

**NB** **Zechariah was a priest** – not an ordinary citizen. He was an official representative of God, therefore a public figure. His standing on religious matters was **OFFICIAL** – not just private.

- His responses to God **and** to the congregation were also **OFFICIAL**
- For him to err was bigger than for a layman to err.

**The Abijah section of the priesthood** was the **8<sup>th</sup>** of **24** divisions of priests (1 Chron 24:10). These 24 divisions carried out, in turn, the daily service of the Temple. Each division served for one week only. Because there were so many priests they had to cast lots in order to apportion jobs to individuals.

11-17 God - through His Angel – made the annunciation of John's birth to his father – not his mother, for John's birth was part of Israel's history and he was to be a very public figure: the Forerunner of the Messiah - no greater gift could have been given to Zechariah by God.

8-11 **Zechariah** was given the task to keep the brazier burning before the Holy of Holies and to put new incense onto it every morning and evening before the morning and evening sacrifices.

→ He was therefore the person **most physically near** to the Holy of Holies that week so, it was his task to **take God's Blessing from there** to the people who were in the outer courts.

→ In the eyes of the people he would be a very respected and revered person... presumed close to God.

**Elizabeth:** 5-7 was a descendant of Aaron and therefore of the priestly clan.

Zechariah and Elizabeth both observed the Mosaic Law, therefore were "righteous"

**But** they were childless: **Two groups in Israel** fitted this description: a) Pharisees b) Essenes

13 They had prayed to God for a child

#### **Annunciation:**

- 1) **Your** prayer has been heard – your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son... call him **JOHN** = God is Gracious = Grace of God
- 2) He will be your joy and delight – many (everyone) will rejoice at his birth.
- 3) He will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must drink no wine.
- 4) From his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- 5) He will bring back many of Israel's sons to the Lord, their God.
- 6) He will fulfill the end-time role of Elijah.

**NB** **The Angel Gabriel** is addressing Zechariah **as a public representative** of the Mosaic Religion and the Mosaic Era.

- the Angel came **during his public service** in the Temple.
- he **could** have come to Zechariah at home if that was God's choice.
- ∴ **"your prayer is heard"** **means** that **ISRAEL's prayer to God** to send her **THE MESSIAH** has been heard and **God is ready** to put His PLAN OF REDEMPTION into action.
- the **first stage** of that is to send **THE FORERUNNER** and the privilege of being **Father of Israel's Forerunner** was given to Zechariah!

#### **Zechariah's Response to God:** 18-20 **Disbelief!**

- This is a warning of **things to come**. The priests of Israel **will not accept** either the Forerunner or the Messiah – or **God's way** of wanting to bring about Redemption...
- Physical closeness to the Holy of Holies did not guarantee **spiritual closeness**.

- As a priest, Zechariah has studied God's ways in the Exodus, when He reversed a hopeless situation for the Hebrew slaves and enabled them to become a Nation in spite of all the odds.
- God had intervened in a spectacular way, working mighty miracles for them, inviting them – through Moses – to begin a completely New Life and inaugurate a **NEW ERA – The Mosaic Era.**
- God wanted to show them a **new relationship** with Him, by Covenant so that they would become the first people on Earth **consciously doing God's Will** in the Commandments...
- God also wanted to reveal that life on Earth was **not** just a passage from the “womb to the tomb”, but a **spiritual journey** through which the Human Race could evolve from
  - (1) a **“mere flesh life”** on the level of the animals – or
  - (2) a **more rational life** on the level of the **PSYCHE** or mind.
  - (3) He wanted us to **evolve ONTO the Level of Spirit**  
– the highest level of our being, so that we would be like the Angels... **terrestrial angels.**
- It is **on the Level of Spirit** that we **meet** the Kingdom of God and discover **“The Lord who is Spirit”** to quote Paul in **2 Cor 4.**
  - (a) - It was **on this DESERT Journey** that God revealed Himself to the People as their Father, Lord and God.
  - (b) - It was **on this journey** they discovered His **continual Presence** in the **Tabernacle.**
  - (c) - It was **on this journey** they were fed with Manna and miraculous water from the Rock (2 Cor 10:1-6)

**NB** All of this was **preparation** for what was now beginning with Zechariah.

- It seems that Zechariah **forgot** that he **was a Priest / public figure** in **his response to the Angel Gabriel!** **and** that he owed his job as a Priest to the **intervention of God in History.**

**NB** Zechariah **responded as “an old man”** whose wife was **“getting on”** in years.

- No matter **what** Zechariah knew about God's intervention in the Exodus, he did not think God **could** REVERSE THE AGEING PROCESS!

**VIP** { Therefore, there **was** something God couldn't do!! Luke 1:37  
- He also couldn't **heal** a barren womb!

**NB** The deficiencies in Zechariah's faith will soon be **reflected** in **the rest of the priesthood**

- who will **not accept** the VIRGIN-BIRTH – even though it was prophesied!  
(We can **“get round”** Scripture with sophisticated explanations and theories)
- they will **not accept** that **God-has-become-Man**  
and as a result, they will crucify the Messiah they **had prayed for** – for centuries!

#### **The Problem is:**

- (1) That they could accept **small** gifts from God – but not **THE GREAT GIFTS** God lavished upon them...  
- such is the tragedy of the Human Race.
- (2) If we do not accept **The Forerunner** to the Messiah, it follows that we will not accept God's Messiah **either.**  
**God's Will** for us involved a **complete plan of Redemption.** We are not permitted to pick and choose.

#### **Theological Problem:**

If the priesthood could not accept that God could reverse the process of Nature in Zechariah's and Elizabeth's bodies, what hope had they of accepting that Redemption wanted to **reverse** the **process of corruption in the Human Race?** (Romans 8)

- one miracle was designed to be a pointer to the other!



### Response of the Angel:

He strikes Zechariah dumb **and** deaf (cf. 1:62). This punishment is **instantaneous**.

- a) Zechariah refused to listen to the Good News of God (**deafness**)
- b) So he is not allowed to be **God's announcer** either! (**dumbness**)
- c) This also means that he cannot give the priestly blessing the people are waiting for!  
It can only be an empty formality now.

**NB** Jesus will give the Blessing of the Redeemer and High Priest at the end of the Gospel (24:51) after he has accomplished all that God wanted of him as Redeemer / Saviour of mankind.

**Today's society is the same.** We flatter ourselves that we are "scientific", that **this** is the **source** of **our unbelief**. Its simpler than that! We just don't **trust** God's Infinite Loving Kindness towards us.

- If **we do accept** God's intervention into everyday life – will have results – not only in miracles, but also, in the challenge to live a **truly** spiritual life.

**Elizabeth:** Elisha - Bet = strong in the house! Or **in God's House**

1:5: from the tribe of Aaron, therefore from a special clan chosen by God to serve Him before the Nation.

1:6: was "worthy in the sight of God". "scrupulously observed all the Commandments of God".  
Therefore, she was a Holy Woman in good standing before God and Man.

1:7: but Elizabeth was **BARREN** and had no child; this was **seen** as a punishment from God in her society.

→ Elizabeth was **not the only "worthy but barren" woman in history!**

In fact these things should have reminded them of **other** women heroines:

- (1) **Sarah**, Abraham's wife: Gen 16:1 ff → *Isaac*
- (2) Rebekah, Isaac's wife: Gen 25:19-28 → *Jacob*
- (3) Rachel, Jacob's wife: Gen 30:1-24 → *Joseph*
- (4) Samson's mother: Judges 13:1-25 → *Samson*
- (5) **Hannah**, Samuel's mother: 1 Samuel 1-2 → *Samuel*

Of this group (1) and (5) **were "old" as well as barren**. God intervened in all 5 cases and the issue of this divine intervention turned out to be a special child, with a mission from God.

**NB** Elizabeth received the message from God through her deaf and dumb husband.

She believed / she conceived and proved God to be true to His Word.

"Unless you believe, you will not see the glory of God": Jn 11:40

Elizabeth will later congratulate Mary for believing God's Word:

"Blessed is she who believed..." (Luke 1:45)

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## EVENTS 2 and 3

### Annunciation to Mary: Luke 1:26-35

- 1:26 "In the 6<sup>th</sup> month" ... of Elizabeth's pregnancy...  
Luke connects the two miraculous events... 2 pregnancies with God as the origin of the event...  
- this was God's intervention in human history.
- 1:27 "a virgin betrothed..." fulfils Isaiah 7:14... quoted by Mt 1:23.  
Betrothal was a binding commitment... so that the term "wife" is appropriate for her: Deut 22:24; Mt 1:20  
- however Luke doesn't use the term 'wife'
- Joseph was "of David's House" ... this was royal descent  
So, any son of Joseph would have legitimate claim to Kingship: Mt 1:1,6,17,20
- God sent the Angel Gabriel – His Announcer – to Mary – just as He did for Zechariah:  
God does not distinguish between persons.
- This announcement was made to the **Mother** since the Father was God Himself.  
In Zechariah's case the announcement was made to the **Father** of the child...  
since his mother – Elizabeth – was human.
- So, these announcements look superficially alike... but deal with miracles of a **very different ORDER**.
- Mary's child had no connection to barrenness or old age in the Mother...  
- the Incarnation was God's own idea; His Plan; His Creation...
- 1:28 "The virgin's name was Mary: i.e. Miriam. This has 2 meanings: a) exalted one b) bitterness  
Joseph's spouse experienced both aspects of that name...
- "Rejoice so highly favoured!" used to be translated: **"Hail, full of Grace..."**  
- Some scholars today shy away from the consequences of **FULL ... GRACE**
- She has found favour with God: She is His Chosen Vessel for the Incarnation of His Beloved Son.
- "The Lord **is** with **you**" The Angel said: **"CHAIRE KECHARITOMENE"**
- Recent and Protestant translations render this: "Rejoice, highly favoured one!"
  - Older and Catholic translations say: Hail Mary! Full of **Grace**
- Kecharitomene is the word being translated. God's Grace is God's Love poured out on us.
- Mary was full of this Love [Charity] because God was "with her" in an altogether special manner since she was conceived without sin and lived in the Divine Will in a unique manner.
- 1:29 "Mary was greatly troubled" by this intervention of God in her own life – which also included the whole history of Humanity...  
**Why?** Because the expectation of the Messiah's coming was on everyone's lips.  
- In her humility Mary is shocked at being the Chosen Mother – even though, like everyone else – she would have prayed for the Messiah's coming.
- 1:30 "Do not be afraid": DO NOT FEAR. Whenever **God** intervenes He banishes fear,  
whereas the enemy **uses** fear as his weapon to capture, control and destroy souls!  
**"You** have won God's favour": you are the Chosen Vessel of the Lord.

1:31-33 **The Message:**

- 1) You are to conceive and bear a Son.
- 2) You must call him JESUS = YESHUA = SAVIOUR
- 3) He will be GREAT... will be **called** Son of MOST HIGH
- 4) The Lord God **will** give him the THRONE OF DAVID: 2 Sam 7:12-13
- 5) He **will** rule over the House of Jacob (the Nation) forever: Acts 15:16; Ps 110 (109):1
- 6) His reign will have NO END... (His Resurrection: beginning of everlasting Kingdom of God)

1:34 **Mary's Response:** Mary asks how God can accomplish His Plan in a **VIRGIN**

- this is a VIP question, regarding the **Fatherhood** of her future Son.
- it appears to presume her **continued** life as a virgin.

1:35 The Father of the child is revealed. It will be an act of Creation by God Himself.

She will be "overshadowed" by the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament this expression was used of the Bright Cloud over the Tabernacle which revealed **God's Presence**.

Cf. { Ex 40:35 ... He overshadowed the Infant Church in Acts 1:5; Ps 90:4  
Ex 13:22

1:36 **"And so**, (therefore) the child will be **holy**... called Son of God"

In Greek Culture their great men were called "sons of God"

Luke says Jesus is THE UNIQUE Son of God... **that is of a different order...**

"Holy One": see Acts 3:14; 4:27; 30 Luke 3:22; 9:35; 22:70

Jesus proved this by His Resurrection: Acts 9:20; 13:32-33

1:37-38 **Nothing is impossible with God.** He is the Originator of all life. He has full control of all reality.

"I am the handmaid of the Lord": Mary is the **servant** of Yahweh.

Her Son will fulfill the 4 Servant-Songs of Isaiah: Is 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12

- Mary is the true Israelite committed to doing **God's** Will: **Fiat**
- She and her Son will fulfill God's Plan for Redemption of the Human Race.
- She goes ahead of God's People (like the Ark) ... they, too, will receive the Holy Spirit, as prophesied:  
Acts 2:18

| COMPARE                                                           |     |                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zechariah                                                         | and | Mary                                                                    |
| 1) An "old" man                                                   |     | 1) A teenager (14 years old)                                            |
| 2) A priest official representative for Nation                    |     | 2) Private citizen – much later seen as representative for all Humanity |
| 3) Prophecy given to Father of the child                          |     | 3) Prophecy given to Mother... Father is God                            |
| 4) Unbelieving                                                    |     | 4) Full of Faith and Love                                               |
| 5) Questioning – uncooperative                                    |     | 5) Questioning – accepting                                              |
| 6) Angel Gabriel STANDS before Zechariah                          |     | 6) Angel Gabriel KNEELS before Mary                                     |
| 7) Zechariah's obstacle: "old" / "barren"                         |     | 7) Mary sought clarification on her virginity                           |
| 8) Zechariah cannot bless the people now that he is deaf and dumb |     | 8) Mary becomes a great blessing for humanity                           |