

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ
Birth Announcement: John the Baptist

The 4 Gospels are a written record of the Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ...
yet they do not give a complete, detailed biography/Autobiography
The purpose of the 4 Gospels is...John 20:31

Why 4 Gospels...and where might we expect to find what we looking for?

	<u>Matthew</u>	<u>Mark</u>	<u>Luke</u>	<u>John</u>
Jesus is	Son of David	Servant	Son of Man	Son of God
Written to	Jews	Roman	Greek	Church
Sign	lion	ox	man	eagle
Ends with	resurrection	ascension	Promise of the Father	Follow Me

At the end of the ministry of Malachi...

- the promise of Elijah
- 400 years of silence

The ministry of Jesus Christ will start with the announcement of the promised/appointed
“voice crying in the wilderness” (Is 40:3) going before the Messiah to prepare the way
for Him

Thus, we will start with the Birth Announcement of “the voice”...John the Baptist

Luke 1:1-25

Luke is considered by historians to be a very good historian
He gives important details and timing of key events

Sources:

- Eyewitnesses
- Ministers of the Gospel, apostles

v1-4

Luke,

- a physician (in those days, a servant to a wealthy person/family)
- a Greek (not Jewish)
- a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ

was in the service of this Greek man named Theophilus (“friend of God”)

Later, Luke was a travelling companion of the Apostle Paul and also wrote the Acts of the Apostles

Both books written before Paul was executed by Nero and before Herod’s Temple was destroyed by the Romans

This Holy Spirit-inspired written testimony of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ is declared so those who read it will know the certainty of His life and ministry

v5-7

Timestamp: In the days of Herod

- king of Judea...a province of the Roman Empire
- an Edomite...those who rejoiced to see the destruction of Jerusalem by Neb about 580 years prior (Lam 4:21-22)
- usurper of the throne of David
- hated for all three reasons, above

Zacharias and Elizabeth

- a priest and a daughter of a priest
- righteous before God...because they believed God (Gen 15:6)
- blameless in obeying the Law (at least in the sight of man)
- old...well stricken in years
- barren/childless...
 - the immediate social context:
 - shame and sorrow...a long and excruciating trial
 - Ps 127:3...children a heritage/reward from the Lord
 - in the overall context of the Word:
 - Sarah was barren...until the Lord opened her womb to bring forth a son (Gen 21:1-3)
 - Rebekah was barren...until the Lord opened her womb to bring forth 2 sons, 2 manner of people (Gen 25:20-23)
 - Rachel was barren...while the Lord opened Leah’s womb and she brought forth 4 sons (Gen 29:31-35)...until the Lord opened her womb to bring forth a son (Gen 30:22-24)
 - Hannah was barren...until the Lord opened her womb to bring forth a son (1 Sam 1:15)

Zacharias was a priest of the course of Abijah

A “weekly work schedule” in the Temple established by David

1 Chron 23:1-6a

when he was old

1 Chron 24:1a, 7-10, 19

24,000 into 24 groups,

in order: 1-24, 1-24, 1-24...

Why does the Holy Spirit gives us this detail?

Key to understanding when (season, month) the Messiah is born...

v8-10

It is now time for the 8th course, Abijah’s, to serve in the Temple (Herod’s)

All the priests in Abijah’s course report for work...

and lots were cast to determine who would do what

It fell to Zacharias to serve at the altar of incense, offering the prayers of the people unto the Lord (if population constant, 1:1000 odds), a highly prized service to represent all the people before God

Zacharias would serve in the Holy Place [Layout]

East (primary direction): entrance to the Holy Place

West: curtain to the Most Holy Place

North: table of showbread...near the veil

South: golden candlestick...near the veil

The altar of incense was on the west end of the room, near the veil separating the Holy Place (priests) and the Most Holy Place (High Priest only)

While Zacharias served in the Holy Place, the people prayed and waited outside to hear a blessing from him

v11-13a

As Zacharias served at the altar of incense, an angel appeared to him...

on the right/south side of the altar, between the altar and the candlestick

[Layout]

Note: the right side is associated with power and authority

This angelic visit:

- was very unusual...never before happened
- it has been 400 years since God has spoken to His people

Zacharias had a “natural” reaction...fear and trembling

So what are the first words from heaven in 400 years?

“Fear not”

v13b-14 The angel goes on: “Your prayer is heard.”

What prayer?

For a son

His (and her) prayer is not just now heard, they were always heard.

But just now being answered...now was God's time

Good example for us:

- Fear not, little sheep
- Pray until you get an answer, never doubting that you are heard

Imagine the mind of Zacharias as he hears the birth announcement of his son!

And that the Father naming him was God

(AT&T commercial: infinity times infinity...poof!)

Note: The Best King Ever of Judah was Josiah

- had 4 sons (1 Chron 3:15)
- firstborn was named Johanan
- sons 2-4 were all evil and reigned

Is God honoring Josiah with Zacharias' son's name?

The angel continues speaking to Zacharias about his son

v15-17 Zacharias' and Elizabeth's son will

- be great in the sight of the Lord...how many parents can say that?
- be a Nazarite (Num 6:1-8)
 - whole consecrated to, his entire life dedicated to, the Lord
 - like Samson and Samuel
- be filled with the Holy Ghost
 - God the Holy Spirit, a Person
- have a ministry of evangelism...to his own people!
- go before the Lord the Savior/Messiah (Mal 3:1)
 - in the spirit and power of Elijah
 - to prepare the hearts of the people for the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6)
 - to break the Lord's 400 years of silence with His people

Note: Mal 4:5-6 has a dual fulfillment – near and far

Old man Zacharias' mind continues to get blown:

Zacharias' and Elizabeth's son is the one of whom Malachi spoke
400 years prior!

v18

Whether out of

- fear
- surprise/shock
- doubt (“this is too good to be true”)
- false humility (“Who am I that the Lord would do this for me?”)

Zacharias fleshes out...wants a sign from God to certify these words

It was insufficient that an angel appeared to and spoke to him, he wants “proof”

A very similar promise given to another old, barren couple (Abraham and Sarah) recorded in the Word of God was forgotten or dismissed by Zacharias... as were the other instances recorded where the Lord closed a wife’s womb until it was God’s time to bring forth a son for His purpose

Had Zacharias lost faith somewhere along the line, but continued to pray... prayed, but not believing?

Do we ever pray out of habit after we have stopped believing?

v19-20

The angel identifies himself – Gabriel

- “the might of God”
- stands in the very presence of God
- appeared to Daniel a little over 500 years prior to tell him the very day the Messiah would enter Jerusalem as King (Dan 9)
- messenger of this Good News involving the Messiah (and was foretold of Zacharias’ unbelieving response to it)

Zacharias wanted a sign...so the angel gave him one!

Being mute from that instant until the fulfillment of these words... the birth of his son

Zacharias is not permitted to share his doubt
“Well shut my mouth” from a different angle

Who gets the last word – man or God?
Does man’s unbelief derail the Plan of God or man’s participation in it?

God’s 400 years of silence to all Israel is not yet broken...
it will be another 9 months

v21-23 Meanwhile outside, the people are waiting for Zacharias to emerge and pronounce
 a blessing from the Lord on them
 Num 6:24-26

“But where is he?
What is taking him so long?”

The people are getting more anxious with each passing minute

Zacharias finally comes out of the Holy Place...but doesn't say so much as one
word!

Oooops...he can't!

So he is “speaking” in a sign language only he knows

“He has seen a vision!
What did he see?
What does this mean?”

To a people eagerly looking for the Messiah, this had to mean something!
But the course of Abijah finishes its week of service and returns home...
the people being none the wiser about what happened on the day Zacharias
was their representative at the altar of incense

v24-25 Who else did not know for sure what had happened to Zacharias while he was on
 duty?

His wife Elizabeth...unless he wrote her a note

The old mute and his wife return home...v39

And PTL...”I am with child!”

But Elizabeth tells no one her good news

She retired from society to fellowship with the Lord her God...

a time of sweet fellowship while He fearfully and wonderfully made

- her son
- the forerunner of His Son

Elizabeth rejoiced in her blessing...alone...with the Lord she loves

Applications:

1. Have we ever wanted...do we currently want...something sooo much for sooo long that when
 - we read the Bible or hear a message that speaks to that desire
 - the Lord or the messenger of the Lord appears to us in a dream/vision that
 - we did/do not want to believe it because we didn't want to get our hopes up only to be bitterly disappointed again?
 - we did not believe it because we were/are afraid of being hurt?
 - we stubbornly held onto "it is/was impossible"...no way it could happen and withdrew inwardly even further to further "protect ourselves"?

Why do we not believe the Word of God that makes everything evident?
Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Jer 32:17, 27

Do we think God does not hear or care about us?

God has a plan for all of our lives and it is a perfect plan with perfect timing
God is a God of appointments

Will we believe the promises of God?

Do we praying, not believing such that when God answers we do not believe?

Then let us ask in faith, nothing wavering.

We can relate...Nathan, Kathryn, and Matthew...a full quiver!!!!

Will we spend some time "in retirement" with Him to rejoice in the new, supernatural, miraculous birth He has given...us?

2. Are we like Luke...knows the Truth (a person) and loves his friend enough to tell him the truth that he might also know Jesus Christ?
3. To those who
 - have not heard the Truth
 - have heard the truth but have doubts and want a signthe Spirit of the Living God is calling you:
 - Fear not, doubt not.
 - Come out of the world –
 - temporary, insatiable, material/physical lusts
 - reprobate/worthless mind/thoughts/perspective
 - Come to Jesus – forgiveness, grace, mercy, love, joy peace, contentment, now and for all eternity
 - Believe – trust – and understand