

The Christmas story- Zachariah and Elizabeth

I. Introduction-

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" Luke 2:11-14

Now faith, hope, and love abide, the greatest of these is love. I Cor 13:12

A. Peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Lk 1:5

B. What pleases God?

The Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." 1 Sam 16:7

The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. II Chron 16:9

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds. Jer 7:10

They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. Lk 1:6

C. The people of Israel had rejected their God-

"Because this people draw near with their mouth and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment taught by men, Isa 29:13

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. Mat 23:27

II. God looks in our hearts for our faith, hope and love-

A. God looks for Faith-

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. Heb 11:1 & 6

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith. Rom 1:16

Assurance: *hypostasis*, thing put under, substructure, foundation

Conviction: evidence and facts

"For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. Amos 3:7

Declare to us the things to come. Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; do good, or do harm, that we may be dismayed and terrified. Behold, you are nothing, an abomination is he who chooses you. Isa 41:22

Assurance and evidence

Faith built on a strong foundation of evidence of a supernatural voice faithfully telling His people the future.

Mocking the false gods who were voiceless idols unable to announce the future

Jesus of Nazareth, the movie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWY1ZIPzPN8>

The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isa 7:14

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Mal 4:5

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. Isa 40:3

B. God looks in our hearts for hope-

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. I will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes. Jer 29:11

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." Lam 3:22

Hope; elpis, expectation of good

joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation

"Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air...but only for one second without hope."

— Hal Lindsey

C. God looks in our hearts for Love-

The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments. The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all. Ps 103:17

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. Deut 6:4

III. Zachariah and Elizabeth-

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. Lk 1:5

A. Faithful servants of God even in disappointment-

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Ps 127:3

If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. but if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. I Tim 5:4 & 8

1. The hopes of Elizabeth-

The villagers ceased in Israel; they ceased to be until I arose; I, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel. Judges 5:7

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Prov 31:25

After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people. Lk 1:23

2. The Hopes of Zechariah-

Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. Lk 1:8

O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you! Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice! Ps 141:1

When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Rev 5:8

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. He will 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, and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared. Lk 1:13

Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. Lk 1:67

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, 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. And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. Lk 1:7

IV. Summary and application-

A. We live in a dark age looking for the return of Jesus-

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words. I Thes 4:29

For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. Amos 3:7

B. Personal prophecies for every Christ follower-

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Eph 2:8

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. I Pet 4:10