

Visions and Revelations:
Message 3 - The One Who Prepared the Way for the Lord of Life

After hearing and considering the word that was spoken, a group of brothers and sisters were inspired by some of the verses that were shared. We felt that it was helpful to reconsider these verses again to dig deeper into the burden of the message and to discover how rich it could be to us. We compiled these verses into six sections, one for each day of the week until the next message, in hopes that many other saints could spend a bit of time every day to reconsider the burden of our brother in a new light. If anyone considers some of these verses or questions and feels enriched by them, we ask you to please leave a comment on the Church in Cleveland site under the message to share your thoughts! Thanks! Grace and peace be to all the saints!

DAY 1

Luke 1:8-9, 11, 13 NKJV

8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.... 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.... 13 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.

Zacharias is a godly serving priest. His name means "God remembers". Elizabeth also had noble heritage, for she was of the line of Aaron. Her name means "God swears" or "God's oath". Together, they beget John, meaning "God gives grace", who brings us completely out of the old age of law into the new age of grace. But in what way does this occur? Zacharias was serving God as a priest, even a priest able to enter into the Holy place in the temple. However, this is something according to custom. It is just the life that he was in. He has possibly done this many times before according to his habit, so he never expected anything different to happen. That is when the Angel appears to him to say "No! Don't live by pattern! You need to live by the grace of God!"

Is your Christian life according to a pattern you have grown accustomed to? How can we have a life truly living according to the age of grace? We need a vision! Ask the Lord today if your current pattern of life is pleasing to Him. Allow Him to shine light on the way you interact with Him, with the brothers and sisters, and with the church. May we all have visions and revelations to bring us into the reality of a life lived by the grace of God.

DAY 2

Luke 1:18

18 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."

We wish that Zacharias's response to the angel could have been to praise God! But instead, it is "How can this be?" Why is that? He was so accustomed to his pattern, when God really appeared to him through an angel, he didn't know how to handle it! This is religion - Having the things of God without God Himself. No new speaking, no new light, no new revelation.

We can pray for visions and revelations, but would you be able to handle it if God appeared and told you something that seemed impossible? Have you ever let your thoughts limit the power of God? If God would say, “The Church in Cleveland can be revived” would you respond “Impossible! How can this be?” We should realize that God is the God of grace! Now, we cannot meet in the hall, but we can have the reality of Christ! Lord we believe! Help our unbelief!

DAY 3

Luke 1:59-60 NKJV

59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60 His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.”

These two verses paint a very clear picture of how we can fall into the pattern of tradition in our Christian life. We are Zacharias, so anyone we beget should also be called Zacharias. We go to church every Sunday, so anyone we save should also go to church on Sundays. This may not necessarily be wrong, but it is not enough. The name “John” was revealed to Elizabeth through the grace of God. In the same way we need to see something new from the Lord. When someone is saved, you have to ask yourself, who is caring for their spiritual food? Are they being supplied with what they need? Just because they go to Sunday meetings every week does not necessarily mean they are nourished and have received what they need. Through God’s grace, we need Him to reveal to us how to be with new ones, care for them, and properly raise them up. How can you care for someone outside of the Sunday meeting this week?

DAY 4

Luke 1:20 NKJV

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.

What a serious word and consequence for Zacharias, mute for more than nine months! However, during this time it seems that Zacharias really pondered what was spoken by the Angel. Each day, week, and month that passed by with the realization that his wife Elizabeth was pregnant must have reinforced the words spoken by the Angel: “because you did not believe.” It is not that Zacharias did not believe in God or in His law, as he was a priest, but there was something new that God was showing him. Zacharias began to realize that there was his old belief in the law, in the offerings, in what man could do—but the *reality* of all of these things is God’s grace given to man.

Saints, do we realize that we know the Lord and still experience “because you did not believe”? How can we speak for God if we cannot hear God? Have we ever felt the Lord’s leading and ignored it? We too may have experienced failures like Zacharias, when the Lord would like to speak to us and/or through us. Instead, can we have a prayer like Samuel who, when the Lord first appeared to him, was able to say “Speak Lord, your servant is listening”?

DAY 5

Luke 1:63-64, NKJV

And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

After Zacharius saw a vision in the temple, he was not able to speak or to hear. However, praise God the story did not end with his muteness but with John's birth! The nine months of pregnancy gave Zacharias time to consider the angel's words regarding his unbelief. This stirred up something afresh in Zacharias. He realized God's grace, and when that revelation culminated in his written naming of his son, the only result was for Zacharias's opened mouth to give praise to God.

In the same way that there was a clear change—a revealing—within Zacharias between when he saw a vision and when he named his son, there should also be a change within us in response to seeing something of God. Perhaps even right now, when so much of our daily life has been affected by the virus, we are going through a season in which we are muted. How can we respond to the Lord with seriousness and sobriety, so that when these things come to pass, we can be people who testify of His grace and speak His praise? Can we beget and say, this is totally of God's grace?

DAY 6

Luke 1:14-17 NKJV

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. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also 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 a people prepared for the Lord."

When the Angel Gabriel spoke to Zacharias, it was not a vision for vision's sake or spirituality's sake, it was a big commitment that resulted in a very practical change. Zacharias and Elizabeth must have diligently helped John to know the Old Testament, to know the prophecies concerning Christ, for John later quotes the book of Isaiah (Luke 3:4-6). I believe that Zacharias and Elizabeth completely changed and upended the orientation of their life to focus on John. They did not raise him according to the custom of the priesthood, but with a view towards the changing of the age. This resulted in a John who began his ministry in the wilderness, eating locusts and wild honey and clothed with camel hair and a leather belt (Matthew 3:4). What a stark comparison to the priestly garment, eating of the showbread and of the sacrifices! John was the one to bring many to repentance to prepare people for the Lord Jesus, and ultimately, he was the one to baptize the Lord himself.

Saints, can we have some prayer that the Lord would speak to us and show us a vision or revelation that would completely change our life, our living, our concepts, our oldness, and really bring us into what God is doing today?