

THE MIRACULOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE TO TWO COUSINS

LUKE 1:5-25; 26-33; MATTHEW 1:18-25

Introduction

In this second message in connection with Emmanuel, I want to look at the lives of two cousins that are “key players” in the life of Jesus; Elizabeth and Mary. While the true nature of their relationship is unknown, we will take the KJV’s translation for this passage of Mary and Elizabeth being “cousins” (v. 36). The word in general means “blood relative, a fellow countryman, cousin or kin” and is translated as “his own kin”, “cousin”, “kinfolk”, or “kinsmen.” However, only a few of the translators use the word “cousin.” The majority of the translations use the word “relative.” We don’t really know what their true relationship was and the text gives the impression that Elizabeth was much older than Mary; “Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age;” (Luke 1:36).

However, they have more in common than just being relatives. Both would receive an announcement that they were going to be expecting. They would have extraordinary pregnancies and both would honor God.

John the Baptists Birth Announcement - Luke 1:5-25

Luke spends no time in identifying some main components of the family which John would be born into.

- His father Zacharias was a priest assigned to the Temple in Jerusalem and his mother Elizabeth, was of the priestly line of Aaron.
- They were “*both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*”
- Zacharias and Elizabeth were “*both well advanced in years*” and Elizabeth was barren and they have been praying for a child. (v.13)

The condition is set and now the miraculous announcement can be made. Zacharias is serving in the Temple before the Altar of Incense. An angel of the Lord appears before him and gives him the good news.

13But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15For he will be great in the

sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17He will also 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 a people prepared for the Lord."

What great news the angel Gabriel brings.

Their prayers have been heard and now will be answered.

God is taking the responsibility of naming the child John.

There will be joy and gladness in their house and others would join in the celebration.

Before he is born, his life is set before them:

He will be great in the sight of the Lord

He will not drink either wine or strong drink

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb

He will have an impact on the nation Israel

He will have the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the nation Israel back to God

He will be the forerunner for God's purpose.

Zacharias is confused as he and Elizabeth are "*well advanced in years.*" He wants to know how this will come to pass. He will be mute until the child is born because he did not believe Gabriel's words. Can you imagine becoming mute for at least nine months?

Elizabeth conceives and went into hiding for five months. She ponders her situation and declares, "*Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.*" (v. 25)

Christ's Birth Announcement – Luke 1:26-33; Luke 1:18-25

26Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Elizabeth is in her “sixth month” of her pregnancy when the same angel, Gabriel is dispatched by God to inform Mary of her soon to be pregnancy. We find out that Mary is engaged to Joseph and she is a virgin.

Like John, Jesus life is already laid out before him:

Her child will be a Son

God takes the responsibility of naming the child Jesus

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest

He will rule the throne of His father David

And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever

His kingdom there will be no end.”

Like the announcement of the birth of John, the announcement of the birth of Jesus is met with questions; “*How can this be, since I do not know a man?*”. However, unlike Zacharias, Mary is not struck with being mute.

Mary’s question is met with more promises:

Jesus father will be the Holy Spirit

He will be called the Son of God

She is informed of the miracle that Elizabeth is with child in her sixth month as she was barren.

Mary responds, “*Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.*”

John acknowledges Jesus

Matthew 1:39-45

Mary visits the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth. When Mary enters the house, John, while in the womb, hears Mary’s voice, and leaps in her womb. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit of God and acknowledges Mary:

Matthew 1:42-45 “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44For indeed, as soon as the

voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Mary stays with Elizabeth until John is born and then returns to her house, now being six months along in her pregnancy.

I wonder what their conversations must have been like.

Conclusion

So what can we take away from this story during this Christmas season?

1. Neither one of these pregnancies should have happened. Elizabeth was well advanced in years and barren. Mary was a young virgin betrothed to a man.
2. God thought it important enough to announce both of these births by an angel named Gabriel.
3. Zacharias and Elizabeth were *“both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”* God found them worthy to include in His plans.
4. Mary was *“highly favored”* by God. He found her worthy to include in His plans for the birth of the Savior of the World.
5. Both of the women praised God that He would find them worthy:
 - a. Elizabeth; *““Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”* (v. 25)
 - b. Mary; *“Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”*
6. God is in the miracle business, then and now. Zacharias and Elizabeth had been praying for a child for so many years that she had become barren. Mary was a young girl that would become pregnant with the King of Kings while not knowing a man.

During this 2015 holiday season, may we all rest in the assurance that God has a plan that began before the creation. That plan would include a young virgin to carry and deliver the Savior of the World.

O come let us adore Him

O come let us adore Him

O come let us adore Him

Christ, the LORD.

Bob Crowder