

Luke 1:1 - 45 (NLT) ¹Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. ²They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. ³Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write a careful account for you, most honorable Theophilus, ⁴so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.

It was a dark day for Israel. They had heard no prophetic Word from God for 400 years, not since Malachi had promised the coming of Elijah (Mal. 4:5-6). The spiritual leaders were either stuck in tradition or corruption; and their king, Herod the Great, was a tyrant. He had nine (some say ten) wives, one of whom he had executed for no apparent reason. But no matter how dark the day, God always has His devoted and obedient people.

⁵When Herod was king of Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He was a member of the priestly order of Abijah, and his wife, Elizabeth, was also from the priestly line of Aaron.

The second son of Samuel (1 Samuel 8:2 ; 1 Chronicles 6:28). His conduct, along with that of his brother, as a judge in Beer-sheba, to which office his father had appointed him, led to popular discontent, and ultimately provoked the people to demand a royal form of government.

1 Chronicles 24 (10) all priests belonging to the order or family of Abijah were eighth in line for service at the temple. Zechariah is from Abijah's order, the eighth in a line of 24 orders of priests according to 1 Chronicles 24. In the Mishnah, which is the record of the oral traditions, each of the families of the priests was require to perform two weeks of Temple service every religious year beginning.

⁶Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord's commandments and regulations.

⁷They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old. -----**ELIZABETH ("GOD IS MY OATH")**

⁸One day Zechariah was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week. -----**ZACHARIAS ("JEHOVAH HAS REMEMBERED")**

⁹As was the custom of the priests, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense.

¹⁰While the incense was being burned, a great crowd stood outside, praying.

¹¹While Zechariah was in the sanctuary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the incense altar.

¹²Zechariah was shaken and overwhelmed with fear when he saw him.

¹³But the angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayer. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give you a son, and you are to name him John.

John ("Jehovah is gracious"). Dedicate him to God, Nazarite all of his life (Num. 6:1-21). Filled with the Spirit before birth (Luke 1:41); will both prophesy and introduce Jesus to the world. (John 1:15-34); will turn many people back to the Lord, (Isa. 40:1-5).

¹⁴You will have great joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,

¹⁵for he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth.

¹⁶And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God.

¹⁷He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."

God often uses His people while they are busy doing their daily tasks. Both Moses and David were caring for sheep, and Gideon was threshing wheat. Peter and his partners were mending nets when Jesus called them. When we get busy, God starts to direct us. Age, gender, race, education, background is NO excuse.

¹⁸Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years."

¹⁹Then the angel said, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news!"

Luke mentions angels 23 times. There are innumerable angels (Rev. 5:11), only 2 of which are actually named in Scripture: Michael (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7) and Gabriel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26).

²⁰But now, since you didn't believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time."

²¹Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long.

²²When he finally did come out, he couldn't speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

²³When Zechariah's week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home.

Unbelief is something God does not accept. Zacharias was really questioning God's ability to fulfill His own Word! Had he forgotten what God did for Abraham and Sarah? (Gen. 18:9-15; Rom. 4:18-25) Did he think that his physical limitations would hinder Almighty God? Zacharias was struck dumb (and possibly deaf, Luke 1:62)

²⁴Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months.

²⁵"How kind the Lord is!" she exclaimed. "He has taken away my disgrace of having no children."

²⁶In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee,

²⁷to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

²⁸Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!"

²⁹Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean.

³⁰"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God!"

³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.

JESUS ("JEHOVAH IS SALVATION") Matt. 1:21 (KJV)²¹And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

³²He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.

³³And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"

Mary: She was a Jew; tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, and a virgin (Isa. 7:14). She was engaged to a carpenter in Nazareth named Joseph (Matt. 13:55), and apparently both of them were poor (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24). Among the Jews at that time, engagement was almost as binding as marriage and could be broken only by divorce. In fact, the man and the woman were called "husband" and "wife" even before the marriage took place (compare Matt. 1:19 and Luke 2:5). Since Jewish girls married young, it is likely that Mary was a teenager when the angel appeared to her.

³⁴Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."

³⁵The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.

³⁶What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month.

³⁷For nothing is impossible with God."**There is nothing too hard for the Lord (Jer. 32:17).**

³⁸Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

³⁹A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town

⁴⁰where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth.

⁴¹At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.