

### Silence from God Is Anything but Golden

Luke 1:5-12

For four hundred years, between the Testaments, God was silent. For four hundred years no prophet spoke under inspiration of God. For four hundred years no angel had been sent from heaven with a message from God to man. There had been no visions, no revelations, no communication from God since Malachi, the last prophet, spoke to God's people. In this text, God sends Gabriel to reveal that the time had come for *the forerunner* (John the Baptist) of the Messiah to be born. The days that the prophets of old had foretold had arrived. The Messiah, Emmanuel, was coming to establish His Kingdom. The priest Zechariah was married to a Levite woman named Elizabeth. Zechariah entered into the Temple on his appointed day, for the priests rotated in their service to the Temple. While near the altar of incense, God spoke for the first time in four hundred years (Luke 1:5-25) to announce the birth of the forerunner that had been prophesied by the last of the prophets (see **Malachi 3:1** and **Malachi 4:5-6**).

*"Behold, I am going to send you **Elijah** the prophet before the coming of the great **and terrible day of the Lord**. He will turn the hearts of fathers **with their children** and the hearts of children with their fathers."*

- (1). John had "the spirit" of Elijah in his temperament, his dress, his customs, and zeal.
- (2). John turned *many Jews* (fathers **with** children) toward faith Jesus the Messiah.
- (3). John came "*before the great and terrible day of the Lord*" which is Christ's first coming.

Why is the "first" coming of Christ called "*the great and terrible day of the Lord*?" Because God came to earth to make "*the first (Old) covenant obsolete and disappear*" (Hebrews 8:13) and establish a New Covenant. The Old Covenant would disappear during a terrible 'day of wrath' from God toward the Jews. The Kingdom of God in Christ begins in the heart of every Jew and Gentile who receives Christ as King. Jesus Christ is the message of Scripture. He is the Living Word; the Subject of the written Word. What I'd like for you to see is that there are times when the voice of God is not heard; when Christ is not exalted.

#### I. When God is silent, there is legalism (the Pharisees).

During the four hundred silent years (between the prophecy of John and the appearing of John), a political and social movement within Israel arose. You know them as "the Pharisees." You never read about the Pharisees in the Old Testament because they didn't exist. They came into being between the Testaments (400 BC to the birth of Christ). Determined not to break any of God's laws, they had, over time, devised an intricate system of oral traditions to keep them from breaking the Mosaic law. But their righteousness was deficient (**Matt. 5:20**). They were "twice the converts of hell" said Jesus.

- (1). Pharisees believed intimacy with God to be rule-oriented, not relational.
- (2). They believed their righteousness should be measured externally, not internally; and
- (3). They missed Jesus altogether.

#### II. When God is silent, there is liberalism (the Sadducees).

Also during the 400 years of silence there rose another political and social wing of the Jews called the Sadducees. The Sadducees represented the more aristocratic elite among Jews. They felt that some of the things Jesus taught, including the resurrection, was beyond rational belief (**Mark 12:27**). As a result, just like their counterparts, they missed Christ. They had little to do with the supernatural.

#### III. When God speaks, there is life.

Gabriel was sent from God to speak to Zechariah and announce the birth of John. Life came to them. "*You have been born again by imperishable seed, the living and enduring word of God*" (I Pet. 1:23).