



12/15/25

I heard a message from Dane Ortlund that really impacted me. He said, "The first Adam, in Genesis 3, blamed his bride. The second Adam, Jesus, said, 'I will take the blame for My bride.'" Wow. This is what we're celebrating this time of year... Our bridegroom came to take away our disgrace... just as we will read in today's passage that God took away Elizabeth's disgrace. The disgrace she experienced was only from other people. The disgrace we all would have experienced without Jesus was in the eyes of God. Praise His name! He took away our disgrace AND put it on Himself. That's beyond comprehension, incorruptible love. I hope that encourages you today.

*Merry Blessings,
Jonna*

Luke 1:5-25

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, Zechariah was a priest. His wife was Elizabeth. Though Zechariah and Elizabeth were both righteous before God and had walked blamelessly according to God's word, they had never been blessed with a child. It seemed for them that it was too late.

Many of the Jews would have thought they were unable to have a baby because they were facing the consequences of sin. But Zechariah and Elizabeth were blameless and righteous. How could this barrenness be due to sin? I wonder if Elizabeth questioned that over the years... wondering every month that it was clear there was no baby... month after month, year after year... "What did I do? What sin did I commit? Surely obedience brings blessing. I must have some sin that I'm not aware of." And then at some point, Mary realized that it was too late for

a baby to come. She didn't blame God or think He owed her. In all her "reproach" she never wavered in her commitment to the Lord.

Then a day came that seemed no different than many others. Zechariah got to burn incense before the Lord in the Holy Place of the temple. By some coincidence, he was chosen by lot... like a rolling of the dice. But this was no coincidence. God had a plan.

While a huge group of people waited outside the temple in the courtyard, Zechariah reverently performed his job. And an angel appeared to him standing on the right side of the altar of incense. This freaked Zechariah out. I imagine his face looked like he had seen a ghost... which... kinda.

But this angel wasn't there to scare Zechariah. He was there to give him wonderful news. He said, "Do not be afraid Zechariah..." Wait... he knew Zechariah's name? Yes. He knew his name. And he told him not to be afraid? Yes... this was a message of hope, not judgment. "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard." Yes, God hears you. He sees you.

Why would the fact that God heard him not bring fear? God's promises are for our joy. "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." It was never that Zechariah and Elizabeth were experiencing punishment. They were being prepared to experience a greater joy. When good things come without any struggle, good things are taken for granted. When good things come after a time of suffering, good things are celebrated. And with those good things come joy and gladness.

No matter what it is, all of God's purposes bring joy and gladness... regardless of the circumstances. My circumstances do not determine my joy. My God determines my joy. Any god in my life that is not THE God will never bring joy and gladness.

The angel gave Zechariah some specifics about John, whose name means "God is gracious." He will be great before the Lord. What will make him great? He won't be filled with wine or strong drink, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit... even from his mother's womb.

Side note... When does life begin? In the womb at conception. John was filled with the Holy Spirit IN THE WOMB. He was not just a bunch of spirit filled cells. He was a little tiny spirit filled human. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord. I know when I read on that John DID turn many to the Lord. He will also go before Him (the Lord Jesus) in the spirit

and power of Elijah.

Elijah was a prophet who was extremely faithful to God. He had a powerful ministry. He never died. God took him home without letting him see death. I personally think he will be one of the two witnesses that will come to the earth in Revelation. There are only two prophets who never faced a physical death... Elijah and Enoch. I believe this is because they will face their 1st death in the end times... and then return to the presence of the Lord in heaven.

In the spirit and power of Elijah, that is, the Holy Spirit, John would be great, turn people to the Lord, and turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to "make ready for the Lord a people prepared." Wisdom in the Lord grows genuine worship and surrender to the Lord.

Oh no. The next words out of Zechariah's mouth were not good. I bet he wanted to grab them and take them back the second they came out... "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." Ohhhhh... Zechariah, you just questioned an angel who was sent from GOD!!! Zechariah was basically asking for a sign... proof. But he was just given the sign. He was just given the proof! He missed it.

The angel answered... I am your sign... "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." Zechariah, in all the times you've served in the temple, have you ever had an angel show up? You don't need another sign!

This is big for me. Zechariah had the word of an angel of God and still wanted to see another sign. I have the word of God with ALL the scriptures giving me written proof of who God is. How often am I asking Him to show me another sign? How many signs do I need to see before I'll believe His words? O Lord, please forgive me for not trusting Your word. That's my sign.

Here's what gives me so much hope. Gabriel spoke up and dealt with Zechariah's lack of faith... but the command not to be afraid still stood. The promised blessing would still come. Gabriel didn't say, "This promise is removed from you. God will give it to someone else." No, he said, "Behold... check it out... you will be silent and unable to speak until the days these things take place because you did not believe my words, which WILL be fulfilled in their time."

The promised blessing will not be removed because of your lack of faith. It WILL be fulfilled, even if your faith is lacking. What mercy! God does not demand perfection, or no one but Jesus

would have any hope. Any consequence God brings for our lack of faith will only make obedience to Him that much sweeter when we turn our eyes toward the Lord.

When Zechariah came out, all the people who were waiting for him were shocked to find out that he couldn't speak. They thought, "He saw a vision!" Well, actually, he saw a real angel. He tried to tell them what happened, but he couldn't speak.

Then Zechariah went home. His service was over. And Elizabeth conceived a baby... just like Gabriel had said. I would say that's also a big sign. He was told he'd have a baby and Elizabeth got pregnant. And then he had nine months to sit in silence and watch this sign from God grow in his wife's womb.

Elizabeth must have been in awe. She hid in silence for 5 months... I'm not sure why. Maybe to make sure she kept the baby safe? But I know what she said about it. She said, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people." She was saying, "The Lord saw me and He took away my disgrace among the people." She was never disgraced in the Lord's eyes. She understood that. But she WAS disgraced in the people's eyes. She never wavered in her faith even though her circumstances were among the hardest women faced. And God saw her and He blessed her. Let me never see God as having the same opinion as man.

Sometimes God says no, because He means, "This is not best for you, even though you might feel like it is."

Sometimes God says not yet, because He means, "This will be so worth the wait."

Sometimes God says yes.

If I trust who God is, I can celebrate whatever answer He gives. All His answers are motivated by His love. When He does say yes, let me not be like Zechariah, asking for proof. Let me just trust Him because He IS my proof. Like Elizabeth, let me never assume the opinion of man is the opinion of God. Lord, please hope me to trust Your no and Your not yet just as much as I'm thankful for Your yes. And if an angel shows up, please help me to be smart enough to know that he IS my sign.