

Luke chapter 1

In this chapter we are introduced to three people, Zacharias, Elisabeth and Mary. Zacharias was a priest in the temple. Elisabeth was his wife, they were old and they had no children, but we are told that they had been praying to God for some time. While Zacharias was burning incense in the temple, Gabriel, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, to tell him that his prayers had been answered. Zacharias questioned how these things could be since Elisabeth and himself were getting on in years and Elisabeth was barren. Gabriel told him that because Zacharias did not believe his words, he would become dumb and not be able to speak and so it came to pass, until Elisabeth did give birth to a son, John the Baptist. (v 5-22)

Mary was Elisabeth's cousin and when the angel appeared to Mary to tell her that she too would have a son, she too was greatly troubled since she knew no man. Once the angel reassured her, she immediately believed.

When we read this story, it seems quite harsh on Zacharias that he should be struck dumb since it would probably be a normal reaction to the fantastic news. I wonder how I would react at the appearance of an angel, let alone hearing such a fantastic proclamation?

We have to bear in mind that Zacharias was a priest and well versed in scripture (had he not heard of Abraham and Sarah?) and the traditions that go along with working in the temple. Working in the temple was not just a job. It was an important link between God and His people and carried with it an enormous responsibility. Today, working in the church carries with it an enormous responsibility. A responsibility to serve, but also to faithfully preach the Gospel and not to deny God or His Word. We have to be very careful about limiting God, putting God into our own little boxes or creating God in our own image, God is a loving God, but He is also Just. In verse 37 the angel says "For with God nothing shall be impossible".

We all make mistakes and Zacharias made a mistake but God is also merciful. We are told that when Elisabeth was questioned regarding her choice of John as the name for her son, the people turned to Zacharias, but Zacharias wrote down that his name would be John and immediately his mouth was opened and he was able to praise God (v 63-64).

A Prayer:- Heavenly Father help us not to limit your power by our own limitations. Help us to look beyond what other people tell us is possible and look to your Word to see that nothing is impossible for you. Help us to be respectful of you and your Word and realize that although you are a loving God, you will not tolerate sin, but you are merciful to a repentant heart. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

By Philip Catherall.