



Parents of the
Baptist

Welcome to Jesus Time where we spend time with Jesus in His time and culture.

Today we learn about the parents of the man who was to prepare the “Way” - as in to remind the Jewish people of Jehovah Lord and to prepare their hearts, minds, and souls for the soon arrival of Christ Jesus their long awaited and anticipated redeeming Messiah.

An Old Testament prophecy of the one coming to prepare the way for Christ:

✝ See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.

Malachi 4:5-6 NIV

Did you notice?- The Lord promised Israel’s destruction if they refuse Him.

For in Bible speak the Land is always Israel while Seas are representative of Gentile peoples.

Jesus clarified that John the Baptist fulfilled Malachi 4:5 that he was the one who prepared His way.

✝ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴ And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵ Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Matthew 11:13 NIV

So John the Baptist by the very admission of the Living Word of GOD, Jesus our Christ Stated that he was indeed the last prophet and was THE Elijah. This means in Elijah’s place, a type of Elijah who preceded Jesus Ministry to prepare His way.

This was until the derogative term “Christian” was developed by non-believers as a means of describing Jesus followers. This was because the unbelieving did not like calling Jesus believers the one and only true “Way” to GOD. Believers in Christ actually liked and accepted the term “Christian” and have used this word to identify themselves as followers of Jesus ever sense.

Likewise we learned in our Revelation chapter 11 study which can be found on this Church website and on You Tube under the same name Wintersville United Methodist Church, that the two witnesses of the future Tribulation many feel they will be Moses and Elijah and be representative of each the Old & New Testaments of Law & Grace.

The two witnesses of the Lord will together once again come into Jerusalem exactly 7 years prior to Jesus Second Coming Advent sometime after the Rapture of the Church. The phrase those who have ears let them hear our Lord often repeated these words as a reference to anyone who has the Spiritual gift of insight of at least being able to recognize there is GODLY Heavenly meaning within His Words. This is to believe and to receive those Words; the Living Words of Jesus our Christ which are literally instructions from Jehovah GOD Himself.

So what do we know about the famous Baptizer named John?

John technically speaking was the last Prophet sent from GOD before the Advent of a New Covenant found within what we call today the New Testament of the Holy Bible.

The first mention of John the Baptizer to be found within Holy writ is when the Arch Angel Gabriel appeared unto John's father Zechariah a priest of Israel who was serving his tour of duty at the Temple in Jerusalem.

✠ Then an angel of the Lord (Gabriel) appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. Luke 1:11-12 NIV

John the Baptists father Zechariah was a priest, this means he was one of the 24 courses or divisions of the sons of Moses brother Aaron the first High Priest. Long Before this King David Prayed and set up for Israel an organized structure of the priesthood for Temple service. This can be found within 1st Chronicles chapter 24.

Priests were eligible for Temple service from the age of 30 to 50 and then to be retired. Meaning close to 50 years old would have been ancient in ancient times- but not so old by our standards today. This why Jesus began His ministry at the age of 30. It was now GOD'S Law that a priest had to be thirty to serve in His Temple.

Also for the record; Jesus Disciples often called Him "Rabboni" which means teacher. Not all priest's were teachers many served in other areas of life and ministry.

John the Baptists mother Elizabeth was also a Levite, a distant descendant of Aaron for the Gospel of Dr. Luke 1:5-7 states this. This means she too was likely nearing the age of fifty herself and was about to conceive and bear her first child.

You see this was her pain and shame by custom in that ancient culture- to be childless.

To be a priest of Israel at the time of Christ one had to be each a descendant of Aaron as well as being properly educated, dedicated & obedient.

Remember the birth records for Israel were kept in the synagogue of each town and recorded in the Temple of Jerusalem to ensure the legal Jewish blood lines.

The proper lineage for marriage was always checked because priests were forbidden to marry outside of the Priestly or Levite blood lines.

Most priests actually prized and were indeed promoted by the privilege of marrying a priests daughter. In Jesus time it was nearly impossible to become THE High Priest of Israel without marrying a daughter of a former High Priest even though any virgin Levite Jewess qualified.

For a priests daughter the dowery asking price for her and her yearly allowances of each cash and provisions such as wine or whatever she had included in her marriage contract were double that of any other class or tribe of women in Israel.

By marrying a priests daughter the opportunity of acquiring positions of power within the priesthood and indeed Israel itself increased as her father was higher and higher in stature and regard. As a priest was more and more powerful so was the asking price of his daughter.

By marrying her, this gave to the young man a life long privilege of instant access as in by marrying up to the same level of success for the young priest that his wife's father had achieved.

This was not a guarantee that he; the young man- would acquire the same level of authority that her father had had, but rather a ticket as in an open door for the opportunity to achieve the same level of success that her father had achieved.

You see this be the means by which the Pharisees had corrupted the priesthood and had assumed the reins of control and power within Israel.

By heredity and marriage to insure only their lines would ever now control Israel.

All kept under control by Pharisaic laws and customs which numbered in the thousands. Control was enforced by each the Temple guards, Israel's military, and ultimately the might of the Roman Legions. You see Rome never cared who was abusing who, just as long as order was maintained and their taxes flowed back to the Empire. In a very real way the Pharisees used Rome just as much as Rome used them by preventing uprisings and revolution.

This alone made the daughters of more and more powerful priests more and more desirable & costly for those priests corrupt in heart.- She; bought, then brought; he, a place at any table unto her fathers rank. Without having a high ranked wife; life, in Israel for a common priest was mundane. A life very limited each socially , financially, and in influence. & yet it was the lower ranking priests in Israel that the people cared for.

Because it was the lower ranked priests who even dared to pretend to care for them. Usually the only chance a common person had in any sort of trouble was gaining the favor of a lower ranking priest who had the favor of a higher ranking priest. Meaning the lower ranking priests were the ones actually more dedicated as in doing their job in & for the Lord rather than for just trying to promote and enrich themselves.

Obviously such as these were Zechariah and Elizabeth John the Baptists parents.

For Dr.Luke within his Gospel 1:6 says each Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in GOD'S sight.

To be called Righteous by GOD in scripture had a Jewish definition in Jesus Time:

By tradition for GOD to call someone Righteous meant in Israel that they had to be blameless in all things and to have a reputation of reverence for the Lord and a devotion to GODLY things.

All done with purity of heart and motivation. To be self denying, charitable, & to have affection for the disadvantaged. Basically a public and private faith intense in action & hope in the Lord.

Of course many of you may well know the Biblical narrative details that Zechariah and Elizabeth were indeed relatives of the virgin Mary although much further along in years.

In fact the Bible explains that Elizabeth- John's mother was past the age of child bearing.

Gabriel informed Zechariah by the Will of GOD that Elizabeth would conceive the Baptist.

Not GOD like Jesus through Mary, but from they themselves as a couple although advanced in years also by a miracle of GOD. (The Arc Angel Gabriel is always the one who gives info about Messiah)

The Angel Gabriel explained to Zechariah that his future son John, his life's work would be of delivering GOD'S message that the Kingdom of GOD was at hand.

To prepare the way of the Lord, for his soon arrival. We know Him as Christ Jesus.

In Jesus Time this was literal as in physical as in preparing the “ Way “ for dignitaries. In many places roads had to be prepared for royalty to traverse, pathways smoothed, rocks removed, weeds trimmed to clear the way for animals, wagons, chariots or litter bearers.

“To make straight the path or way of the Lord” as John the Baptist was famous for saying is actually Isaiah 40:3. This means John the Baptist- his life was not to clear the roads of impediments, but rather to clear the hearts and minds of the people from the obstructions of preconceived notions & life’s distractions in order to prepare people to hear the words of our Lord.

About 50 priests a day served within the Temple on normal days where as on feast days all of the priests reported to Jerusalem.

There were about 20 K priests in Israel at this time according to the historian Josephus.

John the Baptists father- Zechariah, for him to be called up for Temple service in Jerusalem meant he received the message where he & Elizabeth lived in rural Judea by the Temple postal service in newsprint as too the date he was expected to be in Jerusalem.

Now I’m reading from: The Preparation of Zechariah & Elizabeth by Pastor Doug Goins 1985.

As a male member of the tribe of Aaron, Zechariah was entitled to offer sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem. There were so many descendants of Aaron that they were divided into groups, and those groups served in the temple only two weeks in the year.

Within each group that served, lots were cast to decide which priest would be permitted to officiate and give an offering. No priest was allowed to do this more than once in a lifetime, and even then, many never had the opportunity to participate the way that Zechariah was privileged on this morning.

After a lifetime of waiting, Zechariah finally enters at the "hour of incense" and stands at the altar just before the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. There were two prayer offerings: one that began the day of worship in the temple right at dawn, and the same offering was repeated at night, to close the day. Aromatic spices were put on the coals of the altar, a powerful, beautiful symbol of the prayers of Israel rising to God. As the priest, alone in the temple, placed the incense on the altar, he prayed for the deliverance of Israel, and offered prayers of intercession on behalf of the people of Israel. When he prayed, "a great multitude," as it says here, would have gathered outside the temple, prostrate on their faces in the outer court, praying with the priest who represented them in the Holy Place.

Now the rest of this story you may well know when Gabriel explained to Zechariah that his son would be called John which means Graced by GOD, meaning he & Elizabeth themselves were graced by the Lord with John as their son, for them a baby at last.

While John’s Grace would be his privilege of preparing the way of our Lord Jesus.

By description John was to be dedicated not only as a priest from birth like Samuel of the Old Testament but also that he was to have life long vows similar to a Nazarite.

To be set apart meant to be dedicated to the Lord & this included denying himself wine. This also means as the scripture states of John's appearance he was to never cut his hair. Ordinarily for a Jew long hair on a man was considered to be a social disgrace in Jesus time. Unless; a man with long hair had taken a vow of Holiness & service unto Jehovah GOD. These vows were normally for specific time limit for a specific reason or goal.

Few like John the Baptist or the mighty Samson of the Old Testament were vowed from birth for life. And FYI it really was the act of Samson violating his oath before the Lord that cost him his strength. Think about it; if Samson had remained true to his word unto Jehovah Lord- He never would have been with Delilah a forbidden Gentile woman in the first place. She learned his secret and seen to his demise. If Samson had been with a proper Levite woman then only Heaven knows how she could have supported and guided him in obedience unto GOD. So in a very real way Samson & Delilah are very good examples as too why the Lord insisted upon strict bloodlines as for the Priests of Israel. Because it was the people of Israel who suffered physically as well as Spiritually either by oppression or neglect when their Priests were found lacking in either character or devotion unto the Lord.

So, John the Baptist was also 30 years old when he began to call Israel to repentance exactly 6 months before Jesus began his public ministry.

(Mary as told by the Holy Spirit conceived Christ & visited Elizabeth already 6 months w/child. Luke 1: 36, 39-45
Why? Because Zechariah was a priest of Israel and no doubt Mary now had much to hear & learn.)

As Zechariah was in the Temple after being informed by the Angel Gabriel- he questioned how could this be? A child now with he and his wife's advanced age.

& then for doubting his own Prayers unto GOD Zechariah was stricken mute until John's birth.

What Zechariah did not get to finish was the offering of the customary Prayer within the Temple at the conclusion of his Temple service. Scripture does record Zechariah's speaking testimony, adoration and praise unto the Lord at his son John the Baptizers birth. (Luke 1:57-80)

What Dr. Luke did not included was the Prayer Zechariah was to have given within the Temple in Jerusalem when he was stricken mute.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us close today with that ancient unheard, unspoken Prayer of Zechariah.

When after a lifetime of waiting Zechariah finally had the opportunity to offer this Prayer before the Lord.

Blessed art thou Jehovah!

Who causeth to spring forth the horn of Salvation.

GOD as the shield of Abraham,

He that raises the dead and causes Salvation to shoot forth,

the Holy one who graciously giveth knowledge,

who taketh pleasure in repentance, who multiplieth forgiveness,

who redeemeth Israel, who heals their diseases,

who blesses thy years, who gathered the outcasts of His people,

who loveth righteousness and judgement, who is the abode and stay of the righteous.

Who buildeth Jerusalem, who causeth the horn of Salvation to shoot forth,

who heareth Prayer, who bringeth back His Shekinah to Zion,

GOD the Gracious one: to whom praise is due,

who blesseth the people of Israel with peace.

A Jesus/Messiah New Testament break down of the unspoken Benediction-
(End of service Prayer of Blessing & hope) Zechariah was to have given when he was
stricken mute before the entirety of the assembly as he left Jerusalem's Temple.

Blessed art thou Jehovah!

Horn- container of plenty/many
Salvation means victory
Victory of many over what?

Who causeth to spring forth the horn of Salvation.

GOD as the shield of Abraham,

Victory over death

He that raises the dead and causes Salvation to shoot forth,

Dedicated to GOD for Divine purpose

Knowledge is always about GOD

the Holy one who graciously giveth knowledge,

When we believe in Jesus we receive pardon & this pleases our Creator
who taketh pleasure in repentance, who multiplieth forgiveness,

Jesus saves

This word for disease in
Hebrew is the sin of
spiritual sickness

who redeemeth Israel, who heals their diseases,

World disowns the GODLY \

who blesses thy years, who gathered the outcasts of His people,

who loveth righteousness and judgement, who is the abode and

stay of the righteous. Those outcasts of Salvation with victory over death who Love GOD
will live with Him . Likewise those who do not face judgement.

New yet to come only for GOD & His Family- us & His Angels

Our victory

Who buildeth Jerusalem, who causeth the horn of Salvation to

shoot forth, who heareth Prayer, Our Victory is our words of Faith unto GOD/JESUS

Zion is the ancient name of the hill where Jerusalem was built

Literal presence of GOD once again
in Jerusalem – Jesus visited Jerusalem
& shall return at 2nd Advent Coming.

who bringeth back His Shekinah to Zion,

GOD the Gracious one: to whom praise is due,

who blesseth the people of Israel with peace.

Israel means one who contends with GOD-
but ultimately submits to His Will.

& these words of Christ ARE the Will of GOD. John 6:37-40

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive
away. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who
sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has
given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For my Father's will is that everyone who looks
to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day."