(1) Announcement of Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5–25)

1. King Herod reigned from 37–4 BC.
   a. Born in the late 70's BC into an aristocratic Idumean (Edomite) family that had converted to Judaism in the reign of John Hyrcanus I.
   b. Herod's father, Antipater, was advisor to Hyrcanus II. Both Antipater and Herod became loyal servants of Rome and were rewarded accordingly.
      1) Herod was nominated King of Judea by Mark Antony in 37 BC. Octavius presented Herod to the Roman Senate and the Senate appointed Herod unanimously as King of the Jews.
      2) Hated by Cleopatra, and had many land disputes with Egypt.
      3) Appointment confirmed by Octavius (Augustus) in 30 BC.
   c. Married into the Jewish Hasmonean (high priest & ruling) dynasty, but was never accepted by the Jewish people.

2. Zacharias & Elizabeth are described with notable terms (Lk. 1:5–7).
   a. Zacharias was of the priestly division of Abijah. This division was the 8th division of the 24 that David organized.
   b. Elizabeth was also of the priestly line of Aaron.
   c. They are described as righteous (δίκαιος dikaios #1342) and blameless (ἀμέμπτος amemptos #273). Only Noah is described elsewhere in such terms (Gen. 6:9).
   d. Elizabeth's barrenness and the miraculous baby are reminiscent of Sarah & Rebekah.

3. Gabriel appears to Zacharias as a response to his prayers (Lk. 1:11–17).
   a. A son born by means of a miracle and named by the commandment of God (v.13).
   b. A son born with a specific purpose in the Grace Eternal Plan of the Ages (vv.15–17; Mal. 4:5,6).
      2) In the spirit and power of Elijah. Not the literal Elijah returned to announce 2nd Advent (Mal. 3:1–4).
   c. John the Baptist would operate under a life-long Nazirite vow, and be blessed with the life-long indwelling of God the Holy Spirit—even before his personal salvation (v.15; cf. Num. 6:1–21). He is described as the greatest Old Testament saint (Matt. 11:11).