

**THE ADVENT SEASON OF JESUS!
PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD IN OUR TIME!**

Doug Sherman – December 11, 2011

THE KEY POINTS

- ❖ **WHAT IS ADVENT AND WHY DO WE CELEBRATE IT?**
- ❖ **HOW TWO GODLY PEOPLE PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S COMING**
- ❖ **GOD'S PROMISES AND PURPOSES ALWAYS PREVAIL!**

BACKGROUND TO THE TIMES - THE BIBLE EXPOSITION COMMENTARY -

It was indeed a dark day for the nation of Israel. The people had heard no prophetic Word from God for 400 years, not since Malachi had promised the coming of Elijah ([Mal. 4:5–6](#)). The spiritual leaders were shackled by tradition and, in some instances, corruption; and their king, Herod the Great, was a tyrant. He had nine (some say ten) wives, one of whom he had executed for no apparent reason. **But no matter how dark the day, God always has His devoted and obedient people.**

1. WHAT IS ADVENT AND WHY DO WE CELEBRATE IT?

A) Advent is the season of the year preceding Christmas, where we remember that Jesus Christ came to the earth as God in the flesh 2000 years ago. It is the time we remember what theologians call the Incarnation of God the Son. ***It is also a time when we prepare for the coming of Christ to us in our time and place by His Spirit! A time to pray for a FRESH VISITATION OF HIS NEAR PRESENCE!*** He is after all EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US!!! Lastly, It is the time when we look forward to the Second Coming of Christ, not as a baby born in a manger, but as a conquering king who will deal with evil once for all time!

2. HOW TWO GODLY PEOPLE PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S COMING

A) PRINCIPLES OF PREPARATION - Luke 1:5-10 - 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, 9 according 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.**

THE NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY - Because so many priests were available, the tribe was divided into twenty-four *divisions*, that of Abijah (5) being the eighth in order (1 Ch. 24:10). Each division did duty for two weeks in the year, and many priests spent the remainder of their time away from Jerusalem in secular occupations (*cf.* v 23). The *incense* offering was made twice daily, and the choice of the individual to make the actual offering in the holy place was fixed by casting lots. No priest was allowed the honor more than once in his lifetime, and many were never fortunate enough to be chosen at all. The priest went in by himself and made the offering, while the people waited outside in an attitude of prayer until he reappeared and dismissed them with a benediction.

- 1) **THEY LIVED UPRIGHTLY** - Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous before God.
- 2) **THEY KNEW AND APPLIED GOD'S WORD** - They walked blamelessly in the Commandments and statutes of the Lord.
- 3) **THEY WERE POWERLESS TO CHANGE THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES** - They needed a miracle to have a child.
- 4) **THEY SERVED GOD FAITHFULLY** - Zechariah was faithfully serving God in his priesthood.
- 5) **THEY HAD PRAYER SUPPORTERS** - The people outside were in prayer.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION IN SMALL THINGS

Lee Dean, Griffith, Indiana; source: espn.go.com - Players gathering for the first day of basketball practice at UCLA were full of anticipation. They wondered how their coach, John Wooden, would set the tone for the long season to come. They didn't have to wait long. Veterans knew what was coming. But first year players were no doubt perplexed by the initial lesson imparted by their Hall of Fame coach: He taught them how to put on a pair of socks. He did not teach this lesson only once, but before every game and practice. Why? Wooden discovered many players didn't properly smooth out wrinkles in the socks around their heels and little toes. If left uncorrected, these wrinkles could cause blisters that could hamper their performance at crucial times during games. Many players thought the practice odd and laughed about it then. Wooden knows some of them still laugh about it today. But the coach would not compromise on this basic fundamental principle: "I stuck to it. I believed in that, and I insisted on it." In our desire to grow as Christians, we can easily forget about the fundamentals of our faith. If we do, we run the risk of developing painful spiritual blisters that can hurt us as we run our race.

3. GOD'S PROMISES AND PURPOSES ALWAYS PREVAIL!

A) Luke 1:11-17 - *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."*

- 1) SUPERNATURAL HELP FROM HEAVEN WAS REVEALED!** – An Angel was sent with God's message and the promise of his miraculous power.
- 2) THE PRAYERS OF A GODLY MAN WERE ANSWERED!** – The angel assured Zechariah that God had heard his prayer. God is listening to our desperate cries for help!

- 3) ***THE FORERUNNER OF GOD'S GRACE WAS PROMISED!*** – The name, “John” means God is gracious. John would end up being the forerunner of Jesus Christ, the one who is the fulfillment of God's grace to us. John prepared the way for the living embodiment of grace, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 4) ***JOY AND GLADNESS WERE PROMISED!*** – The birth of John would bring great joy to his parents, because it was a miracle that they were able to conceive. Everyone around them would have rejoiced! For those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, his return will be the greatest joy any of us have ever experienced, or could ever imagine!
- 5) ***GREATNESS THROUGH SERVANT-HOOD WAS PROMISED!*** – When the angel declared that John would be great before the Lord, most did not understand that John's greatness would be in his humility and servant-hood. By today's standards, John would have been considered a failure by many. His whole mission was to prepare the way for his cousin Jesus Christ. He would die by the age of 31 with very few personal possessions, and with all of his followers following Jesus. **But in God's eyes, John was great!**
- 6) ***A CONSECRATED LIFE WAS COMMANDED!*** – John was to be committed to a Nazarite vow from the womb. He was not to drink any alcoholic beverage, as a sign of being set apart to God.
- 7) ***A HOLY SPIRIT-FILLED AND EMPOWERED LIFE WAS PROMISED!*** – John's entire life from the time he was in the womb was to be a life filled with the power and control of the Holy Spirit. John was a Spirit-filled and Spirit-controlled man all the days that he lived.
- 8) ***MANY PEOPLE TURNING BACK TO GOD WAS PROMISED!*** – John lived at a time of great national darkness. The people of Israel had become cold toward God, and full of self-righteous religion and ritual. They had not heard the prophetic Word of God for more than 400 years! They needed a radical prophet like John in order to shake them out of their dead religion, and awaken them to God's nearness!
- 9) ***THE RESTORATION OF FAMILIES AND THE DISOBEDIENT WAS PROMISED!*** – Elijah was considered to be one of the two greatest prophets in the history of Israel. He was used during a time of great national darkness as well. He called the nation of Israel to choose

between Jehovah and the false god Baal. In one of the greatest showdowns in the Bible, Elijah calls down fire from heaven, and that people turn back to the true God.

(a) Which turns the hearts of the fathers to the children,... All true national, and spiritual awakening must begin with the family. Nations are built from families, and when the family falls apart, the nation falls apart. Families start with fathers. When fathers turn their hearts toward their children, and begin to lead them and love them as they were designed to, you have the foundation for true revival.

(b) And the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. The other element of a true spiritual awakening is that people turn from the foolish ways of a wayward culture to the wisdom of those who are righteous and just. **One of the greatest evidences that our nation has gone seriously astray from God is how foolish we have become in our thinking, in our philosophies, and in our actions.**

10) A PEOPLE THAT ARE PREPARED FOR THE LORD WAS PROMISED! Before the first coming of Jesus Christ, God was faithful to send his prophet John to prepare a people for the coming of the son. Before the second coming of Christ, I am confident that God will once again speak through John the Baptist type messengers to prepare his people for the second coming of his son. His people will not be left in the dark, but will be prepared for that great and glorious day that will finally restore all of creation to God's original intention!

Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations - Just before General and President Eisenhower died, Billy Graham was invited to visit him at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. He was told he could stay thirty minutes. When he went in, the general was wearing his usual big smile, even though he knew he didn't have long to live. Later Billy Graham told what happened: "When the thirty minutes were up, he asked me to stay longer and said to me, "Billy, I want you to tell me again how can I be sure my sins were forgiven and that I am going to heaven, because nothing else matters now." "I took my New Testament and read him Scriptures. I pointed out that we are not going to heaven because of our good works, or because of money we've given to the church. We are going to heaven totally and completely on the basis of the merits of what Christ did on the cross. Therefore he could rest in the comfort that Jesus paid it all! "After prayer, Ike said,

“Thank you I’m ready!””

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