

God's Invasion

Luke 1:5-12 HCSB In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest of Abijah's division named Zechariah. His wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (6) Both were righteous in God's sight, living without blame according to all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. (7) But they had no children because Elizabeth could not conceive, and both of them were well along in years. (8) When his division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, (9) it happened that he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense. (10) At the hour of incense the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. (11) An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. (12) When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and overcome with fear.

Topic: As we consider the account of God invading the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth, we will learn four facts about God, that when properly understood, will lead to a proper response in our own lives when God comes for a visit.

Introduction

What comes to your mind when you think about an invasion? If you've been around a while you might think about an event, like the Pearl Harbor invasion

Picture of Pearl Harbor invasion



or the Normandy invasion.

Picture of Normandy Invasion <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/photographs/63-514.jpg>



Maybe the more recent terrorist attacks come to mind.

Picture of Twin Towers burning <http://www.illinoisfamily.org/content/img/f27367/Twin%20Towers.jpg>



If you've ever been robbed you might think of that.

Picture of robber <http://www.safecity.com.au/mugger.jpg>



The dictionary defines an invasion as going somewhere by force so as to conquer or pillage. It means to enter and overrun harmfully; to encroach upon, to violate. It also means to interfere with or to break in on.

We normally think up negative images when we think about invasion, so we don't normally think of God as being one to invade our lives or our churches, but this morning that's exactly how I want you to think of Him.

If an invasion means to interfere, then you can be sure God wants to invade your life: He wants to interfere in your business.

If an invasion means to break in on or to encroach upon, then again, you can be sure that's what God wants to do.

The entire first chapter of Luke and the Bible record itself is the story of God invading humanity, humanity that would have been content to carry on as usual, but invading it nonetheless with the greatest love ever known. Don't make any mistake about it: God wants to raid your heart and your mind and He wants to conquer you. He wants to be your Lord and Master.

The question that demands an answer today is: What will you do when God invades your life? Hopefully you've been praying that God would do just that. But when God answers that prayer and He does invade your life, how should you respond? As we consider the account of God invading the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth, I believe there are four facts you will see about God, that when properly understood, will lead to a proper response in your own life when God comes for a visit.

Now, without a doubt God invaded the life of Zacharias with a wonderful message announcing the birth of his very special son that we know as John the Baptist. When God invaded his life, four facts about His visit become powerfully obvious.

1. God Chooses the Time

The Bible says that these were the days of Herod the king. Now you remember that in the book of Haggai the people were rebuilding Solomon's Temple, but the new temple paled in comparison to the old one. When Herod became king several hundred years later, knowing how much the temple meant to the people and being an outsider who wanted to gain the people's favor, he built the Jews a much nicer temple than the one built in Haggai's day.

Picture of Herod's Temple



We are told that Zacharias had gone into this temple to pray, and as he did there were many others who remained outside the temple who were also praying. Though we are not told so explicitly, I believe these people were praying for the salvation of Israel. In Malachi 4, the last chapter of the last book in the Old Testament, God told the people of Israel that...

- [Malachi 4:2-6 HCSB](#) But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings, and you will go out and playfully jump like calves from the stall. (3) You will trample the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day I am preparing," says the LORD of Hosts. (4) "Remember the instruction of Moses My servant, the statutes and ordinances I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. (5) Look, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the

great and awesome Day of the LORD comes. (6) And he will turn the hearts of fathers to *their* children and the hearts of children to their fathers. Otherwise, I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Now that promise was made to Israel 400 years earlier! God promised a Messiah and one who would prepare the people for Him. God had not spoken to a prophet in 400 years, so for 400 long years the people of Israel awaited this day of the Lord. They prayed for the kingdom to come. They looked for one who would come and make things right, and while He could have come at any time He chose this time.

The Bible also says of this time that both Zacharias and Elizabeth were old. They had never had children and were in fact beyond child-bearing age. God didn't come when they were young. He didn't confer with them about when it might have been convenient, and He didn't bother to wait until Zacharias was off duty and at home where he might have been more comfortable. He broke into the man's life when He got good and ready to because God chooses the time.

You think about the times that God has made Himself known to you in some way throughout your life. When I was in my mid-twenties, I told God that I was willing to go into full-time service. He chose to make me wait, struggle, and even despair to the point of being tempted to wander away from that call for twelve years before finally allowing me the privilege of serving as your pastor. You see, I don't have to know why it had to be that year – God works when He chooses to.

Moses chose a time, but God called him forty years later. David wanted to build a temple, but God said it wasn't time. Joseph dreamed about his brothers bowing down to him, but it was many years before it actually happened. Throughout the Bible record we have story after story about God invading life in His own time. I think so many people get frustrated and give up because things aren't moving when they get ready to go. You want to do something for God, but your plans get frustrated. God invites you to something special, but it's not a good time to get involved.

Have you ever heard a young couple say they want to wait and have kids when they've got all the stuff worked out? Serving God is the same way – we like to put God on hold until the timing is convenient for us, but when God gets ready to invade life He isn't going to confer with you and make sure its going to work out with your schedule. God invades life on His time schedule, not yours; and when He does we'd better be ready.

2. God Chooses the People

When you look at the lives of Zacharias and Elizabeth, what you find are two very ordinary, obscure and unlikely candidates for what God wanted to do. God could have chosen anyone in the world to be the parents of this great prophet John the Baptist. He could have chosen someone rich and famous. He could have chosen a Herod or some other great Jew, but He chose these commonplace people for an uncommon task.

Let me tell you what this couple did have going for them: they both loved the Lord greatly. Verse 6 says they were righteous, obedient and blameless. Righteous has to do with a right relationship to God. Obedient tells you the fruit of that relationship, and blameless tells you they were living such a great testimony before others that there was nothing bad to say about

them. They were servants of God. Zacharias served in the Aaronic priesthood as it was his duty – his service to God.

Now don't miss the importance of this: this couple had been pleading with the Lord for years for a child. To be childless in those days was a reproach. God must surely have been punishing them. They could have easily given up on God. When God seemed to forsake them, they could have packed up and moved on. They could have cursed God and accused Him of being an unloving God, but they didn't do this: they chose rather to live lives of full devotion to God. Did God take notice? You bet He did! When He chose to invade life on earth after all those years of silence He began it with them.

Now there's not a life on this earth that God doesn't invade at some time or another, and it's always going to be for one of three reasons.

a. He invades the lives of the lost with the convicting of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible says that

- [2 Peter 3:9 HCSB](#) The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

The Holy Spirit is going to be at work in your life leading you to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and He'll do that until you either surrender to Him or until He is satisfied that you have finally and eternally rejected Him. Some people say that they'll get saved when they're ready, but I'll tell you that today is the day of salvation. Isaiah 55:6 says,

- [Isaiah 55:6 HCSB](#) Seek the LORD while He may be found; call to Him while He is near.

In other words, if you keep rejecting God's invitation that invitation may not be open when you get ready.

b. He invades the lives of the saved as He leads them to godly living and service.

God didn't just save you to deliver you from hell –

- [Ephesians 2:10 HCSB](#) For we are His creation--created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

God will invade your life to lead you to live it for His honor and glory. He wants you to live according to His purposes, and if the child of God refuses to live for God's purposes,

then there's a third reason He will invade life –

c. He invades the lives of the saved for the purpose of discipline.

The Bible says,

- [Hebrews 12:6 HCSB](#) for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and punishes every son whom He receives.

When I get out of His will and do my own thing, God works to bring me back.

If you belong to God, you can be sure that He is going to be invading your life, working to make you like Jesus. When you refuse to love and forgive, God's going to launch a full scale attack on your value system. He wants to conquer your heart and mind and bring you under His rule. When you refuse to live for Him, or perhaps when a church refuses to follow Him, God's going to do whatever is necessary to bring us around. He won't make you turn to Him, He won't make you get saved, He won't make you be obedient, but He can sure make you wish you were!

Do you want God to choose you? Do you want to be one of the people God uses? Then give Him something to work with. Follow the example of Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were righteous, obedient, blameless and serving Him. You take care of those things and in His own time God will come knocking.

3. God Chooses the Method

When God chose to invade Zacharias' life, He used an angel. When God chose to invade Israel's life to prepare them for Jesus, He chose John.

Now Zacharias had gone into the temple to pray and burn incense. This would have taken place at either 9:00 a.m. or at 3:00 p.m. We don't know which. While he's standing at the altar of incense,

Picture of William Blake's "Zacharias and the Angel" www.metmuseum.org/special/William_Blake



this angel of the Lord appeared to his right and verse 12 says that John was troubled. The word troubled comes from a word that means he was filled with terror! Fear fell upon him! We pray all the time for God to make His presence known in our lives, but what if He really did it? We'd be terrified! The angel immediately spoke peace to Zacharias and told him this amazing news about the son he and Elizabeth would bear.

When God chose to invade Israel with news of the Savior they were awaiting, He did so by sending this man named John who we already know is a different kind of man. If I walked around town wearing beggar's clothes and eating grasshoppers and other insects and telling people all over town to repent, most of you would be ashamed of me: ashamed of my look, ashamed about what I was eating and some of you would be ashamed of my preaching because none of it would be respectable. That's what made John so different. Of all the methods God could have chosen to announce the kingdom of God, He chose John the Baptist.

What about when God chose to invade humanity with a Savior? Did He choose a king born in a palace with access to all the world amenities? Did He send a knight in shining armor who would sweep the women off their feet and rally the men around Him? No!

Picture of nativity <http://www.christcenteredmall.com/stores/art/sallman/the-nativity-zoom.jpg>



He sent a dirty little baby born in dirty cow barn with stinking, filthy sheep and shepherds. There was no glory. There were no riches or fame, just a nobody by human standards.

When God chose to save humanity from their sin, of all the ways He could have chosen

Picture of cross <http://blogidaho.biz/Crucifixion.gif>



He chose a shameful wooden cross where Christ was brutally crucified. When He chose to spread the message to all the world, He could have chosen great theologians and great pulpiteers, but instead He chose to do His work through the most unlikely assortment of men and women in that most unlikely of institutions we call the church.

Did you ever wonder about yourself in the service of God? I have. Yes, you are kind and say nice things and brag at all the right times, but I'll tell you that were it not for the grace of God I would not be standing before you this morning. You may wonder why God has led you to that place of service or why He's been dealing with you about that thing in your life.

In fact, you may be wondering why God does not reveal Himself in a more recognizable way to you so that you will know that it's really Him leading you. The answer is very simple – God chooses the method. If you're looking for signs and open doors and throwing out the fleece you may end up only more and more frustrated. Sure God will speak to you through sermons and songs and experiences, but His primary method today is through His Word and in prayer.

4. God Chooses the Purpose

Why did God invade Zacharias' life? Was it simply to tell him he was going to be a daddy? Not hardly, there was more to it than that. Gabriel said to him, "You're going to have a son. This is what you'll name him, this is how you'll raise him because this is what he's going to do." In other words, you'd better do it right.

For all those years this godly couple prayed for a son, and after passing childbearing age they joined Israel in praying for a Savior. When God invaded their lives He chose to answer both prayers. When God showed up that day there's no telling what Zacharias might have thought was going on, but he found out quickly that it was greater than he could have imagined.

Listen to me: you cannot guess, nor can you dictate the purposes of God when He chooses to invade your life. You have no right to say to God that He can do this or that with your life and no more. You have no room to say to God that this is what you'll do because it is your reasonable service. Your reasonable service is up to God – and I will remind you that your reasonable service has a cross attached to it.

Conclusion

When God invaded life in Israel that day everything changed. God had come to shake things up; He had come to interfere, to raid humanity with the greatest news ever known to man. He told Zacharias that his family would have a special part in spreading that news. His son would have God's special anointing on his life from the womb for this task of leading Israel to repentance. His message would be one of great power and conviction and would lead to a national turning back to God and to one another. Zacharias' son would be the greatest

proclaimer of the good news of the Savior – and what was his response? “Can you give me some proof?”

He’s standing in front of Gabriel in the temple of God and he asks for proof? Needless to say that wasn’t the right response! Because of his disbelief he was stricken with muteness until the birth of his son. After 400 years of nothing God breaks the silence to him and Zacharias can’t tell a soul!

What was the right response? “Lord, I believe.” That’s it! That’s all the response that is necessary. When God invades your life to lead you to repentance and faith and you know you need to be saved, what is the right response? “Lord, I believe.” When God calls you to follow Him in obedience – no matter how much trouble we might have with it, our response should simply be, “Lord, I believe.”

You don’t have to wonder whether God is invading your life today or not – it is only a question of why He is invading. Perhaps today you know you need to be saved. What will be your response? You may understand that God is leading you to unite with us, what will be your response? Will there be some thing in the way or can you simply believe? Is God telling you to surrender that thing? That relationship? That sin? “I believe.”

We’re not here today just so we can fill our heads with more understanding – the goal is life change – it is about us giving ourselves to God in greater ways than we ever have before. It is about you allowing the invasion of God to awaken that slumbering spirit within you so that you might arise to the greatness for which you were created.