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## The Announcement of the Final Forerunner – *Luke 1:1-25*

**Introduction** – Luke records the words of Jesus in 19:10, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” This is the story of Jesus Christ coming to seek and to save that which was lost. This is the story of Jesus, but it is also the story of us – of His people – of the world – of that which was lost and now is found, saved, redeemed. This is the only story that starts all the way at the beginning and will go all the way to the end. This story has monumental, world-wide and eternal implications and at the same time meets the needs of ordinary people in whom God finds favor to answer prayers and pour out His grace.

**Luke’s Gospel Purpose** (vv1-4) – Luke (and Acts) is written with a particular purpose: to reveal and declare the great turning point in the history of mankind. It was written for one who had already heard of these things, but it was written in a carefully ordered way after thorough investigation by one who cared to show forth the fulfillment of God’s promises and the trajectory of those promises manifested here on earth. It was written so that Theophilus (and each one of us) might come to know with great certainty and security all that Jesus is for us.

**In the Days of Herod the Great** (vv5-7) – With the backdrop of a wicked, tyrannical king, (*so long as he lived, no woman’s honor was safe, no man’s life secure* – Edersheim) we are brought to the Temple of the Jews and a righteous couple who loved and served Yahweh with great devotion. Even so, Elizabeth was barren, and because of their advanced age, it appeared that God had waited too long.

**A Barren Woman** – The promise to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15) is the promise of salvation from our enemy by the miraculous working of God. Sara, Rebekah, and Rachel were all barren. The symbolism is clear: it is impossible for mankind to bring forth a savior outside of the supernatural work of God.

**Incense, Prayers, and Angels** (vv8-12) – 24 teams of priests rotated through the temple-service and because there were so many priests, lots were drawn for the daily incense offering, and most often a priest only had the privilege of doing this once in his lifetime. The incense represented the offering of the prayers of the people before the throne of God, and all the priests would give themselves to prayer at this time. Central to those prayers would have been a request that God bring forth His Messiah to save His people. An angel (a messenger of God) appears to Zacharias and he trembles with fear.

**Fulfillment, Promise, and Doubt** (vv13-25) – God was not too late, not for Zacharias and Elizabeth, nor for His people Israel. God heard this man’s prayer. This barren woman will not only bring forth a son, she will bring forth a life-long Nazirite (as had Manoah’s barren wife and Hannah). Wine is given for times of rest, fellowship, and celebration; Nazirites were ceremonially set aside from rest for a time of holy war, and so this consecrated one would be *filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb*. It was promised that *many will rejoice at his birth and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God*. Repentance is the gift and promise of God.

**The Spirit and Power of Elijah** – The angel is alluding to Mal 2:6-7, 3:1, and 4:5-6. In some way like all the prophets before, but even more in this point of history, this prophet will *make ready a people prepared for the Lord*.

**Believe the Unbelievable** – Sara laughed when she overheard God’s plans (Gen 18:12), but Zacharias, knowing this story, simply cannot believe. Luke is careful not to dress up Zacharias in some superhuman way. Sometimes even good people have doubts about God’s promises. God in essence says, “just be quiet for awhile and watch God work.”

**Why Start with This Story?** – Luke, unlike the other two synoptics, starts the story of Jesus without mentioning Jesus for many paragraphs. But this is not literary window-dressing.

**John and Jesus/Old and New Administration** – John and Jesus are related to one another, and like their relationship, so are the Old and New Covenants. Related but distinct, the Old, like John will decrease so that the New might increase.

**Pointing Back/Pointing Forward** – Knitting the Old and New Testaments together, all that is happening to Elizabeth and Zacharias points back to what God had done in the past. But it is more importantly pointing ahead in the story to an even more miraculous conception and birth.

**The Personal and the Cosmic** – In every work of God there is great purpose, perfect timing, and a story being written. God does not make mistakes; He is never too late; He loves to surprise and terrify and delight. He pours out individual and very personal mercies and all the while He is actually molding and shaping nations and all of history.

**Getting Prepared** – God does not just send Jesus. He sends His prophets. He sends His messengers. He sends His Word. God wants to come to a people prepared for Him, a people whose hearts have been turned to Him. God’s grace is manifest in the work of His Word and Spirit preparing men and women – for Him. Are you ready for the next work of God? *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen – Heb 11:1. Luke is writing that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.*

*Dave Hatcher – September 11, 2005*