

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>**

There is the promise of a divine Child. God has been speaking to Israel over the years to tell them about this Savior. And now He has decided the time is near.

So does He just send His Son? No. First, He will bring the promised modern day Elijah, the one who will precede the Messiah and prepare the hearts of the people to receive Him.

So God again starts with one couple. Who is this couple? (**Luke 1:5**)

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A righteous couple (**6**) never blessed with children (**7**). Yet they remain “blameless” (**6**), and Zacharias continues as a priest (**8**). It was his time of year to serve “as priest before God in the order of his division” (**8**), and he is gathered with the other temple servants. It is the time of day to send one man to burn incense in God’s temple. Who is chosen? (**Luke 1:9**)

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So he goes into the temple, going near the Holy of Holies to the altar of incense (**Exodus 30:1**), to continue the custom to “...burn on it sweet incense every \_\_\_\_\_; when he [Aaron] tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. <sup>8</sup>And when Aaron lights the lamps at \_\_\_\_\_, he shall burn incense on it, a \_\_\_\_\_ incense before the LORD throughout your generations” (**Exodus 30:7-8**).

Can you feel the spiritual excitement rising? Can you hear the heavenly hosts singing over what God is about to put in motion?

No, not over the incense. That is a tradition and a ministry appointed from the days of Moses. **1 Chronicles 23:13** – “... Aaron was set apart, he and his sons forever, that he should sanctify the most holy things, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister to Him, and to give the blessing in His name forever.”

There is excitement and singing over the lot of Zacharias being chosen so he, an old man with a lifelong prayer and an unfulfilled longing, goes into the presence of God to offer the prayers and praises of God’s people. He has been given his one and only chance to get as close to God as he could in his lifetime. Because “priestly duties were assigned by lot. A priest could have the privilege of burning incense in the Holy Place only once during his lifetime, and sometimes never” (Hayford 1385)<sup>1</sup>.

And God has chosen **him**. In this season. At this time. On this day. And God NEVER acts without purpose and intention and the possibility of the miraculous.

But Zacharias is just doing his priestly duty as he steps into the temple ....

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<sup>1</sup> Hayford, Jack, editor. “New Spirit Filled Life Bible. New King James Version.” Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2002

*Going Deeper:*

1. *Zacharias and Elizabeth had no children in a time when children were seen as a sign of God's favor. What is something "normal" or "favored" you don't have that you thought you would? How do you feel about it?*

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2. *When was a time when God specifically positioned you to fulfill His purpose? What happened?*

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3. *What does Psalm 119:103 say should be sweet to us? Why would this be important?*

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4. *What "incense" are you offering to God? Is it sweet praises and happy thanksgiving? Or is it bitter hurts and sour words? Why?*

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5. *What does Psalm 51:17 say is sweet to God? Why would this be important?*

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6. *What insight into Zacharias and Elizabeth's personality and character do we get from verses 6-8?*

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