

CHRISTMAS

AT GRACE DEVOTIONAL

THE ZECHARIAH IN ME: WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? // DECEMBER 6, 2020

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Discussion Starter: Has God ever required you to wait on Him to answer a prayer, open a door of opportunity, guide you in a decision, etc.? What was it like? What did you learn during the waiting time?

Key Passage: *“In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. ¹¹ And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. ¹⁴ And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.’ ¹⁸ And Zechariah said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.’ ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, ‘I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.’ ²¹ And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. ²² And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. ²³ And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. ²⁴ After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, ²⁵ ‘Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.’” (Luke 1:5-25)*

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth are the first major characters we meet in Luke’s Christmas narrative (1:5-6). The name Zechariah means “Jehovah has remembered” and was a popular name in Bible times—there are at least thirty-one men named Zechariah mentioned in the Bible—but the Zechariah to whom Luke refers is particularly special. He was a priest in the temple and the father of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus and was the forerunner of Christ.

Discuss: What impact did your parents have on you with regard to faith in God? If you are a parent, what faith-influence are you having / have you had on your own children?

Regarding his character and ministry as a priest in the temple, Luke says Zechariah was “righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. faithful and diligent in his service for the Lord” (v.6). One day, Zechariah was performing his temple duties when an angel appeared to him (v.11).

Zechariah and Elizabeth had been praying for a son their entire married life, but Elizabeth was barren and well-past childbearing years. But the angel informed Zechariah that he and Elizabeth would have a son who they were to name John, and their son would be the prophet who would go before the Messiah and prepare Israel for His arrival (v.11-17).

Discuss: It seems in the Bible that God likes to make Himself known to believers who are faithfully going about their daily lives (e.g., David tending sheep, Gideon threshing wheat, Peter fishing, etc.)? What can we learn about God and ourselves from this?

This was great news, but Zechariah did not initially believe the angel—he said it was not possible since he and his wife were too old (v.18). Because of Zechariah’s unbelief, the angel told him that he would immediately be rendered mute until baby John was born (v.19-20). When he came out of the temple, he had to communicate with hand gestures to people praying outside the temple that he had seen a vision of some kind (v.21- 22). Zechariah went home and Elizabeth became pregnant (v.23-25).

Discuss: Why are some people—including committed followers of God like Zechariah—sometimes reluctant to believe it when God sends a miracle their way?

Discuss: Where might a person’s expectations of God come from? How can our expectations of God affect our view of God’s work and ways?

Discuss: Zechariah and Elizabeth faithfully followed the Lord and continually prayed for a son. What does this teach us about God? What does this teach us about prayer?

Luke finishes the story of Zechariah in 1:59-79. The baby had been born, and at his circumcision, mute Zechariah wrote, “*His name is John*” on a tablet (v.59-63). Zechariah immediately regained his voice and began to praise God! Zechariah then proclaimed a prophecy in the form of a song. Zechariah’s words indicate how his heart had changed and his faith had grown during his nine months of silence (v.67-79).

Discuss: Zechariah and Elizabeth only wanted a son, but God gave them a prophet! Scripture teaches us that God always gives the best to those who leave the decisions up to Him. When have you experienced God’s best in your life when you yielded a decision to His will rather than trying to insist on your own will or wishes?

Resources

Zechariah at www.biblestudytools.com

All the Men of the Bible by Herbert Lockyer

“How Did God Use Dreams and Visions in the Bible?” article at www.gotquestions.org