

Church Year Story 1 John's Birth Announced by Gabriel

*Catechism and Memory Verse
from the Congregation at Prayer for the Week*

BIBLE STORY: THE ANGEL GABRIEL ANNOUNCES THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST Luke 1:5-25

Central Thoughts

- Zachariah was officiating as a priest of Israel in the liturgy of the temple, confessing the sins of the people and praying for the Lord to forgive their sins and send forth the promised Messiah.
- The Angel Gabriel announced to Zachariah that the Lord had heard these prayers and answered them by sending the Messiah.
- Zachariah and Elizabeth would be the parents of the forerunner of the Savior.
- Faith believes God's promises.
- The Lord keeps His promises in spite of the doubts and unbelief of those who receive them.

Discussion Questions

Who was Zachariah?

A priest

What does it mean that they were "righteous before God" and "blameless"?

They were believers in the Lord's promises of salvation. The Lord declared them righteous and blameless through faith in His promises. They were forgiven.

How is "walking" used in the Scriptures?

It is a word that describes faith or trust in the Lord's Word.

What does it mean that Elizabeth was barren?

She was unable to have children.

What was Zachariah doing when it was his turn to officiate as priest in the temple?

Burning incense at the hour of prayer when the priest led the congregation in the confession of sins and the prayer for forgiveness and to send the promised Messiah (Exodus 30:6-9)

For what was He praying?

For forgiveness and that the Lord would send the Messiah (Daniel 9:20-27)

Who appeared to Zachariah at the altar of incense?

The angel Gabriel

What message did Gabriel bring to Zachariah?

The Lord had heard Zachariah's prayer for the salvation of Israel. The Messiah would be born according to the promises of God's Word. God would send the forerunner, John, to prepare the way for the Lord's coming (Malachi 3:1). John's coming would be like that of Elijah (Malachi 4:5).

How were Zachariah and Elizabeth part of God's plan?

They would be the parents of the forerunner

What does Gabriel say of this child?

Many will rejoice at his birth and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

What does it mean that he would be "filled with the Holy Spirit"?

It means that John had faith in the Lord, even before he was born.

Why would people rejoice at John's birth?

His birth would mean that the Lord's promises were about to be fulfilled and that the Savior was about to be born.

Why was Zachariah struck mute (unable to speak)?

He doubted the very things for which he was praying.

When would Zachariah's mouth be opened?

When the Lord fulfilled His Word and John was born.

What did Elizabeth confess about her pregnancy?

The Lord had shown grace to Elizabeth by allowing her to be the mother of the Savior's forerunner.

Why did Elizabeth hide herself when she was pregnant?

Faith is not proud and does not boast in anything but the Lord's Word and grace.

Meditation on the Bible Story

The Lord keeps the promises of His Word in spite of the doubt and mistrust of those who receive them. Zachariah and Elizabeth were both of the tribe of Levi and descendants of Aaron. It was Zachariah's priestly duty to offer the appointed sacrifices to the Lord and to intercede for people in the liturgy of the temple. Every day at the hour of incense, the designated priest was to offer prayers to the Lord, confessing the sins of the people and crying out to the Lord to fulfill the promises of His salvation by sending the Messiah. Year after year, month after month, week after week, day after day, the prayers for the coming of the Messiah were offered at the time of the lighting of the temple lamps at twilight (see Exodus 30:7-9). When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah at the altar of incense and announced, "The Lord has heard your prayer," Gabriel was declaring that their sins were forgiven and that the Lord was finally sending forth the long-expected Messiah as He had promised, the One for whose coming Israel and her priests had been praying for centuries. This is why Zachariah's doubt is so astounding. He was doubting the fulfillment of the very things for which he was praying in the liturgy. The children of Israel and all her priests knew that the Savior's coming would be preceded by the birth of a forerunner who would prepare the Lord's way. Therefore, when the priests prayed for the Messiah to come, they were also praying for the coming of the prophet like Elijah, who would preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the Lord's name. Despite Zachariah's mistrust, the Lord would keep His Word and send forth the Messiah as He promised. The forerunner would be born to a barren woman and a doubting priest because salvation rests upon the sure and certain promises of God's Word, not upon the strength or worthiness of those who receive them. Zachariah was given nine months to meditate silently upon the faithfulness of the Lord's promises to His people. On the day of John's naming and circumcision, the Lord would open Zachariah's lips to show forth the praise of the Lord.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Most merciful God and Father, as You kept Your promise to send forth the Messiah and to give Zachariah and Elizabeth a son to prepare His way, so teach us that You will keep Your promises to us in spite of our doubts and unworthiness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



The Angel Gabriel Announces the Birth of John the Baptist
Luke 1:5-25