

## January 2 Answers

- **Herod I** was the first in a long line of Herods who ruled over Israel; he is known as Herod the **Great**, the infamous king who slaughtered all the male children of Bethlehem in an attempt to kill Jesus.
- Zechariah was a descendant of Aaron, so he was a **Levite** and a **priest**. Zechariah and Elizabeth “were both **righteous** before God, walking **blamelessly** in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord” (Luke 1:6). This shows us that it was possible to be in a right **relationship** with God under the old covenant. It also shows us that it was possible to keep the commands of the Law without relying on them for **justification**.
- Zechariah and Elizabeth were old, and they had no **children** because Elizabeth was barren. This was often seen as a **disgrace** in those times.
- Zechariah was a priest, and Luke says that he was “of the division of **Abijah**.” During the time of King David, there were more **priests** than the work required, so the priests were organized into 24 groups or divisions which took turns serving at the temple.
- Gabriel told Zechariah that his prayer had been heard—Elizabeth was to bear a son, and his name would be **John**, which in Hebrew means “Yahweh is **gracious**.”
- Gabriel told Zechariah what a special son John would be: 1) he would bring **joy** to his parents and many others, 2) he would be **great** before the Lord, 3) he would **turn** many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God (speaking of repentance), and 4) he would go before the Lord “in the spirit and power of **Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”
- Gabriel was referring to the prophecy given in **Malachi** 4:5–6. John was Elijah in the sense that he was a prophet **like** Elijah, a “**spiritual** Elijah,” for the same Spirit and power that rested on Elijah the Tishbite, would empower John to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.
- Part of John’s mission was to bring fathers and sons back together as they both **repented** of their sins and **turned** to God, their heavenly Father. In this way, John would prepare a people for the coming of the Lord.
- Gabriel told Zechariah: 1) John must not drink **wine** or strong drink, and 2) John would be filled with the **Holy Spirit** from the womb. The reference to abstaining from wine recalls the **Nazirite** vow of Numbers 6. The reference to the filling of Spirit is meant that John was set apart for special **service** to God, and the Spirit’s **power** was on him from birth in order that he could accomplish his important mission.
- Zechariah said, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” Zechariah was looking for **proof**—he wasn’t going to believe *until* he received a **sign**. Zechariah’s question came from **unbelief**. Ironically, Zechariah was given a sign—his own **silence** became the sign that what Gabriel said would come to pass.