

(1) Announcement of Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25)

1. King Herod reigned from 37-4BC.
 - a. Born in the late 70's BC into an aristocratic Idumean (Edomite) family that had converted to Judaism in the reign of John Hyrcanus I.
 - b. Herod's father, Antipater, was advisor to Hyrcanus II. Both Antipater and Herod became loyal servants of Rome and were rewarded accordingly.
 - 1) Herod was nominated King of Judea by Mark Antony in 37 BC. Octavius presented Herod to the Roman Senate and the Senate appointed Herod unanimously as King of the Jews.
 - 2) Hated by Cleopatra, and had many land disputes with Egypt.
 - 3) Appointment confirmed by Octavius (Augustus) in 30 BC.
 - c. Married into the Jewish Hasmonean (high priest & ruling) dynasty, but was never accepted by the Jewish people.
2. Zacharias & Elizabeth are described with notable terms (Lk. 1:5-7).
 - a. Zacharias was of the priestly division of Abijah. This division was the 8th division of the 24 that David organized.
 - b. Elizabeth was also of the priestly line of Aaron.
 - c. They are described as righteous (δικαιος dikaios #1342_{79x}) and blameless (ἄμεμπτος amemptos #273_{5x}). Only Noah is described elsewhere in such terms (Gen. 6:9).
 - d. Elizabeth's barrenness and the miraculous baby are reminiscent of Sarah & Rebekah.
3. Gabriel appears to Zacharias as a response to his prayers (Lk. 1:11-17).
 - a. A son born by means of a miracle and named by the commandment of God (v.13).
 - b. A son born with a specific purpose in the Grace Eternal Plan of the Ages (vv.15-17; Mal. 4:5,6).
 - 1) The 1st Advent Forerunner (cf. Matt. 17:10-13).
 - 2) In the spirit and power of Elijah. Not the literal Elijah returned to announce 2nd Advent (Mal. 3:1-4).
 - c. John the Baptist would operate under a life-long Nazirite vow, and be blessed with the life-long indwelling of God the Holy Spirit—even before his personal salvation (v.15; cf. Num. 6:1-21). He is described as the greatest Old Testament saint (Matt. 11:11).