

An Angel Speaks to Zacharias

Key Verse: *“The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”*
—*Luke 1:13*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:5-17

continued in the way of righteousness to God, but were now well advanced in age and childless because Elisabeth was barren.—vss. 6,7

As Zacharias performed his duties as a priest, he went to the temple to burn incense when the people had gathered there to pray. As he did so, “there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” Zacharias was full of fear when he saw the angel, but was assured by the messenger’s words, quoting again from our Key Verse, “Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

OUR LESSON CONCERNS

the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist during the reign of Herod the Great, 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 Zacharias and Elisabeth, according to the account, led a proper life by following God’s commandments and trusting in him. They had

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, even from his mother's womb."—vss. 9-15

The news was overwhelming. After so many years he and Elisabeth would be blessed with a son; and no ordinary son, but one who would grow to manhood and become a great prophet of the Lord. He would turn the hearts of many in Israel to the Lord their God. He would do so in the spirit and power of Elijah the prophet, in fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy.—Mal. 4:5,6

This was more than Zacharias could believe, and he expressed doubt. "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years. And the angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."—Luke 1:18-20, *New King James Version*

We are instructed by this incident. As Zacharias' wavering faith led to a lessening of the glory of the moment, so our unbelief at times will diminish the manifestation of God's power in our lives. Let us listen, and believe, when God speaks through his providences.

John's birth and subsequent life helped to restore harmony between many in Israel and their faithful ancient "fathers." This dear son of Zacharias and Elisabeth would be the forerunner to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, Jesus. John would "go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah." (vs. 17, *NKJV*) He would have an uncompromising and fearless spirit, backed by the power of divine Truth.—I Kings 18:17-41 ■