

28.01 Announcement of John the Baptist's Birth (Luke 1:5-25)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:

- *priest*: In times before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the final sacrifice for sin, God instructed people to bring specific animals to sacrifice to take away their sins temporarily. Besides offering these sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, priests had other duties, like offering incense on the altar of incense, supplying bread for the table of shew bread, filling the lamps with oil, *etc.* Priests got these jobs by casting lots into a container and then choosing them. [Teacher, print and cut out the priests’ jobs found below. “Cast” them into a basket. Have each student (up to 7) choose lots/jobs from the basket so that they can see how this was done. Note which student chooses the burning of incense.]
- *barren*: without fruit. In Bible times *barren* described a woman who was physically unable to have a child. We have learned about at least three barren women: Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel. God eventually gave these women children.
- *to conceive*: the very beginning of a pregnancy
- *mute*: unable to speak (as the “mute” button on the TV remote silences the sound)
- *reproach*: unkind and judgmental attitudes and actions against someone

Scripture: (ESV)

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah [we will use the KJV spelling Zacharias in this lesson], of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth [Elisabeth]. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, 15 for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, 17 and he will go before him 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 just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

18 And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” 19 And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” 21 And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. 23 And when his time of service was ended, he went to his

home.

24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, 25 “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

Introduction/Review:

Four hundred years had gone by since the last prophet of the Old Testament had written. History had still contributed to the faith about to come in the New Testament. Ezra had organized the Old Testament books and the Psalms. Synagogues became a precursor of the local church. What are some other events and items of history that took place in this intertestamental period? Let’s review them. [See the terms found below.]

Story:

Zacharias

Zacharias was a priest of God. His wife was Elisabeth. Listen to what the Bible says about these two people: “They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.” Here we have a rare refreshing comment on the character of godly people.

Zacharias and Elisabeth were old. They had never had any children, for Elisabeth was barren. It was an embarrassing situation for Elisabeth to be barren; it was as if, in spite of their godly living, God had not outwardly blessed them in this important way. For years they had been praying for a child. Now, being old, ✓they probably accepted the fact of their childlessness, for it was certainly impossible to have kids at their age.

The angel

Choosing his lot/job, this priest went away to the Temple in Jerusalem for about a week. His job? To burn the incense on the altar of incense in the Holy Place of the Temple. [Show the Temple layout found below.] One day as he ministered at his priestly duty, suddenly an angel appeared on the right side of the altar before Zacharias. Imagine Zacharias’s amazement and fear at the sight!

“Don’t be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer has been heard.” What prayer? That old one that ✓they might have quit praying—that they would have a child. The angel continued, “Your wife Elisabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.”

“What!?” Zacharias might have thought, but he didn’t have much time to think at all for the angel continued his speech.

“You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.” Well, I guess! We will certainly rejoice to have a son! However, there is more reason to rejoice, for this baby John will become a very special man. Listen.

“He will be great before the Lord. And . . . he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go . . . 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 just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”

Now, there are a lot of words in the angel’s statement. Let’s divide them up so that we can digest all that he said. [Repeat from the chart found below.] What a God-blessed ministry this man would have! What a joy for his godly parents to know this. This news was unbelievable!

“Unbelievable.” That’s exactly what Zacharias thought. He even said, [say with a doubting expression and tone] “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is also old.”

Now, who was announcing all this news? An angel! Zacharias’s original fear of this angel turned to doubt right there in the very presence of an angel! He needed a rebuke and got a good one.

Silence

The angel answered him [speak slowly and authoritatively], “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. Now listen to me. You will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place because you did not believe my words, which *will* be fulfilled in their time.”

Did you catch that? What will happen to Zacharias because he did not believe God’s message? [He will be mute—unable to speak—until what the angel said happens.]

The crowd

Before Zacharias had gone into the Holy Place and had his encounter with Gabriel, the angel, a crowd of people had gathered outside in the court of the Temple. It was their custom to pray until the priest burning incense came out. They prayed and waited, prayed and waited, prayed and waited.

Still Zacharias didn’t come out. Maybe the people said to each other, “This is taking a lot longer than usual. What is going on?” They certainly wondered at the long delay.

Finally, Zacharias emerged. “Well, say something, Zacharias,” they might have said. But Zacharias could say nothing at all. He could and did make signs to them. Maybe he made signs like this: [point two fingers to your own eyes and then out toward the right; make a fearful face; form the word, *angel*; shake head back and forth while pointing to lips].

We don’t know what signs Zacharias made, but the Bible tells us the people understood when they saw he was mute that he had seen a vision in the Temple.

The pregnancy

So, what happened? Did it turn out the way the angel said? I’ll tell you this much: Zacharias finished his duty at the Temple. Then he went home. No doubt he somehow communicated to Elisabeth the message of Gabriel, the angel. Sure enough! Elisabeth conceived a child (she knew it was a boy) in her old age.

The Bible tells us she stayed out of the public for five months, keeping herself hidden. Why? ✓ Maybe to meditate on all the Lord had done for her. The Bible records that she said, “The Lord has done this for me in the days when He blessed me, taking away my reproach among people.” Now people could not look down on Elisabeth, for she, like other blessed women, would have a child.

Lessons from this lesson:

- It is highly unlikely that you may encounter an angel. There is no need, for God has completed His Word to us. Believe it—the Bible.
- Look to the Lord for grace to imitate the example of Zacharias and Elisabeth—“righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.”
- We, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, must remain faithfully godly even though it seems as God is not giving us the blessings others enjoy.

Activities:

- Play dough: altar of incense; angel
- Begin learning the books of the New Testament to the tune of "Happy Birthday to You" found below.
- Try to talk without saying words: (1) "What food do you like to eat?" (2) "What do you want for your birthday?" (3) "What game do you like to play?" (4) "What do you like to do?" (5) "What scares you?"
- Have students play-act Zacharias’s trying to communicate the angel’s message to Elisabeth.
- Burn incense. Take safety precautions while doing this.
- Make felt letters of students’ names. Put in separate envelopes. Students place on flannel board.

- Review questions: (Game: A student who correctly answers a question gets to put one felt letter of his/her name on the flannel board.)
 1. What is the name of the priest in our lesson today? [Zacharias.]
 2. What was the name Zacharias's wife? [Elisabeth.]
 3. Fill in the blanks: "They were both righteous before _____, walking blamelessly in all the _____ and statutes of the _____." [God; commandments; Lord.]
 4. What was a problem this couple had and prayed about? [Elisabeth was barren; they had no children.]
 5. What job had Zacharias chosen by lot? [To burn incense.]
 6. Who appeared to Zacharias? Where? [An angel—Gabriel; at the right of the altar of incense.]
 7. Gabriel said Zacharias and Elisabeth would have a son. What was his name to be? [John.]
 8. Tell one thing the angel promised that John would do. [Be filled with the Holy Spirit; turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God; go . . . in the spirit and power of Elijah; turn the hearts of the fathers to the children; turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; prepare a people for the Lord.]
 9. What happened to Zacharias when he didn't believe the angel? [He became mute.]
 10. How do you know Elisabeth was happy when she conceived? [She had prayed for a child; the angel said she would be happy; her reproach was taken away.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Luke 1:6— "They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord."

Handwork:

- Color the clipart picture found at the end of this lesson. Color the curtain blue, red, and purple.

priest

barren

to conceive

mute

reproach

Empire

B.C./A.D. (now called BCE, “before Common Era,” and CE, “Common Era”)

Hellenization

Septuagint

Talmud

Sadducees

Pharisees

Synagogues

Ptolemies

Seleucids

Antiochus Epiphanes

Macabees

400 Silent Years

Intertestamental Period

Apochrypha

Rabbi

Priests' Jobs:

offer incense

replace shewbread

offer morning sacrifice

put oil in lamps

offer evening sacrifice

offer Sabbath sacrifice

keep the altar fire burning

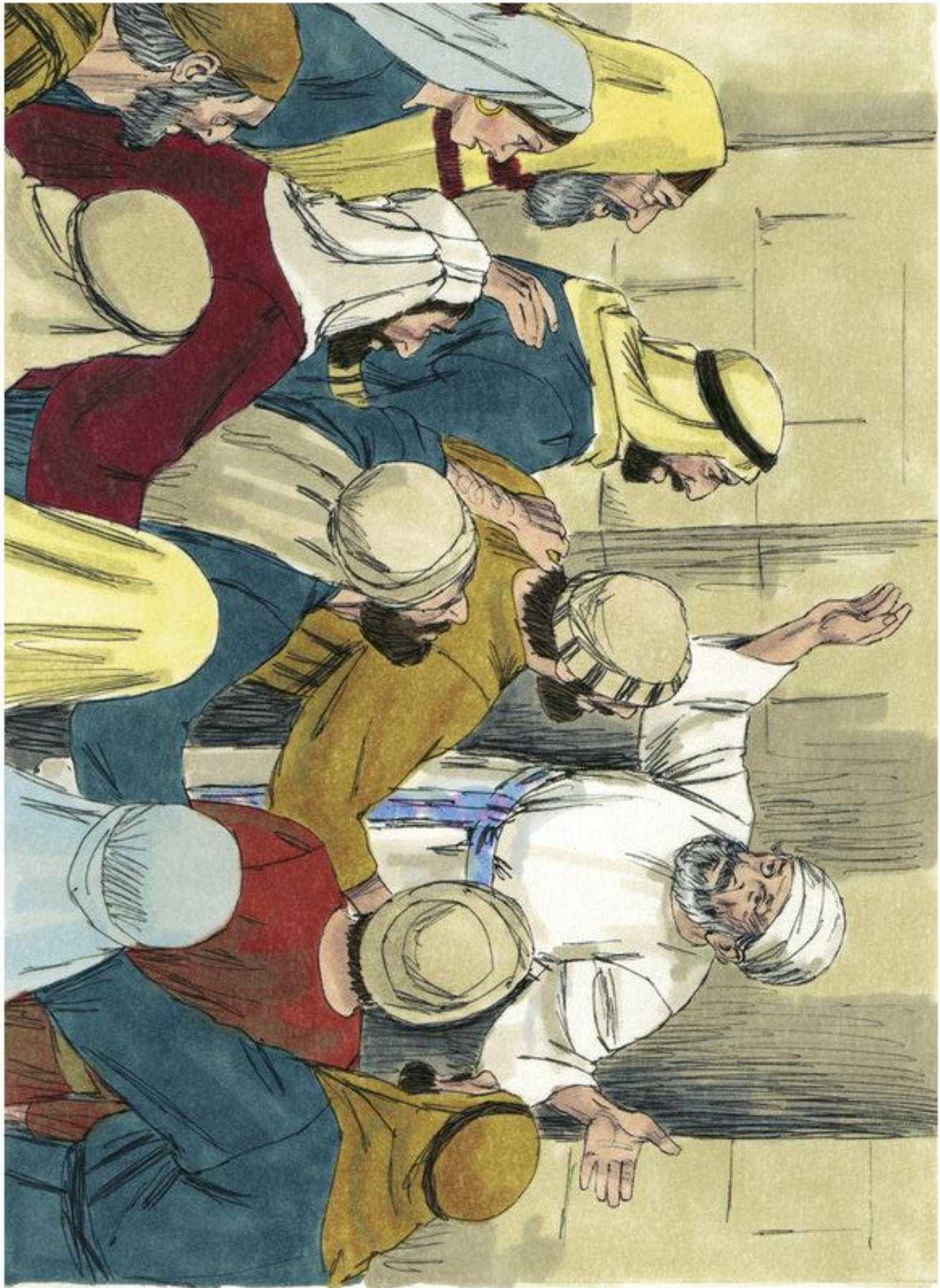


John will—

- be great before the Lord**
- be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb**
- turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God**
- go in the spirit and power of Elijah**
- turn the hearts of the fathers to the children**
- turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just**
- prepare a people**







Zacharias and John

Words found in Winter 2000-2001, Standard Publications
4s & 5s curriculum

Music by Marilyn Alexander

1. An an - gel of the Lord one day to Zach - a - ri - as came And
 2. When John was born, his par - ents knew he was a spe - cial boy; He'd

5
 said, "Your wife will have a son, and John will be his name." "But
 help the peo - ple fol - low Je - sus; that would bring him joy. We

9
 how?" asked Zach - a - ri - as, "we're too old to have a son." "It will hap - pen," said the
 all should learn to do the things that Je - sus says to do, And so let's pray

14
 an - - - gel, "You won't speak un - til it's done."
 ev' - ry day, "Lord, help me fol - low You."

New Testament Books

Tune: Happy Birthday to You

Mat - thew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Ro - mans, First and Sec - ond Cor - in - thi -

4
ans, Ga - la - tians, E - phe - sians, Phi - lip - pi - ans, First and Sec - ond Thes - sa - lo - ni - ans, First and

9
Sec - ond Tim - o - thy, Ti - tus, Phi - le - mon, He - brews, James, First and

13
Sec - ond Pe - ter, First, Sec - ond, Third John, Jude, Rev - el - a - tion.

The musical score is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of four lines of music. The first line contains the lyrics 'Mat - thew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Ro - mans, First and Sec - ond Cor - in - thi -'. The second line starts with a measure rest marked '4' and contains 'ans, Ga - la - tians, E - phe - sians, Phi - lip - pi - ans, First and Sec - ond Thes - sa - lo - ni - ans, First and'. The third line starts with a measure rest marked '9' and contains 'Sec - ond Tim - o - thy, Ti - tus, Phi - le - mon, He - brews, James, First and'. The fourth line starts with a measure rest marked '13' and contains 'Sec - ond Pe - ter, First, Sec - ond, Third John, Jude, Rev - el - a - tion.'. The melody is simple and follows the rhythm of the 'Happy Birthday to You' tune. There are triplets in the second and third lines. The score ends with a double bar line.

