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12-8-2016

Zechariah

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Recommended Citation

Schelhaas, D. (2016). Zechariah. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/603

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Zechariah

Abstract

"I was in the presence of the holy God, and that reality obliterated all petty fears and doubts."

Posting about Zechariah's role in the Advent story from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/zechariah/>

Keywords

In All Things, Zechariah, mute, God, holiness

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Zechariah

 inallthings.org/zechariah/

Dave Schelhaas

December 8,
2016

Zechariah puts hand to mouth, vocalizes softly, then smiles and says, “Ah, this old voice, it works again. I have been nine months dumb, you know.”

My name is Zechariah. Nothing so remarkable there, as thirty Zechariahs before me are recorded in the Scriptures. But Zechariah means “Yahweh remembers,” and that seems remarkable to me, especially after...well, I'll explain in a minute.

I am a priest. That may not seem remarkable either, for we have thousands of priests in Israel. But know this: To me, it *is* remarkable. And it is marvelous. And it is the essence of my identity. I AM A PRIEST! I serve in the courts of the Lord God Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Twice a year for more years than I can count, I came to the temple and watched the lots being cast. In all my years, never had I been chosen to enter the sanctuary of the temple and offer the sweet-smelling incense to the most holy God. I had almost despaired of ever being chosen by Yahweh for this holy task. But this time, from among thousands of priests, the lot fell to me.

With joy and dread, with eagerness and awe, I went into the sanctuary to perform my task. But then! An angel! An angel of the Lord! My heart caught in my throat—my breath came in gasps. But the angel spoke my name, saying, “Zechariah, don't be afraid,” and immediately all fear left me. I was in the presence of the holy God, and that reality obliterated all petty fears and doubts. I was simply calm and happy.

But let me tell you what he told me—this angel Gabriel—now that I can finally talk. He said that my wife Elizabeth, childless for decades, would bear me a son. Can you believe it? I couldn't. I thought of the years that we had begged the Lord for a child. I remembered old Father Abraham and Sarah. Were we like them? I couldn't believe it. But *our* child was only half the story.

This child, who was to be named John, would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, he would be a great prophet, another angel had said, and—hear this—for it is the most important of all: He would come to prepare the way for the Messiah, the son of David. He would make ready for the Lord a people prepared.

I was overwhelmed. I couldn't believe it. And—looking back now, I suppose it was rude of me, but remember, all fear had left me—I said to this angel, “How shall I know this? I am an old man and my wife is old also.”

What foolish words to say to the angel of the Lord, but I said them. Then Gabriel seemed to fill the room; he stood over me and said: “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God! I was sent to speak to you and tell you this good news. Behold, because you did not believe my words, you will be silent, unable to speak until the day these things actually happen, which they will. My words shall certainly be fulfilled.”

I stumbled out of the temple sanctuary like a man in a dream. I tried to mime to the other priests what had happened. I went home and wrote an explanation for Elizabeth, but then to answer all her questions—my goodness, my hand quickly grew weary with writing out the answers.

For the next nine months, I was dumb. Bursting with words to say to Elizabeth, to my neighbors, to fellow priests, but I could speak nothing. Probably a good thing. I have the tendency to prattle on a bit in my old age.

Instead, I thought, I pondered, I ruminated on the mystery of the divine and on the faithfulness of Yahweh. I thought

about my name, Zechariah: "God remembers." He may seem to move slowly, but he does not forget. He is sending the Messiah. "God remembers."

These words became the theme of the song that I made up in my head as I lived without a voice for nine months, and the minute that my voice came back I sang it to our faithful God. Let me sing a bit of it for you now:

*O bless the God of Israel,
who comes to set us free,
who visits and redeems us
and grants us liberty.
The prophets spoke of mercy,
of rescue and release;
God shall fulfil the promise
to bring our people peace.*

*Now from the house of David
a child of grace is given;
A Saviour comes among us
to raise us up to heaven.
Before him goes the herald
forerunner in the way,
the prophet of salvation,
the messenger of Day.*

Versification by Michael Perry