

LESSON 2

“GOD CAN USE YOU, NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES”

- **Zechariah and Elizabeth**

- 1) Zechariah is a simple priest. Elizabeth a home maker. Both are very simple people.
- 2) Elizabeth /Zechariah are childless – barren...a curse in that society.
- 3) Both are very unremarkable people who trust the Lord their God.
- 4) Elizabeth becomes pregnant with John the Baptist at an advanced age.
- 5) Elizabeth immediately recognizes Mary as the Lord’s Mother.
- 6) This realization strengthens Mary as she sees that Elizabeth knows the “secret” that she is harboring in her heart.

- **John the Baptist**

- 1) Born of simple, very orthodox Jewish parents.
- 2) John is the “miracle baby” as his mother is well advanced in years.
- 3) John is to be the one to announce the coming of the Messiah.
- 4) Soon after John’s bar-mitzvah, he goes into the desert to be taught by God exactly what he should say and do to proclaim the coming of Jesus.
- 5) John’s clothing is camel hair and a leather girdle around his loins and he eats wild locusts and honey. (Matthew 3: 1-6)

- 6) He emerges from the desert and begins baptizing people in water for the remission of their sins, shouting, “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand”. (Matthew 3: 1-6) Calls Pharisees, “You brood of vipers...”
- 7) He tells the people that while he baptizes with water and repentance, One is coming whose shoes he is not worthy to carry and Who will baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. (Matthew 3:11)

- **Mary, Mother of Jesus**

- 1) Mary is a simple girl, one who has lived a clean life before the Lord.
- 2) The Bible says that in the 6th month of Elizabeth’s conception (of John the Baptist), the angel Gabriel is sent into the town of Nazareth in the province of Galilee. (Luke 1:26)
- 3) Nazareth is a very small place and Galilee is on the trade route of pagans and thieves...The disciple Nathanael makes the comment, “Does anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46)
- 4) When Mary is probably 14, Joseph (then probably 17 and an apprentice carpenter – about a year away from his own business) asks his parents if he can marry Mary. These ages are perfectly normal in this society.
- 5) The parents of Joseph and Mary meet and formally agree on the marriage and the *qiddushin* takes place. This is an agreement for betrothal in ancient Jewish custom that is as binding as marriage. Once the *qiddushin* occurs, divorce is the only way that Joseph can be legally removed from Mary. The *qiddushin* is in force the full year that couples are betrothed and in Judea it entitles the couple to sexual relations, even though they live apart. In Nazareth, however, local custom forbids this practice. During this year of *qiddushin*, the couples work on furnishing their home and planning for their future.

- 6) The *nissu'in*, or wedding ceremony, will be almost anti-climatic in Jewish society during this era. Highlight is when Joseph receives Mary in the home that he has furnished.
 - 7) Gabriel the angel then visits Mary and says, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28) – Emphasis mine.
 - 8) Mary, quite naturally, is afraid (probably terrified) of both Gabriel and what he has told her. Gabriel then tells Mary to "...fear not..." and Mary believes what the angel tells her.
 - 9) In Luke 1:34-38 Gabriel explains to Mary how she will become pregnant with the Jesus, taking care to remind her that Elizabeth has already become pregnant in her old age as a reminder that **nothing is impossible with God**.
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Zechariah is a simple priest, one of tens of thousands in Israel...**Elizabeth** is a barren wife and, as such, suffers daily the humiliation and heartbreak of being childless in this society...**John the Baptist**, by anyone's estimation, is simply looked upon as a very strange man – living in the desert dressed in camel hair and eating wild locusts and honey. John the Baptist is just plain weird – until he opens his mouth one day and begins proclaiming that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, is among them. **Mary** is a young girl, outwardly no different than thousands of others, who is called of God from a tiny hamlet called Nazareth to give birth through the Holy Spirit to the Messiah. She is uneducated, her family has no wealth and she has no outward greatness to suggest her involvement in the birth of Christ. **Joseph** is an apprentice carpenter, a normal young Jewish male who, like Mary, has no outward signs of wealth, greatness or other markings to predict his involvement with the birth of Jesus.

The teaching here is simple but powerful: God can use any one of us, as long as we answer His call with the words, "Here I am Lord, use me". Ask yourself this question, "Have you answered your calling?"