

**THE
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(Announcing Jesus' Birth)**

Dec. 22, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: God broke the 400-year silence between Himself and Israel to announce the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world!

Scriptures: Isaiah 7:14-15; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Malachi 3:1; Luke 1:38a, 41-55, 68-79; Luke 2:22-38

By the end of the O.T., 400 years before Christ, the relationship between God and Israel had degenerated to a point where it seemed there was absolutely no hope of reconciliation. For those who still attempted to maintain worship in the Temple, it was a matter of performing rites and rituals without the interaction with God that previous generations had enjoyed. Having returned to Jerusalem after many years under the rule of Assyria and Babylon, the Jews were just trying to survive and stay out of harm's way. Alexander the Great conquered most of the known world and instituted the Greek language and culture throughout his domain. This continued until sometime around 30BC when the Roman Empire was solidified and Roman kings and pro-consuls came to power in Israel. For a short time during these 'silent years', the Macabee family achieved political and military independence for Israel, but the Romans conquered them. So, Israel's dreary life continued with no prophetic word, no freedom, no joy.

Yet there were those who held on to the hope that one day, their Messiah would come and they read and quoted writings of the prophets like these:

Is. 40:1-2 KJV **Comfort ye, comfort ye my people**, saith your God. ² Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

*(Comfort Ye My People / The Voice of Him... / Every Valley:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dDjva1ecYo>
stop at 2:13)*

With hope in their hearts, they reminded themselves of what God had said:

Mal. 3:1a KJV Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.

Is. 40:3-5 KJV **The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

(Run video from 2:13 to 2:33: The Voice of Him....)

⁴ **Every valley shall be exalted**, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.

(Run video from 2:34 to the end: Every Valley Shall Be Exalted)

⁵ **And the glory of the LORD** shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

*(And The Glory Of The Lord:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3raTXZ_hPk)*

Some were actually looking for the fulfillment of a major sign that would point them to their conquering King, for Isaiah had said:

Is. 7:14-15 KJV Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

He continued:

Is. 9:6-7 KJV **For unto us a child is born,** unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

(For unto us a Child is born:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFBIJgkj-g>)

⁷ Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Is. 40:9-11 KJV O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! ¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him. ¹¹ He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry *them* in his bosom, *and* shall gently lead those that are with young.

Mal. 3:1b KJV ... and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

God had not forgotten the Covenant He made with Abraham, and as bad as things had gotten, the “Messenger of the covenant” was on His way.

And so it was, after 400 years of silence, God sent Gabriel to Zacharias to finally break the silence! John the Baptist, the one who would “prepare ... the way of the Lord” was soon to arrive. Elizabeth conceived the forerunner of Christ, and six months into her pregnancy, Gabriel broke the silence again. He told a young virgin girl named Mary that Is 7:14 was about to be fulfilled in her body. Immanuel, God with us, the Messiah, the Anointed One, was about to be conceived in her!

We are in awe of what God did that day, because of all the things Jesus the Messiah has become to us. He is our Lord, the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, Rose of Sharon, Bright Morning Star and Lily of the Valley. He is the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Lamb of God, the Teacher of Righteousness, the Way, the Truth and the Life; our Saviour, Redeemer, Comforter, Healer, Deliverer, Intercessor, and so much more!

Luke 1:38a KJV And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.

She then rushed off into the hill country to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was probably the only person who could actually understand and believe the miracle that was taking place in her body.

Luke 1:41-45 KJV And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped

in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: ⁴² And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. ⁴³ And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Mary's response was totally appropriate - worship and praise to God:

Luke 1:46-55 KJV [She] said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. ⁴⁸ For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy *is* his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree. ⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. ⁵⁴ He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy; ⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

She stayed with Elizabeth for the next three months until John was born, at which time Zacharias was able to break the silence God had imposed on him. He also was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy saying:

Luke 1:68-79 KJV Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, ⁶⁹ And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; ⁷⁰ As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; ⁷³ The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, ⁷⁴ That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. ⁷⁶ And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, ⁷⁹ To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And so, in rapid-fire succession, God broke the silence and Jesus our Saviour was born!

Luke 2:22-38 KJV And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present *him* to the Lord; ²³ (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) ²⁴ And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.

Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name *was* Simeon; and the same man *was* just and

devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. ²⁶ And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, ²⁸ Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, ²⁹ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: ³⁰ For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, ³¹ Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; ³² A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. ³³ And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; ³⁵ (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. ³⁶ And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷ And she *was* a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. ³⁸ And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

And so Gabriel, Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Herod's counselors, the host of angels, Simeon, Anna, (and eventually John), all broke the silence to announce the coming of Christ.

In the same manner we trumpet His coming to our world today. The silence has been broken. The secret is out.

Jesus has come! Jesus lives! Jesus is here with us right now!

He has come to seek and to save that which was lost, and we have the honour of being able to invite Him into our hearts today.

Hallelujah Chorus:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iXmIjpGsGc>

Hallelujah Chorus: Handel's Messiah, A Soulful Celebration:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2iXmIjpGsGc>

Songs:

Come Let Us Sing, Let Us Rejoice

We Are In The Presence Of The Lord

O Come Let Us Adore Him

He Is Here Hallelujah