

Title: Christmas is Hope

Reading: Luke 1:5-80

***“Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us.” Luke 1:78 (NKJV)***

Have you ever believed for something, got disappointed, and lost hope? Here is a story of a man who had faith but lost hope – the story of Zacharias and Christmas from Luke chapter 1.

The young woman from Nazareth, Mary, received news from an angel of God that she would conceive a child who would be called Jesus, the Savior of the world (v. 26-35). The angel also told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth was also expecting a baby. Elizabeth and her husband Zacharias were an older couple who had no child. Zacharias was a priest and lived in Judah (v. 5-6). An angel of God also told Zacharias that his wife would conceive a child (v. 13-14). The angel also told him the plans and purpose of God in the life of their coming son (v. 14-17). But Zacharias had difficulty believing that they would have a child since he and his wife were both old and past the age of bearing children (v. 18). The angel was grieved because of Zacharias' unbelief, and he was struck with dumbness, unable to speak (v. 20). However, God still fulfilled His words and plans for the family.

Elizabeth conceived and gave birth to a son (v. 57). When the baby was about to be named, Zacharias was released from being mute. His first words were praise to God (v. 64). He was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke prophecy:

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people...” (v. 68-79)

Imagine that for nine months, Zacharias was unable to speak – perhaps not for punishment but to discipline him for his unbelief. Perhaps God did not want Zacharias to mess up the plan by speaking negative words. However, God used the nine months of silence to work in Zacharias' heart and mind. In those nine months, perhaps the Holy Spirit reminded Zacharias of the words of God:

“As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began...” (v. 70)

As a priest, he knew all the words of God – the Law of Moses and the Prophecies (v. 71-75).

He knew and perhaps memorized the prophecies about the coming of a Messiah, the Savior or Deliverer. In the book of Isaiah, which was written 700 years earlier, it says:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
‘Prepare the way of the LORD;
Make straight in the desert
A highway for our God...’” Isaiah 40:3 (NKJV)

Zacharias knew all the words in the written Scriptures. However, he was not expecting that these prophecies would be fulfilled in his lifetime or that he and his family would play a part in their

fulfillment. He was very surprised, and almost in disbelief, that he would see the fulfillment in his days!

Because God Elohim is a covenant-keeping God, He kept His words spoken through the prophets that He would bring deliverance, that the Messiah would come. Zacharias, though not expecting, became part of the fulfillment of the prophecy. His very own child was part of the fulfillment, as spoken in Isaiah 40:3, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness; prepare the way..."

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways..." Luke 1:76 (NKJV)

For nine months of silence, Zacharias went back to studying the words of God. At the same time, the Holy Spirit worked in his heart despite his unbelief. Zacharias saw the fulfillment of God's plan.

Through God's tender mercy, God restored Zacharias' ability to speak. He was a changed man. During nine months of silence, he re-learned the words of God, believed in his heart, and learned to praise God from his heart. He learned to use his mouth to give praise and adoration to God.

Reflection:

Perhaps some of us are like Zacharias, we believe but may have lost hope after many years of waiting. This Christmas may our Lord God, who is faithful and true give you a **renewed hope** and faith that He will do what He says He will do.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for coming to earth to give us a baby. Help us as we celebrate Christmas to have a renewed hope as we trust and wait on You.

Your Thoughts:

Your Prayer: