

Zechariah's Struggle

Luke 1:5-25, 57-66

Sunday December 5th 2010 Morning Service

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Bible firmly places the coming of Christ in a world of reality: See v.2-4

1. God's Plan v.5-13

Zechariah & Elizabeth show to us God's plan for his people in the real world.

1) Godly living in midst of ungodly days: v5 'In the time of Herod King of Judea'. Herod was an evil man ruling over an unhappy land. In midst of these evil days were found this godly couple v5-6. Took God's word very seriously. Godly people are always those who take God's Word seriously & want to live under God's rule. Are we?

2) Persevering faith in midst of personal pain. v7 speaks of an acute pain in their: Elizabeth was barren. Could have shaped their lives. Faith is about going on serving God: v8-11 Zechariah was a priest: to burn incense on altar was the privilege of a lifetime. Whatever struggles there are in our own lives we can go serving God & others. Faith is also about going in prayer: see v10 & 13. Whatever else they went on praying & so did the community of God's people. What God did here was not just taking away a personal pain: but fulfilling his purposes of salvation for the world.

2. God's Promises v.13-17

The angel was a messenger from God, announcing good news. Lovely features here.

Understanding: v13 needs no introduction (who are you?) or explanation (how are you feeling?)

Authority: v13-17 full of assertions of what will happen. Authority that can make the barren give birth.

Joy: see v.14 & 58. The promises of God are the path to joy.

Fulfilment: God delivers on what he says. See the promise of Malachi 4:5-6 'See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents'. Also Is 40:3 speaks of 'A voice of one calling in the desert Prepare the way for the LORD'. OT & NT belong as one.

Jesus: ultimately all promises of God take you to Jesus. John prepares the way for the Lord v17. But how can they & we be ready for Jesus? Needed hearts turning here specifically in families. Also lives turning from disobedience to wisdom. John's ministry was a great call to repentance, humbling p so that ready to receive Jesus.

3. God's Perseverance

What would we expect from godly Zechariah? Surely a sense of awed delight & gratitude & praise. But two things clouded Zechariah's mind

1) Fear. Angel was a huge shock. 'He was startled & fear gripped him'. Fear not faith rose in him 2) Unbelief: A robust refusal to believe it could be true v.18. 'How can I be sure of this? I, I am an old man': mindset of this world: it doesn't fit the categories of my experience.

How will God respond? Not exactly a great start to the Xmas story.

What is striking is God's perseverance.

1) God is persevering in purpose: God will deliver on his promises regardless of the unpromising people he deals with. So v20 'the day it happens.. my words which will come true at their proper time'. Everything that was promised happened despite Zechariah.

2) God is persevering with people: There was discipline: v19-20. 'Now, behold, look you will be silent & not able to speak until the day this happens'. It was not a discipline that destroyed him but it was a discipline that chastened him. Gave him time, space & plenty of room for reflection & repentance. Heb 12 'the Lord disciplines those he loves...God disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness'. There was also transformation: brought him to willing obedience. See v.63. And joyful praise: v64 Began & kept praising God. Because of God's persevering grace one day in heaven we will all effortlessly & ceaseless praise him: but even now let us seek he would work his grace in us so that we too bring glad obedience & joyful praise to our God.

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