



Luke Chapter 1:18-25 - Answers

1. Did Zacharias believe the angel?

No. He asked for some kind of proof, because he knew that both he and his wife were past the age of bringing children into the world.

What did Zacharias do wrong? It was impossible to believe, wasn't it? These two people were too old to have children. That was a fact.

In order to better understand what Zacharias did wrong here, let's take a look at some other examples of people who had unbelievable promises or commands from God, and how they reacted:

- The most obvious example would be that of Abraham and Sarah. They, too, were too old to have children. Abraham was 100, Sarah was 90. To have a child at that age would probably kill Sarah, to say nothing of the baby she might miraculously carry.

So how did they react when they heard the promise from God that they would, indeed, bring a baby into the world?

We see Abraham's reaction in *Genesis 15:4-6*. *"And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'This one (Abraham's servant) shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.'* Then He brought him outside and said, *'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.'* And He said to him, *'So shall your descendants be.'* And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

Abraham heard the unbelievable and believed. In the book of Romans Paul describes it best: *"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory of God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to*



perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness.' “
Romans 6:19-22

Abraham was in his mid-80's when he believed this promise from God.

About 14 or 15 years later we see Sarah's reaction: *Genesis 18:10-15*
"And He said, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold Sarah your wife shall have a son. (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son' But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh.' “

Sarah did not believe. She laughed. She wasn't being rude about it – she just couldn't believe it and laughed without thinking about who might hear her.

- Moses had a whole lot of questions and objections when the Lord told him that it was going to be his job to come up before the Pharaoh of Egypt and demand the release of the Jews:

God - “*Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people the children of Israel, out of Egypt.*” *Exodus 3:10*

Moses - “*Who am I that I should go?*” *Exodus 3:11*

God – “*I will certainly be with you...*” *Exodus 3:12*

Moses – “*..,when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has set me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?'*, what shall I say to them?” *Exodus 3:13*

God – “*...say to them 'I AM has sent me to you.'*” *Exodus 3:14*

Moses - “*...suppose they won't believe me?*” *Exodus 4:1*

God – “*...what is that in your hand?*” *Exodus 4:2-9*



Moses – “I am not eloquent....I am slow of speech and tongue” *Exodus 4:10*

God – “I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say”
Exodus 4:12

Moses – “Please send someone else” (paraphrased). *Exodus 4:13*

God – “So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses...” And the LORD told Moses that Aaron his brother could be the spokesman.
Exodus 4:14

Moses did not believe. He was afraid.

- When Moses died, the LORD chose Joshua to carry on the job of leading the Jews into the Promised Land. *God said to him: “Moses, my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them – the children of Israel...Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:2-9*

Joshua believed and went.

- Ruth heard the call of God to leave her own people and all she knew in order to go with her mother-in-law to the land of the Jews – the land where the One, True God was worshipped.

Ruth believed and went.

- The prophet Hosea who married a prostitute because God told him to. *“When the LORD began to speak by Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea: ‘Go, take a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land has committed great harlotry by departing from the LORD.’ So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.” Hosea 1:2*

Hosea believed and obeyed a ridiculous-sounding decree.

What do all these stories have in common?

What is the difference between belief and unbelief for all these people?



2. Was the angel unhappy with Zacharias that he didn't believe?

The passage is not exactly clear about whether the angel was angry or unhappy with Zacharias, does it? Gabriel does seem to say, though, something to the effect of “who do you think you are, Zacharias?” “I’m an angel of God and you still are wondering if this is true?”

How did the angel know Zacharias didn’t believe? Maybe he just had a few questions first? Maybe he was just overwhelmed?

Here’s my answer – God knows whether we are just confused or overwhelmed...or whether we simply don’t believe. Confused, overwhelmed, frightened...these are a part of being human and God knows that.

But unbelief – that’s a choice.

When the Israelites finally arrived at the border of the land God had given them, after their long trek from Egypt, they were afraid to enter in. Twelve spies went ahead of them to scope out the enemies they would probably encounter. Ten of those spies came back saying “Nope! We should not go in to this land...they people here are strong and would kill us.” Two of those spies, Caleb and Joshua, returned excited about the plenty awaiting them in this amazing land God had promised.

The people of Israel chose to not believe God. They listened to the ten spies and chose to not enter into the land. They weren’t just afraid...they rebelled. They sinned in unbelief.

Look what the LORD says about them *in Hebrews 3:16-19* “*For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*”

Zacharias did not believe.

3. What happened to Zacharias because he didn’t believe?

There is always a bad result from unbelief. The promise made to Zacharias was not taken away...but his voice was. His voice had uttered the unbelief, so his voice would be useless to him until the promise had been fulfilled.



The worst result from unbelief, of course, is the penalty suffered by those who choose to not ever believe Jesus died to pay the price for their sins. That result is eternity in Hell.

But there is such a thing as a true believer in Jesus choosing not to live by faith. Or choosing to continue in a sin which he knows is hated by God. Or choosing to walk by sight, not by faith. There are results for these times of unbelief, too. Lost opportunities. Lack of joy. A slide into even more sin. Uselessness.

4. Did Zacharias finally come to the point that he believed? (read ahead to verses 63-66 of chapter 1)

Yes, he did, didn't he? He unequivocally had turned the corner and could not wait to get that praise of God out of his mouth!

And that's the good news about unbelief in the life of a Christian. God can turn it around. In fact, sometimes the very thing we must endure because of our unbelief becomes the thing which brings us back to belief. ☺

5. What did Zacharias miss out on because he didn't believe God at first?

Just think, he could have spent the next 9 months singing and shouting the praises of God for the wonderful answer to prayer He had given Elizabeth and Zacharias, but instead he had to silently watch it all unfold, unable to do the thing a priest was supposed to do – tell people the wonders of God.

6. Have there ever been times when you didn't believe God's promises? Did God give up on you? What did you miss out on because you waited to believe?

If I could just ask God a question...



1. I'm having trouble believing in God. Can God help me believe in Him? Can you begin to find answer to this question in this passage?

If you struggle with unbelief, here's the absolute best news you have ever heard:



Belief (or, faith) is a gift from God. He offers it to you because of His grace. Ask for it. Be genuine, though, and don't ask God for faith while at the same time knowing that you don't really want to exercise faith. Ask God to help your unbelief.

“Therefore it is of faith (belief) that it might be according to grace (a free undeserved gift) …” Romans 4:16 (words in parentheses are mine)

“Jesus said to him, ‘If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes. Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, ‘Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!’” Mark 9:23&24