

July 3
The Fuse is Lit

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes.” – Malachi 4:5

[Luke 1:5-25, Jerusalem and the Judean hill country] There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the priestly division of Abijah*. He had a wife of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both were well advanced in years. Now it happened, while he executed the priest’s office before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priest’s office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. The whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense.

An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Don’t be afraid, Zacharias, because your request has been heard, and your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. You will have joy and gladness; and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. He will turn many of the children of

Israel to the Lord, their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ [Malachi 4:6] and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to prepare a people prepared for the Lord.”

Zacharias said to the angel, “How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”

The angel answered him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God. I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. Behold, you will be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things will happen, because you didn’t believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

The people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marveled that he delayed in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. He continued making signs to them, and remained mute. It happened, when the days of his service were fulfilled, he departed to his house. After these days Elizabeth, his wife, conceived, and she hid herself five months, saying, “Thus has the Lord done to me in the days in which he looked at me, to take away my reproach among men.”

*Abijah’s division served in mid May and mid November

1. It was 400 years since God spoke to Malachi; why the delay? How did Zacharias feel?
2. Which of God’s promises do you doubt? Would you doubt if God sent an angel to you?
3. Yahweh, you command history, yet you care enough to take away my reproach by...