

The Lord's Message: The Prophecy Fulfilled: The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

Date: November 28, 2021

Where: Tilghman UMC

Scripture Reference: Luke 1: 5-25

Happy New Year! Today is the begin of the New Year for the Church. We have completed the Season of Pentecost and we are now in the Season of Advent. Advent means the arrival of a notable person. This notable person is Jesus. There are 400 prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Messiah means anointed one, promised deliverer, or savior. Jesus has fulfilled every one of these prophecies. The Bible mentions about true and false prophets. How can you tell if a person is a true or false prophet? What is the litmus paper test? The prophecy that the prophet is predicting happens, comes true, or occurs.

The probability is astronomical for Jesus to have fulfilled all 400 prophecies. As a matter of fact, a professor named Peter Stoner worked with 600 students to figure out that the probability of just eight of the 400 prophecies being fulfilled was 1 in 100,000,000,000,000<sup>21</sup>.

Where is it recorded that Jesus fulfilled all 400 of these prophecies attributed to the Messiah? The proof that Jesus fulfilled these prophecy is found in the New Testament. God has directed me to see how the prophecies in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament.

Let us pray.

If you have your Bibles open, we are going to start at **Luke 1:5**. What does it mean that Zechariah is from the "priestly division of Abijah?" The answer is found in **1 Chronicles 24:10**. If we remember in **Numbers 3 - 8**, God separated out the tribe of the Levites from the other 11 tribes. God gave the Levites the duty of serving Him. God even broke down the duties into responsibilities for each family in the tribe. The priestly division of Abijah is directly connected to the High Priest, Aaron. Aaron is the brother of Moses. God anointed Aaron to be the High Priest. When Aaron died, his sons Eleazar and Ithamar, took over the duties. They shared the High Priesthood. They cast lots. One would serve for a period of time, then the other would serve. As the families expanded, this casting of lots continued for each eligible male. In **1 Chronicles 24:19**, their priestly duties are explained.

Trivia Bible question: we know that when the Roman government took over Palestine they stopped the Aaronic priesthood succession. Who would have been the rightful High Priest? The answer is Zechariah.

We also know that Zechariah and Elizabeth took their heritage very seriously. Look at **Mark 1:6**. In verse 7, we know that Zechariah and Elizabeth are getting old, well past child-bearing age and have no children.

In verses 8-10, Zechariah is fulfilling his priestly duties. He is in the Holy of Holies area of the temple. No one is allowed in, because this is where the presence of God is. A High Priest can only go in this area after going through ceremonial cleansing and wearing the priestly garments. Zechariah is carefully fulfilling his priestly duties as he has done every time he has been chosen by lot.

This time it is different. Look at verse 11, Zechariah sees an angel. In verse 12, Zechariah is gripped with fear. The angel says in verse 13, "Do not be afraid." Continuing on in verse 13, the angel tells Zechariah that God has heard his and Elizabeth's prayers and God is going to give them what they want, a baby boy. This baby boy is going to be different. Look at verses 15-17.

"In the spirit and power of Elijah", what do we know about Elijah? Elijah was a prophet who listened to the word of God and told the people to turn from their wicked ways, their worship of the idol, Baal. Elijah walked in obedience to God. Elijah lived in the desert. He was fed by the ravens. Elijah expects miracles to happen. He said that it was not going to rain for three years and it did not rain for three years. He built an altar to God. He built a trench around the altar. He put the sacrifice on the altar and poured buckets of water on the altar until it was completely drenched and the trench was full of water. He then prayed to God to send fire from Heaven to light the altar. We are told in **1 Kings 18:36-38**, that God answered Elijah's prayer.

Now, there are many prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Elijah and the coming of the Messiah, we are going to look at just three scriptures that pertain to the same prophecy; **Isaiah 40: 3-5**, **Malachi 3:1** and **Malachi 4:5-6**. Let us now see how this prophecy is fulfilled in the New Testament.

When the angel is telling Zechariah about his baby boy having the spirit and power of Elijah, Zechariah is thinking how can this be. I am an old man and Elizabeth is an old woman. How can we have a child? Look at **Mark 1:18**. I seem to recall another story in the Old Testament about another husband and wife that were well past child bearing years, but God granted them their prayer and she gave birth to a baby boy. Anybody remember the name of the couple? Abraham and Sarah. Nothing is impossible for God. Amen.

In verse 19, that is what the angel tells Zechariah. The angel goes on in verse 20 and says because of his unbelief, Zechariah will be mute until the “appointed time.”

In verse 21, the people are getting worried about Zechariah. He has been in there a long time. There is actually a tradition that a rope was tied around the High Priest’s foot and bells around his waist. This was in case the High Priest sins had not been atoned for properly and God struck him dead. Since no one could go in, they would listen for the bells which meant that the priest was alive and moving around. If they did not hear the bells after a long time had elapsed, then they would grab hold of the rope and pull the body of the High Priest out of the Holy of Holies area. The people are thinking well, we are still hearing the bells, but maybe we should start to tug on the rope.

In verse 22, Zechariah comes out, but is changed. Verse 23, tells us that after he finished his priestly duties, Zechariah goes home. In verse 24, we find that what the angel had told came true. Now there are many different theories on why Elizabeth remained in seclusion and to be honest we do not know the real reason. I would put forth to you my two theories. One theory is that Elizabeth is very old and so needs extra rest. The other is that maybe Elizabeth has been pregnant and has had miscarriages. So, she wants to make certain that she is going to give birth of a baby boy. These are just my theories, you can take them or leave them.

We do know that Elizabeth is certain that God has heard her prayers and God will answered her prayers. Look at verse 25.

God announced hope by his angel Gabriel to Zechariah and Elizabeth that they would have a son. Now, this is part 1 of this message. Part 2 will be in two weeks. When we discover the identity of this baby. For now, we just need to have faith. Having faith provides us with Hope that nothing is impossible for God. Amen.