

During the time when Herod ruled Judea, there was a Jewish priest named Zechariah. He belonged to Abijah's section. His wife came from the family of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth. They were truly righteous before God, doing everything which was right and everything the Lord commanded. They were spotless, but they had no children; Elizabeth could not have a baby. Both of them were very old, too.

Zechariah was serving as a priest before God for his section. The other priests chose him to offer the incense. So he went into the of the temple sanctuary of the Lord . There was a large group of people outside. They were praying at the time the incense was being offered.

Then, standing on the right side of the incense table, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. When Zechariah saw the angel, he was disturbed and overcome with fear.

But the angel said to him, ``Zechariah, don't be afraid. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son. You will name him John. You will be very, very happy. Many people will rejoice because of his birth. John will be a great man in the presence of the Lord . He will never drink wine or liquor. Even at the time when he is being born, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit and many Jewish people turn back to the Lord their God. John himself will go ahead of the Lord in a powerful way, like Elijah. He will have the same forceful spirit that Elijah had. He will make peace between fathers and their children. He will bring those people who are not obeying God back to the right way that people should think. He will make ready a people for Lord."

Zechariah said to the angel, ``How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is old, too."

The angel answered him, ``I am Gabriel. I stand before God. God sent me to talk to you and to tell you this good news. Now, listen! You won't be able to talk until the day when these things occur. You will lose your speech, because you didn't believe what I told you. Nevertheless, these things will come true in their proper time." Now the people were still waiting for Zechariah. They were surprised that he was staying so long inside the temple sanctuary. Then he came outside, but he could not speak to them. Then the people realized that he had seen a vision inside the holy place. Zechariah couldn't speak; he could only make signs to the people.

When his time of service was over, he went home. Later, Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, became pregnant. So, she didn't go out of her house for five months. She said, ``Look what the Lord has done for me! My people were ashamed of me, but now the Lord has taken that shame away."



During sixth month of pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin in Nazareth, a town in Galilee. The virgin girl was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, from the family of David. Her name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, ``Greetings! The Lord is with you. He has blessed you." But Mary was very disturbed about what the angel said. She wondered, ``What does this mean?" The angel said to her, ``Don't be afraid, Mary, because God has blessed you. Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. And you will name him Jesus.. He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Highest One. The Lord God will give him the authority of King David, his ancestor. Jesus will rule over the people of Jacob forever. His kingdom will never end."

Mary said to the angel, ``How will this happen? I have no sexual relations with any man."

The angel said to Mary, ``The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest One will cover you. The holy baby will

be called God's Son. Now listen to this: Elizabeth, your relative, is very old, but she is already pregnant with a son. The woman who could not have a baby has been pregnant for six months! With God, nothing is impossible!" Mary said, ``I am the servant girl of the Lord . Let what you said happen to me!" Then the angel went away.

Mantra: I am the servant of the Lord