

The Gospel According to Luke 1:5-38

Zechariah's Big Day

5 In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, & her name was Elizabeth. ⁶Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments & regulations of the Lord. ⁷But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, & both were getting on in years.

8 Once when he was serving as priest before God & his section was on duty, ⁹he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord & offer incense. ¹⁰Now at the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹²When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; & fear overwhelmed him. ¹³But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, & you will name him John. ¹⁴You will have joy & gladness, & many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷With the spirit & power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, & the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.'

A Sign with a Sting

¹⁸Zechariah said to the angel, 'How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, & my wife is getting on in years.' ¹⁹The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, & I have been sent to speak to you & to bring you this good news. ²⁰But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur.'

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah, & wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. ²²When he did come out, he could not speak to them, & they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them & remained unable to speak. ²³When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24 After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, & for five months she remained

in seclusion. She said, ²⁵‘This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favourably on me & took away the disgrace I have endured among my people.’

Surprised by Joy

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. ²⁸& he came to her & said, ‘Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.’ ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words & pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹& now, you will conceive in your womb & bear a son, & you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, & will be called the Son of the Most High, & the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, & of his kingdom there will be no end.’ ³⁴Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ ³⁵The angel said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, & the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶& now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; & this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.’ ³⁸Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.