

The belief of Mary and unbelief of Zacharias contrasted (Quality: Good)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 December 2005

Preacher: Warboys, Ralph (1927-2008)

- [0 : 00] Chapter from which I read, Luke chapter 1, and especially verse 45. Verse 45.
- Words of Elizabeth. And blessed is she that believed. For there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.
- Although this chapter does of course have a special reference to this season, it is more especially upon my thoughts the comparison between Zacharias and Mary.
- Those of you that were present on Friday at Suaversy, I mentioned in the introduction of my text how that throughout the scriptures there are characters set over one against another.
- Cain and Abel, Jacob, Esau, David, King Saul, and others.
- [1 : 22] And here we have Mary and Zacharias. In those three cases I quoted, one was clearly a lost character.
- But clearly here both were children of God. I remind you in mentioning that, in speaking from Matthew, I drew attention to those that John rightly baptized.
- He would come to him confessing their sins. And I set them by comparison against those he rightly refused to baptize.
- The Pharisees and Sadducees, which came to him and he turned them away, called them a generation of vipers, told them they needed to bring forth fruits, meat for repentance.
- Well, let us look a little first of all, the Lord enables, at Zacharias. He and his wife descended, of course, from the tribe of Levi and Elizabeth, from the descendants of Aaron.
- [2 : 44] But what about their character? What about their spiritual condition? They were both righteous before God, not just before their fellow men.
- Remember, the Lord seeth not as man seeth, for the Lord looketh at the heart. They were righteous before God and walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless.
- Just like Job of Ulm, of whom none could point any finger of scorn at any sin that was manifested in his life and conduct.
- But did this mean they were without trials? No more than it did with dear Job. And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren.
- Just pausing there a moment. Why did women in the East so much desire children, and especially a son? Not for their own honor or glory, but for their husbands.
- [4 : 01] That their husband's name and tribe should continue, for they married within their own tribe, as these were both in the tribe of Levi.
- And spiritually, if you and I are the bride of Christ, we should desire the spiritual children.

We should travail spiritually for the new birth. It is, of course, especially so often in our prayers, many times a day for those near and dear by the ties of nature, but also for others.

But oh, may our motive be God's glory and their soul's good, not our own ease or satisfaction or pride.

They were both well stricken in years. And then this angel came to him at the time of incense and told him his prayer was heaven.

[5 : 09] So he was praying for the son. And without dwelling on all the angels' words, Zacharias objected the natural things of human reason.

Whereby shall I know this? How shall this come to pass? For I am an old man and my wife, well stricken in years, past the normal age at which people have children.

And the angel said, I am Gabriel and am sent. Gabriel didn't come of his own desires or thoughts.

He was sent by God. And he said, Behold, look and consider it. Thou shalt be done, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

He was praying for some, but he wasn't expecting an answer. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?

[6 : 36] Prying, but not watching or expecting an answer. Some of you often hear me pray for forgiveness for being surprised when my prayers are answered.

What a poor faith is shown by not expecting answers to our prayers. And Zacharias isn't the only one in the scripture.

And I'm sure I'm not the only one either. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, how when Peter was in prison, prayer was made without ceasing of the church for him.

But when, after the earthquake, and he knocked on the door, and Rhoda went to hearken, opened not the door for gladness, came in and said, It was Peter.

They said, Thou art mad. And when she continued to affirm it was so, they said, It is his spirit. He's already been put to death.

[7 : 48] It is his spirit. They were praying for Peter, but not expecting an answer. How often in those exhortations to pray is the word watching, joined unto him.

Watch unto prayer. The Lord said to Peter, James, and John, those three favoured disciples, the same three taken into Jairus' house, the same three on the Mount of Transfiguration, sit ye here and watch and pray while I go young.

And what did they do? They went fast asleep. When we are to sleep, we're not watching, neither are we praying for that man.

Thou shalt be done. Oh, do we not have to pray, Lord, increase our faith.

He remained speechless. And it would appear his hearing was also affected.

[9 : 06] Because later on we read how they had to make signs to his father how he would have him called. So he must have been deaf as well as dumb.

But then consider Mary. A virgin and the angel came to her and said, Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a son and call his name Jesus.

Mary inquired, not in unbelief, but made an inquiry. How shall this thing be, seeing I know not a man? The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee.

Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.

[10 : 24] Mary believed Gabriel's words. Zacharias did not. There had been instances before of which Zacharias must have known of barren women having children.

Sarah bore Isaac when she was 90 years of age. Manoah's wife was barren and yet bore Samson.

Hannah, that I may refer to also, she was barren and yet she bore Samuel and later on other children as well.

Zacharias must have known of those instances that barren women had had children in the past. but never before had a virgin born of children.

And yet, Mary believed and Zacharias did not. Which one is your reflection and which one is mine concerning whatever promise I want to come to that aspect that the Lord has given you?

[11 : 45] Are you believing the fulfillment of that promise? Are the answers to your prayers? Or will you be surprised?

No often, no wonder that so often we are as it were shut down because of our unbelief. unbelief. But just to refer to dear Hannah for the moment and what faith was shown in her case.

she had gone up to the house of the Lord and she was in bitterness of soul and praying.

She could have been in bitterness of soul full stop but she was in bitterness of soul and praying and wept slow.

[12 : 44] Eli mistook her. So often in my business life and in disciplinary matters I used to have to tell my managers make sure of your facts before you condemn someone.

Eli didn't. Put away thy drink. How long will thou be drunk? Nor am I.

I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink and I like this expression I have poured out my soul before the Lord.

Think of it perhaps tomorrow morning when you poured out the milk from the jug. You can't pour out unless something has already been poured in. We are surrounded by parables.

She was able to pour out her soul before the Lord because already the Holy Spirit had poured into her soul the spirit of grace and of supplication that we read of in Philippians.

[14 : 01] Then Eli answered and said go in peace. And the God of Israel no doubt reminding her of Jacob's name being changed to Israel when he wrestled with the angel at the brook jab.

The God of Israel a prayer hearing and answering God grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. Then she said let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight.

And now we see her faith. So the woman went her way and did eat and her countenance was no more sad.

Was Samuel born? No he was not even conceived and yet her countenance was no more sad and she did eat.

she firmly believed by faith that he who had promised God speaking through the mouth of Eli the high priest he who had promised was able to perform.

[15 : 17] Lord increase our faith. I think of Jairus himself in Luke chapter 9.

He had brought the case of his daughter to the Lord Jesus and said she is at the point of death.

She was twelve years of age and just in passing the woman with the issue of blood twelve years had to be healed first. I'm sure Jairus was tempted in his heart Lord this woman has had her trouble twelve years and my daughter is at the point of death.

Surely my daughter has priority. But no, no. It was the Lord's order that the woman should be healed first and Jairus his daughter should die.

And then when he there came one from the rule of the synagogue saying to him thy daughter is dead.

[16 : 32] Trouble not the master. Give up praying for this one. It's too late. They're spiritually dead. No hope for their soul.

Give it all up. And it came from his own house. It is in our own heart where our great enemies of unbelief dwell. But what did Jesus say?

Fear not. So he did fear. Believe only and she shall be made home. As you know he came in put out those so called mourners who laughed him to scorn and said maid arise.

And her spirit came again and she rose straight by and he commanded to give her mate and her parents were astonished. They had brought their daughter to the Lord in prayer and yet they were astonished that their prayers were answered and she was restored to them again.

Blessed is she that but just before we return more particularly to this verse consider what took place when Zacharias his son John was born.

[18 : 11] They wanted to call him Zacharias after his father but his mother whether it had been revealed to her by the Lord or whether Zacharias had written it down we do not know she knew that his name should be John and so they made signs to his father how he would have him come and he asked or made signs as it were for a writing table and wrote his name is John and they mauled him and his mouth was opened immediately immediately and his tongue loose and he spoked and complained and grumbled about nine months silence and dumbness not a bit of him he spoked and praised

God praised God that despite his unbelieving heart despite his weak faith his prayer was answered what a merciful prayer hearing and answering God we have despite my unbelief and weak faith despite your unbelieving heart and we fight God still hears and answers prayer but how much better if we had been obedient to the Lord's command when he said as we read later on when ye pray believe that ye shall receive and ye shall have if ye have faith as a grain of mustard say we brought some back from

Israel no bigger than a pin's head in little pods about an inch long if ye had faith as a grain of mustard say ye shall say unto this mount be thou removed and cast into the sea and it shall be done it shall be done Lord increase our faith was not that so also with the other ruler who came a centurion Lord I'm not worthy that thou should come under my room but speak the word only and my servant shall be here the Lord said I have not seen such great faith no not in Israel for he was a centurion read unto thee as thou wilt and immediately his servant was he blessed is she that believed

I mentioned in connection with the baptism on Friday those of course as I've said already that are suitable those that have confessed their sins but also that believe and how in Peter we know whether we savingly believe from his words in the second chapter the first epistle unto you which believe he is precious if Christ his name his people his day his house are all precious to you you savingly believe on him unto you which believe is precious and then again this believing on the

Lord Jesus how vital it is for our soul's salvation in the thirteenth of acts we read by him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses justification makes known that redemption has taken place as the Lord's people are justified in his resurrection and then at the end of that chapter having heard the gospel preached when the Gentiles heard this they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord and as many no more and no less as many as were ordained to eternal life believe believe and believers show forth their love to the brethren we read in the fourth chapter of

[24 : 00] Acts said they had lied under the holy ghost and how miserably they perish but this verse especially upon one's mind concerning the promises that the Lord has given you I believe I can look back on many promises that have been for you but there are some for which we have waited many many years and

I have no doubt at all it is so with many of you it may be a promise concerning your own soul waiting for that assurance that your sins are forgiven or whatever it may be but especially those promises concerning those near and dear or later in the night and the years seem to hasten pass I remind you of Abraham at the age of 75 he was given a promise that in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed but year succeeded year he was getting older Sarah was getting older and so after eleven years at Sarah's suggestion he took Higer and

Higer bearish man he put his hand as it were to the back and Sarah too but God said this is not the son of the house fourteen more years had to pass and then Sarah brought forth her son Isaac the promise was fulfilled but in God's time not Abraham and Sarah's time nor in yours or mine our clocks are often fast and sometimes slow but God's clock keeps perfect time like Abraham we try and move the hands round to bring some promise quicker or the fulfillment of the promise quicker or it may be we put the hands back figuratively to try and delay some trial

Abraham's clock was eleven years fast and Moses clock was forty years fast how fast is your clock and I should have said Abraham's was twenty five years but do we continue in prayer remember concerning a particular promise I believe the Lord gave me which still has not been fulfilled in the one hundred and nineteen psalm we have to plead it constantly the psalmist said there remember the word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hurry at our young people's meeting in

November at the early part when we remember of course the gunpowder plot and the remembrance day I spoke of three aspects of remembrance of God remembering not that he forgets but the appointed time comes for the fulfillment as we read God after the children of Israel cried by way of their bondage God remembered his covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob it was the time his time not their time but his time to begin to fulfill it by preparing Moses the psalmist praying for the Lord to remember him with the favor he bore to his people or the dying thief remember me when thou comest into thy king and then again how the

[29 : 16] Lord commands us to remember all the way he has led us these many years in the wilderness but here in that 119th psalm the psalmist there prays for the Lord to remember if it be his will that the time for the fulfillment of that promise should come upon him and it wasn't a promise that he had made his own hope fixed upon upon which thou hast caused me to help thou hast caused me to help we often think of lamentations and especially the case of the young man there in connection with our dear grandchildren and others it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the

Lord not so long ago I spoke to you of that anchor hope that is cast within the fire and so may we plead for the Lord to fulfill his word but believe and wait patiently for him and I remind you that Satan's first words in the scripture left on record were when he tried to cast doubt upon whether God had spoken Satan's first words in scripture yea hath God said and if the Lord has given you a promise don't be surprised if Satan will say yea hath God said are you sure you didn't dream are you sure it wasn't wishful thinking we are not ignorant of his devices as sure as the

Lord gives a promise providentially or spiritually he will give faith in that promise being fulfilled but that faith like all faith will be tried and so often it is by delays in the fulfillment of that promise but what a blessing is pronounced upon belief blessing is she that believed we have of course a character again a man who proverbially has become a type of unbelief doubting Thomas he was not with the other disciples when the Lord appeared to them and he said except

I shall put my finger in the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side you see he wouldn't even believe his eyes unless he could confirm it with a sense of touch as if he thought someone might have painted a print upon the Lord's nails or painted a wound in his side except I shall put my finger in the print and thrust my hand into his side I will not believe John may James might and others but I'm not going to believe but he was a child of God despite his unbelief and when the Lord appeared eight days later said peace be unto you said to Thomas reach hither thy finger and behold my hands and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless but believe and faith was given to

Thomas we don't read he needed to do he answered and said unto me my Lord and my God Jesus saith unto him Thomas because thou hast seen me thou hast believed so sight was all that was necessary because thou hast seen me thou hast believed blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed well we have not touched upon this season of the year this evening but we have on other occasions and

[34 : 55] I remind you that last Lord's day evening I spoke of John the Baptist as he that should go before the Lord preparing his way as repentance prepares the way for the forgiveness of our sins well may we see in the mirror of God's word something of Mary's belief and little of Zacharias's unbelief Lord increase our faith Amen