

TUESDAY NIGHT AT THE CRESCENT

"THE HERALD"

A study of the life and witness of John the Baptist

TUESDAY, MAY 8th, 1990

Subject: "Home, where life makes up its mind"

Reading: Luke 1: 1-25; 38-45; 57-79

1. The dawn approaches. When God begins to work with people he often begins with their parents. Zacharias and Elizabeth were:
 - (a) A priestly family (1: 5).
 - (b) They were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (verse 6).
2. It all started with disbelief:
 - (a) Zacharias's prayer life was inconsistent.
 - (b) Zacharias refused to believe the angel's word on grounds that would deny the very basis of the gospel in its entirety. If God could not restore the processes of nature in Elizabeth's body what hope was there that creation should ever be delivered from its bondage or that Christ would ever be raised from the dead?
3. Zacharias was struck dumb. Why?:
 - (a) Because he couldn't accept the truth of divine intervention he had lost faith in the basic principle of redemption. This meant it was better that he did not pretend to bless the people.
 - (b) Israel's religion was concerned with far more than correct morality and ceremony. Israel's prophets and priesthood and indeed its very existence were meant to stand as a testimony to God's redemptive intervention in nature and world affairs (Exodus 19: 4-6; Exodus 13: 11-16; Numbers 3: 1-13). Zacharias was not witnessing to Israel's very reason for existence.
4. Notice that the focus of the story during Zacharias's dumbness concentrates on his relatives and neighbours (verse 57-66):
 - (a) It was not simply the birth that impressed Zacharias's neighbours and friends. It was the fact that if what Zacharias was saying were true then they were standing on the verge of the Messianic age.
 - (b) What motivation Zacharias had in naming his son has huge implications for us too. If it was merely paternal pride or a glorification of his son and mere fantasising we are in trouble.
5. Zacharias prophecy (1: 68-75):
 - (a) Notice that the first 8 verses go without mentioning his son. Then 2 verses concentrate on John. The last 2 verses revert once more to something else. The proportion is very healthy.
 - (b) John was already, in Zacharias's view, outshone by the rising son (1: 78). It would mean redemption (verse 68), salvation (verse 69) and deliverance from servitude and freedom to serve God (verse 74-75), forgiveness, peace and freedom from fear of death (verse 77-79).
 - (c) John's work would be serious; the Lord's way must be prepared. (verse 76-79).
 - (d) Zacharias's faith recovered and triumphed before the Messiah came; may ours do the same!

"The morning star is the fittest emblem that Nature can supply of the herald who proclaimed the rising of the Son of Righteousness. Every sign attests the unique and singular glory of the Baptist."

F. B. Meyer