

**Dr. Ron Armstrong • December 6, 2020**

**The King Has Come: Now is the Time for Great Faith**

Malachi 4:5. "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. <sup>6</sup> He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

Luke 1:5 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. <sup>6</sup> Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. <sup>7</sup> But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

<sup>8</sup> Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup> he was chosen by lot, ... to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup> And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup> Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup> When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup> But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. <sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. <sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the

righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

<sup>19</sup> The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. <sup>20</sup> 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."

<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup> When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

<sup>23</sup> When his time of service was completed, he returned home. <sup>24</sup> After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. <sup>25</sup> "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

<sup>57</sup> When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

<sup>59</sup> On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,<sup>60</sup> but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

<sup>61</sup> They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

<sup>62</sup> Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. <sup>63</sup> He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John." <sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God.

**A. Let's make some important connections.**

1) Let's look at the bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Timeline of OT divided kingdom to beginning of NT.

- 2) A minor prophet gives a major prophecy.
- 3) God is setting the stage for the announcement of Jesus' birth and the announcement of his ministry.

**B. "Now" is always the time for great faith in God.**

- 1) How could Zechariah presume God was unable to meet the need? The same way we do. Instead, "Let not your heart be troubled ..."
- 2) Zechariah's punishment seems severe if you read the Scripture passively. Try it this way ...
- 3) What was his failure? Zechariah:
  - Forgot what he was doing.
  - b. He forgot where he was standing.
  - c. He forgot whom he was talking to.
  - d. And he forgot what the Lord had already done.
- 4) Why did God choose Zechariah and Elizabeth? Look at the most encouraging verse in the whole chapter, verse 13.
- 5) What worry needs to be turned into prayer? What pain needs to be taken to God for comfort? What are you carrying that it's time to take to God?
- 6) "Now" is always the time for great faith.