

## 2137 - ZACHARIAS and CHRIST'S BIRTH - Luke 1.1-38

PRELIMS. Luke wrote this to Theophilus – but Luke **knew** it would circulate to **all cultures**, so he bore that in mind! Luke was **not** a Jew! (It is reckoned he was born in Macedonia but lived in Antioch in **Syria** and trained as a doctor in Philippi!) So he knew what it was like to be an **outsider** to the Covenant people of God. He gives **prominence** to Gentiles, Samaritans, children, tax-collectors, and those regarded as ‘outcasts’ in Israel. **Women** have a high profile, Mary, Elizabeth, Anna in earlier chapters and at Christ’s burial! **APP** Maybe you are an ‘outsider’ – or maybe you **feel** like one!

Now it seems **many** people had **already** written about Jesus for *many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that Jesus did* [1], but Luke obviously **felt** he should **add** or maybe **correct** what was written or been said about Jesus’ great works! We do know that Theophilus, and others, needed **reassurance** *that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught* [4]. God **moved** Luke, who had *having followed all things closely* relating to Christ, to write to give **us confidence** about the **facts** of X’s life/ death/resurrection. God does not want us to have any doubts about the Truth! **APP** So the **work of the Church** is to **reassure** people, to **strengthen** faith in the Truth! What an opportunity we have at Xmas!

### ZACHARIAS

This is John Baptist’s Father! A **Priest!** He married a Levite of the *daughters of Aaron* [5] *they were both righteous before God walking blamelessly in all the commandments* [6]! **APP** It is possible to be in the Church and **not** righteous before God! Being in a good family line is so helpful, but what is important is not your family line, not your membership lines, but your **walk** with God! *walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord* [6].

History **repeats** itself - like **Abraham** and **Sarah** – they had no family! *But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and*

*both were advanced in years* [7c] In **that** culture, looked on as a judgement or *reproach* [25]! All mothers in Israel wanted to contribute to the ‘growth’ of Israel both numerically and spiritually.

If Zacharias lived in the UK today he would probably be in the **Church of England!** They have **liturgical readings** in **rotation** going through the complete Bible *servicing as priest...when his **division** was on **duty**, according to the **custom** of the **priesthood**, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and **burn incense*** [8,9]

One day as he was engaged in his duties he got a **terrible fright!** *there **appeared** to him an **angel** of the Lord* [12] **unexpectedly!** Angels **always** do come unexpectedly! And as is **usually** the case, Zacharias was **afraid!** *he was **troubled*** [12].

Secular authors and **artists** have coloured our thinking! Angels are **not** ‘cute, cuddly, dimple on cheek, wings on their backs’, lovely little creatures! Seraphim = to **burn** as Isaiah in Temple, touched his lips with a **burning** coals! *I am undone!* Cherubim guarded Tree of Life with a **flaming sword!** Angel of Lord **killed** 70,000 Israelites for David’s sin![2Sam24:15]. Angel of the Lord **killed** 185,000 Assyrians through the night [2Kin 19:35]! The **history** of angels appearing to mankind was **not** a pleasant experience!!

Not surprising Z was **trouble...and fear** came upon him [12] But *Do **not** be **afraid*** [13] For *your **prayer** has been **heard*** [13] What prayer? The prayer he and Elizabeth had made **many years ago** – for a child –when they **were within** the years of child-bearing!! **APP** I believe **both** of them had given up hope! It just wasn’t God’s will for them!! Be careful! Remember Hannah – she was distressed also. It was **not** until she **promised** to give Samuel ‘back to God’ did God grant her a child! She had to come to the point where she **really** believed *children are **God’s heritage*** - they belong to God not us!

## **The CHILD – JOHN BAPTIST**

**Two** ‘wonderful’ things about this child! He will *be **filled** with the*

*Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb!* [15] Note: we are a **person** in the womb, and it seems we can be **regenerated** there also! Several saints – **Moses** parents *saw he was a proper child*, something 'special'; **Samson** a *Nararite to God from the womb* [Jud 13:5]; **David** You (God) *made me trust You at my mother's breasts... On You was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb You have been my God* [Psa 22:9,10]; **Jeremiah** *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations* [Jer 1:5]; **John Baptist!** Regenerated from the womb! Can **still** happen today – I've met with people who 'fell in love with Jesus the 1<sup>st</sup> time they heard of him and never remember hating God'! We must **portray** a **correct image** of God particularly to children. It is **easy** for children to believe – so feed them the Truth – particularly about God's **love** to **them!**

2<sup>nd</sup>, his **ministry** - to *turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God* [16] in **preparation** for the coming of Christ! *to make ready for the Lord a people prepared* [17]. This means that there **needs** to be **some** 'preparation' for Christ! John's ministry was **convicting** people of sin! Unless you realise that you are a **sinner**, and that sin **deserves** eternal death, Christ is not going to be very **relevant**, is He? Why bother about Jesus if He is not a Saviour from **danger**? Have you wondered **why** the OT is 3 times as large as NT? Because it has **important information** – for the **preparation** of the gospel! Whatever you may think about John, his dress, decorum, boldness, sermons, he **did turn many** to God – he **did** prepare Israel for Christ! 'Dare to be **different**'! \*\*Surprisingly(?) he **also** instigated **family reunions!** *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children* [17]! This 'loner', this 'maverick' in the wilderness had Truth and it is the Truth, not the 'channel' that gives blessing!

*How shall I know this? For I am an old man* [18] Perfectly reasonable question – yet it seemed to have **grieved God!** "...*behold you shall be silent and unable to speak because you did not believe my words* [20]! Seems a **harsh judgment!** **APP** God **seriously** wants

us to **believe** His Word! Here is just a ‘little reminder’ that God the big sin is not so much that we disbelieve in hell - but that we disbelieve the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It was *this Good News* that Zacharias refused to believe![19]!

The Bible **focuses** its attention on the **blessings** God wants to give us – not on the awful judgement awaiting the unrepentant! The **incentive** God gives is **not** ‘fear’ of judgement but **reward** for obedience! No mention of Hell in OT (Sheol = ‘place of the dead’, not the eternal flames!) Hell was a **gradual** revelation! What is God’s **first** communication to Abraham and Israel? Was it a message of ‘Unless you repent you are bound for Hell’ attitude? No! It is an attitude of **mercy** and **promise** of **life** everlasting! ‘Move out of here and I will give you a great land for your possession!’ Ie ‘I’ll give you a better life, home, friends, family’! It seems to **fail to believe** the **Good News** God has to give, is **more reprehensible** than failing to believe about His judgements on sinners!

### **CHRIST’S BIRTH**

God sent Gabriel **again** on a **similar** mission 6 months later to another woman – a virgin! *In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God...to a virgin* [26] This time he spoke to the mother herself! And actually, she too was **afraid** and had **questions** to ask! *she was greatly troubled at the saying... How will this be?* [29 + 34]. Again a perfectly legitimate question! And Gabriel explains!

*you will... bear a Son...miraculously! The Holy Spirit will come upon you **Mystery!** What **faith** Mary had! (1) *and you shall call His name Jesus* [31] The name means **Hosea**=‘**save!**’ Jesus saves **people!** (2) *He will reign... forever* [33] He will **never stop** reigning! He is reigning **now!** (3) He is the *Son of God* [35] **Heresy!** **Mystery!** Faith again! X’s kingdom will never be destroyed! After 2,000 years it has only **just begun!** *The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord* [Rev 11:15] **APP** So do **not be discouraged** if you **cannot understand** things in the Word of God!!*