

An Angel Speaks to Zacharias

Key Verse: *“The angel said to him, Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.”*
—*Luke 1:13, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:5-20

ZACHARIAS AND HIS WIFE

Elizabeth led lives devoted to God and his service. Their faithfulness is forever memorialized in Luke’s Gospel: “They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (Luke 1:6, NKJV) Their life was blessed, save for one thing. They had no child, Elizabeth being barren. Perhaps the promise of God was often on their mind: “If you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God,

... all these blessings shall come upon you. ... Blessed shall be the fruit of your body.”—Deut. 28:1-4, NKJV

While walking blamelessly in the divine commandments and ordinances, Zacharias and Elizabeth did not waiver in their service and devotion to God, despite the lack of an heir. They would soon be rewarded. Many persons of great consequence in the plan of God were born to parents who had long been childless. Recall the delay in the births of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samson and Samuel. God sometimes keeps his people waiting for the fulfillment of his blessings in order to amplify the

magnitude of it when finally granted. Such was to be the case in the birth of Zacharias' and Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist.

Zacharias was an Aaronic priest of Israel. "While he was serving as priest before God, ... according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord." (Luke 1:8,9, *NKJV*) While engaged in his duty, an angel appeared to him. Zacharias was very afraid. The Jews believed that seeing an angel would bring death to the beholder. The angel of the Lord was quick to reassure him, speaking to him the words of our Key Verse. To this, the angel then added, "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth."—vs. 14, *NKJV*

The news was overwhelming. After so many years he 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, fulfilling Malachi's prophecy, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers."—Mal. 4:5,6, *NKJV*

This was more than Zacharias could believe, and he expressed doubt. "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 1:19,20, *NKJV*) We are instructed by this incident. As Zacharias' wavering led to a diminishing 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. ■