





**5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.**

- This is a difficult time, if you are a believer, under Herod the Great.
- **Zacharias** – priest (from Aaron). Nothing special, just 1 of 20,000 priests. God uses ordinary people.
- **Abijah** – 8<sup>th</sup> group/division of 24 groups. (1 Chron. 24) Divided to share the responsibilities of the priesthood.
- **Elizabeth** – daughter of a priest. (from the line of priests coming from Aaron.
- A priest could marry only a woman of absolutely pure Jewish lineage.
- All male offspring would be priests.

### Luke 1:5-25

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**6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.**

**7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.**

8 Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,

9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

11 And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

- Why? – Elizabeth was barren, unable to conceive. Like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, & Samson's mother.
- In Jewish culture, having no children meant the parents were to blame – God was punishing them. It was a great burden a woman would carry.
- The rabbis used to say there were seven people are excommunicated from God. Top of the list: A Jew who has no wife, or a Jew whose wife has no child.
- Being barren was grounds for divorce. Wife was cursed by God.
- On top of that they were old – 60+, maybe 70's or 80's. Oldest recorded woman in history to have a baby – in Romania at 66.
- Having no children was a problem financially when they would get old – no one to support them.
- So this was not divine punishment but divine planning.

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- They lived quiet godly lives.

**“righteous”** – because of their obedience it was counted to them as righteousness.

### Isa 61:10

10 I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,

My soul will exult in my God;

For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,

He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,

**“walking”** – participate – shows why they were righteous.

**“blameless”** – not that they were sinless, but they dealt with their sin in short order – brought sacrifices. Followed the Mosaic Law (for sanctification not justification).

**“had no child”** – they were godly but had no children.

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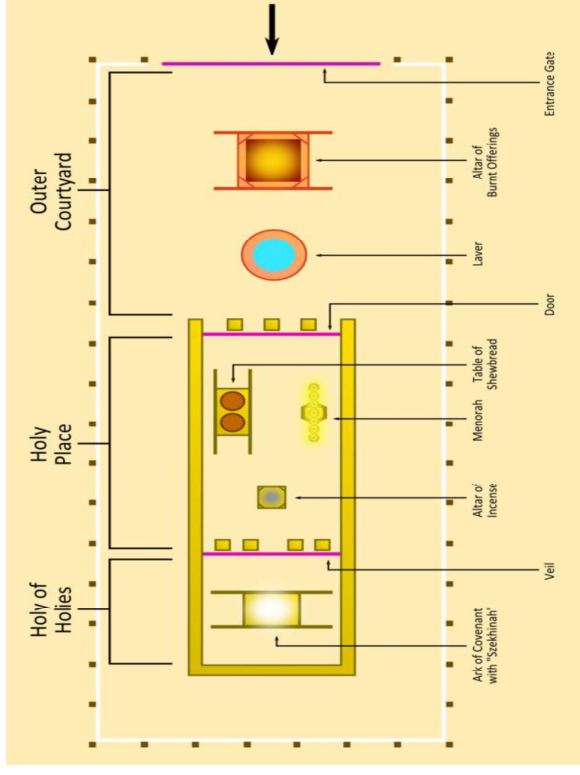
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- Zacharias is going about doing his job, carrying out his service. Nothing unusual.

**“appointed order”** – twice a year (1 week each time) each group/division would go up to the temple in Jerusalem to serve in the temple area – slaughtering of animals, etc. Also would serve at the 3 feasts each year.

- Because there were so many priests, those chosen to actually go into the temple and serve with incense was a very high privilege. You could only do it once in your lifetime.
- The way you were chosen was by casting lots. About 50 were chosen to perform all kinds of services. 3 went into the Holy Place.
- Zacharias won the “lot-tery”. He was chosen to serve in the highest manner of service – to burn incense. Offerings occurred twice a day – AM and PM. This was probably 3 PM. The burning of incense was the offering of prayers ascending to God. Next to the veil.
- So suddenly Zacharias’ life takes a sharp turn under the providence of God.



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- Gong would be sounded by the priests, summoning the people to worship, singing and prayer.
- When the people outside saw the two men exit the temple, they knew that the time to offer the incense had come. A hush would fall on the crowd.
- As the people were praying on the outside, Zacharias was sprinkling the incense on the altar on the inside and offering as prayer – for the salvation of Israel, for the coming of the Messiah, needs of the nation.
- Unexpectedly, another right turn, another zag of the zig-zag.
- An angel appears to the right of the altar. Must have thought - “Does this happen to every priest? No one told me about this.”
- **Note:** Great things happen when you are serving the Lord.

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Fear possibly from:

1. A sudden appearance.
2. An angelic being.
3. Possible judgment.