

People Who Were Ready for Christ's Coming - Part 1

by Zac Poonen

Being ready for Christ's coming requires making the necessary changes in our lives to be prepared to meet Him in our daily lives and in our hearts.

Duration: 58:16

Scripture: Isaiah 11:2, Matthew 1:20

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being ready for the coming of Christ. He warns against deceiving ourselves by thinking we are prepared if we are not actively seeking to make amends for any wrongs we have committed. The preacher also highlights the significance of resolving conflicts and not harboring anger in our hearts before going to sleep. He references the story of Mary, who was the first person to know that Jesus was coming, and how God surprises His children with good things. The sermon encourages listeners to be ready for God's surprises and to trust in His loving plans for their lives.

Transcript

We've been thinking in these days about being ready for the coming of Christ, and that's what I want to share on this morning as well. Not in any theoretical way, but intensely practical way, so that we are actually ready. I probably mentioned this before that when I was a young Christian and I didn't know much about the scriptures, I used to be in an assembly where a study of the coming of Christ mainly consisted of charts and, you know, study of what they thought was prophecy about what would happen when.

It was all very fascinating and very intellectually stimulating, but it didn't help us, any of us, in our daily life or in our home life. And I saw that when, as I grew up and I learned to study the scriptures for myself, I found that even though these things are mentioned in scripture, it's very difficult to be dogmatic about exactly what means what. But one thing we can be sure of is how we ourselves can be ready for the coming of Christ.

That there's no doubt. And whenever Jesus spoke about his own return, the disciples asked him once, when is your coming? He mentioned certain signs, etc., but then he always told them about their personal life. He said, don't be deceived.

Be ready, be ready. Make sure that your hearts are not weighted down. And we saw also that there's a lot of similarity between those who are prepared for the first coming of Christ, second coming of Christ.

So I wanted to look at as few people in the Old Testament, in the beginning of the New Testament, who knew and were ready for the first coming of Christ. There's certain things we can learn from them, which can enable us to check up whether we ourselves are in that category. You know that when Jesus came, more than 99% of people in Israel who had studied the scriptures, who knew that the Messiah would be coming, didn't know he had come.

They just didn't know. And these are not, we're not talking about the non-Jewish people who didn't have the scriptures, who didn't know about the coming of the Messiah. In fact, if they had studied scripture carefully, not only was it written in Micah chapter 5 that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

In Daniel chapter 9, there were details given concerning exactly when the Messiah would be crucified or killed. Cut off a particular time from the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem from Babylon. So they could even know approximately the period when he would be coming.

But nobody was bothered. That's very similar to Christians today, who talk a lot about the coming of the Lord, but I believe the vast majority of believers are not ready. I mean, for example, if there's one human being, one human being whom you have not forgiven on the face of the earth, I don't care what type of believer you call yourself, you are not ready for the coming of Christ.

You will not meet him when he comes. I'll make no effort to give back money that you have cheated other people off. Don't fool yourself if you're ready for the coming of Christ.

You can know all the doctrines and theories and etc. but you're not ready. It's like that with many other things.

The Bible says you should not let the sun set with anger in your heart. Do you go to sleep every night with things settled between your husband, your wife? These are the things that keep us ready for Christ's coming. So that's what we proclaim.

Well, as you know, the first person who knew that Jesus was going to come was Mary. When the angel appeared to her in Luke chapter 1, and I like the message translation here in Luke chapter 1 and verse 28, an angel appeared to Mary, who was a virgin, engaged to a man whose name was Joseph. The virgin's name was Mary.

And the Living Bible says, Mary, God's got a surprise for you. I tell you God is a God of surprises for his people. He has pleasant surprises for his children.

He's a God who's waiting around the corner with a surprise gift. Zephaniah 3.17 says, he silently plans in love for his children. You know how sometimes children silently plan a birthday party for their dad or mom, or dad and mom plan some surprise for their children.

God is like that. God's a loving father. Mary, God's got a surprise for you.

It's a good surprise. It's the most wonderful thing that you can ever think of. And I've thought, why did God choose Mary? In those days, I think girls would get married when they're 18 or 19.

A young girl, she wasn't 50 years old or something. She was a young girl, about 18 or 19, engaged to be married. And from a very simple, poor family in a village, which didn't even have a good name.

Nazareth, as far as we read in scripture, didn't have a very good reputation. I don't know why. Because Nathaniel once said, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? So here was a young girl.

And remember that the promise of the Messiah was way back in the Old Testament. From, I mean, God told Adam and Eve, the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. So I can imagine that nobody knew when exactly he would come.

But I can imagine that a lot of young girls wished that they would be the mother of the Messiah. A lot of young girls, oh, if I could be the mother of the Messiah, how wonderful it would be. But there was only one whom God chose.

Now I want to speak especially to young sisters first. Because Mary was a young sister. If you were living in Israel 2,000 years ago, you think you would have been chosen? That's the thing you need to ask yourself.

The values you have, which God sees. The longing you have in your heart, which God sees. The way you conduct yourself, especially with men.

The way you behave in college, in office. Would God pick on you and say, that's the type of girl I want to be, the mother of my son? That's a very good question to ask yourself. If I had a daughter, that's what I would have told her right from the time she could understand.

Compare yourself with Mary. I sometimes fear that Protestants have reacted against the Roman Catholic worship of Mary, to the extent that they've just thrown her overboard, and feel that it's not good to think too much about her character. Now we don't worship her, but it's very rare to find an 18, 19 year old gold girl in Scripture, whom God Almighty could pick.

Searching all over Israel, with all these people longing to be the mother of the Messiah, that God picks on one. There's no partiality with God. No.

When he picks on someone to serve him, and he doesn't pick on you, that could be a reason. Maybe he's seen something in that person, he never saw in you. Not cleverness.

I don't think Mary was the cleverest. I don't think she came first in her class. I don't think she was the prettiest.

No. God wasn't conducting a beauty contest. What do you think he looked for in Mary? You know the Bible tells us, if you compare Scripture with Scripture, the Bible says there's something in women, that God looks for, which is very precious in his eyes.

You read it in 1 Peter and chapter 3. 1 Peter chapter 3. It speaks of an eternal imperishable quality. Of course it's a great quality to be found in men too, but especially in women. Where he's talking about women in 1 Peter chapter 3. He says, don't let your, verse 3, 1 Peter 3 verse 3, don't let your adornment be external.

You know with your hair and jewelry and dress. You know hair and jewelry and dress are very important for a lot of women. It was true 2,000 years ago.

It's true today. But the Bible says, don't let your adornment be that primarily, but an inner thing. Your adornment should be hidden.

He's not saying that you shouldn't comb your hair or you shouldn't wear any, you know, expensive clothes. I think most of us have clothes that are far more expensive than what poor people in the villages have. We're not here to be legalists, to make rules on that.

But I would say this, that do you place more value on the state of your spirit than on your clothes? Then you're okay. You know when you are careful about the selection of your shoes and your clothes and careful about the way you make yourself attractive with your hair and all, that's okay. But are you as careful with your spirit? Do you spend as much time before God as you do with making up your face? That's a pretty searching question.

And that will reveal to you what your true values are. Nobody knows that but you. And then you ask yourself, do you think Mary was spending so much time, more time? I'm sure that Mary was neatly dressed.

I'm sure she combed her hair, she wore decent clothes and etc. But I think God was more important to her than all these things. And then compare yourself and ask yourself, dear young sisters, are you ready for the coming of the Lord? Here was one of those young women was ready.

God saw. Those are the type of young girls God wants in the last days. I believe all women, married and unmarried, must be neatly dressed.

They must be attractive and because God's made us to be like that. I don't believe in being shabby or ugly or and anything that helps you in that is okay. But make your inner adornment more important.

Then ask yourself, are you more like Mary or are you more like one of these models that appear on television or in the newspaper advertisements? Who do you seek to fashion yourself after? You can be religious. You may be very good at singing and there are people who are choir leaders, women in different churches who have a lot of prominence. I don't think God would have chosen any of them.

But here it says in 1 Peter 3, the imperishable quality, verse 4, of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. I believe that's what Mary had. It's always been precious in God's eyes throughout the centuries.

I think when he made Eve, he wanted Eve to have this precious quality of a gentle and quiet spirit. Quiet spirit doesn't mean she never talks. There are some people, some women who don't talk, who don't have a gentle spirit or a quiet spirit.

They're pretty agitated. They just have the ability. They're good at yoga to keep it all in sight.

It doesn't mean a thing. I'm talking about a spirit that's at rest in God, a meek and a quiet spirit. I would urge you to value that.

God has got many pleasant surprises for such young girls. You'll be ready for the coming of Christ. She was given a promise, which of course no other woman can ever get, that she was going to be the mother of Messiah.

She was a simple girl. She said, how can this be? I've never known any man. She kept herself pure and said, how can this be? See what the angel said.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you. Dear young girls, seek for that. You can't have Christ physically born through you.

That's already done. But Christ can be born in you, in your character. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, he said, I'm like a mother in travail until Christ is formed in you.

So it's right for us to use that expression spiritually as well. That like the body of Jesus was physically formed in Mary's womb, that the character of Christ can be formed in your heart. How will that be? It's not going to be by your determination or your gritting your teeth.

It's going to be when the Holy Spirit, you allow the Holy Spirit to come and fill you, take control of you completely. And you say to him, Lord, get rid of from my life, everything that displeases you. Anything in my life that's more valuable than Jesus, I lay on the altar.

Yeah. God can do amazing things. He wants young girls in these days to be ready for his coming.

And when he has found such young girls, very often, if it is his will, he will also have some young man ready to marry. He had Joseph ready to marry Mary. He wasn't a very rich man or a clever man.

He was just a carpenter. I mean, socially, economically equal to Mary. And that's usually how God does it.

God usually unites people who are more or less on the same level, economically, educationally, socially, etc. But the thing I appreciate about Joseph, I mean, the thing that strikes me, that's the second person we see who knew about the coming of Christ. And we looked at Mary, let's look at Joseph in Matthew chapter 1. It says here, the first thing mentioned about Joseph in the New Testament is, I like that, the Holy Spirit says, verse 19, he was a righteous man.

Matthew 1.19. He was a righteous man. Now I want to speak to young men. That's what must be said about you.

If you want to be ready for the coming of the Lord, that the Holy Spirit can look at you and say, not you're a clever man. Do you want that reputation? Do you want a reputation in the church that you're a clever man? You want a reputation that you're a great preacher? Joseph, I don't think he could preach better than most of us here. Many of you are better preachers than Joseph.

Many of you know more of the Scriptures than Joseph. But he was a righteous man, the Holy Spirit says. First person mentioned in the New Testament is a righteous man.

Long for that. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They will be satisfied.

They'll be filled. And if you're not more righteous and more holy today, the reason is that God saw you didn't desire to be more righteous or holy. All of us are going to be as holy as we want to be.

If I'm not more holy today, it's because God seen that I'm not so desirous to be more holy. Every one of us will acquire as much holiness as we passionately desire because of God's Word. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

They'll be filled. You know, you go to the petrol station, petrol bunk and ask them to give you five liters. They'll give you five liters.

You want to pay only for that. You go and say, I want 20 liters. Okay, then you put your 20 liters in your car.

Somebody else says, go and fill her up. He gets filled up. It's like that.

You get from God. You say, Lord, I'm willing to pay the price only for five liters. Okay, you get five liters and that's all you have.

And somebody else says, Lord, fill me up. I'm willing to pay the price. I know it's going to cost a lot, but I'm willing to pay the price.

Jesus said, sit down and count the cost. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They'll be filled.

I'll tell you this. That's why I say we're all filled according to how much we're willing to pay the price. If you're not more righteous, you don't overcome certain sins in your life.

Still, it's because deep down, you're not willing to pay the price to overcome that anger or that lust or something else. Joseph was a righteous man. According to his level in the old covenant.

Now, I want you to notice the context in which he says he was a righteous man. It says here in verse 18, that before he was married to Mary, he discovered that she was pregnant. I don't know how he discovered it.

Maybe he just observed. After a few months, after the baby was beginning to be formed in her womb, he discovered, hey, this girl I'm engaged to is pregnant. Now, you know, whenever we hear or observe according to our understanding, we usually, when we see something or hear something, we all have a tendency like the children of Adam to judge according to what our eyes have seen and our ears have heard.

Some, it is worse than that. We go by hearsay. Some information that came second hand or third hand or 50th hand, we heard it and usually twisted and warped by the time that information came to us, we believe it.

And if we are stupid people, we will be the 51st person to go and tell somebody else that. And that's how a lot of believers are. But some others are a little better.

They say, I heard it with my own ears or I saw it with my own eyes. Do you know Jesus was even better than that? It says about Jesus in Isaiah chapter 11, a wonderful verse, which I would recommend all of you who want to follow Jesus, seek to follow. I'm not saying this as one who has never made a mistake in this area.

I've made numerous mistakes in this area, but I've learned a lesson. Isaiah 11 and speaking about the prophecy of the spirit resting upon Jesus in verse two, and he would fear the Lord. And one of the marks of the fear of the Lord in verse three, how do we know whether you reverence God or not? Here's a good test.

He would never judge by what his eyes saw or make a decision by what his ears heard. But with righteousness, he would judge. We can judge by what our eyes see and our ears hear.

That's one way of judgment. The whole race of Adam does it like that. I said, some are worse than that.

They go by hearsay. But Jesus would judge with righteousness and say, yeah, I saw that. I heard it, but it may not be exactly as I saw.

It may not be exactly as I heard. There may be another reason which I don't understand. You know that our eyes deceive us.

Do you know that our senses are deceiving us all the time? We don't even realize it. Have you heard the story of the two little boys who were watching the sunset? And one boy, the older boy, the clever one, ten years old, they're usually quite clever when they're ten, said to his four year old younger brother, see the sun was there in the east, now it's here in the west. The sun has moved.

And the little boy said, no, you remember what daddy told us? That the sun doesn't move. It's the earth under our feet that's moving. And the older boy, the clever one, the ten year old, he said, no, I saw with my own eyes, the sun's here now.

And I never felt the earth moving under my feet. I believe what I see. And the four year old said, I believe daddy.

You know who was wise. Listen to your heavenly father. He's always right.

Don't judge by what your eyes see or your ears hear. But Joseph, he was not in that level yet. The Holy Spirit hadn't come upon him like it comes upon us.

So you couldn't blame him for judging. This girl is pregnant. There's only one way that women get pregnant from the time of Eve.

That's when they have had a relationship with a man. But it's an absolute scandal. You know, in the Old Testament, I don't know whether you know the rule.

The law was, if a woman who's engaged becomes pregnant, she has to be killed. That was a law, the law of Moses. That's the way God kept Israel pure in those days.

She has to be killed. You've got to bring her to the elders. Talk about her.

Joseph didn't do that. He had something of the Spirit of Christ, who when a woman caught in adultery was brought before him. He said, no, don't.

Whoever's without sin, throw the first stone. Here was a woman whom Joseph thought had been in adultery, brought before him, and he wouldn't throw a stone. That's why he's called a righteous man.

When you don't throw stones at people. Being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her. What's the mark of a righteous man? First mention of a righteous man in the New Testament.

What is the mark of that man? He does not want to disgrace other people. He does not want to expose other people's sins. Love covers a multitude of sins.

Joseph did it before that verse was written in 1 Peter 4. Wonderful. And he wanted to send her away secretly. He said, well, okay, maybe she slipped up.

Remember, he's got no idea this is the Holy Spirit. He's okay, maybe she slipped up. I always knew she was a good girl.

I've known her for some time and she's really God-fearing. I don't know, maybe she was raped or I don't know what happened, but I don't want to disgrace her. I want to cover up the whole thing and send her away secretly, so that nobody knows about it.

I don't feel it's right for me to marry her, but maybe somebody else can, it's okay. Maybe the man who had a relationship with her, maybe she can go and marry him, because this is not my child. You see the mark of the first righteous man mentioned in the New Testament, and that's a good thing for all of us, men and women, to ask ourselves.

Is this how we behave when we hear what we think is the truth about somebody else, something evil? You know, we have a nature that would rather spread bad things we hear about other people, than good things we hear about other people. That's part of Adam's nature. Jesus has come to change all that.

He's come to change all that, so that we'd rather speak about the good things that we hear about other people. What does it mean to turn the world upside down, like we read in Acts 17? Christ has come to turn, actually, the world right-side up. The world is already upside down.

Right-side up means that we behave the opposite way that everybody else behaves. Everybody else is going to spread bad stories about others, we're going to spread good stories about others. And of course, as long as we live in this world, we will hear a lot of evil things, we will see a lot of evil things, and we just let it die with us.

It's good to be like that. You know, in my position as an elder in a church, there are many, many people who have come and told me things, not even my wife will hear about it. Not even my fellow elders will hear about it.

It dies with me, and not only dies with me. I asked the Lord, Lord, I know I can't forget this thing I heard by tomorrow, but in a couple of years, can you take it out of my memory as well? Or let it sink so low in my memory that I won't even know what this person came and told me. I won't remember it.

And many a time, I found God's answer in my prayer. Somebody comes and tells me, Brother Zak, you remember I told you that two or three years ago? I said, did you? I don't even remember it. I said, Lord, you answered my prayer.

You know why? Because if I don't keep my mind pure, I won't be able to receive God's Word. And that's so important for me, because the Bible says man shall live by the Word of God. And in my position, it's also important for other people to whom I have to give that word.

So I don't know about you, but I've got to keep my mind absolutely pure. And I'll tell you this, keep your mind pure too. You can bless the people who come to your home.

You can bless the people you talk to in your office with a word from God, a word in season. This is how we're going to be ready for the coming of Christ. We're talking about people who knew about the first

coming of Christ.

We're talking about people to whom God speaks and reveals himself. We're talking about people for whom God has pleasant surprises around the corner. I want to be one of those.

He was a righteous man. He didn't want to disgrace her. Will you pray a little prayer? I'm not asking you to take a decision.

You can take a decision. You've taken many decisions in your life and which you have never kept resolutions, etc. It's much better instead of taking a decision to pray a prayer.

Lord, help me never to disgrace anybody by my words, by my gossip. If I gossip something, let it be something good about someone. I have spent enough years gossiping bad things.

Now let me put something on the other side of the balance, which is so heavily tilted in the wrong direction right now. Let me put some good gossip on the other side of the balance so that I can make up for all the years where I have been spreading bad things, not wanting to disgrace her and trying to hide the whole thing. God wants to reveal.

Reveal it. Let him do it. That's been my position, even concerning people whom we've had to discipline in this church in the past.

Fortunately, it's only been two or three in 33 years, but I wouldn't tell people about the reason fully, even when they have accused me of being hard towards them. I told them, I'm a Christian and I will not disgrace you. I will not hurt your family.

No, I'm a Christian. Even if you don't behave like a Christian, I'm still a Christian. So I tell you, God's blessed me, because God treats us as we treat other people.

Please remember this. God will treat you the way you treat others. And God's been very good to me.

I want to be very good to others. He has hidden my sins. I want to hide the sins of others.

Hasn't he hidden your sins, my brother, sister? Things that you did in your life, which you'd be ashamed if other people knew about. How God is that he's hidden it all. Be like that to others.

Yeah. And to such a person, it says, the angel appeared in a dream. The Lord, the angel of the Lord, verse 20, appeared in a dream and said, Joseph, don't be afraid because it's not as you thought.

This is of the Holy Spirit. I know it's never happened before. It was the first time in history it's happened, but it has happened.

The most unbelievable thing. Joseph had to believe it because God told him. Wasn't it good that he didn't put her away? Wasn't it good that he thought about it, that he didn't immediately act? Oh, how many mistakes we have made when we think something and immediately go and do something instead of waiting? It's a good thing Joseph waited.

It says here that, you know, this is something the Lord spoke to me once when I was reading Matthew chapter 1. I think it's the Living Bible or somewhere where it says, or even in the Message Bible, it says, he was trying to figure a way out. It says, verse 20, he had considered this. He was trying to figure out

now, how shall I cover this whole thing up? And how shall I put away Mary with least exposure, with zero exposure? And he was, he was thinking about that and thinking about that and thinking about doing good to Mary and to sleep.

And he had a dream. And what the Lord spoke to me is, in those last moments before you go to bed, what are you thinking about? Think about doing good to somebody. Then you'll have some good dreams, like Joseph had a good dream.

That really spoke to my heart. Because I know in my past years, how my foolishness, I'm just like you, being a child of Adam, with a flesh like anybody else's. Many a time we lie down in bed and before we go to bed, we're not thinking good thoughts about somebody else.

Maybe somebody harmed you. Don't you think Joseph thought Mary had harmed him? Cheated on him? What is worse than a woman engaged to be married, cheating on your fiancé with another man? And here was this man, before the day of Pentecost, a man who didn't know the New Testament or any of those things, thinking as he went to bed, how can I cover this whole thing up? He was a righteous man. And such, and he had a dream.

A dream where God revealed something to him. And I said, Lord, I want to have dreams at night. Dreams of the kingdom.

Dreams where you speak to me. But then, if you want dreams like that, before you go to bed, you have to think good thoughts about others. Take that as a word from the Lord.

And if you don't believe me, try it out. Do some homework and see if it works. I tell you, it does.

What do you gain? What have you gained in all these years of dreaming when you've ever gone to bed thinking bad thoughts about others? You haven't gained much, have you? You've got only one life, brother, sister. Coming of the Lord is near. Don't waste it.

Let's be ready for the coming of Christ. This is a man to whom God revealed. Jesus is going to be born.

The Messiah you've been waiting for all your life, Joseph. He's going to be born. And he's going to be born through the woman whom you chose to be your wife.

Why did God choose Joseph? Why does God choose young people today? He sees something in them of uprightness, of goodness and righteousness as a result of the Holy. In other words, they've responded to the Holy Spirit. Not in their unconverted state.

In their unconverted state, we're all evil. We could be as bad as the thief on the cross. It doesn't matter.

We could be like prostitutes, like some prostitutes who are converted. We could be evil in so many ways. But we're cleansed and forgiven.

And God says, I don't remember your past anymore. But after we are cleansed and after we have given to Christ, how is it then? God's looking for young people who are righteous. Who treat other people the way God has treated them.

Who are kind and gracious and merciful to others. And when they go to bed at night, they're thinking of how to do some good to somebody else. What a blessed way to live.

Imagine if from today onwards, every single night, you went to bed thinking about how to do some good to someone. I tell you, between now and the end of this year, you'll have some pretty interesting dreams. Mark my word, you'll hear God speaking to you.

He will. And it won't be like the dreams that a lot of these false prophets go around saying. It'll be God himself.

You know, so that's the second person. There's a lot we can think about it. But again, you find a mention here of the Holy Spirit.

That's the point. With a number of these cases of people who are ready for the coming of the Lord, you see a reference to the Holy Spirit. That's what I want you to notice.

Mary, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. Here the angel tells Joseph that this which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And he's going to save his people from their sins.

The first promise in the New Testament was given to Joseph. The first promise in the Bible that somebody would not only forgive your sin but give you victory over sin was given to a young man, Joseph, who treated other people the way God treated him. You can hear that word from God.

Jesus can save you from your sins when you are like Joseph. And it says here when he got up, verse 24, he just did as the Lord commanded him. He said, that's fine.

I won't ask any more questions, Lord. I'm not even going to ask Mary, how did this all happen? I want to check up. No need to check up.

No need to check up anything. He got up and said, Mary, we're going to get married. I accept you.

Isn't that wonderful? Now, another example I want to show you now is, of those who were informed about the coming of the Lord. Number three is Zachariah and Elizabeth. In Luke chapter 1, again, we read about these.

They were informed that they would have a child, and that would be John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner for the coming of the Messiah. So they knew the coming of the Messiah is pretty soon. And it says here that in Luke chapter 1, there was this priest, verse 5, named Zacharias.

His wife was Elizabeth. And again, see what it says about them. They were both righteous in the sight of God.

These are the people to whom God spoke and prepared them for the first coming of Christ. And we can learn something from them. These are the type of people whom God will have on earth, will be ready and alert for the second coming of Christ.

They were righteous, not in the sight of men. Oh, that's worthless. Not even righteous in their own eyes.

The Pharisees were like that. It says here, this wonderful phrase, they were righteous in the sight of God. I want that to be said about me at a much higher level than Zacharias, because he was under the old covenant.

Righteous in the sight of God. Almighty God, my father, please certify that about me. Pray that prayer.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst and they'll be walking blamelessly. That doesn't mean they were perfect. Blameless means they were not consciously making a mistake.

And they're according to the level of light they have, which is much less than what we have. According to their level of light, they got a hundred percent. It's like a student in first standard gets a hundred percent in mathematics, but his knowledge of mathematics is less than one percent of all the knowledge of mathematics in the world.

But he's got a hundred percent. According to his understanding, he can't get a hundred and one. He got a hundred out of a hundred.

And according to the light that Zacharias and Elizabeth had, they got a hundred out of a hundred. And I want to tell you the good news that God does not ask you to live according to the light somebody else has. You don't even have to live according to the light your wife or husband have.

You certainly don't have to live according the light I have. You have to live according to the light of your own conscience and you'll be declared blameless. And that's, I'll tell you, when I've understood this truth, it's helped me, stopped me from judging other people.

I sometimes see a brother or sister doing something which my conscience will not permit me to do or say. But I say I don't judge them because I may be in sixth standard and he may be in the first standard. And if a first standard student, if a sixth standard student goes to a first standard student and asks that first standard student, why don't you know anything about geometry? Who is the fool? Tell me.

Definitely the sixth standard student. But that is the foolishness of many believers who expect their wives to live according to their conscience, their own conscience. Who expect their husbands, you must live according to my conscience.

Do you know the amount of conflict particularly religious minded people? You must pray as much as I pray. You must read the Bible as much as I read the Bible. You must get up and I read, get up.

You must not do this. You must not do that. And these people think they are holy.

They are not holy. They are humbugs, religious hypocrites and Pharisees who mess up their marriages because they think, if I'm in this standard, you must be in that standard. And I'll tell you another thing.

If you've got light on something and the other person doesn't have light, don't think you're superior to that person in every area. You may be in sixth standard in physics and the kindergarten in mathematics. That's how it is in the kingdom of God is something like that.

You get light in one area and you don't have light in another area. And that person whom you despise may be in the first standard in physics but may be in the tenth standard in mathematics, if you understand the illustration. There are things which, you know, all of us, it's not just one subject.

There are different areas. Some people may have a little more light in one area. A lot of people are very, who've got a lot of light in the area of money, but not very, don't have much light in the area of their speech and vice versa.

So growth is not equal in all areas. Blameless means according to your conscience. Don't allow yourself to be condemned by somebody trying to make you live according to their conscience in any area.

You go by your conscience and don't judge other people by your conscience. He was blameless. We need to understand this word blameless.

Blameless is different from perfect. Perfect means you know everything about mathematics in the world. No, you're not.

Nobody's perfect. Blameless means according to your level, your class you're in. They walked in the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

They were obedient, but they had no child because they were both advanced in years. Now here we saw about young men like Joseph and Mary. Now here we see about an old man.

How do you think, it says in verse 7, they were advanced in years. How old do you think they were? I'm nearly 69. Do you think I'm advanced in years? You young people tell me.

What do I talk to you? No, I'm pretty young. I think these folks must have been probably 80 or more. They were advanced in years.

80 year old people, 85, walking with God, blameless, upright and being told about the coming of Christ. God loves old people. He loves young people.

He wants all of them in his kingdom. He wants them all to be ready for his coming. I like this.

Some of the first people who knew about the coming of Christ was one young couple and one older couple. Isn't that great? It's no partiality with God. Joseph and Mary and Zachariah and Elizabeth.

Wonderful. But there was something good about them. They were righteous according to their understanding.

I'm sure Zacharias had more understanding on righteousness than Mary and Joseph. So he was yet to be at a higher standard. Have you ever wondered why? Question.

God told Zacharias you're gonna have a son and he said how can this be? God told Mary you're gonna have a son and she said how can this be? Zacharias was struck dumb. Mary was not struck dumb. Why? What's the answer? Is there partiality with God? To whom more is given, more is required.

If you're in the 10th standard, God expects more from you than if you're in the first standard. So two brothers do the same thing and God punishes one more severely than the other. Why? Because that person's been a believer for 50 years.

This person's converted yesterday. They both did the same thing. It's not the same thing.

If an elder brother, certainly in our churches, if he falls into adultery, I would never allow him to be an elder for the rest of his life. He can be forgiven, come back, break bread, but never again in eldership. No, not in his whole life.

But if an ordinary young brother falls into adultery, after being born again, being part of a church, one day he can grow up to be an elder brother. Why? Learn from Zacharias and Mary. They both said, did the same, made the same mistake.

One was struck dumb and the other was not. Remember this, my brother, sister, the more you know of God, the greater your responsibility. That's why we have to take it seriously.

Elizabeth. What do we see about Elizabeth? It says here, even about Zacharias, I want to say this later on, it's written in chapter 1 verse 67, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and he prophesied. Again, you see this emphasis on the Holy Spirit in relation to those people who were ready for the coming of the Lord.

Mary, the Holy Spirit. Joseph, the Holy Spirit. Zacharias, the Holy Spirit.

Now let's look at Elizabeth. It says when the angel came to Mary and told her, and the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you'll have a child, he gave her a little help also to have faith. And that help was, verse 36 of Luke 1, she said, behold your relative, that was her auntie, Elizabeth was her auntie, your aunt Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age.

And she's already six months pregnant. So you see nothing is impossible with God. Then Mary had faith.

Elizabeth, my aunt, pregnant at the age of 90, that's amazing. There was another reason I believe why Zacharias was struck dumb. Because what was he, what was prophesied to Elizabeth that already happened once before? There was another woman who was 90 years old, who had a child.

And that was Sarah. Zacharias knew it. So there was no need to ask how would this be? Whereas when Mary said, I'm a virgin, how can it be? It had never happened before.

So there is a difference. But coming to Elizabeth, it says Mary got up when the Holy Spirit had spoken to her and she went immediately, verse 39, Luke 1, 39, and came to the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting and little John the Baptist leaped in Elizabeth's womb.

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. You see again, those people were all filled with the Holy Spirit. That's the way to be ready for Christ's coming.

The Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, Elizabeth. Filled with the Holy Spirit and she cried out with a loud voice and said, blessed are you among women.

Blessed is the fruit of your womb. How has it happened that the mother of my Lord would come to me? And the sound of your greeting came in my ears. The baby leaped in my womb and blessed are you Mary for believing because that'll be fulfilled in you.

You know something I like about this old 90 year old lady. She can look at a young sister, 19 years old, and respect her. Admire her.

How many of you older sisters talk to young sisters like this? Respecting them, admiring them if they're godly. I tell you most old sisters I've met are experts. They are here to set right all the young sisters.

You mustn't do this, you mustn't do that, you mustn't do that. And if Elizabeth was like you, as soon as Mary came, she'd have had a list of instructions for Mary. But Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and that's the difference between you and her.

She could appreciate that God had done something in a young sister and she could encourage her. And I want to give a little bit of advice to all of you who think you are experts older sisters and older brothers. Encourage these younger people and if they've got something better than you, don't you think Mary got

something better than Elizabeth? Elizabeth was only getting John the Baptist, Mary was getting Jesus.

And if you find some of those younger sisters have a better anointing and a greater, something more blessed than you have, just rejoice. Can you leap for joy when you see some young sister developing? Or are you there to with your shrewd eyes and to find fault with this and find fault with that and her clothes and her shoes and this and that and the other thing? Shame on you. You're not ready for the coming of the Lord.

I'll tell you that. You know what you need older sisters? To be filled with the Holy Spirit. Older brothers too.

I like that about Elizabeth. Oh he says I'm excited something good's happened to you. Are you excited when something good happens to somebody? Something better than what happened to you? Are you excited? It's a mark of godly people.

They rejoice when God does something good for other people. Why can't we all be like this? These are written in Scripture. These are the people to whom God revealed Jesus is going to be born.

I want to be one of those who want to be who's ready for the coming of Christ. And I tell you I learn a lot from the examples of Mary, Joseph, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Many many many things in relation to God revealing the coming of Christ.

Not everybody in Israel knew that the Messiah would be born. Why did God pick one here, one there, one here, one there, one young man, one young woman, one old man, one old woman? God cannot be fooled. He's not fooled by religious language.

He's not fooled by loud singing. He's not fooled by long prayers. He's not fooled by fasting.

He's not fooled by any of those things. He sees our heart. He knows us through and through.

Do you want to be a man of God in these last days? Do you want to be a woman of God? Doesn't matter your age. You may be 90 or 19. Doesn't make a difference with God.

You can be ready for Christ's coming. What a need there is in our time to have a large heart towards young people and to tell them what God has spoken to you. Luke 1 45 will be fulfilled.

Be a brother sister who can give faith to those around you. To speak a firm word to people what God said to you. It'll be fulfilled sister.

Don't let anybody say anything else. Don't worry about what people say Mary. What God has said will be fulfilled.

Can you imagine the encouragement Mary got? She got so encouraged that she began to prophesy a little later. Wonderful. I like that.

Well, there's a lot more you can meditate on yourself. Scripture is such a deep well. If you stop your gossip and stop spending your time thinking about all the evils of others, maybe you'll get some revelation in Scripture.

It's far more profitable and you'll be ready for Christ's coming. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, help us to learn lessons that transform our lives and make us ready for your coming.

We humbly ask in Jesus name, Amen.

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