

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
III. The Divine Introduction Of Christ's Forerunner
(Luke 1:5-25)

I. Introduction

- A. Isaiah 40:3-4 had prophesied about a voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord, and Malachi 4:5-6 had predicted that God would send the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord, with both prophesies dealing with the coming of Christ's forerunner, John. (Matthew 3:3 with 17:9-13)
- B. Luke 1:5-25 thus documented God's miraculous introduction of John's arrival in validating him to be Christ's forerunner, so we view the passage for our insight, application, and edification:

II. The Divine Introduction Of Christ's Forerunner, Luke 1:5-25.

- A. If Jesus was God's actual, promised Messiah, His forerunner who was predicted to come in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 4:5-6 would need to be certified as being God's true forerunner in events involving his arrival.
- B. God thus introduced Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, by a series of unusual and miraculous events:
 - 1. John's father was named Zechariah, "the Lord remembers," and his mother was named Elisabeth, "the oath or covenant of God," the combination of their names meaning "the Lord remembers His covenant," Luke 1:5. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 40) The very combination of the names of the couple who were together used of God in the begetting, conceiving and bearing of Messiah's forerunner signified God's work to recall His promises to send Messiah's forerunner, Ibid.
 - 2. The couple were both of the Aaronic priestly line, they were living uprightly before God, but they were childless and advanced in age, so they had spent long years praying for God's merciful provision of a child from the Lord (Luke 1:13a; 24-25), setting the stage for God's miraculous conception of John, Luke 1:6-7.
 - 3. Zechariah belonged to the 8th course of Abijah in the 24 courses of priests that David had appointed to take turns in the temple ministries (Luke 1:5b; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Lk. 1:5 with 1 Chr. 24:1-19), and at his late stage in life, Zechariah was chosen by lot to offer incense on the altar of incense that stood just outside the veil to the Holiest of Holies, Luke 1:8-9. A priest was allowed to offer up incense there once in his lifetime (Ibid., fn. to Luke 1:9), so the fact that God used lots in Israel to signal His sovereign will (cf. Prov. 16:33) show the timing and opportunity for Zachariah to minister at this altar was of God!
 - 4. While Zechariah was involved in this special ministry, an angel appeared to him standing to the right of the altar of incense, Luke 1:9-11. Hebrew tradition held that the angel **Gabriel** stood to the *left* of that altar while **God** stood to its *right* (Ibid., Pentecost, p. 41), so Zechariah thought he saw God Himself and was terrified, recalling God had told Moses that no man could see Him and live, Exodus 33:20; Ibid.! The angel told Zechariah *me phobou*, "stop being afraid for your benefit," *phobou* being the **present middle imperative of phobeo**, "fear," U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 199; The Analy. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 428. This appearance of the angel at this spot at this time showed that he was an angel of God. (Luke 1:12-13a)
 - 5. The angel spoke of the supernatural birth of John and his naming to elderly Zechariah and Elisabeth, of John's calling to be the Messiah's forerunner as foretold in Malachi 4:5-6 and Isaiah 40:3, of his being a lifelong Nazarite and filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, and of the impact of his arrival, events validated by Old Testament prophecy and indicating God's power in John's ministry, Lk. 1:13b-17.
 - 6. When Zechariah doubted the angel's prediction that he and his wife in old age would have a child, the angel revealed that his name was Gabriel, that he stood in God's presence, so, to punish Zechariah for his unbelief and yet provide more divine sanction of the arrival of Messiah's forerunner, Gabriel predicted that Zechariah would be unable to speak until the day his predictions were fulfilled, Luke 1:18-20.
 - 7. Thus, Zechariah was unable to speak even as he left the temple, what indicated to the crowd of worshipers outside that something miraculous had occurred in Zechariah's ministry in the temple, Luke 1:21-22.
 - 8. Finally, the word of the angel Gabriel was miraculously fulfilled when the elderly Zechariah returned home and his elderly wife Elisabeth was blessed to conceive the forerunner of the Messiah, Luke 1:23-25.

Lesson: *God used multiple circumstances and miracles to verify the fact that the conception, birth and ministry of John the Baptist was validated to be of God, that the Lord had indeed sent John as the Messiah's forerunner.*

Application: *(1) If God has clearly, repeatedly indicated His validation of a matter of concern to us through circumstantial signals that align with Scripture, may we believe His Word and follow His guidance. (2) If God has clearly, wonderfully revealed His leading, may we also greatly rejoice in His revelation as we live for the Lord.*