

Magnificent Intervention

Week of December 13

The story of Zechariah and Elizabeth is the story *before* the story. Zechariah is a priest during the time of Herod and because his wife, Elizabeth, has been unable to conceive, it's just the two of them. But a miracle is about to happen—a Magnificent Intervention. Their story gives us a glimpse into God's power, for the birth of their son—born to them in their old age—would later be known as John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.

The Angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the Temple and announced that this son would “be great in the eyes of the Lord... filled with the Holy Spirit... a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the coming of the Lord” (Luke 1:15, 17). Though overwhelmed and shaken with awe at the Angel's visit, Zechariah has a hard time believing the message: “How can I be sure this will happen? I'm an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.”

Read Luke 1:5-25

Zechariah “was serving God in the Temple, for his order was on duty that week.” Read the following passages in question #1 to find out more about the specifics of this priestly task—being chosen to enter the Holy Place and burn incense before the LORD. The first 3 references go back to the days of the Tabernacle during the time of Moses and Aaron. The 4th reference speaks of the organization of the priests that King David put in place. And the 5th and 6th references speak of the symbolism of burning incense, and the Kingdom of Priests in Christ.

1. In the space to the right, jot down at least one thing you learn from each Scripture.
 - a. The Incense Altar – Exodus 30:1-8
 - b. The Incense – Exodus 30:34-38
 - c. Holy Items in the Holy Place – Exodus 40:22-27
 - d. How the Priests are Chosen to Serve – 1 Chronicles 24:1-6, 19
 - e. What the Bowls of Incense Represent – Revelation 5:6-10
 - f. Kingdom of Priests – 1 Peter 2:4-9 and Revelation 1:6

It is interesting that while Zechariah was burning incense representing the prayers of God's people, “a great crowd stood outside praying” (v10). Prayer is powerful.

2. Think of a time God's people prayed fervently for you. How did God intervene magnificently on your behalf (or perhaps a family member)?

How does prayer affect our willingness to surrender doubt and pride?

Though Zechariah had perhaps forgotten his own prayers for a son, resigning himself to old age, God had more to give. God's plans for Zechariah and Elizabeth would not only change them, but humanity for all time – for John would be “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God’” (Isaiah 40:3).

Because Zechariah did not believe, he was unable to speak until the child was born. But when the child was born, and in obedience Zechariah named the child John as instructed by the Angel, Zechariah began to offer the purest praise and adoration to the Lord His God—a beautiful song of worship to the One who is forever worthy! (see Luke 1:57-79). Zechariah had to surrender his doubt and pride, and so do we, because a lack of surrender can rob us of the life the Lord wants to give us.

3. The Plain Truth states: “You are one surrender away from a Magnificent Intervention.” How is this truth speaking to you personally today?

We can be certain Zechariah's and Elizabeth's story is accurate because the Gospel writer, Luke, investigated every detail thoroughly and used only eyewitness testimony in his report (see Luke 1:1-4). Likewise we can be sure the events reported in Luke, chapter two, are also accurate. With this in mind, how does the wonder of Christmas speak to God's interventions on behalf of lost and broken people?

If we're not careful, we too can easily doubt the Lord's message of hope to us. Even servants of God get discouraged with disappointments, life's curves, and old age. And like Zechariah, sometimes God has to put us in silence for a season while His word is being fulfilled—while He works a Magnificent Intervention.

4. What has you despondent these days, indifferent to the very voice of heaven?

Are you willing to surrender your doubt, your pride in order to publicly praise His Name again?

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Text: Luke 1:5-25

1. A meaningful relationship with God requires _____.
2. Obedience is doing what is _____ in God's _____ and not _____.
3. We think an intervention of God requires _____, but God requires _____.

The Plain Truth:

You are one _____ away from a
Magnificent Intervention.

One Year Bible Reading

Dec. 13: Obadiah 1:1-21, Revelation 4:1-11, Psalm 132:1-18, Proverbs 29:24-25

Dec. 14: Jonah 1:1-4-11, Revelation 5:1-14, Psalm 133:1-3, Proverbs 29:26-27

Dec. 15: Micah 1:1-4-13, Revelation 6:1-17, Psalm 134:1-3, Proverbs 30:1-4

Dec. 16: Micah 5:1-7-20, Revelation 7:1-17, Psalm 135:1-21, Proverbs 30:5-6

Dec. 17: Nahum 1:1-3-19, Revelation 8:1-13, Psalm 136:1-26, Proverbs 30:7-9

Dec. 18: Habakkuk 1:1-3-19, Revelation 9:1-21, Psalm 137:1-9, Proverbs 30:10

Dec. 19: Zephaniah 1:1-3-20, Revelation 10:1-11, Psalm 138:1-8, Prov. 30:11-14

December 12 & 13, 2015