

## ***“Paul’s First Letter to Timothy — Prisoners of Hope — Part 4”***

***Last Time: “‘Prisoners of Hope’, Part 3 (Esther), and Today, Part 4, Elizabeth and Zachariah.***

- ***The hope of women. Paul, in 1 Tim. 2:15, takes us back to Genesis chapter 3:***

***Gen. 3:15-17***

***15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.***

***16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.***

- ***My! That any blessings could ever come from such an act of rebellion against Almighty God is actually quite astounding. And that such blessings in addition would even outweigh the effects of the curse as God saw it and as his chosen plan dictated should totally amaze us. But the entire Bible gives clear testimony of that as we have now seen so clearly revealed.***

***Then, that the judgment put upon women that day in the garden would be turned into blessing IF “they”, that is, the children, grow and prosper under the living and tender and heart-felt and spiritual care of their mothers — that is Paul’s teaching here in 1 Thessalonians. That is God’s promise to women and that is the basis for their “salvation” or “deliverance” from the effects of the judgment given to Eve and all that follow her. For she is “the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).***

***Today we continue our study on “Prisoners of Hope”, Part 4.***

### ***Review:***

- ***God Used Women to Promote His Working Through the Promised Seed***

***What does the Word of God say about this? Well, the genealogy outlines God’s work down through many generations.***

- ***We saw how David’s great-great-grandfather was Salmon and his great-great-grandmother was Rahab (you remember her well, right); his great-grandfather was Boaz and his great-grandmother was Ruth!! The Promise concerning the Seed of the Woman takes center***

*stage here in God's word and in the genealogies it is very evident indeed.*

- *Later, Hanna and her son Samuel take center stage. They provide the connecting link in sacred history between Rahab / Ruth and King David as we have seen in our study on "The Long War Against God".*
- *I can never forget Hannah's "song of praise and thanksgiving" at the birth of Samuel, her long expected son. God had provided a son after many years of barrenness leading Hannah to proclaim in song what goes down in history as one of the greatest testimonies of God's sovereign and eternal purpose ever spoken. It is matched only by Mary's as found in the gospel of Luke as we will see in our next study here. The two are quite similar:*

**1 Sam. 2:8-10**

**8 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, [and] lifteth up the beggar from the dunhill, to set [them] among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth [are] the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them.**

**9 He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.**

**10 The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.**

- *Studying scripture further, we come a number of centuries later to a time when the wife of the high priest, Jehosheba, has opportunity to demonstrate her hope in the unseen as she was tested against all odds. This was in the days of a prophet named Zechariah, whom Christ mentioned in his earthly teaching. The Long War Against God had reached the point where even the Royal Line to Messiah had been breached nearly to the breaking point*
- *So, first the Royal Line was delivered, and then, through Esther, even the Nation itself:*
- *God Used Even Unbelievers to Further His Redemptive Plan (in this case a Gentile king named Ahasuerus).*

- *Now for the rest of this This is illustrated so well here in the pages of sacred history with Mordecai and his young orphan niece Esther on the very center stage:*
- *As we have seen, God used a heathen king (again) to accomplish his purpose. Here were laid down the very foundations for ensuring the fulfillment of the promise concerning the Seed of the Woman and God's plan of redemption.*
- *God Chose Mordecai & Esther to Save the National and Royal Line: Satan's Plot to destroy Mordecai and all the Jews Through evil Haman Is Revealed to Mordecai and he Reveals the Plot to Esther, Commanding Her to Ask Mercy of the King. He also Reveals That She May Die But That It Would Be The High Calling of Her Life to So Sacrifice Herself for Her People. These words from that occasion are so memorable:*

***Est. 4:13-14***

***13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.***

***14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, [then] shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for [such] a time as this? [such confidence in Almighty God's promise especially regarding the seed of the woman.]***

***...***

***Est. 4:16 Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which [is] not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.***

- *At Haman's Personal Request of the king, Haman asks his favor, that a Special Display of Great Honor Is Prepared for The One To Be Honored As Greatest. He Believes This to be Himself! He himself has set up to occasion of his own destruction.*
- *But God Reigns Supreme Protecting His Ongoing Promises Regarding Israel and he uses Mordecai and Esther to accomplish this. Esther takes the great risk of entering the King's presence without having been requested and is granted mercy by the King and, most importantly, she is Granted Her Request to Preserve the Life of the Jews When She Reveals*

**that She Herself was a Jew. Haman, the Jew's mortal enemy, is Condemned to Death for His Treachery and Is Hung. In all of this the hand of God in guiding Esther's interactions with the King are at the forefront of the story.**

- ***But the King's Command Could Not Be Revoked, though Mordecai, having been exalted to position #2 in the kingdom Is Given Authority to Proclaim that All Jews in the Kingdom be Allowed by Royal Command to Defend Themselves Against the Executioners. AND THEY DO, WITH THE LORD GOD'S POWER AND STRENGTH WITH THEM.***
- ***God Uses the Humble and the Weak to Bring to Nothing the Mighty. The Jews Defend Themselves Victoriously, Haman's Son's Are All Executed, and Purim is Instituted, 2 Days of Celebration Every Year, in Remembrance of this great salvation of God's people. And, Mordecai is Placed as Second Command, Permanently!***
- ***God's Work in Support of His Promises Is Glorious Indeed! But There is often even more to the story, it seems. If only we could open the curtain on history even further to see it. But much is masked in scripture and sometimes only hints are given. That is so in this case. For it seems that Cyrus, mentioned a number of times in prophecy, is the son of Ahasuerus and Esther!!***
- ***Cyrus and the return to the promised land is the rest of the story:***

***Ezra 1:1-2***

***1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and [put it] also in writing, saying,***

***2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which [is] in Judah. See also Is. 44:28 and Is. 45:1-5.***

- ***So the new King of Persia is actually a Jew having Esther as his mother and Mordecai as his chief tutor, you can be sure! God has used women in such a remarkable way indeed. "... she shall be saved in childbearing ...". SAVED BY HOPE INDEED:***

**Rom. 8:24-25**

24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?

25 But if we hope for that we see not, [then] do we with patience wait for [it].

**Our Outline Today:**

- ***Elizabeth (and Zechariah): Weak Ones — Chosen to Prepare the Way***
- ***Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Appointed Time — Marked by an Angelic Visit***
- ***Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Angelic Visit — Prophetic Indeed***
- ***Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Angelic Visitor Identified — the Archangel Gabriel***
- ***Elizabeth (and Zechariah) - The Prophecy & Its Fulfillment — Foreshadowed with Elizabeth's Conception***
- ***Mary and Joseph: The Lord's Handmaid, Mary and Her Husband***

**I. Elizabeth (and Zechariah): Weak Ones — Chosen to Prepare the Way:**

- ***There had been a 400 year silence in the prophetic message to God's chosen people since the prophet Malachi had written his final and prophetic words closing the Old Testament. But now, at the appointed time, the archangel Gabriel appears to a priest serving in the temple in Jerusalem. There are 24 "courses" in the Temple Service, all led by a member of the tribe of Levi, and, in fact, of Aaron's ancestral line. See Ex. 32; Num. 3; and 1 Chron. 24.***

**[READ ] Luke 1:5-7**

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia [*the Eighth Course*]: and his wife [was] of the daughters of Aaron, and her name [was] Elisabeth.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were [now] well stricken in years.

- ***Who was Zechariah and who was Elisabeth, his wife? Verses 5 & 6 give us the important details. BUT GOD HAD NOT PROVIDED THE SON OF THEIR HOPES! AND, ACCORDING TO VERSE 7 THEY WERE BOTH "STRICKEN IN YEARS". So, humanly speaking, they had no hope at all of a son. BUT THEY STILL PRAYED FOR A SON, AS WE SHALL SEE ... AMAZING! Perhaps their hope was in the palm of the promises given through Malachi...***

**[READ ] Mal. 4:5-6**

**5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:**

**6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.**

- *I am thinking that Zechariah and Elizabeth may well have been expectantly awaiting the fulfillment of this prophecy, the last one given in the Old Testament, it seems.*

**II. Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Appointed Time — Marked by an Angelic Visit:**

**[READ ] Luke 1:8-11**

**8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,**

**9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.**

**10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.**

**11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.**

- *Gabriel, one of two named angels in the Bible, is the central focus here. See also other references beyond the account of Luke here in the Old Testament in Dan. 8:16 and 9:21. He specifically brings understanding of prophetic events and the hidden working of God for his people Israel. Without help from the Lord, mankind cannot know the secret things of God. Amen!*

**III. Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Angelic Visit — Prophetic Indeed:**

**[READ ] Luke 1:12-18**

**12 And when Zacharias saw [him], he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.**

**13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.**

**14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.**

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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.

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. *[See Is. 40 & Lk. 3 for the Old Testament prophetic references here.]*

- *Zechariah's response is as anyone's would be, fear! Such comfort here though, provided in such a overwhelmingly powerful way! "Fear not, Zechariah". His personal name was used. So often when God intersected with men and women he used there personal and given names!*
- *"For thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John": The reference is to Mal. 4 as we have seen. For John was to be the long awaited one who would again begin to fulfill the prophecies concerning God's redemptive plan. He would fulfill prophecy and would in addition be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth!! Who else was such?*
- *There is a reference here to Messianic deliverance and we saw that also in the Esther revelation. But satan's upcoming work to destroy the plan of God would be fully underway soon as we shall see. The fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the Seed of the Woman must be defeated by satan at any cost!*

#### **IV. Elizabeth (and Zechariah): The Angelic Visitor Identified — the Archangel Gabriel:**

- *But Zechariah doubted the angel's word and there would be consequences...*

***[READ ] Luke 1:19-22***

19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

- *Zechariah would be struck with dumbness as a result of his unbelief of Gabriel's promise. Gabriel identifies himself here by name. What a wonderful thing indeed, but the judgment would fall as promised here. He would be dumb until the prophecy concerning the son would be fulfilled including the detail of the giving of the name "John". See Lk. 1:63 & 64 for this:*

*Lk. 1:63-64*

*63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.*

*64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue [loosed], and he spake, and praised God.*

- *This leads me to ask this question: What are the consequences of rejecting the word of the living God today? Are there none since we live under grace and not under law??*

**V. Elizabeth (and Zechariah) - The Prophecy & Its Fulfillment —  
Foreshadowed with Elizabeth's Conception:**

**[READ ] Luke 1:23-25**

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

**25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on [me],  
to take away my reproach among men.**

- *So soon after arriving home after his term of service had ended, Elizabeth conceived a child as had been prophesied by the angel Gabriel.*
- *"... to take away my reproach among men": These words must refer back to Gen. 3:15-16 and all that followed after that. What was the hope of women? Surely far more than the bearing of male children as many might have supposed. In this particular case it would not be for "the seed of the woman" directly but for another who would*



***be used to administer the saving power of the Lord to an entire nation of those expectantly awaiting their Messiah. “Saved through childbearing if ...”, yes and AMEN!***

- ***How does this develop? We now skip forward to chapter 7 for that:***

***Luke 7:26-28***

***26 But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet.***

***27 This is [he], of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.***

***28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.***

- ***So we must conclude that John was the greatest prophet, should we not? I wonder what Elizabeth was thinking when her husband revealed all of this to her in writing, since he could not speak, having been judged for his unbelief of Gabriel's message. Did she at that time believe that she would be so central in the working out of the Seed of the Woman prophecy for the accomplishment of the Redemptive Plan of Almighty God?***

## **VI. Mary and Joseph: The Lord's Handmaid, Mary and Her Husband**

***[READ ] Luke 1:26-38***

***26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,***

***27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name [was] Mary.***

***28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, [thou that art] highly favoured, the Lord [is] with thee: blessed [art] thou among women.***

- ***More next time, Lord willing. But for now let's leave our study today with these thoughts:***

## **Conclusions and Application:**

- ***Note that again it was Gabriel and again the message was personal to her by name with the words “fear not”. But, significantly, this time it was not a message to her husband but was given to Mary herself. Joseph would also be visited by an angel (in a dream in this case though) as Matt. 1:18-24 indicates. But here it is Gabriel revealing himself and his message directly***

***to Mary! So special indeed this is. Joseph was not the natural father of our Lord Jesus as Lk. 1:35 indicates, so perhaps this is very appropriate.***

- ***Patience. The patience of the Lord. God's people have always needed that and sometimes they needed it for many hundreds of year not seeing his hand of blessing upon them much at all. We saw that in regard to Israel in bondage in Egypt (and Moses was born and elevated to royal heights in due time taught by his mother), through Rahab, Ruth, Hanna, Jehosheba, Esther, and now Mary. Yes, their husbands were very important indeed. But they, and the "handmaids" of the Lord, were on center stage indeed in this heavenly work of God on this earth.***
- ***Note that for Zechariah and Elizabeth, all in life was "of the Lord"! They were godly indeed, were they not. So expectant and so patient.***
- ***Are we? Do we wait on the Lord to see what he will do?***