

Encountering Christmas

God's Great Story: Zechariah

Luke 1:5-24

MAIN IDEAS

- Zechariah (a 'certain' priest) and Elisabeth were ordinary people.
- Both were from the priestly line of Aaron and righteous before God.
- It had been over 400 years since Malachi uttered the prophetic promise of Light and 500 years since the miracle of the fiery furnace.
- Zechariah's priestly role
- Zechariah encounters angel Gabriel

According to 1 Chronicles 24:3-10, what was the "division of Abijah"?

The people waited outside while the priest performed his duties in the Holy Place. Zechariah was chosen by lot to place incense on the Altar of Incense. What was the significance of burning incense in the temple? See Exodus 30:1-9, Exodus 30:34-38, Psalm 141:2, Revelation 5:8.

Why do you think Luke begins with Gabriel's prophecy of John the Baptist? See Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 3:1-4.

The appearance of the angel Gabriel was the first of an explosion of miracles. His message from God was astounding after centuries of silence. Make note of the incredible things Gabriel told Zechariah concerning his forthcoming son.

Why was Zechariah struck mute?

When his service at the temple ended, he returned home. What do you think would have been the *first* thing (of all the things Gabriel told him) he would have tried to "tell" Elisabeth? Why? See Matthew 11:11.

Compare Zechariah and Mary's (Luke 1:26-38) encounters with Gabriel. How were they similar?

Mary went in a hurry to Zechariah and Elisabeth after her encounter with Gabriel. What do you think was the reason(s) for her haste?

PERSONAL RESPONSE

More than likely, we will not be receiving visitations from angels. But as we go through our ordinary days, how can we keep our focus on God's calling on our lives?

What are we doing to grow in our understanding and awareness of who we are in Christ?

In what ways can we discipline ourselves to "seek first the kingdom" (Matthew 6:33)?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-30. Do you see yourself in the description of this passage? Seek to humble yourself by submitting this question to a trusted brother or sister in Christ.

- Memorize Luke 1:17.
- This week, meditate on 1 Corinthians 1:26-30.

GROUP RESPONSE

Zechariah, an ordinary priest, muted by God, obeyed God by forsaking the pride of tradition when naming his son. In what ways can we humble ourselves before the Lord? Pray for humility this week.

Does pride prevent Christians from thinking of ourselves as 'ordinary'? How does this manifest itself? How does this hinder us from being effective witnesses in our community?

REPRODUCE

The Christmas season is an excellent opportunity to share the gospel with neighbors and acquaintances. What are some ways you could use the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth as a gateway to the gospel?

KEY VERSES

From the sermon:

- Luke 1:5-24
- John 3:30

Additional verses from the study:

- Malachi 3:1-4
- 1 Corinthians 1:26-30
- Isaiah 40:3-5
- Luke 1:26-38
- Matthew 6:33
- Matthew 11:11
- 1 Chronicles 24:3-10
- Exodus 30:1-9
- Exodus 30:34-38
- Psalm 141:2
- Revelation 5:8