

Godsword Season Episode 64

by Ken Graves

Ken Graves' sermon discusses the spiritual battle for truth, the role of Jesus as the sole mediator, and the significance of John's birth in God's plan.

Duration: 28:50

Scripture: Psalm 139:13-16, Luke 1:13-17, John 14:6

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Holy Scripture"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the spiritual war between truth and deception, highlighting the power of the Bible as God's word and sword. It focuses on the unique role of Jesus as the only way to the Father, emphasizing the importance of not placing anyone between individuals and God. The narrative delves into the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, a couple from the priestly line, who despite their righteousness, faced the challenge of barrenness. The angel Gabriel brings them the miraculous news of the birth of their son John, who would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb and prepare the way for the Lord.

Transcript

There is a war going on, a spiritual war, a war between truth and deception. Only one thing cuts through all the lies and opinions of man. It is the truth of an ancient book, the Bible.

It is God's word, God's sword. He is the way, he is the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except by him.

And it is our Lord Jesus who spoke those words in John 14. Every other man is absolutely unnecessary. There is nobody between you and God.

Don't make the mistake of putting anybody. One of these two guys who were conceived, and I say again miraculously, here in the beginning of Luke, they were conceived miraculously and they grew. Their development was not arrested, but rather we'll read of them that they grew in wisdom, in stature, in favor with God and man.

So there are four areas of growth that both of these babies will experience. It is written here, Luke chapter 1 verse 1, For as much as many have taken in hand and set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they deliver them unto us, which from the beginning

were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all the things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. The author here, his name is Luke, as indeed this gospel is named after him.

Luke was a physician, he was a doctor in the day, a close friend of one who was radically converted. He was Saul of Tarsus until the day he met and surrendered his life to Jesus Christ, he became known as the Apostle Paul. Luke was a real good friend of his.

Luke was a good friend of all of the Apostles of the Lord. He was there, he came in and out, he was eyewitness to the things that he writes about. He's the one who writes.

And he addresses this that he writes to someone named Theophilus, someone he calls most excellent Theophilus. You know what's interesting guys, nobody knows who Theophilus is, or even if he was a person. It might well have just been an expression, because the word Theophilus, it's a combination of two words, theo and philo, it is God lover, or lover of God.

So maybe Luke is writing this to anybody who loves God and wants to know the story of Jesus Christ. So he addresses it to the God lovers, it may well be. It's also possible that Theophilus was an official, but he was a ruler, obviously someone who's been told and instructed in the Gospel.

It may well have been, there are those who suspect that Theophilus was a governor, or a judge in some capacity in the Roman Empire, and that this, both the Gospel of Luke, and he continues on to write the Book of Acts, were originally potentially one big letter, and that it might well have been written as a defense, or as an explanation for the life and ministry of Paul. Whichever the case, this much we do know for sure. The Holy Spirit moved upon Luke, and he wrote as he was moved on, as he was inspired.

The scripture that he writes is God breathed. He begins the story in verse 5. There was in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias of the course of Abiah, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, and they were blameless.

They had no child. Because then Elizabeth was barren, and they were, both were now well stricken in years. I think all of us here, who are 40 and up, know something about what it is to be stricken in years.

But these two, they know what it is to be well stricken. Not just struck, well stricken. Some days when we get up, we are very conscious of the fact that we've been struck by time, aren't we? Some days you wake up and you just go, man, who hit me? And it was time.

The beating on you, the accumulative sort of damage is collected, and time takes its toll, doesn't it? Living in a sin-cursed world like this one, it does take its toll, it does catch up on you. These recent weeks, I've said to myself, what an old man. I'm having to actually prop myself up, almost to upright sitting, to sleep.

Not in order to sleep, I can sleep just about anywhere in any position, but in order to sleep and wake up in the morning and not have the vocal trouble, just wearing out my digestive system. Things wear, don't they? Apparently, my digestive system is worn to the point where I have this acid reflux thing. I've probably spoken about it.

And you know what, I'm an old man, I talk about my ailments. That's what I do. It's only going to get worse from here.

I'm thinking, man, how come? I thought it through, believe me, talking to the doctors and getting their perspective on what could be this vocal problem that has plagued me, and ultimately it's come to the conclusion that digestive enzymes, acid, it's a corrosive effect, it's an irritant on the vocal cords. I eat a lot. You've heard me talk about that.

I've tried to eat less. It's not that I eat a lot, I don't want you to think I'm a glutton, but it's usually that I do it all at one time. I don't have time to get busy, and I don't eat, spreading that eating out throughout the day, probably like I should.

I've tried to change that, but man, I still am busy. I'm very busy, and then at the end of the day, I have a chance to get caught up on all that eating. But I'm an old man now.

I've got to sleep sitting up. I see you all have one of those old man beds with a motor. Remote control, I saw them on TV, I've seen them.

Elizabeth and Zechariah, this is a couple. What we have about them is that they're in the priestly line. Both of them are.

They're born to families that are significant in the worship of God and how that would all be done according to God's ordinance. There was, you see, a priesthood. In case you're new to biblical things, I'd like to explain what is the role of a priest.

Well, God established that there would be these guys, and their job was to sort of mediate between God and men, to help men connect with God, to make it possible for God to connect with men. There were men who acted in the role of mediator. It was because of the fact that we're all, as a race, as humans, all of us estranged from God because of sin.

There was a need for mediator. There was a need for someone to be the go-between in that thing with us and God. That was the role of the priest.

You know, in case nobody told you this, that all changed. And there is no longer a need for any human mediator between you and God. See, what ultimately the priesthood was all about was prophecy of a mediator that would come.

One mediator, one high priest. One that would be so adequate that no others would be needed. One priest who was so perfect in his role of priest that all the other priests would be kind of, well, dismissed.

Jesus Christ is that priest. And he's the perfect mediator between God and man because he is God and he is man. Because he is divine and he is human.

Because he is both. He's able to connect. He's able to be the bridge from God to man.

There's now no longer any need for you to go through any man. Be clear on that. There is no New Testament priesthood except in the sense that all of us who believe, all of us who have been born again, are now a nation, a holy nation, of kings and priests under our God.

In the sense that now all of us help connect to God. God has chosen that he would use us as his ambassadors. That he would use us to connect people with him through our witness, through our words, and through our example, through praying for people.

But be clear on this. Nobody has to go through you or me or any other mere mortal. To get to God, there is only one who says himself, he is the way, he is the truth, the life.

No one comes to the Father except by him. That is our Lord Jesus who spoke those words in John 14.6. Every other man is absolutely unnecessary. There is nobody between you and God.

Don't make the mistake of putting anybody there. Back then, back here in the place that we're reading about today, there was still in place a priesthood. I say again, the purpose of that priesthood was to communicate to humanity the need for a mediator.

It was prophetic. It was about one who would come. Everybody was waiting for that one to come.

The Messiah. Everybody was waiting for him to come. And here you had a couple who were part of the priestly line, but had no child.

And no child because Elizabeth was barren. She was unable. She was not reproductive.

Please understand, in those days, that was a shameful thing. It was considered some kind of curse from God. People had this belief.

It was a perversion of a truth, a perversion of the concept that whatever you sow, you will reap. They took it so far beyond that that basically they had a view that was a whole lot more in common with a pagan thing called karma. You know, if you did bad, bad would come to you.

If you did good, good would come to you. And that is not always the case. You may do good your whole life and still have bad come to you.

As indeed was experienced by Job. Many others, biblically. You may be bad your whole life long and have good come to you.

As we're told in the scriptures, it does in fact happen. In fact, Psalm 37 addresses that. Along with Psalm 73.

That the wicked will often prosper. And you've got to not look at that and get confused. Don't look at the fact that the wicked are prospering and being in health and let that cause you to stumble.

So they, back in those days, many of those people, believed that if you were not blessed with children, it must mean that some or another, the curse of God was on your family, on you as an individual, or on your family line. Because it kind of comes to an end at you. Well, they were wrong in that belief.

But nevertheless, they held that belief. So know this about Elizabeth and Aaron. They're both childless.

And they're both very old. Well stricken. Not just struck, well stricken.

So we don't have a number given to us here. We don't know their age. But we do know that it is past the age where people typically reproduce.

But we also know this about those two people. They were not bad by human standards. They were, comparatively speaking, good.

Now, not compared to God, because God is the only one that is truly good. Everybody else has to have an adjective or another word to go with good. You know, pretty good.

Fairly good. I mean, comparatively speaking. These two, as humans go, were people that went out of their way to please the Lord, to live by His commands, to do what is right, to reject what is wrong.

That's what's written about them here. And yet still, no child. Verse 8. It says, It came to pass that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

The whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

So here, know the story. Get this. All of the priests had certain duties.

There were more priests than what you needed to continue to keep things operating. So everybody had to wait their turn. You had to have your turn.

Your family got its turn. And then, you'd be selected to do a certain job. It was a great honor.

In this particular case, the job that fell upon Zechariah was to go and burn incense. That is, to go into the holiest place of all in the temple and to burn the incense. Let the smoke of that incense rise.

And that was symbolic. The incense is symbolic of prayers in that you see the smoke rising as it does. It was symbolic of a sweet smell of praise and prayer that rose to the Lord.

It was Zechariah's job to go in there and to do this thing. And while he's doing it, all of the people are outside waiting. This is a big ritual and they know what's going on.

But he is going in as priest to burn the incense. To, in a sense, mediate again. Carry their prayers in.

Symbolically, allowing the prayers to rise with the smoke of the incense. He goes in there and an angel appears standing right there by the very altar. This is universally the response of people when they see an angel in the scriptures.

Great fear fell upon him. Now there is an exception to that in the book of Genesis. When two men, they appeared as men, entered into the city of Sodom sent by God, as they were, to the city of Sodom to verify the wickedness that has risen to God of the inhabitants of those twin cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

They were greeted by Lot, righteous man, who was there in the gate of the city. And being there in the gate, it indicates that he'd become one of the city fathers. That he'd become an official.

Somebody who judged matters, settled disputes. He meets these two men, knowing them to be strangers. He doesn't recognize them as angels and he does not have the experience that we read about here and almost every other place where angels appear, but rather, apparently, these angels appeared as regular guys.

That is, when they appeared, they appeared as regular as any of you and me. But Lot, knowing that they were strangers to Sodom, invited them to come stay at his house because he knew just how bad the streets of Sodom were at night. You know that story, right? That even while those two angels dwelt as guests at the house of Lot, the citizens of Lot, the most militant of the homosexuals, the sadomasochistic, brutal homosexuals, came beating on the door of Lot looking for those two men that they did not sexually know and they wanted to know them.

In a sexual way. Asked Lot. In fact, demanded of Lot that Lot would send them out so that they could know them.

They intended to rape the very angels of God. Lot pleaded. Lot interceded.

Lot went as far as the ancient Middle Eastern custom would take him. In fact, he even offered his own daughters as sacrifice. You read that and you might think that is just absolutely brutal and indeed it is.

But it was also an expression of just what it meant if somebody came under your roof, they came into your care, you were supposed to sacrifice yourself and everything that was yours in protection of somebody who was your guest. That was the custom. Men, the brutal men, the sick, sadistic, homosexual men of Sodom rejected that offer.

They pressed against Lot. They were going to take Lot. They were going to enter by violence.

When the angels of the Lord came out, struck them all with a form of blindness. Not the kind of blindness probably where you just couldn't see anything, but blindness where you couldn't really process what it was you were seeing because they continued to look for the door. They couldn't find the door.

They pulled Lot inside and the angels told Lot and his family, get out of town because the judgment of God is going to fall. Abraham had interceded for the Twin Cities. Abraham, the friend of God, had prayed and said, God, please, if you could find even just ten.

He got all the way down to ten. If you find just ten righteous, would you please spare that city, this judgment? God said, yeah, if I find ten, I will spare it. Ten were not found.

And the four that were found and were willing to be saved were given the orders by those angels to get out of town and get out quick. God destroyed the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We have an approximate location based on the scriptures, based on the description in the scriptures at somewhere near the region that is now the southern part of the Dead Sea.

But there is, it is an absolute waste of time and yet there are archaeologists that are trying to find some evidence that these great cities ever existed. But they ignore just how thorough the destruction of God is. Interesting spot on the surface of Earth.

Now, that particular place is in a great rift. It is the lowest spot on the surface of the Earth. You know that? The lowest spot on the surface of the Earth.

It is actually lower than sea level which is just on the other side of the Judean Mountains. It is a place that has experienced something unique on the Earth and that was the very judgment of God. And that account that I just gave you is the only place in the scripture that I know of where people see angels and aren't just completely struck with terror.

And apparently all indications are from the story that it is the form that the angels appeared in. It is based on that occasion that the New Testament tells us to be good to strangers. Be hospitable to people that may come to your door in need.

Because some, he says, have entertained angels and not known it. I believe that is a reference to Lot that he initially invited two men to come to his house for their own safety and for their good and had no idea that he actually had the angels of the Lord in his house with him. Such a thing, I suppose then, such a thing could happen to you and me.

It is possible that you could meet an angel and not know that the angel is an angel. I suppose it's possible. But I would add unlikely.

The vast majority of people, in fact, I think 100% of the time that come to us and are in need are not angels but they are, in a sense, a test from God. We are told that the Lord Jesus will one day say when I was hungry you fed me. When I was naked you clothed me. When I was sick and in prison you visited me.

Remember that from Matthew chapter 25. Zechariah's reaction was great fear. Fear fell upon him.

In verse 13 But the angel said unto him Fear not, Zechariah's for thy prayer is heard. Now again, I'm reminding you that Zechariah's job is to light the incense and do this which was very symbolic of prayer ascending. The angel says Don't be afraid.

Almost always the first thing an angel has got to say Don't be afraid because apparently if we see them as they are they are quite glorious quite majestic there is something about them in fact, according to Psalm 8 man is made a little lower than the angels they are a higher form of life and there is this I guess contrast that people experience when they see them as they are. Zechariah experiences it. The angel says Don't be afraid because your prayer has been heard.

And he says And thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son and thou shalt call his name John. Thou shalt have joy and gladness and many shall rejoice at his birth. Now I personally got to believe that this angel is smiling at the delivery of this news.

How could he not be? It's like getting to deliver somebody a million dollar check. How do you do that with an old puckered up face? I'm sure you get it you can't like how do you just not bust out laughing as you go hey guess what I think this angel was. This angel by the way is a significant angel.

His name is Gabriel we'll see that as we read on. Gabriel. He is one who five centuries earlier appeared to Daniel.

He has an interesting job Gabriel. His job seems to be directly connected to the ministry and the announcement of the ministry of Messiah. He delivers this news.

He said you'll have great joy and gladness in verse 14 and many shall rejoice at his birth for ye shall be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. That would be the first indication that John the Baptist would be a Nazarite. That he wouldn't touch wine or strong drink.

That he would be sanctified that he would be consecrated set apart that he be somebody that was given to the very service of God even from his earliest. He'd be a Nazarite like Samson. And that he'd be filled with

the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

Please consider that one. He would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. Now be clear on this.

In case you're not. In case you're a new Christian you haven't settled this issue let it be settled. Human life begins at conception.

And no later. Any attempt to try to fix a date or a point in time where a person becomes fully a person is nothing but criminal. It's illogical.

It's the kind of thing practiced by people like Hitler. It's one thing that Hitler had in common with every abortionist and everybody who was pro-abortion. Is that he believed that there was such a thing as a person that really wasn't a whole person.

That really wasn't fully human. That evolutionary thought allowed him to justify the wickedness the brutality and the attempted annihilation of a whole nation of people the Jews. Even from his mother's womb Zachariah would be filled with the Holy Spirit.

He would have an experience he would have a direct relationship with God even from his mother's womb even from the earliest point of his existence. He says in verse 16 the angel continues and many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he said 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 a ready of people prepared for the Lord.

Imagine the news that Zachariah's being given. Imagine the news you guys he's being told that not only is he going to have a son he's going to have a great son he will be great. Now isn't that the wish for every one of us who have babies? Be they little women or little men.

We have a hope and a wish for them to attain greatness. You have been watching God Sword a ministry of Calvary Chapel Central Maine. If you're in the Central Maine area please drop by to see us at 154 River Road in Orlington.

We meet Sundays at 8.30 and 10.30 a.m. and again at 6 p.m. or Wednesdays at 6 p.m. If you're in the Southern Maine area we meet at the Greater Portland Christian School 1338 Broadway in South Portland Saturdays at 7 p.m. You can also check us out on the web at www.ccbangor.org There you will find audio and video teachings by Pastor Ken available for download as well as many other ministry resources.

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