

Session 2: A brief look into the Calling of John the Baptist

I. THE FORERUNNER TO THE FIRST COMING OF JESUS CHRIST: JOHN THE BAPTIST

Throughout the rest of this class we will continually cross-reference and look back to this particular man, John the Baptist. We will draw many principles and practical things from the life of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the ‘Forerunner’ to the First Coming of Jesus. We know that John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus because of Luke 1:17.

“17He(John) will also go before Him(Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord...For you(John) will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways” (Luke 1:17,76)

GOSPEL OF LUKE

All four gospels speak of John the Baptist, but only Luke speaks of the birth and calling of John the Baptist. This is where we will begin our journey into the life of a ‘forerunner’ named John the Baptist.

Again, I cannot stress that importance of keeping on the forefront of our minds and hearts, ***everything*** the Father does, is for the sole purpose and motivated out of Love.

“6And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.7But they had no children...8So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, 9according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.11Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” (Luke 1:6-11)

- A. It is not mere coincidence that the birthing to the prophetic voice came in the context of praying. Zacharias was in the Temple burning incense to the Lord as the people prayed.
 - a. The prophetic voice clearly is birthed in the place of worship and prayer.
 - b. It is amazing that at this moment in history, the lot fell to Zacharias
- B. We must also understand that this was not the first time Zacharias had burned and offered prayer and worship to the Lord at the altar of incense. He had a lifestyle of prayer and worship.

“13The angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard, and your wife will bear you a song, and you will call his name John...15For 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.16And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.17He will also go before Him(Jesus) 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.” (Luke 1:13-17)

- A. Gabriel declares that Zacharias’ prayer has been heard. This is in clear relation to the history of prayer that Zacharias has.
 - a. There are no references that Zacharias was praying in this moment for a son.
 - b. The Prophetic Promise of a Messenger/Forerunner came through contending in the place of prayer. (We must first contend in the place of prayer)
 - c. A Closer look at Gabriel’s prophecy to Zacharias regarding John

“He will be great in the sight of the Lord...” (Luke 1:15a)

- 1. John’s greatness will not be in the eyes of Man as we will see a little later, but rather is great in the eyes of the Lord
 - a. Jesus refers to this in Matthew 11:11
“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist...”

“and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink...” (Luke 1:15b)

- 1. John was called into the Holy Consecration of a Nazarite. (*Numbers 6*)
 - a. We will take a look at Numbers 6 a little later

“He will also go before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient of the wisdom of the just to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17)

- 2. Gabriel prophesies that John will be a partial fulfillment of the very last prophetic word given in the Old Testament.
“5Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6)
 - a. It is important to note that there is a 400 year silence in the prophetic. From the time of Malachi 4 to John the Baptist, it was complete silence. No Prophetic voice cried out.

3. Again we see the key in this verse is “**he will also go before Him**”. John the Baptist went before Jesus.

“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Vs6

(1) The spirit of Elijah, will cause a ministry to go forth to draw together the generations.

(2) In context to this, the Enemy has systematically caused the hearts of fathers to be turned away from the children causing a greater divide! We need a great turning of the hearts!

(a) Abortion, sex trafficking, pornography, molestation, incest, emotional abuse, divorce(fatherless homes), alcoholism...to name a few

In this next section of scripture we will see the context to the birthing of the Forerunner and the Messiah.

“Now after those days, his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months...Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”...the angel said to her, “behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom there will be no end.”...36Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this now the sixth month of her who was called barren”...then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”...Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.” (Luke 1:24-40)

- A. The angel Gabriel shows up again! There are only 4 places in Scripture where it directly names the angel Gabriel. We find that he is mentioned twice in one chapter!
 1. Gabriel also shows up in the book of Daniel. (8:18, 9:21) Both times in Daniel it is in relation to prophecies about the End Times.
 - a. Important to note that Gabriel in the Old Testament showed up in regards to End Times, and also in the context of the Forerunner ministry, this is a two-fold ministry: First coming of Jesus, and the Return of Jesus (the end times).
- B. John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins.
 1. We see out of the House of Aaron (Luke 1:5), rises up the forerunner, John the Baptist
 - a. Aaron was the Great High Priest Established by God through Moses

2. Jesus is raised up out of the House of David (*Luke 1:27*)
- C. Here we see a dynamic connection: House of Aaron being symbolic of Prayer and Priestly Ministry, and the House of David being symbolic of Worship and Government.
 1. These two realities were cultivated in the womb at the same time!
- D. Elizabeth was pregnant with John 6 months before Mary was pregnant with Jesus.
 1. John the Baptist, the Forerunner ministry was birthed just before the Messiah!
 2. Jesus the Messiah came on the Heals of the Forerunner Ministry!
3. **We Cannot Neglect this Reality!**

The Forerunner's message always comes just ahead of the Messiah! The Forerunner operates in the prophetic spirit to tell of what is right around the corner. The Forerunner is a half-step ahead of Jesus.

“And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit...Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard now the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. 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. His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.” But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him.” (Luke 1:41, 57-66)

- A. The prophecy given by Gabriel was that the child would be filled with the spirit from the womb. Here we actually see an account where John was manifesting in the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb! It is very interesting that at this time Luke makes it a point to mention that (AND) Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
- B. Yet another testimony that the prophecy Gabriel was dead on, Elizabeth gave birth to a son!
- C. Verse 58 I believe is a key verse:
 1. Elizabeth's neighbors and family heard what had happened and rejoiced.
 - a. Though they probably did not understand, they were rejoicing in the Birth of the Forerunner.
 - b. The general consensus was that the Lord had done something, so they rejoiced!

D. Tradition states that if a son was born, the name of the father would be given to the son. But in this moment, Elizabeth and Zacharias broke the social, cultural, and traditional norms and named their son John, according to the will of the Father.

1. So taken back when Elizabeth responded they actually went to Zacharias

E. When Zacharias spoke they all marveled! Earlier in Luke 1, we see that Zacharias was made mute due to his unbelief! The people had known that he had an encounter...

1. Zacharias didn't speak for more than 9 months!

a. Imagine his prayer life!? He couldn't talk to anyone...he was forced to talk to the Lord.

2. So when Zacharias spoke after 9 months, it was like yet another tip off that something was going on

F. The people responded with a question in their hearts, "*What kind of child will this be?*"

1. You can bet they kept an eye on this one to see what was/would happen!

"Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied saying, "Blessed is 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, who have been since the world began. That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hated us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which 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 the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender Mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." (Luke 1:67-80)

A. In verses 68-75 Zacharias prophesies about the Messiah.

B. Verses 76-79 are direct prophesies to/for/about John the Baptist.

"You will be called a prophet of the Highest."

1. Ordained by God to be a mouthpiece to the people

"You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways"

1. The only way to prepare "His" ways is first to go before His face.

- a. This speaks not of just encounter like in Moses' day but rather an ongoing experiential relationship.
- b. Also it is a foreshadowing similar to the Tabernacle of David where they would sit before the Visible, Tangible, Presence of God.

A forerunner cannot prepare the way for Jesus until they first spend time with Him. This reality cannot be skipped or excused. You cannot truly be a forerunner without first going before His Face.

“To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins...To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

1. Here we see an idea of what the outward manifestation of John's ministry will be. We can take this and also apply it to the foundational message of a Forerunner.
 - (1) Only through Jesus is the remission/forgiveness of sins.
 - (a) To give light to those in Darkness
 - (b) To guide feet into the way of peace

“So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.”

1. We see three realities in this passage
 - a. John the Baptist Grew
 - (1) Growth is a natural progression. So in the natural it must be in the spirit. We must grow
 - b. Became strong in spirit
 - (1) To become strong means to be strengthened
 - (2) In spirit: refers to literally Holy Spirit
 - (a) John became strong in/with the Holy Spirit.
 - (b) It was an active process. He became well acquainted with Holy Spirit.
 - c. Was in the deserts
 - (1) an uncultivated region fit for pasturage
 - (2) lonely regions

(3) John was literally in the place known as Loneliness and Death.

(a) It was in this place that John found Joy and His Life

(b) It is in this context that he became strong in spirit, he was in a place where this could be his only dependence.

(i) Another picture is when Jesus was ‘drove’ into the wilderness by the spirit after his baptism. (*Mark 1:12*)

It is in the place of deserts, in the place of wilderness that is the truest/best stage to become strong in spirit. We cannot separate the reality of the wilderness in context to the preparation of a forerunner.

It was in the wilderness that John the Baptist was prepared, it was 40 days in the wilderness that Jesus came forth empowered by the Holy Spirit. (*Luke 4:14*) Even King David had a season of Wilderness where he hid in a cave!

A forerunner must learn to embrace the wilderness and find utter dependence on Holy Spirit. It is in this place that the preparations are made for ministry. We cannot come forth unless we are ‘Leaning upon our beloved.’ (*Song of Solomon 8:5*) As a Forerunner, you will be ill prepared and possibly never released into your full destiny unless you are utterly dependant on Him. The reality of Jesus’ return and the rage of the Anti-Christ will utterly crush you if you are not found leaning on Him!

II. JOHN’S MANIFESTATION TO ISRAEL: LUKE 3

“While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he went in to all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places made straight and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’” (*Luke 3:2-6*)

A. It was in the wilderness, the place of preparation that the word came to John. It was only in the place of wilderness where John was found leaning on His beloved and rejoicing at the voice of the Bridegroom! (*John 3:29*)

B. The message was Repent and be Baptized!

1. We in the Western world have turned our backs on these two foundational Messages
 - a. Part of the Forerunner Ministry is to re-trumpet this reality!
 - b. God will use Forerunners to provoke the people back to reality!
2. John was a mad man! Preaching a ‘new’ message

- a. When God wants to shift the church out of complacency He raises up one with a message that will shake foundations and confront the ‘state’ and ‘reality’ of lives
3. Nothing is more offensive to a heart than to be told you are a sinner and need to turn from your evil ways (repentance) and be baptized.
 - a. The people who get the most upset at this teaching are the ‘church’ people who think they have it all together just like the Pharisees.
4. John then quotes the prophecy in Isaiah 40, the same thing the Angel Gabriel prophesied over him.
 - a. John officially claims to be this one

(1) There becomes a defining moment, when we identify and proclaim who it is that the Lord has created us to be. John identifies with this reality and proclaims it. **“I AM A VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS”**

“Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, “I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire...And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.” (Luke 3:15-16,18-20)

- A. Remember, at John’s birth they reasoned in their hearts, ‘what kind of child will this be’ (Luke 1:66) So the people became even more expectant.
 1. Important to note that they did not fully listen to His message. They took the fact that he was proclaiming Isaiah 40, but didn’t actually listen to what He was saying. They thought they knew.
 - a. But they still reasoned in their hearts if John was the Christ. John made it clear he was preparing the way for the Christ, that he was not the Christ. The people still didn’t get it.

***“Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive the elect. See, I have told you beforehand therefore if they say to you, ‘Look, He is in the desert!’ do not go out; or ‘Look, He is in the inner rooms!’ do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”* (Matthew 24:23-27)**

(1) There is a proclamation coming that the Christ is here! If men in the days of John the Baptist already reasoned in their hearts that he could be the Christ and did no signs or wonders. How much easier in the coming days for men and women to be deceived!

(2) This is the importance of the Forerunner! There must be a preparation of the elect before that day!

- B. We see that John actually rebuked Herod for his evil ways!
 - 1. Herod was the Governor
 - a. The Forerunner Message also confronts the Governmental Authority