**Series – Dr. Luke’s Perspective on Jesus**

**Text – Luke 1:5-25**

**Message 2 (July 30, 2017)**

**BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Introduction**

1. Luke’s mission was to give to Theophilus an orderly accurate accounting of the life and ministry and redemptive accomplishments of Jesus so that he might ***“have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”*** Luke had been teaching him, and he was also collecting evidence to support what he was teaching. Ad I am suggesting that Luke was writing these things so this person might come to faith in the Lord Jesus and grow in that faith.
2. Luke studied the available written records and the interviewed eyewitnesses and recorded what he compiled so he could present evidence that might, along with the Holy Spirit of God, persuade Theophilus to believe.
3. Where should he begin? Just as the Book of Acts is a continuation and a fulfillment of the Gospel that Luke had compiled, so that the book of Luke is a continuation of the Old Testament, and a record of its fulfillment. Luke thought it important to show that connection. He does that in verses 5 through 25. Here is the text (Read).
4. Kids, today we are going to be introduced to a guy named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth and an angel named Gabriel and a baby that would be born, named John. What of job did Zechariah have (He as a **priest**)? Zechariah went into the holy place of the temple to put something on the altar. What was it (**incense**)? When he started to exit the temple’s holy place what did he see (**an angel**)? After he had this encounter what could he no longer do (**speak**)? What did the visitor in the temple call this information (**good news**)?
5. **CONNECTING THE GOSPEL TO THE PAST (5-10)**
6. Israel’s historical record
7. Let’s consider Israel’s history. Basically, it began with Abraham and a covenant God made with him, it included a 400 – year exile in Egypt, and then an amazing deliverance from slavery in Egypt. But because of unbelief, Israel wandered around for forty years in the wilderness until they finally occupied the land that had been promised to them centuries earlier. The people were to drive out the current inhabitants and settle into the new land, but they failed to obey God and struggled with compromise with the nations around them.
8. Under kings David and Solomon, the nation grew in power and influence, but again, through lack of faith and obedience, the nation divided. Eventually the Assyrians destroyed the northern portion of the kingdom, which never recovered and the southern kingdom was taken into captivity by Babylon in 586 B.C. That captivity lasted 70 years. They tried to start over and rebuilding under the thumb of the Persians, but never broke free. They only changed masters; first the Greeks invaded and controlled the land, and then the Romans came to power.
9. A few who knew the Scriptures were longing for the day when the darkness would lift and the sun would again shine on the nation of Israel. But the darkness remained.
10. Israel’s faint hope.
11. More than four centuries before Luke began collecting and documenting his sources, the prophet Malachi recorded the final book of the OT. He had promised, ***“For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.”*** Malachi was saying, “Sunrise is coming. The darkness is not permanent.”
12. As good as that sounded, 400 years passed. God didn’t speak – at all! There were no prophecies. There were no angel visitations or declarations. There were no miracles. There was no evidence God was anywhere nearby. Prayers went up, but noting much seemed to change. Israel continued to sink into the darkness.
13. Where was this ***“sun of righteousness?”*** When would the darkness be lifted? When would the day dawn? Malachi had promised joy and blessing and great victory***, “You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.”*** One chapter earlier Malachi had written, ***“And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly came to his temple and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”*** Great, wonderful news! But where is he?
14. And that’s how the OT ends. There was a great promise, but no fulfillment. So we pick up Luke’s narrative. Rome is in power. Wicked King Herod has some measure of control over Judea as a puppet of Rome. Israel continued to carry out endless ritual, but for the most part had sunk deeply into apostasy. The true message of God’s pardon and mercy and grace and all but been lost, replaced with a man centered, self-righteous, works-righteousness religious sham. An empty shell.
15. To be fair, not everyone had abandoned all hope. A priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were ***“righteous before God and walking blamelessly in all the commands and statutes of the lord.”***  But they too wondered about God’s plan and purpose and His promises. This couple was no elderly. God had never allowed Elizabeth to have children. In some sense at least, they felt themselves to be cursed of God. They continued to serve faithfully – but it all seemed futile.
16. So Zechariah, whose name means “God Remembers” went through the motions as a priest, wondering if God really does remember His people.
17. Each morning at the temple an animal was sacrificed on the brazen altar. In both morning and evening, incense offerings were presented to God. There were some 18,000 priests so not every priest would be privileged to offer incense offerings, in fact most would never have that privilege. Lots would be cast and the priest for the day would be randomly chosen; it was a great honor. If it happened at all, it could only happen once in a lifetime That day the lot fell to Zechariah. This was his moment, the high point of his service as he entered the holy place. Only a curtain now separated him from the most holy place where the Ark of the Covenant rested, the symbol of the presence of God. It was amazing!
18. The priest would place some coals on the altar of incense and then drop the incense on them and a puff of smoke would rise and the fragrance would fill the room. The priest would then quickly leave and be greeted by the people who were gathered outside praying. But this priest didn’t immediately leave! Something stopped him in his tracks!
19. **RECOGNIZING THE BEGINNING OF FULFILLMENT (11-2)**
20. The Angel
21. Can you imagine? You’re alone. It’s rather dark inside the tent room. The smoke of the incense continues to rise and you turn around and…it’s a wonder Zechariah didn’t have a heart attack (story of Nathan Moser, Billy Graham, and me).
22. If the angel’s presence didn’t get to him the angel’s announcement would have! ***“Don’t be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a song, and you shall call his name John.”*** Zechariah and his wife were probably in their seventies or older. I’m guessing that they hadn’t prayed that prayer in a long time.
23. The angel continues to tell Zechariah about his son to be born, vv. 15-17, and the joy that would come for Zechariah and Elizabeth (v.14). Do you know why? It’
24. S not just because they were going to have a baby. The darkness was about to lift! John would be the one who prepared the way for the Messiah! But that joy was not immediate. Even in the presence of an angel – hearing this message that came from God delivered by this heavenly being – Zechariah was choking, trying to swallow the news! It can’t be. It’s impossible!
25. The unbelief
26. ***“How shall I know this?”*** He’s asking how it is possible for him to believe. Many people ask the same question. “How can I know what you are saying is so?” It seems impossible.
27. So the angel answers – “I am Gabriel.” Zechariah knew that name from the book of Daniel. ***“I stand in the presence of God…I was sent to speak to you to bring you this good news.”***
28. “Good news” is the Greek word euaggelizo or euaggelion That’s our word for “Gospel.” Luke loves this word, using it ten times (only used one other time in the Gospel – in Matthew). It was the good news that God was sending a Savior to die for our sings so that we could spend eternity with Him. And that good news is launched with the arrival of this miracle baby, John!
29. The sign and the beginning of the promise fulfilled
30. Because of Zechariah’s unbelief, Zechariah would be unable to speak until the baby was born. That would be the sign to him and his wife of God’s promise of the coming of good news!
31. The people had been concerned why it took Zechariah so long to exit the temple, and when he came out they are trying to engage him in conversation, but he couldn’t talk. They figured he had a vision, but nothing seemed to come from that. He finished his term of service and went home. Elizabeth became pregnant.

**Conclusion**

1. We need to remember the predictions that Malachi made. He said the sun of righteousness is coming, but he also said that before He comes, before the sun rises, before the Messiah, the Lord Savior comes, a prophet will appear to announce His arrival; he will be a herald, an announcer a forerunner to the Messiah. Malachi said this, ***“Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare (clear)the way for me”*** (3:1). There’s coming a messenger to announce the arrival of the sun of righteousness, to announce the dawn.
2. As Luke sets this up, he lets Theophilus know that the promises God made in the OT were fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s bringing in the evidence. He is showing how just as God said, one came to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus. Buy the way Zechariah got it. Turn ahead to Zechariah’s song in verses 78-79 – ***“Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*** The sun was just about to rise. The darkness was just about to be penetrated by the light! In the words of the prophet Isaiah (9:2) – ***The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.***
3. This is not some pipedream or human invention. This is the Gospel of God, the good news that God can redeem people from their sin and grant to them eternal life. It was true for Theophilus and it is true for us. The sun of righteousness is here!
4. Quote John 1:6-8, 3:19 – 8:12 “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Are you in the light?