

# **BORN UNTO YOU—ADVENT 2022**

## **“From Silence To Song” | 12.3.22**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION (Malachi 3:1; 4:4-6 | Luke 2:5-25)**

- A. Israel had spent 400 years in Egypt—80 years in the wilderness—500 years in the promised land and then 70 years in exile. The hope for the coming Seed was waning among God’s family.
- B. But in the final book of the Old Testament, Malachi appears like the HYPE-MAN at a good parade, *“Everyone, on your feet, the parade is staring, it’s coming, stand up, let’s celebrate.”*
  - 1. But instead of fulfillment, instead of the promised Seed, another 400 years of silence sets in.
  - 2. Where was Israel’s Christmas Day, was it even coming, and if so, WHEN?
- C. As Kate Miller rightly stated some years ago, *“This wasn’t no silent night, these were silent centuries, in fact it was 146,000 silent nights, over 210 million minutes of longing, groaning, and waiting, waiting for their Advent, waiting for Israel’s Christmas Day.”*
- D. Enduring silence is painful, but 400 years? Beloved, entire lifetimes would pass by with no prophets, no inspired writings, no dreams, no revelation, no word of God, just...LONG...HARD...EMPTY...SILENCE!
- E. PRAY | “From Silence To Song”

### **II. GOD’S VISITATION OF ZACHARIAS**

- A. Passing these priests in the streets, they would’ve been covered in blood, and the smell of smoke. Everyone knew, they were bloody, because their task was holy. From millennia past, far before Zacharias, back to Adam, Abraham, and Moses, this blood had been flowing.
- B. This line of bloody work was central to Israel’s culture as a people. Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were priestly, from the rural village just outside of Jerusalem, most believe to be Hebron (*not exciting, small, considered by some as Podunk*). Priestly ministry was in their veins, they didn’t have an option (*Soccer or University*).
- C. **Luke 1:6** *“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly.”*
  - 1. This doesn’t mean they are sinless, it simply means that they are following God faithfully, but not perfectly! But we are also to note, their righteousness, is BEFORE GOD, which means it’s been years of hidden faithfulness.
  - 2. Well, Zacharias and Elizabeth were in a tough spot, they had no children, they were old, and that wasn’t changing. Not only was this humiliating in their day, it was also financially risky (*they had no offspring to look after them*).
    - a. But among all these various pressures, and personal distress, they were still waiting for BOTH their CHRISTMAS DAY, and ISRAEL’S CHRISTMAS DAY.
  - 3. With 18,000 priests, divided into 24 divisions, each division (750 people) were called to serve twice a year, for a week at a time. As you arrived, you would then cast lots to see what duties you would be performing in the temple. This time, the lot fell to Zacharias to burn incense IN THE HOLY PLACE, which was a once in a lifetime opportunity.
  - 4. While doing what Zacharias had done many times before as he served in the temple, this time was different. With his one chance to go behind the veil, as Caleb has stated before, *“Maybe this is his chance to make his prayer known to God, in the holy place, where God is said to dwell.”*

- D. **Luke 1:11-13** “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.”
1. God has finally broken the silence, after 400 years of closed heavens, Zacharias in his old age has the greatest encounter with God of his life. But he’s gripped with fear. Zach isn’t like, “*Oh, hey, how’s it going over there? You startled me.*” He’s terrified, and rightly so, *God hasn’t been seen in 400 years.*
    - a. For our older generation, don’t let cynicism, skepticism, hardness of heart, bitterness and offense settle into your soul. Through all of their disappointment, which is great, Zacharias is serving God!
  2. Well, what prayer had been heard? Zacharias’ prayer for a child, or for the Messiah? I think the angels answer to them is a two-for-one. It’s John, the forerunner to Messiah.
    - a. Beloved, our prayers should also be like Zacharias’, both PERSONAL and CORPRATE.
- E. **Luke 1:14** “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.”
1. Zacharias and Elizabeth’s joy would be two-fold, it would be both PERSONAL and ESCHATOLOGICAL.
    - a. God’s family is called to live with an eschatological hope, a joy that what God has promised at the end of this age, and in the age to come, will surly come to pass.
  2. Can you imagine the rejoicing, after 400 years of silence, and thousands of years since Eden, and now, suddenly, just as God said in **Malachi 3**, He’s fulfilling His promises? This is great joy and gladness!
- F. **Luke 1:15** “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.”
1. Like his father Zacharias, John would also live his life before God, honoring the Lord in both the private and the public place. In fact, John would only have about 18 months of public ministry.
  2. **Luke 1:80** “So the child (John), grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”
    - a. Beloved, in a culture that demands you be great in the eyes of others, what does it mean to be great in the sight of God? What does it mean to live before His eyes? To love Him wholeheartedly? When many are seeking the public place of notoriety, what does the private place of solitude look like?
- G. **Luke 1:16-17** “For 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 children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”
1. Although Zacharias and others are following the Lord, and waiting for Christmas Day, largely, as a nation they have abandoned God. But this promised child John, would call them back to their first love, once again shouting, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One...”
  2. John’s calling is both GREAT and SUBSERVIENT, and they are connected. John’s subservient heart towards God makes him great in the eyes of God. John served God, and never got his role twisted.
    - a. **John 1:22-27** READ IT
  3. When this prophecy is first given in **Malachi 4**, their hearts, their homes, their temple, and their city was in disrepute.
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- a. John’s calling was to partially fulfill the spirit of Elijah (*The fullness of that prophecy I think is still yet to come*), which was calling Israel back to God, back to their families, back to the temple and back to their city.
  4. Friends, do you find is a coincidence that breaks 400 years of silence, with the very words that started the silence? Zacharias’ name means, GOD REMEMBERS, and John’s name means, GOD IS GRACIOUS.
    - a. *God had remembered His creation in the Garden, He remembered them during 400 years of Slavery in Egypt, He remembered them in the wilderness, He remembered them in the promised land, He remembered them during the judges, He remembered them through the prophets, He remembered them through the Babylonian exile, He remembered them through 400 years of silence, and when God remembers, He acts! HE WAS GRACIOUS!*
  - H. **Luke 1:18-20** “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 and said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to and bring you these good 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.”
    1. Well, Zacharias point blank refuses to believe the angel, which from a human perspective is understandable, in part. Zacharias says, “How will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”
    2. So Gabriel says, “Uhhhhh, no iam I’M GABRIEL, who stands in THE PRESENCE OF GOD, unlike you, not once in a lifetime, but all the time. Ya, I’m that guy, one of only two named angels in the Bible Zacharias.”
    3. But beloved, how painful is this, Israel is experiencing 400 years of silence from God, because of their unbelief, and the first person that God speaks to when He breaks the silence, doesn’t believe Him!
      - a. God doesn’t take unbelief lightly. It’s not cute to Him. It’s not overlooked. It’s not appreciated. It’s sinful. Our unbelief is an indictment to His person, to His character, to His goodness!
        1. **Mark 9:24** “Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!”
    4. Friends, there’s a danger in being around the holy One of Israel. We can end up treating Him and His kingdom with contempt.
    5. It’s not uncommon to come across people who are disengaged, separated from God, board in their relationship with Jesus, while serving Him at the same time. I think Zacharias is here in some fashion.
  - I. **Luke 1:21-25** “And the people waited for the 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, thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”
    1. Is the truth that God’s eyes are on you, enough to sustain you throughout the whole of your life? Even if the cultural scorn of others is great and people have opinions about you and your lifestyle?
    2. Zacharias and Elizabeth are chasing God. Their lack of a child isn’t because God is judging them, it’s because God is going to demonstrate His glory in and through them.
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