

LUKE CHAPTER 1

Luke's arrangement of the Events of "THE COMING"

1st Event:	1:5-23	Zechariah in the Temple [“after these days, his wife Elizabeth conceived and hid herself for <u>5 MONTHS</u> ”]
2nd Event:	1:26-38	Annunciation to Mary
3rd Event:	1:39-55	Visitation to Elizabeth : <u>The Magnificat</u> [“Mary stayed with her about 3 MONTHS...”]
4th Event:	1:57-66	Birth and Circumcision of John.
5th Event:	1:67-79	Zechariah’s prophecy [“and the child grew up ... and he was IN THE DESERT until he appeared publicly...”]
6th Event:	2:1-7	The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem
7th Event:	2:8-21	The Shepherds come to Jesus [“8 days later the time came for him to be circumcised...”]
8th Event:	22-35	Simeon’s recognition and prophecy
9th Event:	2:36-39	Anna’s prophecy [“and the child grew... filled with Wisdom”]
10th Event:	2:41-51	Boy Jesus in the Temple. [“and Jesus advanced in Wisdom and stature and in favour with both God and man”]

Things to notice in this plan of Luke’s:

- a) Events 1 and 10 **stand alone**. The others are in pairs.
- b) After certain events Luke gives a general comment to indicate a lapse of time.
- c) First Event stands alone as the **last OT** scene before the Incarnation, which occurs six months later.
- d) Events 2 and 3 are linked by Mary’s decision (1:39) to visit Elizabeth as soon as she becomes aware of Elizabeth’s pregnancy.
 - At the end of the 3rd Event Mary stays with Elizabeth for 3 months.
6 + 3 = 9 months (i.e) until the Birth and Circumcision of John.
- e) 4th and 5th Events form a natural pair. Zechariah recovers his faith and his speech and prophecies over his son... Mary is present with Jesus in her womb. **This fact** makes Zechariah’s prophecy wonderful.
 - At the end of 5th Event we are drawn into the future as John spends his youth in the desert.
- f) 6th and 7th Events draw us back 30 years to the Birth of Christ and the wonders that happened.
 - At the end of 7th Event there is an interval of **7 days** to circumcision
and a **further** 33 days to Mary’s Purification (Presentation).
 - Lev 12:2-4 laid down the law for a mother to be purified 40 days after the birth of a son.
- g) 8th and 9th Events follow one another naturally.
 - After 9th Event there is an interval of 12 years.

h) 10th Event occurs 12 years later.

- This is followed by an interval of 18 years, when Jesus begins his ministry at 30 years.

Things to Notice:

(a) Luke is concerned to inform us about events that **actually happened** – so he gives us an accurate time-table for these events.

NB For him, he was recording **Historical Facts** – not stories or myths.

(b) Event 1 and 10 stand out by themselves – so Luke wants to emphasise something.

(1) { 1st Event: is about AN OLD MAN in the Jerusalem temple
10th Event: is about A YOUNG MAN in the Jerusalem temple

(2) { 1st Event: the old man cannot believe he can become A PARENT at **his** age and in **his** circumstances (barren wife)
10th Event: the young man points his natural parents to his **SUPERNATURAL ORIGINS:**
“**MY** Father’s business”

- for Zechariah it was miraculous parenting
- for Jesus it was supernatural parenting. **God was His FATHER**

- These are 2 miracles of a very different **ORDER**. For Zechariah and Elizabeth God reversed the aging process and made a barren womb fruitful. This type of intervention had occurred a number of times in salvation history, e.g. Abraham & Sarah, Hannah and Samuel’s unnamed mother...
- The miracle of the **Incarnation** and Birth of the Son of God is an intervention of God into human history that is **completely unique**
- When the Logos became flesh, it was an act of creation by God with no human father involved...

STAGE 1

The Coming of the Son of God into the World

First Event: 1:5-80

The Last Hours of Darkness before The Dawn of the Christian Era

- The “night” of Israel’s History had been long, dark and turbulent.
- But through it all the Hope that the Messiah would come at last as “the son of righteousness with healing in his wings” (Malachi 4:2)
- **Isaiah 40:2-8** said that Israel would be consoled when “the glory of the Lord will be revealed and all mankind will see”.
- Before this Parousia (manifestation) of the Lord, a Forerunner would prepare Israel: (Is 40:3-4)
- **Malachi 4:5-6** prophesied that a new Elijah would come before the great Day of the Lord: “to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children...”
- Now 400 years after Malachi, God was ready to **action** prophecy.
- Zechariah and Elizabeth – the **Abraham and Sarah of the New Era** – are chosen by God to give the world this special child, the Forerunner.
- God’s Chief Announcer, the Archangel Gabriel, God’s Angelic Announcer – came with the good news.

NB **Zechariah was a priest** – not an ordinary citizen. He was an official representative of God, therefore a public figure. His standing on religious matters was **OFFICIAL** – not just private.

- His responses to God **and** to the congregation were also **OFFICIAL**
- For him to err was bigger than for a layman to err.

The Abijah section of the priesthood was the **8th** of **24** divisions of priests (1 Chron 24:10). These 24 divisions carried out, in turn, the daily service of the Temple. Each division served for one week only. Because there were so many priests they had to cast lots in order to apportion jobs to individuals.

- 11-17 God - through His Angel – made the annunciation of John's birth to his father
– not his mother, for John's birth was part of Israel's history and he was to be a very public figure: the Forerunner of the Messiah - no greater gift could have been given to Zechariah by God.
- 8-11 **Zechariah** was given the task to keep the brazier burning before the Holy of Holies and to put new incense onto it every morning and evening before the morning and evening sacrifices.
- He was therefore the person **most physically near** to the Holy of Holies that week so, it was his task to **take God's Blessing from there** to the people who were in the outer courts.
 - In the eyes of the people he would be a very respected and revered person... presumed close to God.

Elizabeth: 5-7 was a descendant of Aaron and therefore of the priestly clan.
Zechariah and Elizabeth both observed the Mosaic Law, therefore were "righteous"
But they were childless: **Two groups in Israel** fitted this description: a) Pharisees b) Essenes
13 They had prayed to God for a child

Annunciation:

- 1) **Your** prayer has been heard – your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son... call him **JOHN** = God is Gracious = Grace of God
- 2) He will be your joy and delight – many (everyone) will rejoice at his birth.
- 3) He will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must drink no wine.
- 4) From his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 5) He will bring back many of Israel's sons to the Lord, their God.
- 6) He will fulfill the end-time role of Elijah.

NB **The Angel Gabriel** is addressing Zechariah **as a public representative** of the Mosaic Religion and the Mosaic Era.

- the Angel came **during his public service** in the Temple.
- he **could** have come to Zechariah at home if that was God's choice.
- ∴ **"your prayer is heard"** **means** that **ISRAEL's prayer to God** to send her **THE MESSIAH** has been heard and **God is ready** to put His PLAN OF REDEMPTION into action.
- the **first stage** of that is to send **THE FORERUNNER** and the privilege of being **Father of Israel's Forerunner** was given to Zechariah!

Zechariah's Response to God: 18-20 **Disbelief!**

- This is a warning of **things to come**. The priests of Israel **will not accept** either the Forerunner or the Messiah – or **God's way** of wanting to bring about Redemption...
- Physical closeness to the Holy of Holies did not guarantee **spiritual closeness**.



- As a priest, Zechariah has studied God's ways in the Exodus, when He reversed a hopeless situation for the Hebrew slaves and enabled them to become a Nation in spite of all the odds.
- God had intervened in a spectacular way, working mighty miracles for them, inviting them – through Moses – to begin a completely New Life and inaugurate a **NEW ERA – The Mosaic Era.**
- God wanted to show them a **new relationship** with Him, by Covenant so that they would become the first people on Earth **consciously doing God's Will** in the Commandments...
- God also wanted to reveal that life on Earth was **not** just a passage from the “womb to the tomb”, but a **spiritual journey** through which the Human Race could evolve from
 - (1) a **“mere flesh life”** on the level of the animals – or
 - (2) a **more rational life** on the level of the **PSYCHE** or mind.
 - (3) He wanted us to **evolve ONTO the Level of Spirit**
– the highest level of our being, so that we would be like the Angels... **terrestrial angels.**
- It is **on the Level of Spirit** that we **meet** the Kingdom of God and discover **“The Lord who is Spirit”** to quote Paul in **2 Cor 4.**
 - (a) - It was **on this DESERT Journey** that God revealed Himself to the People as their Father, Lord and God.
 - (b) - It was **on this journey** they discovered His **continual Presence** in the **Tabernacle.**
 - (c) - It was **on this journey** they were fed with Manna and miraculous water from the Rock (2 Cor 10:1-6)

NB All of this was **preparation** for what was now beginning with Zechariah.

- It seems that Zechariah **forgot** that he **was a Priest / public figure** in **his response to the Angel Gabriel!** **and** that he owed his job as a Priest to the **intervention of God in History.**

NB Zechariah **responded as “an old man”** whose wife was **“getting on”** in years.

- No matter **what** Zechariah knew about God's intervention in the Exodus, he did not think God **could** REVERSE THE AGEING PROCESS!

VIP { Therefore, there **was** something God couldn't do!! Luke 1:37
- He also couldn't **heal** a barren womb!

NB The deficiencies in Zechariah's faith will soon be **reflected** in **the rest of the priesthood**

- who will **not accept** the VIRGIN-BIRTH – even though it was prophesied!
(We can **“get round”** Scripture with sophisticated explanations and theories)
- they will **not accept** that **God-has-become-Man**
and as a result, they will crucify the Messiah they **had prayed for** – for centuries!

The Problem is:

- (1) That they could accept **small** gifts from God – but not **THE GREAT GIFTS** God lavished upon them...
- such is the tragedy of the Human Race.
- (2) If we do not accept **The Forerunner** to the Messiah, it follows that we will not accept God's Messiah **either.**
God's Will for us involved a **complete plan of Redemption.** We are not permitted to pick and choose.

Theological Problem:

If the priesthood could not accept that God could reverse the process of Nature in Zechariah's and Elizabeth's bodies, what hope had they of accepting that Redemption wanted to **reverse** the **process of corruption in the Human Race?** (Romans 8)

- one miracle was designed to be a pointer to the other!



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