



December 11, 2024

MESSENGER

QUOTE FOR TODAY

"Without any doubt, the mystery of godliness is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory."

1 Timothy 3:16

INFO

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When a Priest Found His Tongue

Zechariah was born to privilege.* He was a son of a priestly line in first century Jerusalem and automatically came into a comfortable income from doing routine functions --- daily rituals and mundane support tasks --- to keep the Temple operating as the center of Jewish worship. He was one of about a thousand men who served as priests during that time, so the work was spread out.

Zechariah lived in an arranged marriage with Elizabeth, who was from an even more honored priestly line which could be traced back more than twelve centuries to Aaron, the brother of Moses. The two had enjoyed a good relationship for many years, but sadly, they had not been able to have children. Yet, they remained faithful, to each other and to God.

Suddenly Zechariah's humdrum work life changed. He was selected randomly ("by lot") for a once-in-a-lifetime honor -- - to be one of the priests to enter the Sanctuary and to burn an incense offering to honor the very Presence of God! Being sincere in his personal faith, Zechariah stood in awe when he finally entered the Holy Place!

After a time of wide-eyed silence, Zechariah began to sense that he was not alone. Slowly, an image took shape through the clouds of incense. Zechariah responded with "terror" and "overwhelming fear." The figure identified himself as the angel Gabriel and said he came with a special message: Elizabeth, now beyond the age of child-bearing, will miraculously have a son; a special son to be named "John" (meaning "God is gracious"); and he will introduce an even-more-special Gift from God. Predictably, Zechariah responded with questions and asked for a sign. Those were the last words he spoke for the next nine months. His inability to speak was the sign he'd asked for.

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(Continued from other side)

When Elizabeth had her baby, the time came for the boy's naming ceremony. The religious leaders assumed he would be "Zechariah Jr.," but Elizabeth said No. They turned to his father who had not spoken for months. He communicated in the only way he could --- by writing what the angel had revealed to him: "His name is John."

That released another sign! Zechariah found his tongue!

He began to speak, praising God. Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea.

Suddenly verbal, Zechariah couldn't stop talking. There was a buzz for miles around.

Now Zechariah's world was ready for the even greater Gift from God ---another baby boy who would be born a few months later in the little town of Bethlehem.

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Are **you** in a boring, humdrum life pattern? Maybe this Christmas season can be a turning point, when you hear from the Lord in a new way. You don't need to talk about it right away; in fact, maybe a time of silent reflection needs to happen first. But when the Lord loosens your tongue, let it go! Express the new experiences of spiritual connection you're feeling, in praise and testimony.

Pastor George Van Alstine

*Zechariah's entire story is found in Luke 1:5-20 and 59-64.