

Text— Luke 1:1-25

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

We have now entered the Advent season, during which we prepare for the anniversary of Jesus Christ our Savior's birth. Our Scripture selection reports some interesting events which happened prior to the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, for in our sermon text we behold:

"THE ANGEL GABRIEL'S MIRACULOUS MESSAGE TO ZACHARIAS"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Who Zacharias is
- 2) Who the angel Gabriel is
- 3) When the angel Gabriel's miraculous message was given and what it consisted of
- 4) Why the angel Gabriel's miraculous message to Zacharias was very important
- 5) What happened subsequent to Zacharias receiving the angel Gabriel's miraculous message

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Verses 1-4, ----- (Luke 1:1-4)

The apostle Paul, in Colossians 4:14, mentions a fellow Christian, "Luke, the beloved physician." The same Luke is the man who penned our Scripture selection; and, we would do well to keep in mind the fact that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," as 2 Timothy 3:16 informs us.

In the opening words of our text, Luke indicates that *many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed among the early Christians*. However, *many folks were not actually moved by the Holy Ghost to pen words given by inspiration of God*, which is why Luke desired to accurately set forth the eyewitness accounts of ministers of the Word, since Luke was given *perfect understanding of all*

things from the very first. Hence, to avoid any confusion and misinformation, Luke wrote the full truth to an early Christian named Theophilus, that he might *know the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed*, so that he might avoid all apocryphal writings which at best are a mixture of truth and error.

Fellow Christians, it also behooves us today to cling to the pure God-inspired Holy Scriptures, rather than dabbling in all sorts of uninspired writings in which the authors are found, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Mark 7:7) Let us be grateful that God has given and preserved His Holy Word for our learning.

Verses 5-7, ----- (Luke 1:5-7)

At the time the events related in our Scripture selection occurred, Herod the great was king of Judea and operated under Roman authority. It was during that time period a man named Zacharias was a Jewish temple priest *of the course of Abia*, which was the 8th of the 24 orders – divisions or courses – scheduled to serve in the house of the Lord, the temple in the city of Jerusalem, doing various assigned duties during specific weeks of each year, as specified for the descendants of Aaron in 1st Chronicles chapter 24.

Zacharias the priest had a wife named Elisabeth who was also a descendant of Aaron. Zacharias and his wife were believers in the promised Messiah, for our text relates *they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. Hence, Zacharias and Elisabeth had that righteousness of which we read in Romans 3:22, "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." The believing couple, having the forgiveness of sins by God's grace through faith, then strove to keep God's Law, thereby showing the Lord their faith in Him was genuine, for they knew the truth we read of in Ephesians 2:8-10, "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For

we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Sadly, Zacharias and his wife had not been blessed with a child, *because that Elisabeth was barren*. Furthermore, they were both advanced in years and consequently past the time when couples normally can have children. Nevertheless, despite being advanced in years, Zacharias was still active as a priest of the true God.

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As we look further into our text, let us see who the angel Gabriel is.

In verse 11 of our text we are told of *an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense*. Then, in verse 19 we learn that very angel identified himself by saying: *I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God*. Therefore, the angel Gabriel is an holy angel of the Lord who stands in the presence of God.

Gabriel, and all other holy angels, are, as we learn from Hebrews 1:14, “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.” The word “angel” means “messenger”; consequently, the angel Gabriel is a holy messenger, a spirit-being, a holy servant of the most high one true God.

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us see when the angel Gabriel’s miraculous message was given and what it consisted of.

Verses 8-10, ----- (Luke 1:8-10)

There were a number of priests from each course, from each order or division, who would serve at the temple during specific weeks each year. Within that group of priests who were serving, various tasks would customarily be assigned to each man by casting lots to decide which necessary task each

priest would perform. At the time the incidents in our text took place, *Zacharias’ lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord*. The altar of incense was in the holy place of the temple, just outside the holiest place— the holy of holies. Zacharias would burn incense while the people remained out in the court of the temple; so, it happened that *the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense*. It was quite an honor for a priest when his lot was to serve in the holy place for a week.

Verse 11, ----- (Luke 1:11)

Imagine how Zacharias must have been startled when he was in the temple burning incense, *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense*. Suddenly Zacharias was no longer alone, for there at the right side of the altar of incense stood a holy angel of God at just the time when Zacharias was burning incense to the Lord.

Verse 12, ----- (Luke 1:12)

I don’t think any of us would have reacted differently than did Zacharias if we were in his shoes. It’s not common for a holy angel of the Lord to visibly appear near us; no wonder then that Zacharias was troubled and fearful at the sight.

Verses 13 & 14, ----- (Luke 1:13-14)

It is evident that Zacharias had prayed again and again to be blessed with a child with his wife. The holy angel assured Zacharias that his prayer had been heard and that he had no need to fear.

The angel of the Lord brought wonderful news to Zacharias: *Zacharias’ wife Elisabeth would bear a son and Zacharias was to name him John. Zacharias would have joy and gladness; and many other people would rejoice at John’s birth*.

John’s birth would be a miracle of God, for recall that Zacharias and Elisabeth were old folks who were well beyond the years when people normally

have children. Oh, it was a miraculous message the angel Gabriel delivered to Zacharias.

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As we ponder the next few verses of our text, let us see why the angel Gabriel's miraculous message to Zacharias was very important.

Verses 15-17, ----- (Luke 1:15-17)

There were good reasons for Zacharias and others to be joyful at the birth of his son, John. The angel, being God's messenger, declared that John *shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*

Think of it: John would be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb; and, so it came to pass. John was specially gifted by God the Holy Ghost because he had a special mission of greatness to accomplish in the sight of the Lord. John would not and was not given to the use of alcoholic beverages.

John's special mission was that *many of the children of Israel would he turn to the Lord their God.* Yes, John by his preaching and teaching of repentance would and did turn many Jews to the Lord God.

John would go before the Lord as His forerunner, for John would *go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.*

Take it to heart that John would be and was like Elijah of old, a faithful desert-dwelling prophet who proclaimed God's Word to people who needed to sincerely repent of their sins and believe on the Messiah – the Christ – who would appear on the scene, keep God's holy law perfectly and then pay for all the sins of all people by shedding His holy and precious blood while nailed to the

accursed tree of the cross. Indeed, the people needed to be properly prepared for the Messiah who was then yet to come: the people needed to realize their sinfulness and their dire need for the promised Savior from sin.

My friends, it still remains a fact that people to this very day need to be properly prepared for the Savior by acknowledging their sinfulness and their inability to save themselves; then, they need to heartily repent of their sins and to lay hold on Christ Jesus the Savior by faith in Him. The Holy Bible plainly states: "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (Romans 3:23-26; 6:23; 1 John 4:9-10)

Accordingly, the angel Gabriel's miraculous message to Zacharias was very important because people's hearts needed to be properly prepared to receive the Messiah, the Christ, who was then soon to visibly come to earth and fulfill all righteousness. People needed to realize their sinfulness and their dire need for the promised Savior, that they might repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

We all today need to likewise realize our sinfulness and our continued need for daily repentance and persistent faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, for Acts 4:12 clearly states, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." John 3:36 adds, "He

that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” Therefore, let us never forget why the angel Gabriel’s miraculous message to Zacharias was very important.

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As we ponder the remaining verses of our text, let us see what happened subsequent to Zacharias receiving the angel Gabriel’s miraculous message.

Verses 18-20, ----- (Luke 1:18-20)

Although Zacharias was a man of faith, he had doubts about him and Elisabeth having a child in their old age. The angel Gabriel made it clear that as a holy messenger of God who stood in God’s presence while conversing with Zacharias, the words he spoke were God’s wonderful message of glad tidings which were NOT to be doubted or contradicted. Thus, because unbelief had temporarily arisen in Zacharias, he would be mute until the birth of John occurred in fulfillment of God’s Word. Thankfully, Zacharias did not remain in unbelief, for he continued to serve the Lord in his priestly duties and did not run away and quit.

My friends, God’s promises to us are also sure since God’s WORD IS TRUTH! And yet, if we are honest we must admit that we are like Zacharias in that we have doubts at times when God’s timing of things is not what we think it should be. We then need to repent when we sinfully doubt God’s Word, for 1 John 1:9-10 tells us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

Verses 21 & 22, ----- (Luke 1:21-22)

Zacharias was in the temple at the altar of incense much longer than was customary, since the angel Gabriel had been speaking to him. Consequently, the people in the temple courtyard wondered what was going on inside where Zacharias was

burning incense. But, when Zacharias finally came out to the people, *he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.* Zacharias was mute, as the angel had said to him. Zacharias could only nod at the people and motion to them with his hands; Zacharias was unable to pronounce the Aaronic benediction upon the people.

Verses 23-25, ----- (Luke 1:23-25)

Zacharias attended to duties at the temple which obviously did not require the use of speech, *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.* Subsequently, consider what happened as God demonstrated that His WORD IS TRUTH, *for after those days Zacharias’ wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.* Yes, the aged Elisabeth became pregnant by her husband Zacharias despite the fact they were old and stricken in years. It was a miracle that Elisabeth was with child; God worked the miracle just as His angel had said He would— that’s what happened subsequent to Zacharias receiving the angel Gabriel’s miraculous message.

Let us thank and praise God regularly for keeping His promises, including the angel Gabriel’s miraculous message to Zacharias. Let us thank and praise God regularly for His WORD which is 100% TRUTH. Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, because God in His Word promises: “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18) God grant that we keep the true faith. Amen.

m.e.l.