

# Wednesday with the Word

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## The Message Before the Move

Luke 1:8-25 New International Version (NIV)

## The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

**8** Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, **9** he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

**11** Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. **12** When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13** But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. **16** He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." **18** Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

**19** The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. **20** And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

**21** Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

**23** When his time of service was completed, he returned home. **24** After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. **25** "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

**Foretold:** fore tell to predict future, or a future event; spoken into the future

- Zechariah was a priest (a faithful, and trusted servant before God). What I love about the many different translations of the Bible is that they all seem to include or deem Zechariah's faithful, and trustworthiness to God as important. As I continue to read, I love that they immediately dive into him going to work after informing us of the issues he and his wife were facing with conceiving a child.
- You see, when reading the word, it's very important to pay attention to the details of the text. EVERY word matter...
- Here in this text we have the setting being illustrated for us before we begin to see the story unfold.
- May I offer to you that many times we see God moving in someone's life, and sometimes question the movement or activity taking place without understanding the message spoken over their life.
- Every movement or fruitful manifestation you see in someone's life is connected to a message or word spoken over them. (Luke 1:37)

### **Let's begin to dive into the text:**

#### **Luke 1:8-10**

- So, we have the faithful servant Zechariah showing up to the temple, to serve the Lord his God despite his present circumstances.
- Barren, childless, and still faithful.
- I am reminded of the extreme level of trust involved when remaining faithful in a foggy, wilderness like season.
- We are told that Zechariah is assigned the task of entering and burning incense in the temple. You will find in many commentaries a breakdown of the sacredness of the task given unto Zechariah. Some argue that the burning of incense was a form of worship, through prayer.

### **Strong Concordance references the smoke coming from the incense in Hebrew as: alah**

**Phonetic Spelling:** (aw-law')

**Definition:** to go up, ascend, climb (dance with God)

- And yet, while this internal form of worship is happening in the temple, the text informs us that the other “Worshippers” are outside praying as well.

Listen, I really really love God!! How intentional it is that Zechariah is going through the motions of his custom in acting out his faithfulness before God and then a HUGE, UNEXPECTED encounter with God takes place while there’s a whole audience outside.

- I couldn’t help but to think about what this looks like for us today as believers. We are going through what can seem like a barren experience... an experience where we aren’t necessarily seeing the physical manifestations of God taking place:
  1. Graduations getting canceled
  2. Classes being switched online with many struggling to maintain the focus of that
  3. Jobs being cut off
  4. Curfews being set in place...
  5. Hundreds and thousands of citizens not necessarily knowing where their next is coming from...
- All the while, we have an audience watching, a people that are in need of a personal illustration of what it looks like to be a part of the faithful few...
- You see, even right now we too are still being called and pushed to be faithful. We are still being called to worship like Zechariah; the one who created our NOW.

**How many of us can still serve God in the wilderness despite not seeing the manifestations of our desires?**

**Luke 1:11-17**

- Last week in Exodus we dove in depth in our discussion about the importance of worship and exploring how fear can create false worship. What I love about verse 11-12 is that as Zechariah is committing to complete this task, and faithfully (might I add) an Angel appears.
- Immediately, the text lets us know that Zechariah’s initial response was “**FEAR**” ... He was startled and gripped with fear...
- When God gets ready to answer the prayers that you have offered up to Him in your life fear may arise but move even in the midst of fear. Hear me clearly, I’m not saying move in fear.... I’m saying in the MIDST of fear, moving is essential because you’ll find that fear is only an illusion to stop you from getting to what God is handing over to you!

- You see, as believers we often find ourselves praying, and praying, and praying, and praying for a thing to manifest and when it appears, we respond surprised like: “Woah wait” “For real” “For me?”
- It is also important to realize that what we are seeking will not always look the way that we want it to or come in the form that we expect it to. I am sure there are many of us that have been receiving revelation during this time of quarantine or solitude and if we had not been forced to sit down and stay still, we probably would have not heard what God was trying to get to us.
- I love the Angel’s response to Zechariah’s countenance because it illustrates to me beautifully the Prince of Peace that God not only is but freely gives us access to as his chosen vessels.
- The Angel says, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.” For a moment, take some time to just replace your name with Zechariah’s and say to yourself “Do not be afraid “Your Name”; your prayer has been heard”

**Did you shout? Listen, I am shouting with YOU!!**

- This isn’t a moment to boast in prosperity, but a moment to rest in the knowledge that GOD HEARS YOU, and HE HAS YOU! The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer. (1 Peter 3:12)

**Even in this season of wilderness He is waiting on the moment your preparation meets the wilderness. And, watch his Glory be revealed.**

**Luke 1:13-17:**

**13** But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. **14** He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15** for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. **16** He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17** And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

- During verses 13-17 we see this clear prophetic, foretelling message being given to Zechariah regarding he and his wife's desires and prayers to conceive a child.

- Prophetic messaging is always specific in nature. These verses really conceptualize for me that before there is ever a problem God has a plan!
- Let it be noted that we are seeing in these verses the power of a message coming forth, before moving. God is getting something to Zechariah not just momentarily but through a series of movements.

### **Luke 1:18-21**

- Now remember we are talking about Zechariah, the one found righteous in God's sight, and faithful by appointment as the priest. And even he displays both fear, and reluctance in his response to this miraculous encounter.
- I can imagine in a perfect world Zechariah would've reacted in a more musical or whimsical way, after experiencing this intense spiritual encounter with the Lord by way of an Angel. But I honestly prefer the one depicted in the text over any other reaction.
- If we are being honest, Zechariah's first response is extremely common amongst us as believers. Immediately, he showcases doubt and includes that he and his wife's age disqualified them from conceiving a child; therefore, making the message and deeming what God said HE would perform as impossible.
- I love this because it immediately caused for me to think of **Matthew 19:26 NIV** where Jesus looks at the disciples and says "With man this is impossible, but with me all things are possible" ...
- Can I offer to you, that in this season age, nor people, nor circumstances, or anything for that matter will be able to stop the message God has spoken over your life!
- You see, if I can add some color to both Zechariah's and Elizabeth's experience I would say that they, like many of us have gotten to a point where being content in "knowing" or "thinking" that God doesn't want something to happen for them seems like the best option or final say.
- They were declared righteous, and faithful in the eyes of the Lord, so we know that they believed! But, does that mean that they too didn't wrestle with putting their faith over the fear of a thing that they have prayed for, not manifesting.
- But could it be that this is why the word also tells us in Isaiah 55:8 "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways" declares the Lord. This is because

when dealing with a season of wilderness there will be moments that you can become weary, or even content but what changes the game for many as we see throughout the bible is their FAITH.

- It is in this couple's worship and faithfulness to God that we see what happens when “Preparation meets the wilderness”. In the text throughout this experience we see that they are still serving. And it is in this moment of serving that the Angel appears.

**What is it that you would most likely get caught doing during this wilderness season?  
If an Angel appears who is that you'd be serving?**

- But watch this!! Even in Zechariah's doubt, the word that was already spoken is still VALID.
- You see the Angel Gabriel lets him know that I stand in the presence of God and have been sent by God to tell you this good news.

**PAUSE... despite Zechariah's reluctance, despite his doubtful response to the news, the message is STILL good. Which means the move is still being MADE?**

- But what the Angel does next, I believe, we should pay the most attention to; The Angel silences Zechariah. He doesn't just silence him for the day but until the thing he has been praying, serving, and striving towards manifest.
- The angel acknowledges that even though you don't believe these words or this message, what I've said **WILL STILL COME TRUE AT THEIR APPOINTED TIME.**
- The Angel understood that God's message rarely ever speaks to the present moment.
- Most of the time you'll find that a message from God isn't to be used as a pass to move, but rather a reason to hope! Rest in knowing that whatever it is you are seeking to see manifest itself after this quarantine or season of solitude will come true, you just have to be STILL and know...
- Continue to worship in spite of, continue to serve in spite of, continue to trust in spite of because guess what when it's all said and done you are **COMING OUT...**
- Luke 1:21 is so pivotal to this whole text because the same audience, the same group of assembled worshippers that were there when he first entered in the temple, were waiting for him to come out...Some time had gone by but guess what they were still there.

**The supporters, the naysayers, the onlookers, and so many other “worshippers” they all too will be waiting for us to come out of this wilderness like experience and when you come out on the other side what is it that they will see?**

**Luke 1:22-25**

**The transformation that God is getting ready to do in our lives throughout this season is one that will be noticeable. Noticeable, without us even having to say a thing... and that doesn't mean that we will be able to speak.**

**Can I offer to you all that God may be taking us, his disciples, his believers, or as some like to say his chosen people through a season where he is about to do ALL THE TALKING...? This is His message, and as his vessels we are the moves.**

- I honestly love how relatable this couple's commitment during an internal wrestling truly is. Their service in spite of their situation is truly admirable. The text ends with Zechariah finishing up his shift exiting the temple for all the people to see that he's mute and he goes home.
- It never says that he told anyone or even Elizabeth for that matter about the message, and yet we still see movement. Elizabeth becomes pregnant.... I can only imagine the faithful act of Zechariah during their intimate encounter.
- Yet it is clear to state that for five months she's in seclusion... this solitary moment with just her and God (of course her husband...but he can't talk) ...

**What is it that we are carrying that God needs our undivided attention on so that he can begin the process of birthing it out of us?**

When Elizabeth exits the season of seclusion, she speaks that the Lord has taken away her disgrace among the people. It is always the Crazy Believers, the radical believers, the ones that still serve in spite of, that folks love to talk about the most. And it is also, these believers that we see **MOVE OUT, AND UP.**

In this season choose to hold on to the message God has promised to you, and if you are in need of that message today, I challenge you to read the word. I am choosing to hold on to the fact that God promises to never leave nor forsake me. So even in spite of the present circumstance I will stand firm in knowing that HE HAS my back!

**There is a message, before a move!**