

God Hears and Positions You to Receive His Favor



Opening...

What if you had the right background, all the right connections, successful career or grades, have a huge following on social media, have more 'FOLLOWERS' than most friends, maybe even you're an "Influencer" – which gives you sponsorship, gifts to endorse, yet does that exempt you from hard times?

There was a couple who seemed to have the correct resume for success and favor in their community...

Family Connections of Zacharias and Elisabeth

- ☞ Zacharias served as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem. He came from generations of a family of priests; a grandson of Aaron's, Abia, one of the sets of priests who ministered in the Temple from Sabbath to Sabbath (1 Chron 24:1, 4, 10)
- ☞ Elisabeth also came from priestly lineage of Aaron, Moses' brother. "one of the daughters of Aaron" which means she came from an honored priestly line (Ex 6:23)
- ☞ It was okay for priest to marry, yet even more acceptable and favored on for them to marry in the priesthood lineage.

Meaning of Names

Zacharias – 'remembered by the Lord'

Elisabeth's - means "God is my oath" that is, "a worshiper of God."

John - means "the mercy or favor of God", "Jehovah's gracious gift" "the oath which God swore to Abraham."

God's View of Zacharias and Elisabeth

- ☞ They were known for being good and just in God's sight.
- ☞ They walked with integrity in the Lord's ways and laws.
- ☞ *Message* translations describes them as those who lived honorably before God and kept the commandments and enjoyed a clear conscience before God.
- ☞ They had a strong faith and spiritual gifts.
- ☞ Elisabeth was faithful to her husband. Zacharias was faithful to his wife even though she could not conceive a son.

And YET...

They had sadness. Why? ... infertility, old

- ☞ Zacharias was wise to label his wife as '**well-stricken in years**' in reference to having a child. A childless state was more humiliating as a daughter of a priest in Israel because of the dream every woman might have in the privilege of being the mother of the Messiah.
- ☞ See a parallel between this couple and Abram/Sarai
- ☞ This was a curse Gen 16:2

LABELS

Elisabeth was **marked** as "barren", "old".

What labels do you hear?

You're average, you won't make it, pass it, amount to anything, finish anything, not good enough, loser, not smart enough, it's too late, not forgivable, generalized for us older ones, overlooked, insignificant, etc.

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Story of Tyler Perry – beginnings were tough with little chances with no name, no money and next to no support, yet he moved to develop his talents. Even after producing his play and only 30 showed... he kept moving and believing. His Motto: TRUST GOD. DO GOOD.

Significance of God's timing and positioning Zacharias:

Zacharias was chosen to perform his priestly duties in God's presence as was the schedule and routine of the temple. He had been selected from ALL the priests through customary procedure of casting lots for a **once-in-a-lifetime opportunity** to enter the sacred precincts of the temple. He **burned sweet incense while outside a large crowd of people PRAYED**.

“his lot was to burn incense” – “the part assigned to each priest in his week of service was decided by **lot**. There were employed at the offering of incense – to remove the ashes of the former service; to bring in and place on the golden altar the pan filled with hot burning coals taken from the altar of burnt offering; and to sprinkle the incense on the hot coals; and while the smoke of it ascended, to make intercession for the people. This was the **most distinguished part of the service** (Rev 8:3), and this was what **fell to the lot of Zacharias** at this time.” – Jamieson Fausset and Brown “Commentary on the Whole Bible”)

Fire on the altar of incense was taken from burnt offering. Fire symbolized the presence of a Holy Jehovah in the House. Fire ascended as a sweet savior to God.

Incense – The sacrifice was made in the morning and evening where the burnt offering was a symbol of the acceptableness of the sacrifice offered on the altar of the burnt offering, with coals from whose altar the incense was burnt. It was a ‘living sacrifice’ (better understand the wording in these verses: Psalm 141:2; Rev 8:3) by worshippers.

Praying – outside the court in front of the temple where the altar of burnt offerings was located, men and women in separate courts, but altar visible to all.

God Positions Us for Favor

Position – right side – the south side, between the altar and the candlestick, Zacharias was on the north side, in front of the altar while offering incense. **Why there?** The right was **the favorable side**

Matt 25:33 sheep and goat

Mark 16:5 in tomb, man in white robe sat on right side

Jesus is seated on the right hand of the heavenly Father

SUDDENLY Gabriel was present with Zacharias, to the right of the altar. Zacharias was afraid. Gabriel calmed him down. Anticipate God's ‘suddenly’ in your life as you are faithful before God.

Your prayers have been heard. Elizabeth would have a son – John. He'll bring great joy and happiness. Many will share your joy.

John will be great in God's sight. John, a forerunner of Jesus, was to be a Nazarite, “a separated one” Numb 6:2, only Samuel (1Sam 1:11) and Samson (Judg 13:7) a pure Nazarite to symbol holiness. Not drink alcohol. Be filled with the Holy Spirit, even in her womb. He spoke of the purpose of John:

1 unify families,

2 convert disobedient back to God

3 prepare for the arrival of Jesus, their Messiah.

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- ☞ Zacharias found it hard to believe! ***Doubt silenced him!***
- ☞ He took so long in the Holy Place that the people outside thought he saw a vision when he came out speechless.
- ☞ He would be silenced so he picked up his tablet/iPad to communicate with others.

Elisabeth's Transformation

- ☞ Elisabeth became pregnant shortly afterwards. She stayed out of public for 5 months until she could **showcase God's favor**. She'd live in disgrace for years. **Disgrace would be gone!**
- ☞ Mary's encounter with Gabriel...
- ☞ Noted Elisabeth's pregnancy v.37 **The IMPOSSIBLE IS POSSIBLE!**

- ☞ Elizabeth became filled with the Holy Spirit. John was filled in her womb when they **heard the sound** of Mary pregnant with the Messiah arrived.

- ☞ Elisabeth blessed Mary and acknowledge God's goodness over her. She was the first woman to confess Jesus in the flesh.
- ☞ Elisabeth celebrated Mary and wasn't feeling overlooked by her own great news. She didn't feel sorry for herself that the focus wasn't on her.

- ☞ When Elisabeth gave birth to John, news of the Lord's special kindness to her *spread through her extended family and community*.
- ☞ **Everyone shared her joy.**

The moment Zacharias was able to talk, he **shouted praise to God**.
Influence! A reverence spread through the whole community following.

What will you do?

1. Remain Faithful
2. Obedient, honor God
3. Trust God for His time and positioning you with His favor. He hears your prayers.
4. Suddenly could be any time
5. In the midst, worship and pray
6. Replace labels with who you are in Christ
7. Remove your disgrace
8. Bring about the impossible as possible through God
9. Many share in your joy of what God does in and through your life.
10. Praise God!