

John Promised to Zachary

I saw Zachary conversing with Elizabeth.

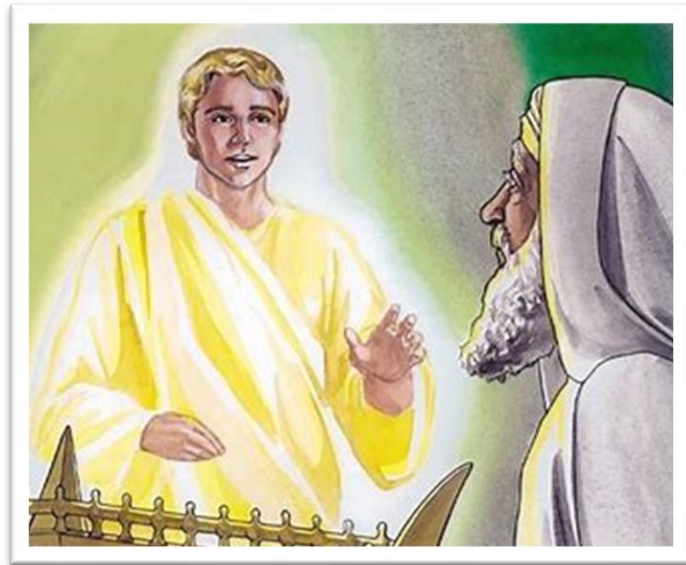
He was telling her how sad he was because his turn to offer sacrifice in the Temple was drawing near, and how he dreaded the contempt that would there await him on account of his being childless. Zachary went twice a year to the Temple. He did not live at Hebron itself, but at a place called Jutta about fifteen minutes' walk from Hebron. The ruins of former buildings still lay between the two places, leading one to fancy that they had once been connected. Many such ruins were to be found on the other

side of Hebron, for the place was once as large as Jerusalem. At Hebron dwelt priests of a lower degree; in Jutta, those of a higher rank. Zachary seemed to be the Superior of them all. He and Elizabeth were regarded with extraordinary veneration from the fact of both having descended in a direct line from the race of Aaron.

I saw Zachary with many people of this locality, going to a little property that he owned in the neighborhood of Juttah. It consisted of a house, an orchard, and a spring. I saw him there also with the Holy Family at the time of Mary's Visitation. At the period of which I am speaking, Zachary was teaching the people and praying with them. It seemed to be a preparation for a feast. He told them of his great dejection, and of his presentiment that something remarkable was going to happen to him.

Again I saw Zachary with the same people going to Jerusalem, where he had to wait four days before his turn to sacrifice came round. Until that time, he prayed in the forepart of the Temple. At last when his turn came, he went into the sanctuary outside the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The roof over the altar of incense was opened so that the sky could be seen. The priest offering sacrifice was not visible to those outside. A partition concealed him, but the smoke of the incense could be seen rising. I think Zachary told the other priests that he must be left alone, for I saw them leaving the sanctuary. Zachary went into the Holy of Holies where it was dark. It appeared to me that he took the Tables of the Law out of the Ark of the Covenant, and laid them upon the golden altar of incense.

When he kindled the incense, I saw to the right of the altar a light coming



down on him and in it a luminous figure. Zachary, frightened, stepped back and sank, as if in ecstasy, at the right side of the altar. The angel raised him up and spoke some words to him. Zachary replied. Then I saw something like a ladder let down from Heaven, and two angels ascending and descending to him. One took something from him; but the other—after Zachary had opened his garment—inserted a shining little body in his side. Zachary had become dumb. I saw him before leaving the Holy of Holies, writing on a little tablet that lay there. This tablet he sent at once to Elizabeth, who likewise had had a vision at that same hour.

I saw that the people outside were troubled and anxious on account of Zachary's remaining so long in the sanctuary. They were even moving toward the door to open it, when Zachary replaced the Tables in the Ark and came forth. The crowd questioned him about his long stay in the sanctuary. He tried to answer, but could not. He signified to them by signs that he had become dumb, and went away. Zachary was a tall and exceedingly majestic old man.