

LESSON 1 – THE LORD MAKES A WAY WHERE THERE IS NO WAY

ZECHARIAH & ELIZABETH – JOHN THE BAPTIST

Abraham/Sarah

Father of Israelite Nation

Sarah doubted God's Promise

Sarah barren

Zechariah/Elizabeth

Priest/Holy of Holies/Angel

Doubted angel's promise

Elizabeth barren

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS DO NOT HINDER THE LORD

The LORD was guiding the events of history to prepare the way for Jesus.

The LORD used Abraham – a man of tremendous faith as a blueprint for the faith necessary when Christ is brought to earth.

Genesis 15:6 ff

Lots were cast – 24 groups of priests – about 1,000/group
Zechariah is chosen.

Fast-forward to Zechariah.

Zechariah and Elizabeth backed up **outward** compliance with **inward** obedience.

As we study the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, we will see over and over again amazing, complete **OBEDIENCE**.

Read Luke 1: 11-17 and discuss.

Zechariah sees the angel Gabriel – first reaction is **FEAR**.

Gabriel immediately tells Zechariah to fear not – that his prayers have been answered!

Elizabeth will bear a son – they are to name him “John” which means “The LORD is gracious”...full of grace. Elizabeth literally brings grace to earth in the form of John the Baptist.

JTB was to be like an Old Testament prophet – calling the people away from their sin and back to the LORD their GOD. He was to be a “herald”. Webster’s defines a herald as, *“a person or thing viewed as a sign that something is about to happen.”* This is literally quite true in the case of JTB.

JTB is often compared to Elijah the prophet...powerful, strong, full of GOD’s power.

Zechariah – **Immediately** after the mountain top experience of seeing the angel Gabriel and upon hearing that he will bear a son who will be the forerunner of Jesus Christ – **DOUBT** arrives! See Luke 1:18.

This is so typical of our Christian experience here today. Satan continually bombards us with doubt and unbelief but he is particularly obnoxious about it immediately after we have mountain top spiritual experiences. Zechariah, although he was priest, a man of GOD and soon to be the father of one of the most important characters in the entire Bible, experienced that same attack of DOUBT.

Read Luke 1: 19-24.

So, what happens? Zechariah doubts what Gabriel tells him and is struck dumb.

Remember that Sarah had laughed when she was told that she would give birth to a child at her age.

Zechariah is disciplined by Gabriel – can’t speak a word until JTB is born.

****General Discussion of this concept of doubt after a spiritual high.****

Enter the woman...Elizabeth...who speaks for the first time and says, "The LORD has done this for me..." (Luke 1: 25)

Her first words are words of gratitude and thankfulness for the goodness of the LORD her GOD.

Elizabeth spends 5 months in seclusion – the idea of being barren in that society was a terrible fate. The inability to produce heirs was viewed as a curse. It was also economically dangerous for the elderly – no SS, nothing to fall back on.

Zechariah & Elizabeth were both faithful and obedient people **BUT** they were both suffering because of the lack of offspring.

Both felt humiliated and hopeless – they were way past the age for having children – Just like Abraham & Sarah were.

But, just like Abraham & Sarah and just like countless other situations that His children have cried out to Him about, the LORD GOD did what He does best...

HE MADE A WAY WHERE A WAY SEEMED HOPELESS.