

## **“Living In The Spirit & Power Of Elijah!”**

**Luke 1:1-25**

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named **Zacharias**, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**. *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense for the (**Evening Offering**). Then **An Angel of the Lord** appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him. *“Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your Prayer is Heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy & gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 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. And he Will Turn Many of the Children of Israel to the Lord Their God. 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!”* 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.”* And the Angel answered him, *“I am Gabriel, who stands in the Presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring to you these glad tidings. 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!”* And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the Temple. 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. So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days, his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, *“The Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among the people!”*

**Luke 1:5-25 (NKJV)**

You need to know that the story concerning the birth of John the Baptist conforms to a unique Lukan format that is repeated 4 different times by the gospel writer in 6 consecutive passages concerning the events surrounding that First Christmas. Here in this passage we see the **Promise Of God & Sign Given** by the Archangel Gabriel to Zacharias in the first of these four occurring stories conforming to this unique pattern.

**Handout I**

**“Luke’s Narrative Story Patterns - Birth of Jesus”**

## Luke's Historical Acts of Faith/Song of Praise Pattern

<u>Promise of God:</u>	Zacharias' Wife Elizabeth, Who Was Infertile & Unable to Have Children Would Bear A Son in Her Old Age (See Sarah - Genesis 18:11)	Luke 1:5-17
	There Will Be Great Rejoicing at His Birth	Luke 1:14
<u>Character:</u>	<u>Zacharias</u>	Luke 1:5
<u>Sign Given:</u>	He Would Be Mute & Unable to Speak Until The Day His Son was Born & He Named Him, John	Luke 1:20
<u>Evidence of Fulfillment:</u>	John the Baptist, His Son is Born	Luke 1:57
	Neighbors & Relatives Rejoice with Zacharias and Elizabeth at John's Birth & Circumcision	Luke 1:58-59a
<u>Response of Praise:</u>	<u>Song of Zacharias</u>	Luke 1:67-79

We should also recognize that this Story is Special  
Because many important stories in the Bible are told in a Chiastic Pattern!

### **Chiastic Pattern – "X"**

- |                                                                        |                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>A</b> Holy & Faithful Service, Temple Sanctuary, & People           | <b>Vs. 8-10</b>         |
| <b>B</b> Archangel's Appearance & Zacharias' Response                  | <b>Vs. 11-12</b>        |
| <b>C</b> Archangel's Announcement Of "Good News"                       | <b>Vs. 13-17&amp;19</b> |
| <b>B<sup>1</sup></b> Zacharias' Unbelief & Archangel's Response        | <b>Vs. 18-20</b>        |
| <b>A<sup>1</sup></b> People, Temple Sanctuary, Holy & Faithful Service | <b>Vs. 21-23</b>        |

Luke also saw and drew upon the parallels of the circumstances, the method of the announcement, and the actual events surrounding the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. This later parallels between the birth of Isaac and John is portrayed by Luke in the following:

**This Is The 1<sup>st</sup> Time Angels Are Sent As Messengers  
To Guide Those Involved In The Birth of God's Only Son!**

### **Handout II**

### **"Birth Comparisons of Isaac & John"**

I am now going to cover some background material surrounding this story narrated by Luke before going on to talk about the significance for all of us gathered here this morning! It is paramount to understand the Priesthood of which Zacharias was apart & to understand the Evening Offering he was selected by lot to perform on this day.

#### **1. The Levitical Priesthood Of Which Zacharias Belonged Was Made Up Of**

- 12 Divisions: One Representing Each Tribe Of Israel**
- Each Division Was Further Subdivided Into Two Groups - Total Of 24 Subdivisions**
- Zachariah Belonged To The Subdivision Of Abijah, Which Was 1 Of The 24.**
- Each Subdivision Of The Priests Served 14 Days In Consecutive Order, Each Year, Until Their 50<sup>th</sup> Year. By Special Election Each Year By Casting Of Lots (Urim & Thummim)**
- All Subdivisions Were Expected To Attend Yearly, The Seven Great Feasts Of Israel**

#### **2. The Incense Offering Zacharias Was To Offer That Evening**

- Was Offered Twice/Day At Dawn's First Light & At Twilight's Last Light**
- Fell By Lot To An Individual (God's Chosen & Anointed)**
- God Chose Zacharias That Day To Bring The Evening Incense Offering**
- Notice That Both Zacharias & His Son John Were God's Chosen & Anointed Priest's & Prophets. Each Were To Prepare Way Of The Lord Among His People**
- Notice That They Both Represent Archetype Of His Son Jesus Christ**

## 2. The Incense Offering Zacharias Was To Offer That Evening

- F. Notice That The Altar Of Incense Was Considered The 2<sup>nd</sup> Holiest Place In The Temple, Adjacent To The *“Holy Of Holies”*, Where God Dwelled On Earth! Zacharias & The Promise Of John The Baptist Are Second In Precedence To God Dwelling In His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ
- G. Evening Offering Was Significant - A Symbol Of The Darkness That Was About To Be Broken, & With It The Long Wait For The Messiah Was Just About Over – See [Luke 1:10](#) & [Daniel 9:20-21](#)
- H. The Temple was Known as a *“House of Prayer”* - [Isaiah 56:7](#)

*“Now while I was speaking, praying, & confessing my sin & the sin of my people Israel, & presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the Holy Mountain of My God, 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!”* [Daniel 9:20-21](#)

*“Even them I will bring to My Holy Mountain & make them joyful in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings & their sacrifices will be accepted on My Altar; for My House shall be called a ‘House of Prayer’ for all nations!”* [Isaiah 56:7](#)

## 2. The Incense Offering Zacharias Was To Offer That Evening

- I. Incense Represented The Prayers Of The Priest & The People Going Up As The Smoke Of The Incense Rises Up To The Heavens, To God’s High Altar Of Incense, Where His Son, The Great High Priest, Accepts Them!
- J. Prayer Of Those Who Truly Believe & Put Their Faith & Trust In God, Brings His Holy Intervention. Not On Behalf Of All, But On The Behalf Of The Faithful!
- K. In The Temple God Heard Their Prayers & He Responded. He Spoke To Zacharias Through One Of His Archangels (His Messengers). God Made Him A Promise, God Gave His Word. God Acts On Our Behalf, & God’s Good Will Is Accomplished In His Good Timing!

## 3. God Speaks To Zacharias Through *“An Angel Of The Lord”*

- A. Not *“The Angel Of The Lord”*, Who In The Old Testament Is The Preincarnate, Son Of God!
- B. Gabriel The Archangel Speaks Directly For God Himself! Gabriel Is God’s Mouthpiece!
- C. This Experience Is Equivalent To An *“Epiphany”* - Meeting & Talking With God!
- D. The Angel Said, *“Do Not Be Afraid”* – Not From The Evil One & Intends No Evil. Represents The Holy One, Who Brings Peace & Assurance To Those He Blesses & Speaks To!

## 4. God’s Mighty Supernatural Action Is On Behalf Of His Faithful Servants

- A. Zacharias & Elizabeth
- B. True Israelites - In A Faithful Response To The Promise He Originally Made To Abraham!
- C. True Christians – All You Live In Faith & Obedience

## 5. God Naming The Child Himself Is A Rare & Important Occurrence

- A. Ishmael’s Name Means *“God’s Chosen”* [Genesis 16:11](#)
- B. Isaac’s Name Means *“God’s Joy & Laughter”* [Genesis 17:19](#)
- C. John’s Name Means *“God Is Gracious”* [Luke 1:13](#)
  - 1. God Is Gracious To Zechariah & Elizabeth!
  - 2. God Is Gracious To Israel!
  - 3. God Is Gracious To The Whole World!
- D. Christ *“Emmanuel”* Which Means *“God Forever With Us”* Son Of Man & Son Of God [Isaiah 7:14](#)  
Jesus’ Name Means *“God Will Forgive His People From Their Sins”* [Luke 1:30](#)
  - 1. God Kept His Promise To Abraham To Redeem Him!
  - 2. God Kept His Promise To Israel To Redeem Them!
  - 3. God Kept His Promise To Redeem The Whole World!

## 6. The Promise Of John's Birth

- A. Brought Joy & Importance To Zacharias & Elizabeth By His Life
- B. Brought Joy & Importance To Israel By His Message & Baptism Of Repentance
- C. Brought Joy & Importance To Whole World By His Testimony Throughout The Generations
- D. Brought Joy & Importance To God His Creator

*"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord!"*

Luke 1:15a

## 7. John's Commitment To God

- A. Commitment As A Priest & Prophet For Life!
- B. Complete Commitment – Nazarite Vow: Abstinence From All Earthly Pleasures! No Drugs, No Alcohol, A Special Diet, No Wife, No Children, Never Cut His Hair Or Beard For A Lifetime
- C. Set Apart For God Alone From His Mother's Womb
- D. Filled With Holy Spirit From His Mother's Womb
- E. His Mission Was To Go Before The Lord To Preach Repentance & To Prepare The Hearts Of God's People To Turn Back To Him & Away From Their Life Of Sin & Selfish Desires!

*"The Law of Truth was in His Mouth, & Injustice was not found on His Lips. He walked with Me in Peace & Equity & Turned Many Away from Iniquity. For the Lips of a Priest should keep Knowledge, & people should seek the Law from His Mouth; for He is the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts!"*

Malachi 2:6-7

*"Behold, I send My Messenger, & He will prepare the Way before Me. And the Lord, Whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in Whom you delight. Behold, He is Coming," says the Lord of hosts!"*

Malachi 3:1

## 8. John Preached & Prophesied In The **"Spirit & Power of Elijah"**

- A. Prophetic Vision
- B. Prophetic Speech
- C. Prophetic Boldness
- D. Prophetic Lifestyle (Food, Drink, & Dress)

The rabbi's & people who lived at the dawn of 1<sup>st</sup> century AD had been waiting for 868 years for the return of Elijah! They were also expecting a forerunner, a prophet of old to announce the Messiah's coming, not just any prophet but the return of the prophet Elijah!

Q

*"But Why Elijah & Not Another Prophet?"*

A

**Because Elijah Was Predicted To Return Before Of Coming Of The Messiah!**

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great & dreadful day of the Lord! And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, & the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come & strike the earth with a curse!"*

Malachi 4:5-6

Further, they assumed that Elijah would have to be the same Elijah who was sent into heaven both body & soul (not yet having experienced a physical death and knowing that the clear teaching of the bible is that all men must die once and then appear at the final judgment of God) in a flaming chariot (See 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 2:11)

## 9. John's Mission Was To Bring The Good News Of God's Grace & Mercy To All The People

- A. Echoes From Israel's Past - **Isaiah 40:3-5**
- B. Foretell Immediate Future Of The Coming Of The Lord Among His People
- C. Foretell Appointed Time Of Coming Of Kingdom Of God & Forgiveness Of His People's Sins

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted & every mountain & hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight & the rough places smooth; the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed, & all flesh shall see it together; for the Mouth of the Lord has spoken!"* **Isaiah 40:3-5**

## 10. Two Possible Decisions Accompany The Announcement Of God's Amazing Grace

- A. Zacharias' Unbelief
- B. Elizabeth's Belief

Q

*"How Will Israel Respond?"*

Q

*"How Will The World Respond?"*

Q

*"How Will I Respond?"*

## 11. Elizabeth's Faithful Response To God's Amazing Grace

*"The Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among the people!"*

Luke 1:25

**Elizabeth's Response Is Similar To Three Faithful Ladies Of Old Testament**

Sarah – Genesis 21:6, Rachel – Genesis 30:22-23, & Hannah – 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:19-20

### A. Similar To Sarah's Response

*Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, & all who hear will laugh with me!"* Genesis 21:6

### B. Similar To Rachel's Response

*Then God remembered Rachel, & God listened to her & opened her womb.*

*And she conceived & bore a son, & said, "God has taken away my reproach!"* Genesis 30:22-23

### C. Similar To Hannah's Response

*Hannah conceived & bore a son, & called his name Samuel, saying, "Because I have asked for him from the Lord!"*

1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:19-20

Q

*"But Why Does Elizabeth Chose Seclusion For Five Months?"*

A

**She Keeps God's Appointed Time**

A

**She Heightens Anticipation & Mystery Surrounding Supernatural Events Of John's Birth**

A

**She Shows After 5 Months Physical Proof Of God's Promise**

Luke also saw in the birth of John and Jesus a continuation of the ancient prophecies concerning the birth of the Messiah and especially with John who would be both the last of the Old Testament Prophets and the announcer of The Prophet of the New Testament! For the follower of Jesus Christ, the Christian of today, there are three very important spiritual concepts that speak to us out of this passage of prophecy:

**Walking In God's Way - The Way Of Obedience Brings**

1. God's Favor & Blessing In My Life!
2. God's Attention & Care To My Prayers!
3. God's Intervention To My Prayers In The Lives Of Others!

Jesus Christ is found on every page of the plan of God the Father in the whole of the Old Testament and foretold in these last days in the prophesying, preaching, teaching and baptizing of John the Baptist, son of Zacharias and Elizabeth of the priestly division of Abijah of the Tribe of Levi, son of Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham keeper of the promise and covenant of salvation pledged to him by God Himself. In the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the world has truly witnessed the coming of The Prophet promised by Moses, the long-awaited Messiah and Savior of the world fulfilling the covenant God made with Adam, Noah, and Abraham.

**In The Person Of Jesus Christ Born In Bethlehem:**

1. We Meet God **Face To Face!**
2. We Finally & Forever Have God With Us As **"Our Emmanuel"**
3. We Can Live Like John The Baptist In The, **"Spirit & Power of Elijah"**

In closing let me say this the Rabbis of Jesus time were right about one thing Elijah will one day return to earth and announce the coming of the Lord but not until the last days of this world's existence. They did not; just like people today do not, consider it possible, that Jesus Christ is the Savior and Lord of this world! They also thought it impossible for the Lord to come twice to earth just as people today are not expecting Jesus Christ's Second Coming to actually happen!

But the people who know the Lord, Jesus Christ today, know and are expecting that He is indeed coming again and that He is coming quickly!

The last time Jesus came, He came as a poor baby boy born in a stable, humble even to His death on a cross! But this next & last time, He is coming back to visit His creation and His people as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and every eye shall see Him even those who lament His reality! When He returns again in glory, every knee shall bow & every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!

**Q**

***“What Will I Do Differently This Christmas Season,  
In Light Of This Divine Revelation To Me  
From God’s Holy Word?”***

**A**

***“This Christmas Season I Will Give God My Heart,  
To The One Who Loved Me So Much,  
That He Gave Me His Son’s Life To Make Me His Own!”***

**A**

***“This Christmas Season I Will Give God My Life,  
So, He May Use Me As He Desires,  
For His Glory & For His Kingdom!”***

**A**

***“This Christmas Season I Will Live My Life  
Like John The Baptist,  
In The “Spirit & Power Of Elijah!”***

***“Bow Your Heads Now & Ask  
God’s Holy Spirit To Fill You With:  
A Spirit Of Prophecy, A Spirit Of Evangelism,  
A Spirit Of Boldness, & A Spirit Of Hope!  
That You May Go Forth This Advent Season  
In The Spirit & Power Of Elijah & John The Baptist.  
That You May Be A Forerunner,  
Proclaiming The Advent Of Our God,  
The Second Coming Of Jesus Christ,  
The King Of Kings, & Lord Of Lords!”***