

"Prepare the Way of the Lord"

Luke 1.5-25

Mele Kalikimaka! -- Christmas STORY is MISSIONARY Message

CHINA – Christmas EVE Services > HOT Date Night!

YES! Shopping Malls FILLED with Shoppers and CAROLS being PLAYED

But ALSO – CHURCHES – International, Registered, and House Churches
 FILLED with VISITORS – SEEKERS – Drawn by CHRIST of CHRISTMAS

BEIJING – Visit by Authorities every Year – Concerned about our Christmas Plans

UNSTOPPABLE Number of CHINESE Citizens Streaming into Places of Worship

“I greatly RESPECT Awesome power of CHINA – CONFUSED by HOW, WHY
 BABY born FAR from here, LONG Ago – So NERVOUS about BABY JESUS!”

2000 yrs Ago God’s PROVIDENTIAL Preparation for Son of God to COME

UNIFIED LANGUAGE - Greek/ Hellenists

POLITICAL STABILITY / LEGAL SYSTEM - Romans

TRANSPORTATION - Roman roads - Ships and Harbors

SPIRITUAL - Emptiness of Roman/Greek idolatry

Expectancy - Jewish nation - SEARCH FOR MESSIAH

1. Decline of the Old Covenant

a. Political Corruption

v. 5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea - "Herod king of Judea"

LITTLE MEANING TO US TODAY / REVULSION TO THE JEWS

Not True Jew – IDUMEAN - Descendant of Esau - CONTINUOUS HATRED

"KING" by Roman Senate: Vassal of Roman Caesar's to HUMILIATE JEWS

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar -- when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Phillip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene... Luke 3:1

LIST OF ROGUES > Just to LIST Names, REMIND People of their SLEAZE
Last time USA: "Preach in Beijing can you speak about Gov't Problems of China?"

SURE that might be LAST SERMON in CHINA!

Could NOT Imagine SERMONS without CRITIQUE of BAD POLITICIANS!

BIBLE > LIGHT OF GOSPEL SHINES AT DARKEST POLITICAL HOUR
LUKE – None of NT Writers – Neither JESUS or APOSTLES – NOT Focus on Foolish Political Decisions – Excessive CORRUPTION – Boyfriends or Girlfriends
GOSPEL is GOOD NEWS for SINNERS – Politicians or People they EXTORT

b. Religious Formalism

v. 5 there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron

BOTH - "descendant of Aaron" – ALII – JEWISH PRIESTLY ROYALTY

You THINK been DOING Church for LONG TIME?? Memorized SONGS?

TODAY: Another MISSIONARY, Another GUILTY TRIP, Another OFFERING!

People of ISRAEL been REPEATING Rituals for 1500 years

1000's of PRIESTS / equiv of GOV'T Workers – STEADY Job & PENSION

FINAL OT Prophet > for MANY it was EMPTY RITUAL...

When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is not wrong? "Oh, one of you would shut the temple

doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says LORD Almighty Malachi 1:8-10

c. Surprised by Grace

v. 11-13 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

SOLEMN MOMENT - "Alter of Incense" part of Most Holy Place

Zechariah entered w/ 2 Attendant Priests - Outer Room

Very LIKELY w/ 1000's of Priests NEVER BEEN THERE BEFORE

Probably ROPE tied to ANKLE if Collapsed – Be PULLED OUT from OUTSIDE

More than just Another Boring Sunday!! APPEARANCE OF ANGEL GABRIEL

Malachi also describes ENCOUNTER with God HE desires for HIS PEOPLE...

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire... Malachi 3:1-4

SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SURPRISED – Be EXPECTANT and READY..

GOD – who does NOT Know HOW to LIE – has PROMISED His PEOPLE

"The time is coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Jeremiah 31.31

Israel had Many Opportunities to Know God - History Continual Sin & Rebellion

GOD CONTINUED TO EXTEND HIS GRACE

"where we see the Word of God preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms in many faults" John Calvin

Even After 4 ½ yrs – Dayna & I still MARVEL to Share Word of God in BJ
Last Sunday – Nov 24 – African Bro > Chinese Uni Classmate – New Sis in X

2. Design for Covenant Renewal - People

GOD FULFILLS HIS SAVING PURPOSE FOR WORLD - Ordinary People
English evangelist - Gypsy Smith - ASKED HOW TO HAVE REVIVAL

"Do you have a place to pray?"

Go - WITH CHALK - Kneel Down - Draw Complete Circle Around You

Pray for God to send revival on everything in circle

STAY UNTIL HE ANSWERS - REVIVAL WILL HAVE BEGUN

TYPE OF PEOPLE WHOM GOD USES....

a. Obedient

v. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

UPRIGHT..OBSERVING..BLAMELESSLY

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." Isaiah 2.2,3

SIGN of New Covenant – SPIRIT of God fills PEOPLE who want to SERVE Him
NATIONS that will WALK IN HIS PATHS

MAN AND WOMAN WHO WERE DIFFERENT FROM SOCIETY...

2 yrs ago > African Xtian > THAI Buddhist > MUSLIM from Sri Lanka

Buddhist still comes EVERY SUNDAY – Great RESPECT & CURIOSITY

b. Suffering

v. 7 they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

SOCIETY'S GOAL - Life as Painless and Convenient as Possible

TODAY - Many Couples don't want BURDEN of Children – Inconvenient Expense

1 Child COUPLES in Major Cities of CHINA – Not Afford, No Time for 2nd Child

BIBLE Days CHILDLESSNESS = CURSE OF GOD: Shame, Ridicule, Gossip

Bible - Bad things happen to Good People, Good things - Bad People

SOVEREIGN PURPOSE / PLAN OF GOD

Men look BACKWARD to see CAUSE / God points FORWARD IN HOPE

SCOURGE of GLOBAL Church > PROSPERITY Theology

3rd Lausanne Conf > 4000 Leaders / 98 Countries – Keep that Stuff Away from US

NOT Every Christian will Have BENZ and a VILLA! Just TV Preachers!

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted

2 Timothy 3:12

ELIZABETH & ZECH. Lived with LONELY SHAME for MANY, LONG Years

DESPITE their SUFFERING they REMAINED...

c. Faithful

v. 8 he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty

"on duty....serving" / OLD PRIESTS MOCKED > READY to be Called to SERVE
 Hope that's TRUE of Us > Young or Old READY to Serve LORD of HARVEST
 vs. 23,24 when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. After these
 days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden

ANXIOUS WAITING DURING PREGNANCY / Z – is Mute

ME trying to Communicate in CHINA – Master of the PANTAMIME

He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is
 John." Luke 1:63

CONTRARY to NAMING CUSTOMS of Jews > OBEDIENT to God's Command
 WHAT STANDARD TO DO WE APPLY TO CHRISTIAN LIFE?

If your car starts once every 3 tries is it reliable?

If your paperboy skips your house 2x's a week is he trustworthy?

If you miss work once a week are you a loyal employee?

If your refrigerator stops for a day every other week do you say,
 "Oh well it works most of the time"

If your water heater gives an ice cold shower once in a while is
 it dependable?

If you miss a couple loan payments a year does the bank say,
 "ten out of twelve isn't bad"?

If you fail to worship God one or two Sunday's a month, should
 you be called a faithful Christian?

d. Chosen

v. 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense

CHOSEN FOR SALVATION

"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Luke 10:22

CHOSEN FOR SERVICE - "chosen by lot" RARE PRIVILEGE / once in life

You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him Luke 1:76

Family: Father, Mother, Son UNIQUE ROLE in REDEMPTIVE HISTORY

NO ONE ELSE HAS INFLUENCE & OPPORTUNITY FOR CHRIST YOU DO

8 yrs in Africa / 11 yrs Central Asia / 7 yrs Hawaii > Serve Church with 70 Nations

Sovereign God – WEAVING Tapestry of YOUR Life for Unique Kingdom Service

Youth Pastor of BICF – Over 20 yrs Multi-Cultural Exp – Youth & Leaders

Church in China AMAZING Growth – IGNORING their Own Kids – Tim Carrigon

e. Disciplined

v. 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.”

"Silent...did not believe" NEED be HUMBLLED to Rightly GLORIFY God

ALWAYS HAVE NEW LESSONS TO LEARN - Greatest in Kingdom CHILD

He who is not busy bein' born is BUSY DYIN...

Bob Dylan

When Zechariah OPENS his MOUTH it is to PRAISE - NOT CURSE

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. Luke 1:64

it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD...Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him Lamentations 3:26,28

3. Desire for the New Covenant

a. Prayer

v. 13 the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard...

OFFERED Many Prayers over LONG YEARS of Service

FATHER – for Child (stopped?) / PRIEST - Redemption of Israel

God answers BOTH Prayers – SURPRISING WAY – thru ONE BABY BOY

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4

SON – Prepare Way of the Lord – Set into MOTION Plan of REDEMPTION

LUKE - GOSPEL FILLED WITH PRAYER

Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Luke 6:12

Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Luke 18:1

being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground Luke 22:44

IF JESUS NEEDED TO PRAY - HOW ABOUT US?

Tired of Praying? LITTLE BOY..

I'M TIRED OR PRAYING FOR THIS FAMILY AND GETTING NO RESULTS

Aunt Harriet NOT yet married, Uncle Bill still NO job, Dad's hair still falling out,

Thank God Zechariah and Elizabeth NOT RETIRE from Praying and SERVING

b. Grace

v. 13 "...your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John"

NAME "John" = THE GRACE OF GOD

John Pointed People to REDEEMER > GRACE OF REPENTANCE -

Men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. Lamentations 3:31-33

c. Great (*Privilege*)

v. 15 for he will be great before the Lord / Great OPPORTUNITY to See JESUS

the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating 1 Peter 1.10,11

"I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Luke 7:28-30

GREATER Privilege – Finished Work of X – Complete Canon of OT & NT

Greatest Blessing of OLD Covenant – Embrace Fulfillment – We See HIS Fullness

Jesus: “Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear at you hear but did not hear it” Matthew 13:16,17

As M worker REMIND Still MAJORITY of World NOT HEARD

6500 Lang. / 1000 Whole Bible / 2000 SOME Script > Over 3000 Nothing

Cannot be GREAT Before the Lord in BLESSING if they’ve NEVER HEARD

Holiday SEASON – Nations right HERE – Int’l Students UHH – Lonely, Open

d. Spirit - LUKE - GOSPEL OF HOLY SPIRIT

400 years of PROPHETIC Silence – None since MALACHI - Holy Spirit QUIET

v. 15 he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb

And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. Luke 1.35

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit Luke 1.41

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied Luke 1.67

"I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Luke 3:16

We NEED BAPTISM – Received when BELIEVE in Jesus Savior / Spirit-Baptizer BY FAITH we are FORGIVEN and FILLED for the Work of KINGDOM Service

e. Restoration > many people will he bring back....

v. 16,17 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared.”

Fulfills Promise of Malachi -

He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers... Malachi 4:6

Church follows PRINCE of PEACE > Should be PLACE of PEACE

Russian Pastor of BICF – Uzbekistan – Russian Speaking JEWS & MUSLIMS

Both GROUPS brought to FAITH in Jesus Christ

Wednesday Pastor’s Meeting – Pray: “I’m going to JOIN the 2 Groups TONIGHT”

Came back ALIVE Next Wednesday – Looks like Everything is GOING WELL

CHRISTIANS should Teach World > PEACE with GOD, PEACE with MAN

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation 2 Corinthians 5:17,18

"Uduk" - Sudan: "God was in Christ snapping fingers again with man thru Christ"

Greeting among Uduk - Sudan - SNAP FINGERS - Friendship Restored

Handshake or Shaka sign - EVERYTHING IS ALL RIGHT

e. Joy – what is ON Everyone’s Christmas LIST this YEAR!

v. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth

JOY Not from STUFF – either the iPhone or the Samsung – Lamborgini or Ferrari

Joy NOT from SUBSTANCES – Not from END of the BOTTLE or the NEEDLE

Joy NOT from SEX – Great FUN, Outside of Marriage it is FALSE and CHEAP

TRUE, LASTING, ETERNAL JOY > JOY OF SALVATION >>

JOHN THE BABY -

As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb
leaped for joy. Luke 1:44

JOHN'S BIRTH -

Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and
they shared her joy. Luke 1:58

REASON for JOHN'S JOY – OUR JOY > Mission Field / Missionary Church

1st Sermon Preached in Hawaii > Rev. Hiram BINGHAM on OAHU

Announced this ADVENT JOY on April 23rd, 1820

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people"
Luke 2:10

Still TRUE today 193 yrs LATER > DISTANT Islands or Distant LANDS

JOY in JESUS Christ > GREATER than Anything World OFFERS

Who will you tell?

Luke 1:⁵ In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will 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 and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared.” ¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” ¹⁹And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” ²¹And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. ²³ And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. ²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵ “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”