

Gabriel's First Announcement

Luke 1: 5-25

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. They were upright and righteous and walked in the way of the Lord, observing all of His commandments. But they had one great disappointment in life; they had no children, and were quite aged.

At this time, Zechariah's division was on duty to serve as priest before God. He had been chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. All of the worshippers waited outside for his blessing as he went into the temple.

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah standing at the right side of the altar. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and gripped with fear.

Don't be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you; many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. He will bring the people of Israel back to the Lord. He will go before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Bah! How can this be? We are old; we cannot have children.

My name is Gabriel, and I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent here to share this good news. And yet you doubt me? Because you doubt my words, you will have no words until all that I have said comes true.

Meanwhile, the people were outside waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he finally came out, he couldn't speak to them. He made signs and gestures but no words came out. The people didn't understand but eventually they came to understand that he had seen a vision.

When his time of service at the temple was completed, Zechariah returned to Elizabeth and shortly after she became pregnant. For five months she stayed in joyful seclusion singing God's praises.

The Lord has shown me his favor and has taken away my disgrace among the people.