

BIBLE CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

LESSON-SERMON*

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for CSDirectory.com**

Compiled by C. Norman Wood, Burke, VA, 703-898-8818, woodcn@aol.com

SUBJECT: Is the Universe, Including Man, Evolved by Atomic Force?

SECTION IV: The Annunciation to Zechariah, and the Conception and Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 5-7, 11-19, 57,58)

Zacharias/Zechariah

[Zack ah rye'us] ("the Lord has remembered")

TIME LINE: @4-6 CE in Jerusalem

Zacharias = Elisabeth
John (the Baptist)

Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist. According to Luke, he was a priest from the line of priests associated with Abia (or Abijah). Abia was the eighth of the twenty-four courses into which the priests had been originally divided by David (I Chron 23:1-19). He was married to Elisabeth, "*one of the daughters of Aaron.*" Described as righteous before the law, the couple was childless and "*advanced in years.*"

"An angel appeared to Zacharias, announcing that his long desire for a son would be fulfilled and the son's name was to be called John. Asking for a sign, Zacharias was struck dumb. It was not until after John's birth that Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, was again able to speak, blessing God and prophesying the fulfillment of Israel's hope for the Messiah." (HarperCollins)

Dell, Joy, "A lesson from Zacharias," Christian Science Sentinel (12 November 1978), p. 1961.

--Zacharias was a priest in the temple at Jerusalem.

- He and his wife Elisabeth were good people, who wanted to live by divine direction.

---But they had one disappointment.

- They were well along in years and had no child.

--While Zacharias was performing his priestly duties one day, and the multitude outside were praying, a spiritual intuition dawned on him, which had never occurred to him before.

- This intuition was so real and substantial to Zacharias that we read, "there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense." (Luke 1:11)

--The divine message included the promise that Zacharias and Elisabeth, in spite of all material laws to the contrary, would have the child for which they had prayed.

- The child would be a son, and they were to call the boy John.

Twitchell, Pierrepont E., "Zacharias," POEM, Christian Science Journal (September 1947), p. 433.

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The brilliant light of Truth had pierced the shroud
For one who would obey.

The angel spoke of what was to come.

Roegge, Mrs. Beulah M (CSB, Lecturer, Associate Editor, CSPA Trustee, Publisher's Agent, Clerk, and Contributing Editor; Chicago, IL), "**There are no barren years.**" POEM, Christian Science Sentinel (16 February 1998), p. 11.

Surely, Elizabeth's prayers
Prepared for John,
Sara's for Isaac,
The Shunammite's for her son.

And Mary,
Virgin-mother,
Perceived God's love for all the world,
Conceived His Son without desiring.

O childless of today—
There are no barren years.
All earth's children are as yours
When you pray.

John (the Baptist)

TIME LINE: @5-28 CE

Aaron

↓

Father=Mother

Elisabeth=Zecharias

John (the Baptist)

Father's brother

Mary

Jesus

John the Baptist was the cousin and forerunner of Jesus; a moral reformer, and preacher of Messianic hope. He is an important figure in each of the four New Testament Gospels. According to Luke, Elisabeth and Mary, the mothers of John and Jesus, were either blood relatives or close kinswomen. As is true of Jesus, practically nothing is known of John's boyhood. The silence of his early years was broken by his loud call to repentance shortly before Jesus began his ministry. Matthew reports that John preached in the wilderness of Judea [**central Israel**]; he also probably preached at Perea [**West of Amman, Jordan**], east of the Jordan River which was in the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who arrested and imprisoned him in the fortress of Machaerus on the lonely hills east of the Dead Sea, and had him executed at the whim of his daughter.

If John was born of priestly parentage, he must have abandoned the priesthood and taken up a ascetic mode of life in the Judean wilderness, where he subsisted on locusts and wild honey. In the prophetic tradition he appeared out of the wilderness, heralding the coming of the Messiah and proclaiming the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He felt called to take on Elijah's mantle. Not only did he dress like Elijah, but he also understood his ministry to be one of reform and preparation.

John's baptism was a washing, symbolizing moral regeneration, administered to each candidate only once. He had a burning awareness of one who was to come after him.

John was a forerunner of Jesus, not only in his ministry and message, but also in his death.

Early tradition has always represented the place where Jesus was baptized by his cousin John as being the spot shown today: the ford at Hajlah. At the River Jordan, he recognized Jesus as the Messiah, baptized him, and pointed him out to his own disciples as "the lamb of God." The story of John the Baptist is the drama of a young man aware of his own mission and greatness, yet willing to step aside and act as a signpost to one even greater than himself. It seems that John lived for some time beyond Jordan, perhaps to avoid the authorities of Judea and Jerusalem, perhaps because of the regular and clean flow of the Wadi el-Kharrar from the east into Jordan.

Matthew and Mark tell the story of John's imprisonment and death retrospectively, as though they occurred before the public ministry of Jesus. However, Matthew 11 seems to contradict that timing. While in prison, John seems to have grown disillusioned by his own failure and the developing failure he sensed in Jesus' mission. Perplexed and impatient at Jesus' method of developing his work, and perhaps feeling that he was forgotten while others were helped, he sent two of his disciples to ask "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt 11: 3).

Bauman, Mrs. Helen Wood (CSB, Associate Editor, Editor, and Normal Class Teacher), "**The Lesson of John the Baptist,**" EDITORIAL, Christian Science Sentinel (15 June 1957), p. 1033.

--John was the kinsman of Jesus.

- Before his birth, an angel had appeared to his father, Zacharias, and had declared that John would turn many to God and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17)

---Grown to manhood, John preached repentance in the wilderness with the sternness and zeal of an Elijah.

- He baptized with water and spoke of the coming of the Messiah.

--John's mission typifies the purification of the senses, a purification which must precede the coming of the Christ to human thought with its power to destroy mortality.

- Jesus himself sought John's baptism as an example for others, plainly showing that purification of the senses is a demand for one who seeks to prove man's true and spiritual sonship with God.

--John represented man born of woman, needing regeneration; whereas the Master represented man, the child of God, antedating Abraham and knowing neither birth, nor sin, nor death.

Rome, Rev. James J., "**Impersonal Healing,**" Christian Science Journal (January 1905), p. 615.

--We are told by Luke that Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied concerning John the Baptist, "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give the knowledge of salvation [science of health, Wicliffe's translation] unto his people."

- Every revelation of Truth to the world has been clearer than that preceding it.

---The truth as revealed to this age through the

personal life and labor of the Founder of Christian Science, and so amply expressed in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures," brings the knowledge of salvation, as of old, to all who are willing to hear and understand.

--In all ages every revelation of Truth has come through some person who has attained that spirituality of thought which enabled him to express the Divine law.

- The revelator is necessarily identified with the revelation; and we should not attempt to separate the beneficent influences of such revelation from its God-appointed channel by claiming to receive it impersonally.

Gabriel

[Gay'bree-uhl] ("champion of God")

Gabriel is one of the most prominent angels in the post-exilic Jewish literature and in Christian texts, especially extra-canonical literature.

The “champion of God” was used as a proper name to designate the angel who was sent to Daniel to explain the vision of the ram and the he-goat, and to communicate the prediction of the seventy weeks.

He announced also the birth of John the Baptist, and of the Messiah. He describes himself in the words, "*I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God*" (Luke 1: 19).

Luce, William Aubert, “Two Great Angels, Michael and Gabriel,” Christian Science Sentinel (1 September 1962), p. 1501.

“Moral courage needs humility; spiritual daring requires wisdom; firmness calls for tenderness . ”

--In the Bible there are many references to angels.

- The patriarchs and prophets are pictured as talking with angels as intimately as friend talks with friend.

--To the angelic activity of comfort and protection is ascribed the name Gabriel.

--The angel Gabriel unfolds the divine grace of Love to the receptive heart.

- It was to the Virgin Mary’s illumined consciousness that Gabriel announced the Savior’s coming.

- Gabriel had previously appeared to the elderly Zacharias, declaring the impending birth of the child who would be known as John the Baptist.

---Identifying himself to Zacharias, the angel said (Luke 1: 19), “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God.”

Swope, Kate, “Union and Communion,” Christian Science Journal (July 1903), p. 194.

--While we all admit the infallibility of the Bible, this does not of necessity admit the infallibility of the common interpretation of it.

- Our creeds are but so many varying interpretations of the Bible; our orthodoxy is but the most commonly accepted interpretation of the day; our heresy is often the interpretation of the morrow.

--On page 566, we find a distinction of masculine and feminine qualities of thought. "The Old Testament assigns to the angels to God's divine messages — different offices. Michael's characteristic is spiritual strength. He leads the hosts of heaven against the power of Satan, and fights the holy wars. Gabriel has the more quiet task of imparting a sense of the ever-presence of ministering Love. These angels deliver us from the depths."

- These angels are where heaven is, and heaven, we are taught by the Master, "is within you."

---Hence it is within us that both the strong

Michael thought and the tender Gabriel thought deliver us from the depths.

- In strength and gentleness lies the symmetry of development.

SECTION V: The Deaf Man With an Impediment in His Speech Cured (Mark 7: 31-37)

“one that was deaf”

TIME LINE: 29 CE, probably summer, in Decapolis (Jesus’ 3rd year of ministry, the year of development and opposition)

This story is peculiar to Mark, and was selected for inclusion for its unusual character. There is uncertainty as to whether mark thinks that the healing of the deaf mute concerns a Gentile or not. “Usually (Jesus) healed instantaneously, here by stages; usually by a word, here by material means. The reason for the difference of treatment must be sought in the spiritual state of the sufferer. The miracle was done privately that the man in the absence of the multitude, might be able to concentrate his attention. Jesus made use of the language of signs, because the man was deaf. He put his fingers in his ears, indicating that

he would pierce through the obstruction. He touched his tongue, indicating that he would remove the impediment in his speech. Having thus produced faith in the man, He worked the miracle.” (Dummelow)

C., W., “**See thou tell no man,**” Christian Science Journal (January 1903), p. 611.

--A single demonstration may not be sufficient to carry much weight with a prejudiced antagonist, and even seekers after Truth often find occasion for doubt in the first few apparent results of their efforts; but when a number of such demonstrations are combined, they constitute a testimony which ultimately overcomes all opposition.

--How important, then, that the Christian Science student consider thoughtfully each demonstration that comes under his observation before referring to it publicly.

--We find emphasis for this suggestion in the constant reiteration of the Master's command to those whom he healed: "See thou tell no man."

- Not that the mighty works of God were to be concealed.

---That were impossible.

--It may often be wise, however, for the healed to remain silent until the full significance of the demonstration is comprehended and they have become "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Siegfried, Edith Harris, “**Ephphatha,**” POEM, Christian Science Journal (January 1960), p. 37.

Give thanks for open thought: for open hands
 Outstretched to feed the hungry, sow the seed;
 For open hearts, attuned to hear the call
 And speak the word that points the open way;
 For open eyes, which penetrate the veil
 And see with vision clear the perfect man;
 For open doors, which bid us pause and read
 The open books that all may understand;
 For open meetings, where, with lips unsealed,
 We tell our friends how Truth has made us free;
 But most, give thanks for Love, the open fount,
 Unfailing source of every open thought.

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*The weekly Bible Lessons are made up of selections from the King James Version of the Bible and the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, who discovered Christian Science.