

Ensure fellowship with God through 1 John 1:9

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

John – better named as **John the Herald** because of his mission to herald the coming of Messiah.

Luke 1:67-80

(67) And his (John the Herald) father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:
(68) "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

(69) And has raised up a horn of salvation (MESSIAH – and signifies His great strength) for us in the house of **David** His servant (reference promise God made to David in that his descendent would rule an eternal kingdom from his throne – **2 Sam 7:12-13**).

(70) As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old--

National deliverance from Israel's enemies - -

(71) Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

2 Samuel 7:12-13

(12) "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.

(13) "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

- The Old Testament saint viewed, with the coming of The Messiah, a national deliverance.
- A salvation from all her enemies!

(72) To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,

(73) The oath which He swore to **Abraham** our father (**Gen 12:1-3**),

(74) To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,

(75) In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

(76) "And you, child (John), will be called the prophet of the Most High (Jesus Christ); for you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS (reference **Malachi 3:1**).

Genesis 12:1-3

(1) Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you;

(2) And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing;

(3) And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

- Remember Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit (endowment of the Spirit).
- The Holy Spirit is communicating that Malachi 3:1 is fulfilled by John.

Malachi 3:1

(1) "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.

"Hosts" - צבא

TSABA – Army

A reference here to the Lord Jesus Christ, "Lord of the Armies" – the One speaking!

(77) To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,

(78) Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high (ref. Messiah) will visit us,

(79) TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

- **Peace** is something that characterizes the Kingdom that Jesus Christ will rule (from David's throne), therefore, "guiding our feet into the way of peace" is a reference to bringing them into the Kingdom.
- The nation is anticipating national deliverance from her enemies when Messiah arrives.

As Church Age believers, having a completed canon of Scripture, we are able to see how Christ was rejected and how History transpired accordingly. It is often difficult for us to have an accurate frame of reference for the believer living at the time of Zacharias, Elizabeth, John, and Mary.

To fully understand what was going on...

- that the offer of the Kingdom was a legitimate offer, and
- that when Jesus Christ was rejected the Kingdom was postponed
...you have to understand things through the mind of the believer living when Messiah came.

- What was the condition for fulfillment of the offer of the Kingdom to actually come? **Faith**
- It begins with believing the message of John (the Herald) – the forerunner of Christ.
 - He will herald the advent of Messiah.
 - Because Jesus is the Son of God – John will point people to Jesus – the promised Messiah.
 - John, therefore, prepares the nation.

FAITH

Believing John's message – faith begins.

In fulfillment of what the prophets had taught from the Hebrew Scriptures

John's baptism - identification.

Identification with the Kingdom that Messiah would actually rule

Culminates with faith in Jesus as Messiah.

The promised seed of David

Remember John is preparing the way for the Messiah

Then Messiah (Jesus Christ) shows up to be baptized by John – why?

In order that righteousness might be fulfilled, and
PROTOCOL – the King had to be identified with the Kingdom He would rule.

- The King is being identified with the Kingdom through John's baptism
- All the subjects in the kingdom who have believed in John's message (of Messiah and the Kingdom) are being identified with the kingdom through John's baptism
- Then Jesus shows up and "BEHOLD" - - there He is...
- Faith then culminates in personal faith in Jesus as Messiah, the promised seed of David, the King who is going to rule the Kingdom.

What was the message preached right after that? The gospel of the Kingdom!

That is what John preached – that’s what Jesus preached.

**What Kingdom? The Davidic Kingdom that Jesus Christ came to rule.
The Kingdom Christ would usher in if accepted by the nation.**

- So the nation is anticipating national deliverance.
- The condition for fulfillment is faith which begins with believing the message of John the Herald.
- Being identified with the Kingdom through John’s baptism.
- Culminating in personal faith in Jesus as Messiah, the promised see of David.

POD – Faith is a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom and experiencing the blessings of the Kingdom.

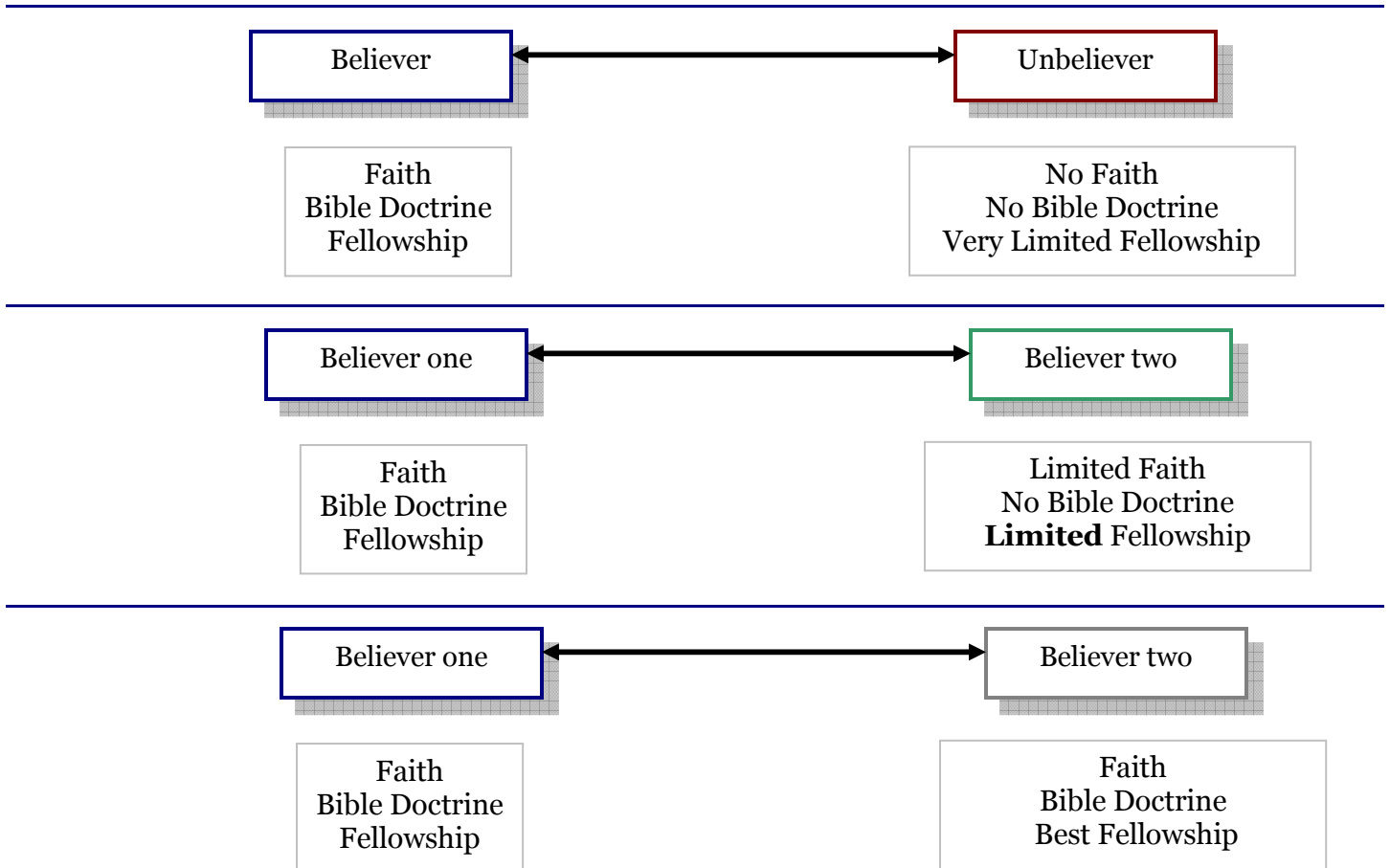
- If the people do not believe are they going to enter the Kingdom? NO
- If they reject the King, is the Kingdom going to come? NO
- What’s going to happen if they reject the King?
 - The Kingdom was promised!
 - So, if they reject the King, the Kingdom will be postponed!

How does all this apply to us?

- Faith is required by us to enjoy the greater blessings of life.
You become a believer by grace through faith, but as a believer to enjoy the greater blessing of life requires **faith**.

These are blessings that money cannot buy!

Faith + Bible doctrine + Fellowship



Experiencing friendships in the Lord as a blessing requires:

- Fellowship with God
- Bible Doctrine – a unity of faith (doctrine)
- Faith

(80) And the child (John) continued to grow (physical growth) and to become **strong in spirit** (a result of spiritual growth)...

“**Strong**” – κραταιόω

KRATAIOO – *be strengthened or to grow strong*

“**Spirit**” - πνεῦμα

PNEUMA – *spirit*

- God the Holy Spirit was the one strengthening John as he learned the Spirit’s ways with him.

... and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

- The Desert is a place where an individual is stripped from the details of life.
- An ideal place to learn dependence on the Lord to provide.
- To grow spiritually – to grow “**strong in spirit**”.
- The desert serves as John’s classroom. Elijah – a very similar experience of having to trust God. Who provided food and water for Elijah when all resources disappeared? God did!
 - This environment of dependence upon the Lord strengthened Elijah’s and John’s faith
- The figurative deserts of life serve as our classrooms as well.
- This is what makes us grow at an accelerated rate when we find ourselves stripped of the details of life.
- We become dependent on the Lord who prepares us to “walk in a manner worthy of our calling” (**Eph. 4:1**).

Deserts are our classrooms also. All are designed to teach...

- A terminal illness
- A financial desert

...the primary lesson is dependence on the Lord.

Once you learn that dependence you begin to soar spiritually on wings of eagles.

And when you come out of that desert into a wonderful, lush - green - prosperous land you will have learned how to depend upon the Lord. You will have capacity for the blessing that you are enter into.

Think about situations where you see people go from rags-to-riches, often without a lot of development – the value of what they have is not realized and it is squandered on the vain things of the world.

**When the believer has been refined by the deserts of testing that God has placed him in then he is prepared for what God would have him do.
At the right time and in the right place.**

POD – The deserts of life serve as the believer’s classroom to develop dependence upon the Lord.

POD – The deserts of life teach the believer to PRAY.

- You cannot control circumstances in the desert – you must turn to Someone who can.
- PRAYER is how you set that One into motion.

Why Pray for what you already have?

Why Pray if you have everything?

Why Depend?

Those who have, fail to pray & depend.

- In order to survive in the desert the believer must be supplied by the Lord, because we need physical and spiritual sustenance in a desert to survive.
- So, when you are placed in the desert, whatever your personal desert is - financial – health – relationship desert – learn to depend on the Lord.

POD – The deserts of life are also designed to strengthen the believer's **faith**.

- That is why John was put in the desert – to grow “**strong in Spirit**”.

The relationship of prayer and faith to each other while in the desert.

- As you see your prayers answered in the desert your faith increases.

POD – The deserts of life are used by God to prepare the believer for future service.

- To the **unbeliever** in fulfilling your ambassadorship responsibilities.
- To **fellow-believers**. To encourage and to challenge. If you have gone through the desert of suffering and you learned how to pray - - and how to depend on the Lord. If your faith was strengthened by having seen God at work in your life - - you have a command in the Word to encourage one another (**1 Thess 5:11; Heb 3:13**).

John lived in the desert until his public appearance to Israel.

- John's parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth were both descendents of Aaron, father of the priesthood.
- John, therefore, had a right to the priesthood.
- A right to be trained in Jerusalem to become a priest.
- Normally, given the circumstances of his birth, he would have been educated to be a priest. His father would have trained him – BUT God did not want him in the capitol.
- The capitol had become corrupted with those misapplying the Scripture.
- They were masters of it, commentators of it, and they supported their positions from it, but all lacked one ingredient - - **FAITH**.
- God does not delight in anthropocentric theological speculation!

John was set apart to God – to herald the coming of Messiah.

Mark 10:25

(25) "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

- The wealthy man has everything he needs – why should he turn in dependence upon someone else?

- A great time to evangelize someone is when they are stripped from what they have.
- When they are diagnosed.
- When their life unravels.
- When the emptiness of their life begins to manifest itself.

- What do you have now that you have gone through desert testing?
- A testimony to God's faithfulness!
- To His sovereign omnipotence, to prayer!
- To promises in the Word that carried you through.
- To the Spirit's mentorship.

Note the four people intricately involved in the coming of Messiah –

1. Mary
2. Zacharias
3. Elizabeth
4. John

And when He arrives – Jesus

Zacharias – Ζαχαρίας (Greek)

ZACHARIAS

זַכַּרְיָהוּ (Hebrew)

ZACHAR – “to remember”

Elizabeth - Ἐλισάβετ (Greek)

ELISABET

אֵלִישֶׁבַע (Hebrew)

ELIYSHEBA – “God has sworn”

What has God sworn?

His covenants. His promises to Abraham and David.

Inherent in Elizabeth’s name.

What has God remembered?

His covenants in the birth of John and Jesus.

John - Ἰωάννης (Greek)

IOANNES

יְהֹנָן (Hebrew)

HANAN – “to be gracious”

How is God gracious?

The coming of Messiah and His forerunner is not a result of Israel’s obedience.

Therefore, Israel did not earn or deserve the fulfillment of these covenants. It is all GRACE!

Jesus - Ἰησοῦς (Greek)

IESOUS

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Hebrew)

YESHUAH – “salvation”

From the verb -

יָשַׁע (Hebrew)

YASHA – “to deliver or save”

The Lord delivers or the Lord saves!

Mary - Μαρία (Greek)

MARIA

מִרְיָם (Hebrew)

MIRYAM

Or

מֵרִיאָה MERIY – “A fatling” - A term used to describe sacrificial animals.

Remember Mary who placed herself as a sacrifice to be used by the Lord.

"Behold the bonds slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." (Luke 1:38)

As a result she will bear a Son and her Son will be the Sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the world.

Names that were assigned by God:

- John - - “*the Lord is gracious*”
- Jesus - - “*the Lord saves*”

Names that were assigned by parents:

(During a time when God was silent – intertestamental period)

- Elizabeth - - “*God has sworn*”
- Zacharias - - “*God has remembered*”
- Mary

A wonderful testament to the sovereignty of God.

Even in a time when God is silent, He knows what is going on by way of His omniscience and omnipresence – and you can know that He knows what is going on in your life also because He is your Heavenly Father.

There may be times when you feel like you are in a desert of life and wonder where the Lord is but He is right there with you.

Sometimes you won't even see His providential hands until you look back – when you've cleared the desert then you'll realize how He got you through it.

Those times are designed to bring you into more dependence on Him – to refine your **faith** – to teach you to **pray** – to **trust**.

God's perfect plan continues to unfold whether people are aware of it or not.

People are used by God unbeknownst to them which is a testimony to just how great our God is.

These five people all had something in common – God the Holy Spirit.

God the Holy Spirit is required for human beings to fulfill the will of God for their life.

The filling of the Holy Spirit is required to be used by God for His glory – that requires our volition.

All Scriptures quoted are from New American Standard unless otherwise noted.