

Called to Believe

Key Verse: *“Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”*
—Luke 1:20

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:5-25

OUR LESSON DEALS WITH the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist, during the reign of Herod the Great, the king of Judea. John’s father Zacharias, was a priest “of the course of Abia,” and his mother, “was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.” (Luke 1:5) Both of them, according to the account, led a proper life by following God’s commandments and trusting in him. They had continued in this life of devotion to

God, and were now well advanced in age and were childless, because Elisabeth was barren.—vss. 6,7

As Zacharias carried out his duties as a priest, he went to the Temple to burn incense when the people had gathered there to pray. “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” (vs. 11) Zacharias was full of fear when he saw the angel, but was comforted and assured by the angel’s words, “Thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.” (vs. 13) The angel went on to explain that the child’s birth would bring joy to many people, and would be a cause of great gladness. He also explained that the child would be raised in a special manner, “and he shall be filled with

the Holy Spirit.” (vs. 15) His birth and subsequent life would help to restore harmony between Israel, and “the fathers,” representing the patriarchs. We realize that this pictures the world also coming into a condition of harmony and peace with God in his kingdom. This dear son would be a forerunner, or introducer, to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. John would “go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.” (vs. 17) He would have an uncompromising and fearless spirit, backed by the power of Divine truth.—I Kings 18:25-41; Mal. 4:5

The proclamation caught Zacharias by surprise as evidenced by his response. “Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” (Luke 1:18) These words led up to our Key Verse, in which Zacharias was told that he would not be able to speak again because of his unbelief until the events ‘shall be performed.’ (vs. 20) The angel Gabriel, who was one of the most honored angels, being inferior only to Michael, spoke these words. (Jude 9) He had often stood in the presence of God, and was sent by him to reveal the wonderful news to John.

When Zacharias departed from the Temple, he was met by a throng of people who had waited for him. As he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and was only able to beckon to them. They perceived from this “that he had seen a vision in the temple.” (Luke 1:22) Elisabeth did conceive, and would hide herself for five months, saying, “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.”—vs. 25

As in the cases of Sarah (Gen. 18:9-14), Hannah (I Sam. 1:5-27) and the Shunamite (II Kings 4:14-17), Divine power quickened the natural forces when they were dormant, inoperative, or suspended, to accomplish God’s will. As we recall the Lord’s words, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”—Luke 18:27 ■