

Christ our High Priest Luke 1:1-10

Luke 1:1-10 “1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. 5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah,[a] 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.””

1. “1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.”
 - a. Luke has undertaken something that MANY have undertaken. EYE Witnesses.
 - b. It seemed good to him, why? Because he has followed ALL THINGS closely for “sometime past” that is, a LONG TIME. HE is an expert. A researcher.
 - c. So far there would have been Mark written and in circulation and even Matthew in circulation and we know that there was a text now lost to us that was a common reference source written by an unknown author – a text that scholars simply refer to as “Q” and perhaps many more scraps and sayings and short stories that may have been shorter than Mark that are now lost to history, and we know that because when he uses the word “many”.
 - d. Likely, Luke saw something INCOMPLETE in the works that were floating around.
 - i. 35% of the book is unique to Luke.
 1. It gives details of Jesus’ infancy found in no other Gospel:

2. the census of Caesar Augustus,
 3. the journey to Bethlehem, Jesus' birth,
 4. the adoration of the shepherds,
 5. Jesus' circumcision, the words of Simeon
 6. Jesus at age 12 in the temple talking with the doctors of the law.
 7. It also is the only Gospel to give an account of the Ascension.
 8. Parables that are only found here include the Good Samaritan and the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus
- ii. As interesting as this is, at the end of the day, Holy Spirit prompted him to write this. **2 Peter 1:20-21** "20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."
- e. What do we know about the Author, Luke.
 - i. Luke was either a Greek gentile or a Hellenic Jew, meaning a Jew who was culturally Greek. He was from the city of Antioch in Syria, but that city spoke Greek – and Luke makes good on this background by using some very advanced Greek, so Greek students beware. This was a Greek man writing to another Greek man – and you can tell he has no problem addressing things about the life of Jesus that would have been taboo for a Jewish person to approach.
 - ii. He was a doctor. It is important because the story of Jesus testifies to miracles that are essentially medical miracles. These are not miracles of an old testament nature – fire from the sky, parting of the red sea, sun standing still and the like – these are miracles of the medical world and stand to benefit from a medical witness who can testify from a the standpoint of a medical professional.
 - f. Who is this Theophilus? The name means Lover of God, or beloved of God – but it seems no one really knows who he was. Some traditions have him as a leading Jew in Alexandria, some that he was a Roman official, and other theories.
 - g. The purpose is, so that he might have “certainty in the things that he had been taught” – had he doubted? Then this was written so that he might BELIEVE, and really, so that we might believe.

2. V 5 “5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah,[a] of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.”
- a. When we are introduced to Zechariah, whose name meant “God remembers” and his wife, whose name meant “My God is an oath” or promise, or “My God is abundance.”
 - b. As a priest, he would have been from a very special lineage. It would mean that he was from the tribe of Levi. Beyond that, it would mean that he was a direct descendant of Aaron, the older brother of Moses, who served as the first high priest of Israel. ALL priests were from this family.
 - c. It is noted that not only he, was a descendant of Aaron, but also his WIFE. This is noted probably to show how exclusive the privileges were for this couple. Her FATHER would have been a priest. Priest were forbidden to marry Gentiles, so in case you were wondering, she was not just a Jew, she was a direct descendant of Aaron, like her husband.
 - d. But What does it mean to be a priest?
 - i. Because “priest” that may need some explanation. The idea of a priest in the Bible times has nothing to do with a modern-day Christian understanding common in America.
 - ii. This word priest as is different from the mid-evil understanding of a Catholic priest.
 - e. In the old testament, a priest functioned as a mediator **go-between** for common average everyday people and God’s requirements in worship. Worship was something came with outward ceremonies only certain individuals were qualified to do. Worship required a priest to perform the rituals and the sacrifice.
 - f. We know now that these commands and laws had to foreshadow the roll that the Messiah would play as a go-between for God on behalf of humankind.
 - g. Why does it mention that he was of the division of Abijah? This authenticates this man as a legitimate priest. You didn’t go to school to earn a degree so that you can get credentialed to be a priest. You didn’t feel a call of God on your life through the Holy Spirit to be a priest. What qualifies you to be a priest is to be a man from the right family.
 - h. King David had divided the priests into rotating cycles of 24 divisions. Divisions of what? The decedents of Aaron! Aaron had 4 sons, the older two

died and the younger two had sons, Eleazar and Ithamar and ALL of the priest descended from these two men. 1 Chronicles 24:7-9.

- i. What would Zachariah's service looked like?
 - i. Zachariah was serving as a decedent of the men of Abijah, the eight division, some 1000 years later.
 - ii. Zachariah would have been consecrated as a priest in the old testament – according to the Bible, in Numbers 3:30, Zachariah would have been consecrated at the age of 30. According to Lev 8, he would have had to bring a bull and two sheep to sacrifice and unleavened bread – a symbol of purity – and oil so that he could be anointed with that oil in a symbol of the Holy Spirit's empowering presence in his ministry.
 - iii. What was the point of all this? It was a foreshadowing of the Christ the Messiah because what age did HE take on the mantle of his ministry? 30. How was he anointed for ministry at his baptism? With the presence of the Holy Spirit.

3. "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."

- a. They were BOTH righteous AND blameless in ALL the commandments of the old testament law? Is that possible? No. No one can keep the law perfectly. **Acts 15:10** "Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"
- b. What does it mean then? It means that as much as it was reasonably possible to keep the commands, they kept them. These were some VERY upstanding citizens and would have been venerated and respected in their community. Pretty awesome, right? They had it all. Not only were they were born with privilege and they lived up to it.
- c. BUT...there is a plot twist: Elizabeth was BARREN. This was in a day and age without American distraction from media, a day before modern opportunities that now exist for men and women that are not parents, a day before modern intervention that might at least give and explanation medically as to why and give some comfort that it is not a curse from God or something you did wrong. It would be your identity and it would be your curse.

- d. Elizabeth and Zachariah had the pressure of being of class of individuals whose proud heritage DEPENDED on having sons. The very worship of the LORD depended on them having decedents that would carry on the duties of the priest hood.
 - e. They had reason to Hope: there are at least three stories in the Bible of women that suffered from being barren. Sarah, of Rachel, and of Hannah, so there was reason to hope, but sometimes Hope is almost more painful than giving up hope. Probably, hope was gone and the suffering had been put in its place on the shelf with all the rest of life's disappointments, probably as life's greatest disappointments.
 - f. Now, they were both advanced in years and it was too late. There was no reason to believe that Zachariah was as important as Abraham and Elizabeth was important as Sarah and that their would-be child was as important as Isaac.
4. "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."
- a. We are told in the Bible that each division of the priests served one week out of the year, and then ALL of the priests were on duty during the feasts of the Lord, those high holy days,
 - b. Just because your division was on duty, didn't mean that YOU personally would be going into the temple ITSELF, into the Holy Place with the menorah, and the show bread, and etc..... you had to be chosen by GOD for that duty. How was he chosen by God? He was chosen by God by the casting of lots.
 - c. Casting lots is thought to have been the throwing sticks or stones with markings into the lap of the one casting. The scriptures taught that it was through this way that the will of God was obtained, **Proverbs 16:33** "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." This was used, not for personal matters but for religious and national matters, and here for deciding who was actually going to go into the Temple to perform the worship ceremony.
 - d. Within the Temple there was the Menorah, the show bread, and the alter of incense. We don't have time to go into these in detail and that would go

beyond this scope of the sermon, but let's look at these three things and what they stand for.

- i. The menorah was a symbol of Christ as the light of the world – it was the only light source of the temple and was made of seven lamps made from a single piece of pure gold. I didn't use candles, but oil, pure oil that represents the Holy Spirit.
- ii. Next was the table of 12 loaves of show bread that would be set out for seven days and was then eaten by the priests.
 1. It was said that these twelve loaves, not only would **not** go bad over the seven days, but would also feed all of the priests.
 2. This is also symbolic of the person and work of Christ. He went to great lengths to demonstrate that he was the bread of life **John 6:35** that comes down out of heaven – He would also tangibly demonstrate this by dividing the loaves and have them take up 12 baskets of leftovers and then 7 baskets.
- iii. But it was the altar of incense that is written about here, which is what Zechariah was given to do when he was in the temple during this cycle of temple service.
 1. This altar was a square, 18 inches on each side, made of wood, but covered with gold. It was at the furthest reaches of the inside of the temple area known as the Holy Place and it sat right in front of the veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies which was where the arch of the covenant resided with the mercy seat and the presence of God – a place only approachable by the high priest once a year.
 2. Twice a day the priests would approach the outside of this room to burn incense before God.
 - a. The priests would take coals from the bronze altar (from the fire that was never supposed to go out) – from the morning and afternoon sacrifices and would use this to burn the incense on the Altar of Incense. This is thought to represent the prayers of the saints and was given during the time of afternoon prayers during the morning and afternoon sacrifices.
 - b. This is why we see in verse 10 that all of the people were outside “at the hour of prayer” – it was a holy convocation –

you were not required to be there but people attended every day to offer various sacrifices and to plead before God.

c. While this was burning, this was the time that the priest would take the opportunity to maintain the menorah – the golden lampstand – He would trim the wicks and fill it up with oil...isn't interesting that the oil, which represented the Holy Spirit, that this was filled during the hour of prayer, when the prayers of the people of God rose like the smoke of incense during the time of prayer.

3. We see this referenced in the book of **Revelation in 8:1-4** "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. 3 And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, 4 and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel."

Application

1. When we look at the consecration and the operations of the priest, what are we to do with that? If that is a symbolic testimony of the ministry of Christ, what that does that mean for us?
 - a. It means the SAME THING. Whatever it means for Christ, it also means for us. WE are the priests now,
 - i. We are to be like our master
 - ii. We have unity with Christ John 17
 - iii. We are a royal priesthood **1 Peter 2:9** 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.'
 - iv. That means when, for thousands of years these men were carrying out the ministry of sacrifice, they were prophesying about YOU.

1. They were proclaiming about a time when a generation of New Covenant believers would be anointed, not just with oil, but with the Holy Spirit.
 2. They would have a new heart (Jeremiah 31) they would die to themselves and would live as a living sacrifice (Romans 12) and they would have a ministry of reconciliation.
- b. What do we do? Everything a priest does. Which is what?
2. We offer a) sacrifices of praise, b) we are anointed by the Holy Spirit and carry His presence, we c) Shine the light of the Gospel (menorah), we have a ministry of reconciliation and WE are the go between through prayer (incense), and through the Gospel.
- a. We offer sacrifices of praise – we offer a sacrifice of our time, our talents, our efforts, and really our LIFE – Romans 12
 - b. Anointed by the Holy Spirit
 - i. We are filled with the Holy Spirit and give light to the world just as the Menorah illuminated the Holy place.
 - ii. We bring the bread of the presence to the world whenever we share Christ with the world as one who said, “I am the bread of heaven.”
 - c. Intercession
 - i. Finally, we offer prayers to God as a sacrifice of praise, and just as the priest Zachariah would have lit that incense with the coals of from the alter, when we give our sacrifice of the prayer.
 - ii. YOU are a priest now. It does not matter if you are Jewish, or gentile, or if you are a man or a woman, you are now a priest, so fulfill your ministry. Fulfill your calling as a priest. Zachariah was perhaps one out of millions that was called, from the tribe of Levi, from the house of Aaron, the division of Abijah, and then selected by lot to go in and fulfil this calling, but so are you called out, one in millions who have NOT yet been called.
 - iii. So what do we do? It all sounds good, but what is the specific exhortation? It is time, if you have not yet begun to fill your ministry, to put your life on the alter, and watch it burn – let the fire of God burn away all the things that have nothing to do with His will for your life and then to have nothing left but the glowing coals of the alter.

- d. Ministry as a mediator – this everything combined – this is being a go-between between God and mankind. Not in addition to Christ, but an extension of Christ’s ministry.
- i. We started with being a go between – are we a go between? Every time you live for God and you are a living Sacrifice on the alter, every are filled with the Holy Spirit (menorah, show bread), every time you pray for someone you are interceding on the behalf of someone else (like the incense on the alter),. We have a MINISTRY of RECONCILIATION
 1. **2 Cor 5:18-19** “18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling[b] the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.”
 - ii. This means that we die to self, live for others, as we ... SHARE THE GOSPLE. One of the things that I learned in 1 Peter 3 was that our suffering brings is used by God as a testimony to bring people to salvation **1 Peter 3:18** “For Christ also suffered[b] once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”
 1. So when you stand up for what is right and suffer for it, as Christ did, and act as a living sacrifice, God uses that to bring the atonement home that person. You are just like the priest in a sense, acting as a go between for the people. Your suffering is the lamb on the alter, like Christ on the cross...some of us may even go literally to a death like that.