

in Israel in those days, was that the Messiah would rescue them from the bondage of Rome. Rome ruled Israel at that time.

- 4) God had a much greater work for the Messiah. He would rescue mankind from the bondage of sin and give eternal life to all who would believe.

b. Zacharias blessed John (v.76-80)

- 1) He would be the prophet of the Highest.
- 2) He would go before the Lord to prepare His ways.
- 3) He would give knowledge of salvation to the people (v.77-79)
 - a) Later John said, (John 1:23) *"He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias."*
 - b) John said of Christ, (John 1:27) *"He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."*
- 4) The child John grew and was strengthened in spirit (v.80).

Conclusion: As we have examined the birth of John, we have also noted several principles that can help us day by day. Every Christian is a priest with the privileges and responsibilities that come with it. We are to live righteous lives because God is watching all that we do. God will answer our prayers if we are right with God and pray in His will. Babies are humans even when they are a tiny single cell. God blesses obedience. We are to count our blessings and praise the Lord.

This week, let's allow God to make us more like He wants us to be.

Song: More Like the Master - 325

Christmas Story (pt 1) John

27 November 2016 PM – Luke 1:5-25, 57-80 – Christmas16 – Scott Childs

Introduction: As we near the time of year that we remember the birth of Christ, this year I want to take you on a chronological journey through the events leading up to and following the birth of Christ. For the next five weeks on Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings we will examine ten major events of the Christmas story. My goal will not just to give you information but application that you can apply to your daily lives.

Transition: This evening we are going to study the first part of the Christmas story – the birth of John the Baptist.

1. John's Announcement (Lu 1:5-25)

a. John's father Zacharias (v.5-7)

- 1) He was a *priest*. Thus, he was of the family of Aaron. He was of the *course* of Abia (Abijah) 1Ch 24:4, 10.
- 2) A *course* was a class or course itself of priests who for a week at a time performed the duties of the priestly office. David divided the priests into twenty four classes, each of which in its turn discharged the duties of the office for an entire week, from Sabbath to Sabbath.^{Thayer}
- 3) His wife was Elizabeth. She was also of the priestly family of Aaron. Remember, only men born in the family of Aaron could be priests. During the Old Testament dispensation, a priest had closer access to God than anyone else. Now since the beginning of the New Testament, every true Christian is a priest before God. We have the privilege of access to God but also the duty to live pure and clean lives. (1Pet 2:5) *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."*
- 4) Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous. They obeyed God's Word blamelessly (v.6). This is a challenge to each of us. God is watching how we live. God knows what you have done and said this week. He knows how you have acted. (Psalm 139:1) *"O LORD, thou hast searched me, and*

known me." (Ps 139:2) "Thou knowest my downsitteing and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off." (Ps 139:3) "Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways." (Ps 139:4) "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."

- 5) They were both very old but Elizabeth had no child (v.7).

b. An angel spoke to Zacharias (v.8-20)

- 1) Zacharias was in the Temple doing his priestly work of burning incense (v.8-10).
- 2) An angel appeared to him (v.11-12). Note how he responded. He was *troubled* (full of inward commotion) and *fearful* (full of terror).
- 3) The angel calmed his fear.
 - a) His prayers for a son had been heard (v.13-14). God promises that if we pray right with a clean heart, He will answer our prayers. (1John 5:14) *"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"* (1Jn 5:15) *"And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."*
 - b) His son would be great and be a Nazarite from birth (v.15).
 - c) His son would turn many to the Lord (v.16-17).
- 4) Zacharias questioned the angel's word (v.18-20). For this he became dumb (unable to talk). We must learn from this not to question what God says in His Word.

c. Zacharias could not talk (v.21-25)

- 1) The people realized that he had seen a vision because he *beckoned* (made signs) to them (v.21-22).
- 2) Elizabeth conceived a son (v.23-25).

2. John's Birth (Lu 1:57-66)

a. John was born (v.57-58)

- 1) Her baby was John from the moment of conception. Babies are living humans the moment they begin as a tiny cell. This is a strong argument against abortion. (Ps

139:15) *"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."* (Ps 139:16) *"Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them."*

- 2) After nine months, the child was born followed by great rejoicing. John was a miracle baby because Elizabeth was very old.

b. John was named (v.59-66)

- 1) The family all wanted to call the baby Zacharias after his father.
- 2) Elizabeth obeyed the angel's command (v.13) to call him John (v.60).
- 3) The relatives made signs to Zacharias (v.62). Evidently, he was deaf as well as dumb. He could not hear or talk. Zacharias wrote *"His name is John"*. Immediately, as soon as he wrote that, Zacharias could hear and talk again (v.64). God blessed his obedience. God will bless your obedience as well.

3. John's Mission (Lu 1:67-80)

a. Zacharias praised the Lord (v.67-75)

- 1) He gave praise to the Lord. This is something that we often lack. We need to take time each day to thank the Lord for the things he has done for us. Don't just say, God thank you for all your blessings. Name the blessings. As the Hymn writer put it, "count your blessings name them one by one."
- 2) The angel had told Zacharias that John would go before Him (Christ) in the power and spirit of Elijah (v.17). This would be a fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy. (Mal 4:5) *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:"* (Mal 4:6) *"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."*
- 3) Notice that Zacharias' thinking, like the thinking of many