



Zechariah



God's long-standing promise to send the Messiah was about to be fulfilled. In His mercy, God sent the permanent solution to man's sin problem. God wants all people to believe His message of love and forgiveness.

Day #1: Temporary Solution

With your parent's permission, draw a shape on the palm of your hand with a marker that is NOT permanent. Now wash your hands with soap and water. Did the mark wash off? Even if it isn't completely gone, it won't take long for the mark to fade away entirely. The mark was TEMPORARY, which means it did not last. Keep this word in mind today.

In the beginning, God created everything, and everything was very good. But when sin entered the world, all of that changed (Romans 5:12). The Bible is very clear about sin. Sin causes separation from God (Colosians 1:21), and every person deserves death because of his or her sin (Romans 6:23). But God loves the people He created, and He does not want to be separated from them. Man's choice to sin was no surprise to God! God had a plan to take away man's sin from the very beginning (Genesis 3:15). God was going to send a Savior, the Messiah, to earth at just the right time. This Savior would make a way for people to be made right with God FOREVER.

Before the Savior came, God gave His people a TEMPORARY way for their sins to be covered. He required each person to kill an animal as a sacrifice for their sins (Leviticus 17:11). The **innocent** animal would die as a substitution for the **guilty** person who had sinned.

The father of each family would have to bring a flawless, first-born, male lamb to make a sacrifice for the sins of his family (Leviticus 1:2-4, Malachi 1:8). And once a year, the high priest of the Israelites, also known as Jews, would enter God's temple to make a sacrifice for the sins of all the Jewish people (Hebrews 9:7).

† *Those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year.* - Hebrews 10:3b

The Bible says that these sacrifices were a symbol of the permanent solution that God was going to send (Hebrews 10:1). God's people longed for the day when God would send a PERMANENT solution to take away their sins (Malachi 3:1). This week, we will see that the permanent solution was on His way! (Hebrews 7:27)

Day #1 continued:



Romans 3:23 says, "Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory." Who does **everyone** refer to? (Every single person.) Does this include you? (Yes.) Every person has sinned. Every person must accept God's permanent solution in order to be made right with Him and receive new life. Thank God that He sent the Messiah to take away the sins of all people who believe in Him (Romans 3:22).

Day #2: A Temple Visit

God chose only the men from Aaron's family to be the priests who would go into the temple to offer sacrifices and burn incense to Him. There was a man named Zechariah that was in the family line of Aaron. He and his wife, Elizabeth, were upright and followed God's commandments. They were old and they did not have any children.

One day, when it was Zechariah's turn to burn incense in the temple, an amazing thing happened. God sent an angel to speak to Zechariah. God used angels many times to bring important messages to people. God had an incredible message for Zechariah. It was wonderful news that would impact the rest of the world for all time.



Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah... When Zechariah saw him, he was amazed and terrified. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must name him John. He will be a joy and delight to you. His birth will make many people very glad. He will be important in the Lord's eyes." - Luke 1:11-15

The angel told Zechariah that his son would be a very special child, set apart from the moment of his birth for a very important purpose (Luke 1:16).

*He will prepare the way for the Lord. He will have the same spirit and power that Elijah had. He will teach parents how to love their children. He will also teach people who don't obey to be wise and do what is right. In this way, **he will prepare a people who are ready for the Lord.***" - Luke 1:17

God had told His people that He would send them a Messiah - a King who would reign in righteousness (Isaiah 9:6-7) and bring salvation to all people (Isaiah 49:6). For hundreds of years, the Israelite people had been looking forward to the time when the Messiah would come. It was great news that the angel brought to Zechariah! The blessed day they had been waiting for was coming soon.



According to Luke 1:12, Zechariah had prayed for a child. He spoke the deepest desires of his heart to the Lord, and the Lord answered. God always hears our prayers! Psalm 62:8 beckons us to, "Trust in Him at all times, O people; **pour out your hearts to Him**, for God is our refuge."

Day #3: Charades

Have you ever played charades? It is a game in which players act out a word or phrase without saying a word. This is a fun game, but what if all of a sudden, one day you were completely unable to speak? It probably wouldn't be fun for very long. This is what happened to Zechariah in the temple.

The angel had appeared and told Zechariah that he and his wife would have a son who would prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. But, because he and Elizabeth were so old, Zechariah had doubts.

 *Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is old too." - Luke 1:18*

Does this sound familiar? Genesis tells a similar story. God told Abraham he would have a son when he was 100 years old and his wife, Sarah, was 90 (Genesis 17:16). The Bible tells us that Abraham also had doubts (Genesis 17:17). But Abraham had never seen God do such a miracle. As an Israelite priest, Zechariah knew the story of Abraham and Sarah having a baby when they were nearly a century old. He knew of God's promises to Abraham, and God's promise to send a Savior. So, Zechariah was punished for his doubt.

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I serve God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will have to be silent. You will not be able to speak until after John is born. That's because you did not believe my words. They will come true when the time is right." - Luke 1:19-20

The people outside the temple wondered what was taking Zechariah so long. When he came out, he could not speak. He had to motion to them that he had seen an angel.

 How do you think Zechariah acted out what he had seen? Try to act it out without speaking. Zechariah doubted God's messenger. We all have doubts at times. Ask the Lord to help you overcome your doubt when you are in a time of disbelief (Mark 9:24). The Bible promises great things when we do not doubt God (Mark 11:22-24).

Day #4: Elizabeth

All children are a gift from God (Psalm 127:3). We see how special this baby was to Elizabeth from her response.

 *When his time of service was over, [Zechariah] returned home. After that, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She stayed at home for five months. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days, He has been kind to me. He has taken away my shame among the people." - Luke 1:23-25*

Elizabeth had grown old without ever having a child of her own. She felt ashamed that she had not been able to have children. God chose this perfect time to bless her with a child. But this was not just any child. This child would be used to announce the coming of the Savior, and He would be great in the sight of the Lord! (See Luke 7:28a!) God's plans are greater than anything we can think of on our own.

Day #4 continued:

The angel had instructed Zechariah to name the child John. The name John means, "Jehovah is a gracious giver." Grace means to give something that we do not deserve. God graciously gave Elizabeth more than she had ever hoped for. And God graciously gave to the world, the one who would make the people ready for the Messiah.

While Elizabeth was pregnant with John, she received a VERY special visitor (Luke 1:39-40). We will look at this special visit next week.

 Elizabeth recognized the Lord as the gracious Giver of the gift of John. We, also, must recognize God's hand in our lives. When we have prayed for something and He has answered, remember to thank Him earnestly.

Day #5: The Birth of John

Finally, after months of waiting, it was time for John to be born.

 *When it was time for Elizabeth's baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her. - Luke 1:57-58 (NLT)*

What a precious time of rejoicing for Elizabeth and Zechariah! Their family and friends all gathered to celebrate with them. Zechariah had been silent for the entire nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy. As was the custom, on the eighth day, they would name the baby. Everyone assumed that his name would be Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said otherwise.

But his mother spoke up. "No!" she said. "He must be called John." They said to her, "No one among your relatives has that name." - Luke 1:60-61

It was customary to name a boy after his father or a close relative. The group was surprised to hear the name John. So, they asked Zechariah what he wanted to name the baby.

He asked for something to write on. Then he wrote, "His name is John." Everyone was amazed. - Luke 1:63

We know Zechariah no longer doubted, but believed God's message, because he obeyed the angel's instructions. Right when he obeyed, Zechariah's voice returned to him. The first words that came forth were praise to His gracious Lord.

Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God. Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, "What will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way. - Luke 1:64-66 (NLT)

 Zechariah could not contain his joy. He openly praised the Lord for what He had done. Do you praise God in front of others? If this is hard for you, ask God to give you the boldness to praise Him as He deserves.