




THE TWELVE VOICES OF



CHRISTMAS

— WOODROW KROLL —

The Twelve Voices of Christmas
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GABRIEL

VOICE OF DISCLOSURE

LUKE 1:1-22, MATTHEW 1:20-25

Gabriel's quiet voice disclosed a spectacular message for three central characters in the story of the birth of Jesus. To Zacharias: Your son will prepare the way for the Messiah. To Mary: Your virgin-born Son will be the Messiah, the Son of God. To Joseph: Don't be afraid to wed Mary. She will give birth to the Messiah. These three messages form the heart and the hope of the Christmas story.

I am one of Jehovah's most trusted angels, and He has called on me to deliver many momentous messages. But none can compare with the three I delivered in connection with the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem – all within months of each other.

The first was to Zacharias. It was a message of good news, but he did not receive it as such.

I remember him as a godly man, an aging priest who served my Master with distinction. His wife, Elizabeth, was also very godly. Both of them were getting up in years, and they had no children. But that was about to change.

Jehovah sent me to tell Zacharias that he and Elizabeth would soon have a son, one who would be filled with the Holy Spirit from Elizabeth's womb. He would be the promised forerunner of the Messiah, in the spirit and power of Elijah.

When the day came, I left the presence of God and flew directly to Jerusalem. It was there, in the temple, that I appeared to Zacharias. He was all alone in the Holy Place, burning incense. In the quiet of that solemn place, I disclosed my

message.

“Don't be afraid, Zacharias. Jehovah has heard your prayers, and He is pleased to answer them. You will become a father. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son, and you will name him John.”

That should have been cause for celebration. His child was destined to be great in Jehovah's sight. He would turn many people to the Lord. His birth would bring unbounded joy to many people.

But the old priest didn't believe me! He told me that they were too old to have children. I was shocked! I never expected that kind of response.

“I'm Gabriel,” I said sternly. “I stand in the presence of God, and I've been sent to you with this news.” Surely he would understand that I had direct access to Jehovah and had just come from His throne room with this message.

But he did not believe, and nothing displeases God more than unbelief. “Since you do not believe,” I told him, “You will not be able to speak until the day your son is born.”

Immediately, I returned to the presence of

God, leaving Zacharias to sort out all that had happened to him.

It was just six months later that Jehovah sent me on my second mission. Perhaps the reception of this message will be different, I thought.

This time my destination wasn't the capital city or the gleaming temple, but the picturesque village of Nazareth on the southern edge of Galilee. This sleepy little village was a backwater town. People in Israel had little respect for it and would say in derision, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

I was to appear to a young woman named Mary. What I had to tell her was so startling that I knew I must be quiet but strong, and my actions deliberate but gentle. I found her in a humble, little house.

I said, "Be happy, Mary. You are highly favored by God. You are one of the most blessed women on earth."

I could see that my presence troubled her. But it appeared that she was more puzzled by my greeting than she was afraid.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," I continued. "You have found favor with God." I hoped that would calm her. Then I told her she would conceive and bear a Son, and her Son was to be called Jesus.

I had so much more to tell her – that her baby would be great and would be called the Son of the Highest, that Jehovah would give her Son the throne of His father, David, and that there would be no

end to His reign.

That's when she interrupted me. She had a puzzled look on her face, and I knew what was bothering her. She wanted to know how she could become pregnant when she was a virgin. It was a fair question.

I'm not sure she fully understood my answer, but I explained that the Holy Spirit would come over her in such a way that she would become pregnant. That meant that the One born would be both God and man. That message contained the most important news, the greatest disclosure, in history.

Mary's response relieved me. She believed! She knew nothing was impossible with God. She calmly and graciously accepted His will for her. How different was her reaction from that of Zacharias.

There was one more message to be delivered, this time to Joseph. Mary was engaged to him. But now she was pregnant, and he deserved to know how it happened. He had to understand that it was both legitimate and acceptable for him to proceed with his marriage plans.

I decided to deliver my message in a dream. I appear to him suddenly and said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid. Your beloved Mary is pregnant, but she has not been unfaithful to you. What has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit of God. She will carry a Son to full term. When He is born, you will take Him as your own Son and name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

In the dream I reminded Joseph of what the great prophet said, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call his name Immanuel.” I wanted him to understand that there was no reason for him to file divorce papers on Mary. She had done nothing wrong. While he slept, I quietly slipped away, happy to have been used of God as one of the twelve voices of Christmas.

I told each of these three – Zacharias, Mary and Joseph – “Do not be afraid.” These words of comfort were later echoed by the other angels when they appeared to the shepherds. Throughout the ages, men and women who have heard the Christmas story have found that they no longer need to be afraid, for they have come to know the Savior of the world.