



World Christian Fellowship

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Zacharias - Faithful Priest faithless

Luke 1:18-25

Luke 1:18-25, *Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." ¹⁹ The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."*

²¹ *Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.*

²³ *When his time of service was completed, he returned home. ²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. ²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."*

Last two weeks we have been looking at the life of Zacharias.

Zacharias the priest.

Zacharias Divine encounter.

Today we will look at how this Faithful priest was faithless?

V 18, Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

Zacharias could have asked any other question, but he chose to ask how can I be sure?

Reason:

He is old

His wife also old.

So, in effect he ask the angel, what makes you think that I can believe this?"

Zacharias could have said,

- I am overwhelmed!
- I am shocked!
- I am so happy!
- I am so thrilled!

Would you pass my thanks on to God?

But Zacharias did not. He was a sceptic.

First of all, Angels does not show up every day. There was no divine visitation for the last 500 years.

Secondly, God has not spoken to the nation of Israel over 400 years.

Thirdly, miracles do not happen often. Certainly, for Zacharias to have a child it needs a miracle.

Zacharias knew they were past child-bearing age and even when they were in the normal years of childbearing capacity, she was barren.

Isn't it amazing?

He had been praying for a child and God sends an angel to announce he is going to have one and he does not believe it!

Remember the story in Acts 12?

Peter imprisonment and church praying for his release when he was released the church does not believe. (**Acts 12:1-17**)

God gives Zacharias an answer and he does not believe it!

Now in the long past

Abraham asked God how can he be sure? **Genesis 15.**

Gideon asked the same question to God in **Judges 6.**

Hezekiah did the same thing to God through the prophet Isaiah in **2 Kings 20.**

They asked God for more explanation when He had spoken to them things that were hard to understand.

Zacharias was righteous man, faithful to God but this was too much, he just could not believe this.

Does he need stronger evidence than a word from God?

The same question was asked to Jesus.

Luke 16:30-31, *“No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’³¹ “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”*

Peter wrote in his epistle very clearly.

2 Peter 1:17-19, *He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*

What could be more certain than a word from God?

Zacharias did not believe the Word of God.

That is serious disbelieve the Word of God.

The angel's response is appropriate!

V 19, The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

Who do you think you are talking to?

I am not just some angel or a person, but I am Gabriel!

There are myriads and myriads of angels, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands is the way the Bible in the book of Revelation describes them.

We do not know the exact number of angels, but there are numerous angels that God created. They are holy and live in His presence.

Only two of them are named in the Bible,

Michael, who is sort of super-angel, he shows up when there is a battle to fight.

Gabriel, who is God's number one messenger with the mega messages.

When there is a massive message to deliver like the whole of redemptive history in the coming of the Messiah Gabriel came. Gabriel was sent to Daniel to deliver the establishment of the Kingdom.

When the Messiah's arrival was inaugurated with the birth of the forerunner, John the Baptist, he shows up to make the announcement to this humble priest.

Gabriel was the one who came later Mary with the announcement that she would bear the Messiah.

Luke 1:26, *In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,*

Gabriel who came to Daniel in chapter 9 and told him about the history of redemption, until to the kingdom of Christ.

Gabriel means, "mighty one of God."

Why would he introduce himself as Gabriel?

Because Zacharias is the man who knew the Old Testament and Gabriel appeared in the book of Daniel.

Gabriel came with these earth-shattering messages, monumental ones.

Angels are always sent by God.

They do not act independently.

They are perfect ambassadors for God.

The Angels only do what God sends them to do and say what He sends them to say.

God is the king of the angels and He sends them with His messages.

We can read how God sent angels.

Exodus 23, 32 and 33.

Numbers 20,

1 Chronicles 21,

2 Chronicles 32,

Daniel 3,6, 8, 9, &10.

God dispatches angels with His messages.

" I came to bring you good news."

This is not a message of judgment.

Zacharias may be afraid, but I came with good news. This news is going to make you rejoice, everybody around you rejoice, people in Israel rejoice, and the world rejoice.

Those words "good news" translate the Greek word ***euaggelizō*** or ***euaggelion***, from which we get the "gospel," which is the old English word for good news.

Luke uses this word about ten times and its used once in Matthew 11.

God is sending a Saviour to die for your sins so that you can spend forever in heaven.

That is the good news. It all gets launched with the arrival of His forerunner.

V 20, *And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."*

If you had never been able to have a child and you were in your 70, and suddenly you were going to have a baby, you would be wanting to talk about it.

He could not.

He was not even going to be able to tell the wonderful encounter and the miracle.

Imagine when he goes back to his village after his one-week duty at the temple?

Luke 1:62, *Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.*

He was deaf, and mute. This is severe. It is merciful in that it is temporary.

If you are going to be so unbelieving as not to hear God's Word, then you are not going to be able to speak it.

If you are so faithless as not to believe, you are going to be useless in the proclamation.

So, God shut him up and that was an every day, every moment reminder of his sin of unbelief.

What happened to you, Zacharias?

"I was made mute by an angel because I didn't believe when God spoke to me."

Wouldn't it be good if God did that to people who did not believe His Word?

Then we would know who they were.

The problem is, we would go in and out of being mute most of our lives.

God shut him up.

His normal duty was to teach the Old Testament and tell people about God and give them counsel and wisdom. That is what a priest did during the most of his year. He could not tell this wonderful story. He could not do anything but bear the shame of having been made deaf and dumb by an act of judgment from God.

This was not going to change until the day child is born.

Luke 1:64, *Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.*

At once his mouth was open, his tongue loosed, and he began to speak.

What was first thing Zacharias did?

Praise God.

He was a true believer. He had been told by an angel he was going to have a son. The son was going to be the forerunner of the Messiah. His son was going to be the greatest preacher Israel had ever known. A father would be proud of that. His son was going to turn many hearts to God. He wanted to praise God for that, but he could not, he was mute. He could not praise God. His tongue was stopped. The first time it got loosed, all that pent up praise over nine months long came gushing out.

Not being able to praise God itself a great punishment for Zacharias.

God is sovereign and He will do His plan and it does not rise or fall on the faith of men. God is sovereign.

What changes is not the plan but your part in its unfolding. Faithless people do not change the plan, they just forfeit the blessedness of doing in it what God would want them to do.

It will come. It will happen, just the way we said it will happen. Too bad you will not be able to be a part of the proclamation of that great reality.

Learn to hear God's Word because you will never be given the privilege of proclaiming it if you are not willing to hear it with

faith. Great redemptive acts will occur in God's time, with or without your faith. Better you should believe God and participate and enjoy the privilege of participation as long as its eternal reward.

Outside the Holy Place:

V 21, *Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.*

People must be wondering!

Priest will go inside the Holy place put the incense in the altar and get out from there as soon as possible. Because they were getting very close to the presence of God.

The priest went in every day in the morning and every day in the evening, and he came back out.

How long does it take to put those coals there?

How long does it to put the incense on, watch the smoke go up and get out?

Few minutes.

They are outside the sanctuary.

When the priest does not come out quickly and if there is a delay then the first thought on their mind is that he is been judged by God.

Remember **Leviticus 10**, there was Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, priests. Took their respective fire pans with the coals, after putting the fire in them, placed incense on it, they were going to do the incense offering, but they offered strange fire.

Fire came from the presence of God and burn them in a split second.

So, Moses said to Aaron to be careful.

Leviticus 10:6-9, *And Moses said to Aaron, and to Eleazar and Ithamar, his sons, "Do not uncover your heads nor tear your clothes, lest you die, and wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled. ⁷ You shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die, for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you." And they did according to the word of Moses. ⁸ Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, saying: ⁹ "Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you, nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations,*

There was Uzzah.

Uzzah was among the people who brought the ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem. God said, "Put it on poles, don't touch it, and carry it on shoulders." Poles going through the rings on the sides, and just carry it that way. They thought they had a better idea and they put it on a cart, and they should not have done that. God wants things done His way and He was trying to teach them a lesson.

2 Samuel 6:6-7, *And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.⁷ Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.*

Uzzah wanting to protect it from hitting the ground touched it and instantly died. God was sending a message about reverence and holiness. God gave them some external ways to illustrate what He wanted out of a heart attitude.

According to the Talmud, the priest was to go in and do his work and get out of there as fast as he could. The longer you stayed in there, the more potential for death there might be if you did anything offensive or blasphemous to God.

People on the outside were wondering what had happened to Zacharias.

V 22, *When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.*

Finally, he comes out, but he cannot speak.

He was supposed to give a standard benediction that he was to give when he came out. They all gave it.

Numbers 6:24-26, *“The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; ²⁶The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”*

Zacharias comes out but he could not pronounce blessing except to show some sign language!

The people realized he had seen a vision inside the temple since he was unable to speak and his countenance.

They did not know what it was.

V 23, *When his time of service was completed, he returned home.*

A plain ending to a phenomenal week!

The rest of the week he just went around doing his duty as a priest, sacrificing animals.

Elizabeth, his wife would be waiting for him and it does not say anything about the meeting.

I wish there were a paragraph!

V 24, *After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.*

Luke wants us to know that she did not get pregnant until he came home, less some false accusation be made against her.

That is a miracle!

That is the beginning of the unfolding of the age of miracles that surrounded Jesus and the apostles. A miracle happens to this old couple and she becomes pregnant.

for five months remained in seclusion.

Why?

They knew she was barren. If she started announcing everywhere that she was pregnant, who is going to believe it?

She stays in seclusion. Even her relative Mary did not know she was pregnant. The angel came and told Mary that she was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

Luke 1:36, *Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.*

V 25, *“The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”*

In our first message on Zacharias, we looked at in detail barrenness was a kind of shame/disgrace in the Jewish society.

She knew God had done this miracle!

Application:

1. We all struggle with the problem of doubt.

Doubt is a Problem for even the righteous

Zacharias was righteous in the sight of God!

Being righteous in the sight of the Lord means that his godliness was not an outward show, like the “righteousness” of the Pharisees, but a matter of the heart.

The man walked with God and he had done so for many years. The fact that such a godly man doubted shows us that none are exempt from the problem.

Other great men and women of faith in the Bible also had their moments of doubt.

Sarah stumbled over a similar situation.

When the Lord announced to Abraham that his wife would give birth to a son, Sarah, listening on the other side of the tent wall, laughed in doubt (**Genesis 18:10-15**).

The son of Zacharias, John the Baptist, had a time of doubt.

So, doubt is a problem, even for those who are righteous in God's sight.

If godly men like Zacharias and John fell into doubt, we should be on guard, so that we do not fall. Since even the godly have fallen, we may wonder, "What is the source of doubt?"

Zacharias had an angel suddenly appear and speak a direct revelation from God, but he did not believe.

Later in Luke, the rich man in Hades pleaded with Abraham to send someone to warn his brothers, so that they would not also come to that awful place of torment.

Doubt is not a problem of evidence, but of the sinfulness of the human heart. Even those who are righteous struggle with the sinful nature.

God, who sees the hidden secrets of each person's heart, knew that Zacharias was different than Abraham, Gideon, or Mary. Zacharias was limiting God by the normal course of human nature. He and Elizabeth were too old to have children.

The disciples fell into this error when they were faced with the crowd of 5,000 hungry men, plus women and children.

So even if we have walked with God for years, when we are faced with a seemingly impossible situation, we need to look to our hearts, which are prone to limit the Almighty by human possibilities.

God has given us abundant evidence in Scripture that He is the God of the impossible. Nothing is too difficult for Him. The source of our doubts is not a lack of evidence. It is rather our, sinful hearts.

Zacharias and Elizabeth had been married for a long time. They had entreated God to give them a child and take away their reproach, but God did not answer. Now that they were physically too old to have children, they had come to terms with their disappointment. They had concluded that it must not be God's will. So, when the angel suddenly announced that they would have a child, Zacharias doubted.

You prayed for something so long and your request was denied for so long that you concluded, "It isn't going to happen." Then,

maybe even after you stopped praying, suddenly there was a glimmer of hope that your prayers were about to be answered.

2. God is Faithful.

God does what He says!

Luke underscores this point in several ways. First two chapters of his gospel.

There is a parallel pattern here of two birth announcements (John the Baptist, **Luke 1:5-25**; Jesus the Messiah, **Luke 1:26-38**) Meeting between the two mothers, Mary, and Elizabeth, which serves as the link (**Luke 1:39-56**) two birth stories (**John, 1:57-80**; **Jesus, 2:1-40**).

Although our doubts do not keep God from graciously blessing us according to His promise, He does lovingly discipline us in our doubts, that we may share His holiness.

So, the angel struck Zacharias dumb and deaf. By doubting God's ambassador, he was doubting God Himself. God took that seriously.

As a loving Father, He taught His erring child a lesson he would never forget. The angel specifically states Zacharias' sin: *"because you did not believe my words"* (**Luke 1:20**).

When Elizabeth exclaims of Mary, *“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord”* (**Luke 1:45**).

Since God will fulfil His word, we should be believing, like Mary, not unbelieving, like Zacharias.

Thankfully, doubt need never be fatal. We can recover if we will submit to God’s gracious discipline.

During his months of silence, Zacharias submitted to God by meditating on His Word and being thankful for His faithfulness in fulfilling His gracious promises. This is evident from the stream of praise that gushes forth when he finally has his speech restored (**Luke 1:68-79**).

It is loaded with references to Scripture and how God has fulfilled His promises. If Zacharias had spent those silent months grumbling about how unfair God was to strike him deaf and dumb, he would not have erupted in praise as he did.

We should learn from this godly man.

We can overcome the problem of doubt if we will see that God does what He says He will do.