



THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH

VOICES OF ADVENT

LUKE 1:5-7 ^{NIV}

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named **Zechariah**, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife **Elizabeth** was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. ⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

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LUKE 1:8-10 NIV

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.

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LUKE 1:11-13a NIV

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...”

LUKE 1:18 ^{NIV}

Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”



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LUKE 1:23-24 ^{NIV}

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.

LUKE 1:57-58 NIV

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.
⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

LUKE 1:59-63 NIV

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

⁶¹ They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.”

LUKE 1:64-66 ^{NIV}

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶ Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

LUKE 1:64-67 ^{NIV}

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LUKE 1:68-79 ^{NIV}

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies

and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors

and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,

and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

LUKE 1:57-58 NIV

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

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The claim that Jesus is God gives us the greatest possible hope, not just hope for the world, despite all its unending problems, but hope for you and me, despite all our unending failings. A God who was only holy would not have come down to us in Jesus Christ. He would have simply demanded that we pull ourselves together, that we be moral and holy enough to merit a relationship with him.

TIMOTHY KELLER

A deity that was an “all-accepting God of love” would not have needed to come to Earth either. This God of the modern imagination would have just overlooked sin and evil and embraced us. Neither the God of moralism nor the God of relativism would have bothered with Christmas.

TIMOTHY KELLER

The biblical God, however, is infinitely holy, so our sin could not be shrugged off. It had to be dealt with. He is also infinitely loving. He knows we could never climb up to Him, so he had to come down to us. God had to come himself and do what we couldn't do. He doesn't send someone; he doesn't send a committee report or a preacher to tell you how to save yourself. He comes himself to fetch us. Christmas means, then, that for you and me there is all the hope in the world.

TIMOTHY KELLER