

Luke 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

Analysis

Zacharias's question 'Whereby shall I know this?' echoes Abraham's question (Gen 15:8) but lacks Abraham's faith. Despite angelic visitation and clear promise, Zacharias demands a sign, revealing doubt where there should be trust. His appeal to natural impossibility ('I am an old man') shows reliance on human reason over divine power. This stands in stark contrast to Mary's submissive faith (v38). Zacharias's unbelief, though understandable humanly, demonstrates how even the righteous can falter in faith when confronted with God's impossible promises.

Historical Context

Zacharias had witnessed miraculous temple service and received direct angelic revelation, yet his rational mind struggled with biological impossibility. His doubt reflects the common human tension between faith and sight, promise and present reality.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can even faithful believers struggle with doubt when God's promises seem impossible?
2. What is the difference between asking for understanding and demanding proof?
3. How does Zacharias's doubt contrast with Mary's faith in responding to God's word?

Interlinear Text

καὶ εἶπεν Ζαχαρίας πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον Κατὰ τί¹
And said Zacharias unto the angel Whereby G5101
G2532 G2036 G2197 G4314 G3588 G32 G2596 G1135

γνώσομαι τοῦτο ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι πρεσβύτης καὶ ἡ γυνή²
shall I know this I for am an old man And G3588 wife
G1097 G5124 G1473 G1063 G1510 G4246 G2532 G1135

μου προβεβηκοῦα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῆς³
my well stricken in G3588 years G846
G3450 G4260 G1722 G2250

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 17:17 (Parallel theme): Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

Genesis 15:8 (Parallel theme): And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

Luke 1:34 (Parallel theme): Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

2 Kings 7:2 (Parallel theme): Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in

heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

Isaiah 38:22 (Parallel theme): Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

Genesis 18:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

Luke 1:7 (Parallel theme): And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.