

MIRACLE WHEN IT'S TOO LATE

Luke 1:5-80

We all know the feeling! You wake up in the middle of the night.

You lay there tossing and turning in bed and can't go back to sleep.

So, you go down to the kitchen to see what's in the fridge for a mid-night snack.

Suppose for a moment that as you do that, just as you reach for the light switch, suddenly an angel appears.

He calls you by name, and says to you,

"Ralph, you and Helen are going to have a child." *How would YOU react?*

My wife would probably say, "Take an Alka-Seltzer, and go back to bed."

We'd decide we're too old for that kind of thing.

What Helen would really say is, "My name's not Sarah!"

O.K., well, how about Elizabeth?

That's probably what they would have been saying about that time too.

Except they had no child and they had been praying to God for years for that child they had never been able to have.

They waited and waited, but God never did anything about the desire of their heart.

Did He care? Was He just too far away to do anything?

Why didn't He answer? What was the use?

Was there any point in waiting for God any more?

Then one day it was Zacharias's turn. Zacharias was a priest.

A member of one of 24 groups David organized to minister in the temple.

Each group had about a thousand priests.

They each served two weeks per year in the temple.

2 were chosen daily to enter temple to service the incense altar in the Holy Place.

The priest was chosen by casting lots. Once you're chosen, you'd never be chosen again.

Only one in a hundred were chosen each year.

This was Zacharias's opportunity of a lifetime.

He was old and gray and would never have another.

He wants to be sure to do everything just right!

But something *wasn't* just right.

He'd been carefully instructed about everything he was to do in there.

But something happened that wasn't according to the script.

As he enters the Holy Place, and begins to perform his task, an angel appeared!

Nobody told him about this! Now what do you do???

Zacharias was really afraid!

Had he done something wrong?

Was God about to judge him?

What could this mean?

And then it happened!

The angel informs Zacharias that God has heard his prayer.

They're going to have a son.

There's some discussion as to what Zacharias's prayer was.

Is he praying for the redemption of Israel?

Or, is he praying for their heart's desire, a son?

I don't know.

I suspect that like most of us, he was caught in a tension between the two.

He wants God to get on with His plan for His people.

But he's probably saying, "Just give us a child first! Then come!"

It really doesn't matter because the one answer solves both. 1:17

This son who was to come would prepare the way for God to get on with His program.
This one would go before Messiah, as Malachi had promised, to prepare the way for the coming of Messiah, who would redeem His people.

This was too good to be true!

Everything his heart longed for is about to come to pass.

He just had the chance of a lifetime.

Now his wife would have a child!

And to top it off, Messiah will soon come and they're to have a key part in that as well.

What more could a man ask for?

But wait a minute. How could he be *SURE* that this isn't just a dream? **1:18**

He seemed to be awake.

But is this really happening?

Could he really count on it?

So he asks the angel, "How can I be sure that God is really going to do what He promised?"

First, the angel responds by identifying himself. **1:19**

He is Gabriel, "the mighty one of God", or "God is mighty".

He stands in the very presence of God—he has heard God say it.

There will be a sign—His inability to speak will demonstrate that God is doing this.

In fact, he will not speak again until it comes to pass. **1:20**

If you think God who took the voice away can bring it back, then remember why it happened:

It's because of your unbelief.

It's to give you a sign that God will keep His Word.

As soon as Zacharias came out, everyone knew God did something **1:22**

His character is such that no one questions it.

v.6—Both Zacharias and Elizabeth are known for godly character

The people immediately seem to understand that God has spoken to this godly person.

In verses 57-80 we see that the miracle was accomplished just as God had promised. **1:57-58**

Luke's point: **If God did what He said about John's birth, He'll do what He said about the redemption of Israel, through the coming of the promised son.**

From beginning to end, *this is a story about trusting God and waiting on Him.*

Zacharias has been waiting for a son.

Israel has been waiting for their redemption.

God is about to fulfill both desires—in HIS time, in HIS way.

Trust the Lord with all your heart.

Wait on Him.

He will accomplish all that He has promised—in HIS time, in HIS way

A miracle when it's already too late

Two saints trust God to accomplish great things for them and for His people.

EVIDENCE FROM JESUS' BIRTH AND PRESENTATION WHICH DEMONSTRATES THAT HE IS THE MESSIAH (1:1-4:13).

Evidence related to the Son of Man's arrival 1:5-4:13

Events recorded demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah.

4 chapters contain at least 38 evidences: Jesus is Messiah as He claimed!

List presents convincing evidence that this is no ordinary human birth.

The doctor who investigated the facts was convinced that this was a virgin birth, accomplished by God Himself.

It's not my interest to list the proofs, nor to prove that Jesus is who He said He was.

If you're interested in pursuing the matter, do as Luke did, go over the evidence and see for yourself whether the eyewitnesses have presented a good enough case!

Arguments Luke uses are weighty enough to indicate that those who choose not to believe haven't done so because of lack of evidence.

Unbelief is caused by the will – people don't want to believe it!

Evidence related to His birth and childhood 1:5-2:52

In order to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah, you have to start with the testimony concerning John.

1:5-25 answers the question posed in **Matt. 17:10**: 1:17

What about the promise of the coming of Elijah?

Anyone familiar with the O.T. would ask that question.

Luke begins by answering it –

The promise of Elijah is fulfilled by John – **1:17**

Luke's idea: **JOHN FULFILLS THE PREREQUISITES OF THE ONE WHO WOULD BE MESSIAH'S FORERUNNER.**

∴, Jesus is Messiah.

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ON THE MIRACLE:

1. THE PERSPECTIVE OF INCREDULOUS Zacharias 1:5-25

The fact that he was righteous didn't produce faith.

The fact that he was religious didn't produce faith.

The fact that he was old didn't produce faith.

The fact that he served God didn't produce faith.

=> Testimony from John's birth 1:57-80

Luke continues the story later, at John's birthday party.

2. THE PERSPECTIVE OF TWO BELIEVING SAINTS 1:39-66

After months of pregnancy pass, Zacharias and Elizabeth are convinced of what God is doing and present themselves as witnesses of what's about to happen.

Her faith is evident when Mary visits. 39-45

John's birth 1:57-58

He's born to the one everyone called "the barren one" – in her old age **1:36**

His name 1:59-63

God has shown them mercy. 58

John – "God is gracious" – both to them and to His people.

Zacharias's voice restored 1:64-66

3. THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEIGHBORS

Events occurring at John's birth demonstrate to those familiar with them that God is about to do something unusual (1:57-66).

These unusual events cause neighbors to consider their significance (1:65-66).

Everyone's talking about it.

Their question: "What will this child be?!!"

"What does all this mean?"

WHY? Three notable evidences caught their attention:

1) The impossibility of his birth.

The unique birth to "barren" Elizabeth in her old age **1:57-58, 7, 36**

Both parents were already too old for this **7,18**

Everyone recognizes that God has done a miracle to bring this child.

2) The selection of his name. 59-63

The unique name given to the child--"God is gracious" (1:59-63)

Everyone wants to call him "Zacharias, Jr."

His parents name him "John"

People can't figure out why they'd take a new name from outside the family for their only son. Why *this* name?

3) The restoration of speech to Zacharias.

The unique circumstances concerning Zacharias's temporary silence, corrected at John's birth 1:64

The people are reminded of source of problem--9 months before.

Now God gives it back.

The people want to know why. ***What does this mean?* 65-66**

Zacharias answers their question--Zacharias' prophecy.

He's filled with the Spirit in preparation for this prophecy.

John's birth indicates:

4. THE PERSPECTIVE OF GOD'S PROGRAM 1:67-80

Provision for fulfillment of the covenants 1:67-75

Preparation for Messiah through John's ministry 1:76-80

The nation is going down the tubes spiritually.

Politically and economically they are a disaster area--in slavery to Rome.

A pagan half-breed king sits on the throne, while a pagan governs Jerusalem.

The people are going their own way--far from God.

Their religious leaders are caught up in legalistic ritualism--not seeking God.

Families are fragmented, disoriented and fighting among themselves.

God is about to fulfill the covenant promises.

He praises God. He realizes that John's birth demonstrates that God is about to fulfill

His promises to His people, through Messiah's coming (1:67-75).

1:68 He praises the Lord because He is visiting His people

= He is starting to reveal His plan for His people again

1:69 A Savior is born

1:70-73 The Savior will free them from their enemies

1:74-75 The Savior will enable them to serve Him

John comes to prepare the way for Messiah 1:76-79

-to prepare the people for His coming.

Zacharias points out the significance of John's birth

-He has come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for Messiah.

JOHN IS GOD'S PROPHET--after 400 years of silence. He comes--

- To prepare the way of the Lord
- To make them conscious of their sin
- To motivate them to ask for forgiveness of their sins (and receive it)
- To give light to those who walk in darkness
- To guide them in the way of peace

That is, John came to do what Elijah was going to do.

John's life and ministry demonstrate that Jesus is Messiah.

*ZACHARIAS ANSWERS THE DOUBT OF THE PEOPLE WHO WITNESSED
JOHN'S BIRTH: What does this mean?*

He is the one who prepares the way for the Lord.

If the one who prepares the way is born:

Open your eyes

Get ready

Because, your Messiah is coming!

God fulfilled His promises literally and completely.

However, the people didn't accept it.

God is faithful

What will we do with His Son?

WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THEIR TESTIMONY MAKE IN OUR LIFE?

Are we trusting and waiting on God for the desire of our hearts?

Whatever it is that might seem too good to be true for you, remember Zacharias! Hang in there!

Trust God and wait for Him to do things HIS way, in HIS time.

Be sure that the desire of your heart is in tune with the desire of HIS heart!

Then trust HIM and wait on HIM.