

## The Thrill of Hope

### **Luke 1:5-22**

<sup>5</sup>In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. <sup>6</sup>Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. <sup>7</sup>But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. <sup>14</sup>He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup>for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. <sup>16</sup>He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

<sup>18</sup>Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

<sup>19</sup>The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. <sup>20</sup>And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

<sup>21</sup>Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup>When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

(Ah-Bi-Jah)

Bible scholars call it the "silent years"

400 years of silence

Between Malachi and Four Gospels

Florence Chadwick

[https://www.islapedia.com/images/6/66/Flo\\_Chad.png](https://www.islapedia.com/images/6/66/Flo_Chad.png)

## **Illustration**

It's 1952, off the coast of California. The morning is chilly, the Pacific Ocean is frigid, and thick fog rolls over the water like a gray blanket. A young woman named Florence Chadwick steps into the water. She's already the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions—she's tough, experienced, and determined.

Today, she's attempting to become the first woman to swim the 26 miles from Catalina Island to the California coastline. For hours, she strokes through the icy waves. She's flanked by boats that watch for sharks and provide encouragement. Her mother is in one of them, cheering her on.

But the fog is thick—so thick she can't see the shore. She begins to lose hope. Her muscles ache, and her mind is overwhelmed by the fog and the cold. After 15 hours in the water, Florence does something she rarely did: she gave up. They pulled her into the boat. She was devastated—until she realized something heartbreaking. The shore... was less than one mile away. Later, in an interview, she said this: *“I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it.”*

Sometimes the fog rolls in spiritually. You're swimming in cold water, emotionally exhausted, maybe feeling like giving up. But hope—hope in God's promises—is like the shoreline. You may not always see it, but it's there. And if you believe it's there—even through the fog—you'll keep going.

God has promised us a shore. And unlike Florence, we can be certain: it's closer than we think. Don't quit in the fog. God keeps His promises.

Two months later, she tried again. The same thick fog set in, but she succeeded in reaching Catalina. She said that she kept a mental image of the shoreline in her mind while she swam. She later swam the Catalina channel on two additional occasions.

## **I. God sees you.**

### **Vs. 5-13**

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<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.

#### A. Unpack text

1. Zechariah and Elizabeth
2. Elizabeth is Mary's relative – Probably her cousin.
3. The Bible goes out of the way to mention three realities.
  - a. They were righteous in the sight of God – They were living right.
  - b. They were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive.
  - c. They were both very old.
4. Why mention that...
  - a. Because the reason they had not conceived was not because they had done anything wrong.
  - b. They were not being punished.
  - c. They was not a hidden sin God was exposing.
  - d. They were living right but still had no children.

#### **Application**

- When you are in a desert don't think that God has abandoned you.
- He has not abandoned you.
- He sees you.
- He hears you.
- He knows you are there.
- He is close.

#### **Psalm 34:17-19**

<sup>17</sup>The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;  
he delivers them from all their troubles.

<sup>18</sup>The LORD is close to the brokenhearted  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

<sup>19</sup>The righteous person may have many troubles,  
but the LORD delivers him from them all;

## **Application**

- When Jesus is your high priest you have the strongest representation in the universe.
- There is no higher power than God's son – Jesus Christ.
- You need to let that settle in your spirit.

## **Romans 8:31**

If God is for you who can be against you.

- Some of you need to quit overthinking this and let God take care of you.
- He wants to take care of you.

## **Picture**

- A powerful father who watches over and cares for his children.
- A powerful husband who watches over and cares for his bride.

## **God want you to feel that!**

- Feel loved
- Feel cared for
- Feel protected
- Feel watched over
- Feel God's provision for your life

## **Hebrews 6:19-20**

<sup>19</sup>We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, <sup>20</sup>where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever...

- Hope is an anchor (*Hebrews 6:19*): It holds you steady during life's storms, even when you can't see the bottom or control the waves.
- Hope is a seed packet: You don't see the harvest yet, but every promise contains the DNA for future growth. Trust that it will sprout in God's time.
- Hope is a shoreline in the fog: Like Florence Chadwick swimming through thick fog, you may not see the end—but if you believe it's there, you can keep going.

### A. Back to story.

1. Zechariah was chosen for a once in a life time job.

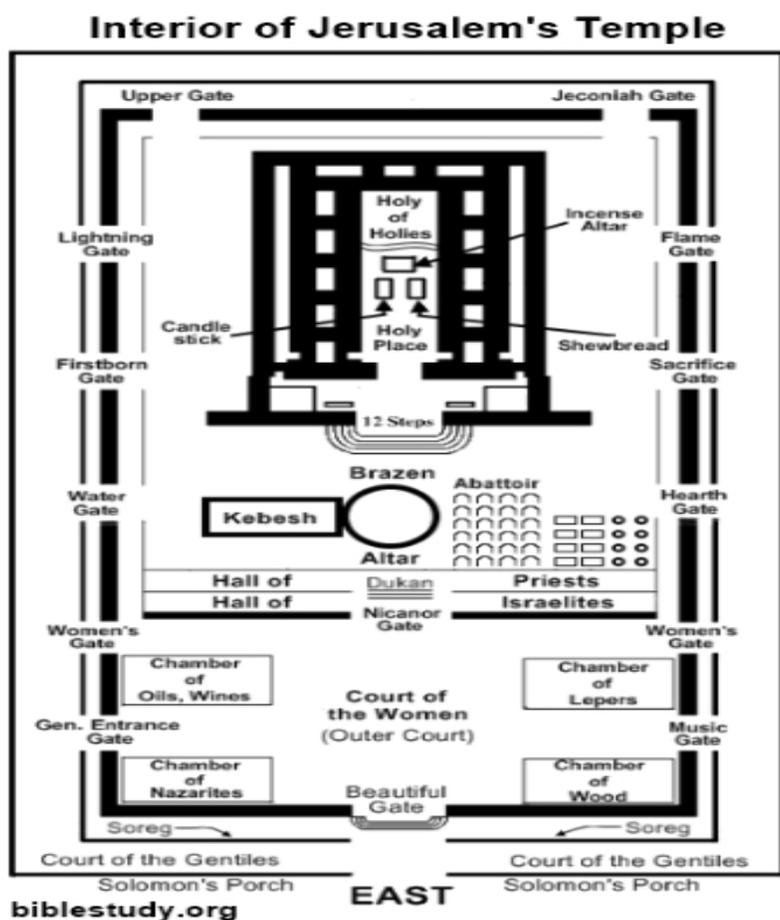
2. He was a priest and the opportunity to go into the Holy of Holies was only give to each priest one in their life.

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<https://www.biblestudy.org/biblepic/interior-design-of-jerusalem-temple.webp>

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I'd like the pic to cover the screen from top to bottom if possible so people can read the words.



**Court of Israel**

**Court of the Priests**

Only the priests could enter.

This court contained the great Altar of Burnt Offering and the copper Laver for ceremonial washing.

### **The Temple Edifice (Sanctuary)**

The Temple building itself sat at the western end of the Court of the Priests

on another raised platform, accessed by twelve steps. It consisted of three main rooms:

**The Vestibule (Porch)** - A large, imposing entrance hall.

### **The Holy Place (Hekhal)**

: The main room for religious service, entered only by officiating priests. It contained:

- The **Menorah** (seven-branched lampstand). – Gave constant light. The priests were to keep the wicks trimmed and maintain the 7 flames on the lampstand. It was the only source of light. The lampstand symbolizes God's everlasting giving of life and light to His people. Jesus said... "I am the light of the world" and in heaven there will be no need for light because the presence of God will illuminate all of heaven.
- The **Table of Showbread**. The Table of Showbread was a golden table in the Holy Place of the tabernacle that held 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, it was approximately 3 feet long, 1.5 feet wide, and 2 feet 3 inches high. The table's purpose was to signify God's constant fellowship with His people, and the bread was replaced and eaten by priests each Sabbath
- The **Altar of Incense** – right in front of the Holy of Holies –. The priest would take fire from the burnt offering altar outside and light the incense. The burning incense represents the prayers of the people. Zachariah would pray for the forgiveness of sins and the people outside of the temple were agreeing with him in prayer.

**August 2017 a rare weather phenomenon occurred.**

**Last time it rained was October of 2017.**

The [Atacama desert](#) in [Chile](#), widely referred to as the world's driest desert, is currently experiencing a truly breathtaking phenomenon. After [surprise heavy rainstorms showered](#) the region, thousands of colorful flowers bloomed to blanket its surface.

This time, heavy rains [hit in mid-August](#), prompting seeds in the ground to germinate. Here's what the landscape typically looks like:

### **Dry Pic First**

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### **Flower Pic at the end of the illustration**

[https://img.huffingtonpost.com/asset/59a8075324000032004ba9e0.jpeg?cache=v3YZVQcHe0&ops=scalefit\\_960\\_noupscale&format=webp](https://img.huffingtonpost.com/asset/59a8075324000032004ba9e0.jpeg?cache=v3YZVQcHe0&ops=scalefit_960_noupscale&format=webp)

### **This site might have better pics**

<https://www.gochile.cl/en/tours/blooming-desert.htm>

## **Desert Seeds**

Imagine walking through a dry, cracked desert. Nothing green, nothing blooming. Just miles of dust, sand, and silence. But what you can't see is what's underneath that lifeless surface.

Beneath the dirt, hidden in the harshest environments, are thousands—sometimes millions—of tiny desert seeds. They've been lying dormant for years, sometimes decades, waiting for a single moment: rain.

When that rain comes—and it doesn't come often—it doesn't just water the ground. It awakens life.

Almost overnight, the desert transforms. Wildflowers explode into color. Plants shoot up from what looked like death. The dry wasteland becomes a garden. Why? Because the

seed never forgot what it was promised. It was created with the expectation that rain would come.

Some of you have been waiting. Praying. Holding on. And it feels dry. Lifeless. Like nothing is changing. But if God planted a promise in you, you can trust this: He knows when the rain is coming.

Hope in God's promises is like those desert seeds. Just because it hasn't bloomed yet doesn't mean it's dead. It means it's waiting—for God's timing, for His rain, for His appointed season. And when it comes? It won't just trickle. It will burst.

### **Application**

- Pray radical prayers.
- Dream radical dreams.
- Don't let the fog keep you from your destiny.
- God is there.

## **II. God has purpose and power for you**

### **Luke 1:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup> for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. <sup>16</sup> He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

#### A. Unpack Text

## **III. God rewards faith**

### **Luke 2:18-22**

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah asked the angel, “How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”

<sup>19</sup> The angel said to him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. <sup>20</sup> And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup> When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.