

Some Reasons to Believe God's Words

International Bible Lesson

Luke 1: 8-20

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“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” (Luke 1:20).

Zechariah unexpectedly met an angel in the temple who said that Elizabeth would bear a son who would be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and after he grew up his son would prepare people for the coming of the Messiah. Unhappily, Zechariah did not believe the angel's words; therefore, the angel Gabriel gave him some reasons to believe the good news he brought from God. One reason for Zechariah to believe the angel's message involved God's punishment of Zechariah for his unbelief. When the angel disciplined Zechariah, he could not speak until after the birth of his son, John the Baptist. Zechariah's punishment served as a sign of God's power and a warning to others of what God can do to encourage those who refuse to believe His words. When someone does not believe God, consequences follow, but God will still achieve His purposes. Another reason to believe is: whether people believe God's words or not, God has the power to do His will. God's ability to keep His promises and warnings do not depend on people believing Him and His words. Although Zechariah did not believe the angel's words, he left the temple unable to speak until his son was born at the appointed time; furthermore, the Holy Spirit indwelt John while in his mother's womb as the angel said. Then, at the appointed time, John began preaching a message of repentance, and when he saw Jesus he proclaimed: “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

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Thinking Further

1. Why was it so special for Zechariah to serve in the temple and burn incense in the Holy Place?
2. What did the worshipers and Zechariah do when Zechariah burned the incense?
3. What was special about Gabriel?
4. How were Sarah, Hannah, and Elizabeth similar, but different from Mary?
5. How were John and Jesus different from everyone born before and after them? What responsibilities did God want each of them to fulfill?