

God's Divine Hand

Before we read these precious words of our text today, I'd like to ask you if you believe in the "supernatural", truly believe? That is an important question, because the truth is . . . we must. We must believe in the supernatural realms, because that is where God is. And that is where the angels are. And that is where the saints that have gone on before us are now living.

As we are told in Hebrews 12, the "City of the Living God" is right here, right now, all around us. And though we may not be able to see it with our "natural" eyes, it is still very real, as real as the "natural" world.

And so yes, though we live within this natural world, the supernatural world is just as real, and we must believe in it, because that is where God is!

Follow along with me as I read our text for today. And note very clearly how God begins to show us His very "supernatural" Hand at work. Verse 5 of Luke 1.

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

13 But 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. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For 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. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He 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.” (Luke 1:5-17)

Here, in these precious words, a very special story is being presented to us, one that is strange to our ears, but is absolutely true in every detail. It is a story that reveals the beginning steps of the precious redemption of the souls of God’s chosen people, truths carefully fitted into common and ordinary events of that current day, truths that unless we listen carefully to them, might get lost in our reading of them.

Here, set within matters of daily life taking place in the ordinary activities of ordinary men and women of that day, God reveals to us that all of the next things that were to take place would come directly from His own Hand, supernatural events carefully intertwined within ordinary natural events in such a way that only the people that God wanted to know about them would know.

And that would also be so of all of the many other events that would follow these that we read about here, these special visits of the Angel Gabriel, the birth of John the Baptist, the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus, His death and His resurrection. Nothing would be left solely to the will and behaviors of men. Every meticulous detail would be part of a carefully devised plan that God had put into place long even before man was ever created.

I make this point because it's being made here for us in these words of scripture. But Why? It's because God wants you and me to know, with a certainty, that while yes, mankind does have “free will” to do and to act in most any manner that he chooses, whether good or evil, and that mankind will surely take part in most all the plans of God, there are still certain parts of that plan that God will not leave to the uncertain will of men.

Simply put, God is sovereign over all of His creation, and He is intimately involved in all that takes place within it. And while man's “free will” is very important to God, there are many times that He will reach His hand into our circumstances, and He will providentially alter the “natural” course of events in order to bring about His plans and His purposes. And these events that we have before us today are some of those times.

And over the coming weeks, we will study about a lot more of those events. And as we said a moment ago, God wants us to know, with a certainty, that it has all come directly from His own hand, as part of a meticulously designed plan, put into place long before man was ever created, long even before the foundations of the earth were laid.

A question that we asked in the message last week was “Why did God Himself not just personally come and do all of the things that were needed to be done in providing redemption to mankind, Jesus perhaps descending out of the clouds, walking the earth, performing miracles, giving us the bible fully written, and all of the other many things necessary for our redemption?”

Why did He instead use men and angels to do most all of those things, Gabriel, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph and on and on? Why does God seem most always to use men and angels to carry out His work”?

Simply put, God doesn't reveal those answers to us, so we don't know the whys of those questions. But we do know that he does, and here within these words is an example. And in doing it this way, God allows those of us who truly desire to know Him as our Savior and Lord to clearly see that it is His divine Hand that is bringing about every part of these miraculous works.

But what is it that separates you and me out from the rest of the world and enables us to read these words and to actually see that it is God's Divine Hand at work?

It is a “gift” that comes directly from Him, a very special gift, the gift of “faith”. And through the “eyes of our faith” you and I have the miraculous ability to “see” and to “believe” things that we would not otherwise be able to see and believe, things that others, those who do not believe in God, cannot even imagine.

Without “faith” you and I would be like the rest of the world, believing that all that we see and all that we are as people, just happened, over time, evolving out of the earth, and all of those other foolish notions adopted by people who do not have “faith”.

But praise be to God, you and I, being saved by His blessed grace, do have “faith”. And by “faith” we can read these words that we have before us today and believe them. We can believe that the mysterious Hand of God, planned and was here, in these words, carrying out that plan, using supernatural means within the hearts and minds of men and angels to bring about the blessed redemption of men.

And so, as we read here, we see this priest, Zacharias, going about his ordinary duties, when something very “out of the ordinary” takes place. An angel, Gabriel, appears out of nowhere and begins to tell Zacharias the prelude to the most wonderful story ever told, how Zacharias and his wife and their, yet unborn son, would be the beginning part of the story of redemption and salvation of the souls of all those who will turn their hearts to God and believe.

This special angel, Gabriel, that God sent to tell Zacharias about all these things, enjoyed a very revered relationship with God. He was one of the “Elect Angels” who stood in the very Presence of God. He enjoyed an eternal existence, and because of that, His ministry spanned the eons of time, bringing very, very special messages to people throughout all generations.

We read in the days of the Old Testament, Gabriel bringing God’s ministry to men like the Prophet Daniel, and also to others. And now here, in the New Testament ministering to Zacharias, and again later to Mary, the mother of Jesus. And then also ministering later on during the end days of this earth.

And folks, though Gabriel may never visit with you or me, other angels do. God assures us that they do. In Hebrews chapter 1, we read

¹⁴Are they (the angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

God uses His angels to minister to all those who will “inherit salvation”, those of us who have received Christ as Savior. Isn’t that an absolutely exciting thought, that angels are ministering to us at every moment. They are right here, right now, ministering to our every need. Wow!

And that is why Gabriel came to Zacharias, to Mary and to all the rest. He was doing God's will, carrying forward God's plan, for them personally and for all the other people who would be blessed by his ministry.

And again, God has shown us all of this clearly in these words so that you and I would know that everything that was taking place then, and now, was and is coming directly from His Own Divine Hand.

A question! "Would it help you and me in our belief and faith if we could see a fearsome angel like Gabriel?" It might seem so, but apparently not! As strange as it might seem, even if we saw the Lord Jesus Himself, it might not be the best thing for our faith. You'll recall that Jesus once said to His disciples,

²⁹ . . . "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

Seeing an angel or some other creature of the "supernatural" realm might truly be wonderful, but evidently not the very best thing for our faith.

And yes, you and I might ourselves someday see an angel, and most likely have unknowingly seen them already, as mentioned in Hebrews 13 where we are told that, "we will entertain angels unawares".

But with all of this being said, it does seem to be a good and a right thing for you and me to do to take the time to ponder and to meditate on the unseen realms of God. Angels are spoken about hundreds of times in these scriptures, and that tells us in no uncertain terms that God wants you and me to know about them and about their unseen work among us.

And I must tell you that it is an exciting thing for me to think about and to even embrace the existence of that other realm of life that swirls around about us all of the time. To believe that angels and the souls of fellow believers who have gone on before us actually live and move and have their being right in our midst, right now, is an exciting thought to me.

Which brings me to another reason why I believe that God would have us to know about the existence and the work of His angels; it's because He knows

that it is really hard for you and me to get past believing in only the “natural” things and ways around us. We have been so well-trained in the “natural” that the “supernatural” is inconceivable to us.

This “natural” world and its protagonists, the academic's and the scientists, have stamped an indelible belief upon our hearts and minds, that if we can't see something, if we can't feel it or in some way sense it with any of our natural senses, then it does not exist.

The Holy Spirit who lives in each of us who believe, tells us continually that that is not so. But still, we have been so well trained by this clever world that we default to “natural” thinking. And we try to explain everything with a “natural” answer.

But yet, these scriptures that we are reading here today clearly go beyond the “natural” and demand that we not only believe but also embrace something that is “unnatural”, something that is “supernatural”.

Note here though, that God does not try to build some clever argument to get you and me to believe in “supernatural” things, He simply presents an angel, Gabriel, speaking in ordinary language to Zacharias.

Hollywood would have done it differently. They would have presented Gabriel in all sorts of flashing lights and sound effects. But God simply has Gabriel appear there next to the altar of incense.

Yes, there are times when God Himself is a little more dramatic in His presentation of Himself, but in each of those circumstances, there is a special purpose.

Here God is very matter-of-factly presenting Gabriel to Zacharias in a way that says to you and me, “supernatural is just as natural as natural”. “So, believe it!”

And may I repeat myself and say again that in this matter of God using His angels to present His truth to the human world, there is nothing new taking place

as God uses an angel to carry out His plans among men. This same thing had been taking place all throughout time.

We are told in the Book of Galatians that the giving of the law of God was a ministry specifically assigned to angels. Listen!

¹⁹What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. (Galatians 3:19)

This and other passages of scripture tell us that God used His angels to minister His law, His word, to people all through the centuries. And we see hundreds of other instances where God used His angels to intervene in the lives of men, one showed Abraham's servant where to find a wife for Isaac, another wrestled with Jacob, and in the Book of Revelation, we find where the Apostle John was instructed to write letters to the "angels" of the seven churches.

A thought to ponder . . . does God have a special angel that is assigned to this church. I personally believe so. But I also believe from these scriptures that there are angels all around about us every moment of every day.

As we are told in Hebrews chapter 12, we who have Christ as our Savior actually live, right now, within a holy city called the "City of the Living God". Listen to those words!

²² . . . you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. (Hebrews 12:22-24)

Folks, God wants you and me to know with a certainty that not only this event of Gabriel speaking to Zacharias is real, but that there is a whole supernatural world swirling about us every minute of every day, right at this minute, this day. And though we might not be able to see them with our natural eyes, they are still as real and as present as you and I are. And until you and I are able to grasp and believe that all of this is taking place, we will forever struggle with the actual existence of God.

Remember that our faith demands that we believe that the unseen world actually exists. It is part of the foundational meaning of the word "faith".

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

So then, as we begin this adventure into the study of the beginning days of our Lord Jesus, we are thankful that God has given us the special gift of "faith" to enable us to believe what is otherwise unbelievable. And to be able to see that God's divine Hand is guiding and forming and orchestrating every step along the way. Praise be to God!