

There were 400 years of silence from God after the words of the prophet Malachi in the last book of the Old Testament. **Malachi 4:6** *He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.* Then the book of Malachi was closed. God was silent. Where was hope after 400 years of silence? Some remained faithful - one was a priest named Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth. Zacharias continued to serve as a priest. **Luke 1:8-9** *Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.* After silence from God, not expecting anything different, he continued to serve the Lord faithfully. But this certain day became different as an angel appeared to him. Why now? and Why me? And the angel of the Lord gave him hope as the Lord heard his desire.

**Luke 1:11-14** *And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.*

Zacharias questioned the angel, Gabriel, of this news of having a baby as he and his wife were old. Isn't it just like us to question what God has for us? **Luke 1:18-19** *Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years." The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."*

Does Gabriel seem frustrated at Zacharias not fully believing or excited over the news? After all, he was Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God! Gabriel not only gives him good news of the Messiah to come but also hope for the deep desire in him of having a child. So he was silenced and could not speak of what the angel said until his child was born.

As the baby came, Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied all that the Lord was going to do. He told of the Messiah to come, to redeem, to forgive, and to show mercy to His people. After years of wondering whether God was listening, the silence was broken on that glorious night. Prayers were answered - salvation was on the way. The baby born to Zacharias and Elizabeth was John the Baptist. John did prepare a way for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Is hope wanning in your life? Do you have unanswered prayers? God hears; God sees; God knows every tear, every prayer, every broken request we lay at His feet. In a world of lots of noise, do we need silence so that we can hear God? Do you need a word from the Lord? Do you need a reminder that God is near and He hears our prayer?

Be still and wait for God. He will come. He will speak.