roman historiography like Herodotus and Josephus, but also much like the Old Covenant Historical Narratives ("In those days..." is a Septuagintalism!)

**II. ZECHARIAH: STORY OF THE BIRTH OF THE INFANT PROPHET**

**Elizabeth's delivery of the infant Prophet John would be the birth of the one to proclaim the coming of the One Who will deliver all who believe from death!**

**A. At the End of His Life...**

...God brings a new beginning- NEW LIFE- -An Infant Prophet who will come to prepare a people for the coming of the LORD (Isaiah 40:1-6; Mal. 3; 4).

**B. Priestly Family (1:5-7)- Division of Abijah.**

i. 18,000 priests in Jerusalem at this time. Each division (Abijah was the 18<sup>th</sup> according to 1 Chronicles 24), would serve in the temple for two one-week periods each year. Only once in their entire lives would they be able to offer the incense offering! This was a special time for Zechariah, one he had looked forward to for his entire life!

**C. From Barrenness to Life in the Womb (v.7)-**

i. **Application:** Elizabeth was barren and yet Zechariah and Elizabeth both trusted God's promises and believed in spite of their circumstances! This was a "reproach" for women in the ancient Near East! Our hearts are much like barren wombs- -they are barren.

ii. **Barren Wombs are like Barren Hearts!** Just as Zechariah and Elizabeth were barren and cannot do anything to further or fulfill the promises of God, so our hearts are barren without a desire of God or his salvation- -yet God gives life where there is barrenness! Rejoice!

iii. **Elizabeth and Israel's Reproach!** Elizabeth was a "reproach" of many in Israel for having a barren womb

(because it was thought this was a curse from God as a result of a particular sin, cf. John 9). Yet Israel was cursed by God with a barren heart, because they will not wholly respond to Elizabeth's son John, or the One to whom He will point for salvation!

- iv. Application:** Trust in God no matter what your situation or difficulty! Think about Zechariah and Elizabeth's prayer: they prayed for a son, God gave them a prophet to foreshadow Jesus. Listen to Jesus' words concerning this:

**Luke 7:18-30:** The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, <sup>19</sup> calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>20</sup> And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" <sup>21</sup> In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. <sup>22</sup> And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>23</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." <sup>24</sup> When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? <sup>25</sup> What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. <sup>26</sup> What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>27</sup> This is he of whom it is written, "' Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'" <sup>28</sup> 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." <sup>29</sup> ( When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, <sup>30</sup> but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

***This teaches us that God can and does do above and beyond what we ask or imagine when we pray (Eph. 3:20-21).***

***Sometimes you might ask for a son, but God wants to give you a prophet!***

- D. Angelic Announcement (1:11-15)-** Gabriel has come to visit- -the interpreter of Eschatological or End-Time Events (Daniel 8-9). We should remember that this means that the End Times are being inaugurated with John's birth, and the answer to Daniel's prayers are being answered by God!

**Daniel 8:15-17: When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it. And behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. <sup>16</sup> And I heard a man's**

voice between the banks of the Ulai, and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision."<sup>17</sup> So he came near where I stood. And when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face. But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

Daniel 9:17-23: Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.<sup>18</sup> O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.<sup>19</sup> O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name."<sup>20</sup> While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the LORD my God for the holy hill of my God,<sup>21</sup> while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice.<sup>22</sup> He made me understand, speaking with me and saying, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you insight and understanding."<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly loved. Therefore consider the word and understand the vision.

**Don't miss:** In Luke's account, God is "making his face shine upon his sanctuary (v. 17) that Daniel prayed concerning. God is answering the prayer of the people at the time of the prayers and the incense offering (v. 18). God is being merciful to Israel in offering "comfort, comfort" through his prophet John (vv. 18-20). Gabriel interprets Daniel's vision and the vision of Zechariah that is breaking into history in the End-Times (which were full of eschatological anticipation!) (vv. 22-23).

***After the Prophecy of Daniel, we do not hear from Gabriel again until the End Times are at hand, recorded here in Luke 1!***

***The old is passing away- -behold! The NEW has come in John and Jesus!***

**E. John's Name and Purpose (1:16-17; Malachi 3; 4)- Set apart to God!**

**F. Assurance of God's Word- "Nothing will be impossible with God" (1:18-25, 37)**

**i. Yet doubt: "How shall I know this?"** This is an expression of doubt in God's Word, yet it shows that even man's resistance of the Word of God (and implicitly the Holy Spirit) cannot prevent God from working and fulfilling of his promises to His people!

## **1. God's Temporal Judgment: More Silence!!**

John- -NOT Zechariah would be God's prophetic mouthpiece of Messiah!

## **2. Doubt- Yet God's promises are fulfilled despite sinful man's response to them!**

### ***Is there anything impossible with God?***

- ii. Zechariah's doubt shows that God takes our doubt seriously, but it is not enough to undermine, or prevent the work of God from being accomplished.
- iii. This is the hope of all men when God comes with His Word to make himself known- - **God accomplishes his salvation and deliverance in spite of man's sinful doubts!**
- iv. Let us cast away our doubts and revel in God's power and goodness this Christmas as we see the glory of God revealed in **the insignificance, humility, and obscurity of two infants!**

**Elizabeth's delivery of the infant Prophet John would be the birth of the one to proclaim the coming of the One Who will deliver all who believe from death!**

### **Conclusion**

In spite of **insignificant births, humbling circumstances, and obscure places on the map-** - God does the unbelievable and makes the impossible- - possible by his grace!

The living God teaches us to trust Him and His promises, living by His Word, no matter what circumstance or situation he has brought us into! We must be faithful to His Word, knowing that He will do above and beyond what we could ever ask or imagine.

Are your prayers unfulfilled, still have some outstanding prayer requests that God has not paid? Trust in the One who speaks in history, fulfilling his promises despite man's sinful doubt, to save those who cannot save themselves- -those with barren hearts which are so much worse than barren wombs!

### **Lord's Supper**

CRB