

July 1, 2012
"Zacharias' Amazing Day"
Luke 1:5-25

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were masters of the ordinary. They were faithful people, Scripture tell us – ⁶ **And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:6 NKJ)** Yet, they lacked the excitement and joy of the birth of a child, it seems though they had prayed, maybe even as Hannah did, they were resigned to a childless life. They trusted and accepted God's providence. Yet, in one day EVERYTHING CHANGES!

I. Zacharias wins the lottery!

Now when I say this I am not goofing around with words –

⁸ **So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. (Luke 1:8-9 NKJ)**

1. This was a real lottery; it was the kind of thing from which our current lotteries got their name!
2. Making decisions (or discerning God's will) by casting lots was a common practice in Biblical times:
 - A. Lots were cast to decide which goat would be offered to God (sacrificed) and which was the scapegoat – Leviticus 16:8-10
 - B. Land was divided by casting of lots, this is why property is called a "lot" - Joshua 18:6-11
 - C. Lots were used by Saul to find the supposed "guilt" of Jonathan for eating honey – 1 Samuel 14:41-45
 - D. Participation in music ministry (Praise) 1 Chronicles 25 was decided by casting of lot – 1 Chronicles 25:8-9
 - E. Lots were cast for gate keeping duty – 1 Chronicles 26:13-16
 - F. Lots were cast among priests for the duty of bringing the wood for offerings – Nehemiah 10:34
 - G. Lots were cast by those returning from captivity to decide who, 1 out of 10 would get to live in Jerusalem – Nehemiah 11:1

- H. Lots were cast by wicked Haman to decide when he would destroy the Jews – Esther 3:7 & 9:24
 - I. It was prophesied and fulfilled lots would be cast to divide Jesus' clothing – Psalm 22:8; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34 & John 19:24
 - J. The decisions lots make are of the LORD – Proverbs 16:33
 - K. Lots are credited with ending contention – Proverbs 18:18
 - L. Sailors cast lots to find Jonah's sin – Jonah 1:26
 - M. Christ's disciples cast lots to find Judas' replacement apostle – Acts 1:26
3. In this circumstance, the number of Priests potentially chosen by lot for burning incense was so great that this was really likely a once in a lifetime opportunity for Zacharias!

II. His friends are faithfully and fervently praying!

¹⁰ **And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. (Luke 1:10 NKJ)**

1. See how important is prayer to spiritual work / warfare –
2. Note when the angel Gabriel appeared before it was in answer to fervent PRAYER –

²⁰ **Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. (Dan 9:20-21 NKJ)**

III. Zacharias is visited by an angel!

¹¹ **Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. (Luke 1:11-12 NKJ)**

"How are we to account for this fear? To that question there is only one answer. It arises from our inward sense of weakness, guilt, and corruption. The vision of an inhabitant of heaven reminds us forcibly of our own imperfection, and of our natural unfitness to stand before God. If angels are so great and terrible, what must the Lord of angels be?"

J.C. Ryle

IV. *The angel's message is mind-bogglingly
WONDERFUL!*

The message includes:

1. *Answered prayer –*

¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; (Luke 1:13 NKJ)

2. *A birth announcement –*

and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

(Luke 1:13-14 NKJ)

3. *A child filled with God's Spirit from the womb –*

¹⁵ "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15 NKJ)

4. *A child who will have an impact on people for God's Kingdom –*

¹⁶ "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. (Luke 1:16 NKJ)

5. *A child who will be the forerunner to the Messiah / Christ*

¹⁷ "He will also 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 a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17 NKJ)

V. *Zacharias foolishly does not believe the Good News!*

¹⁸ And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years. (Luke 1:18 NKJ)

VI. *The angel Gabriel denounces Zacharias lack of faith and Zacharias is appropriately SILENCED!*

¹⁹ And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. ²⁰ "But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time." ²¹ And the people

waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. ²² But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. ²³ And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. (Luke 1:19-23 NKJ)

1. *Lack of faith kept Israel's first wilderness generation out of the promised land –*

2. *Lack of faith will send most people to Hell –*

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18 NKJ)

3. *Yet, God is gracious often toward unbelief, if even the slightest faith is with it –*

²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24 NKJ)

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (Joh 20:29 NKJ)

4. *What caused Zacharias' sinful lack of faith?*

A. *A lifetime of ordinary vs. one day of extraordinary; he let years of life experience / age outweigh the Word of God, even when it was delivered by an angel!*

B. *He did not follow God's Word –*

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NKJ)

Genesis 17:17-21

VII. *Here God grace overrules Zacharias lack of faith, John is conceived anyway –*

²⁴ Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, ²⁵ "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." (Luke 1:24-25 NKJ)

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