

Upside Down Wisdom

Luke 1:13-17

Within this narrative of the angel's description of the birth and life of John the Baptist we have some strange statements that can only be understood in terms of wisdom from above. God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and if you really want wisdom in this life, you must learn to look at life the way He sees it.

I. Time is kept by God in terms of a good purpose and not a grievous pain.

"Do not be afraid ... for your petition has been heard, and your wife will bear you a son" (v. 13).

To be barren was a culturally unacceptable in Elizabeth's day. Yet, this curse had been her's and her husband's for years. They were now old. The Lord will often delay answering our prayers for many years. That certainly was the case with Zacharias and Elizabeth. Yet, the Lord answered their prayer. Why the delay? It all had to do with the timing of the coming of Christ - John was His *"forerunner."*

(A). Rest assured that God's timing always centers around grand, eternal purposes.

God knows and does what is best, in the best way, and at the best time. He knows the best time for His people to be born; and he knows the best time for them to be born again.

(B). Don't conclude a prayer is not answered because it isn't answered in your timeline.

Too many Christians confuse supplication with gratification. Prayer is more about seeking and submitting to the will of God, as in *"Nevertheless, but they will be done."* Prayer is not simply bombarding God with our desires, be they ever so sincere. Prayer is more about seeking Him.

(C). None of us knows what it is for which we ought to pray.

Let's get it through our heads; we do not know what is best for the glory of God and His kingdom. *"Likewise the Spirit helps us in distress: for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit prays for us with groanings which can't be spoken"* (Romans 8:26).

II. Greatness is measured by God according to His grace and not human glory.

"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord" (v. 15). It is not *"great in the eyes of the world."*

Everybody wants their kids to be great. It's the dream of a parent for someone to honor their child! But notice John the Baptist's life - (1). His home was *"countryside"* not the country club. (2). His clothes were made of coarse camel hair, not silk. (3). He wined and dined on locust and honey not caviar and wine. (4). He made people mad, (5). He never held office, (6). He spent time in jail, (7). and he was executed by the King. From the measurements of this world, John's a complete failure.

(A). Yet, He was filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb (v. 15) - literally, *"controlled by the Spirit."*

(B). He was filled with the spirit and power of Elijah (v. 17) - turning people to God and His Kingdom.

(C). He was filled with God's grace throughout his life (v. 18) - caring little what others thought.

III. Repentance is commanded by God for times of real joy and never to kill joy.

"Many will rejoice at his birth. (For) he will turn many.... back to the Lord their God" (v. 14, 16-17).

"Do not be afraid" (v. 13) - *"You will have joy and gladness"* (v. 14) - *"and many will rejoice"* (v. 14).

The theme throughout this entire text is *"joy."* Joy because John will *"turn many people to the Lord."*

The phrase *"He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children"* is a quotation from the Malachi 4:6 where the prophet foretold the purpose of the Messiah's forerunner (John). This phrase is actually *"He will turn the hearts of the father with their children BACK to the LORD."*

Notice that the entire theme of *"joy"* is tied up with the hearts of parents and kids turning to God.

Upside down wisdom is opposite of the way the world thinks. The world says that God takes away joy with rules and regulations that keep you from truly experiencing life. Not so. In reality, it is only when a person turns his or heart toward God and makes Him King of their lives does real joy come