

28.04 Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:57-80)

28.05 Joseph's Angelic Dream (Matthew 1:18-24)

✓ “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.
- A Bible costume to fit the teacher or a realistic male puppet dressed as Joseph

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *to circumcise*: to cut a special part of a boy baby; this was commanded in the Old Testament and was to be done on the eighth day after the boy was born
- *betrothal*: a period of about a year in which an engaged couple waits to be married; engagement that is as legally binding as marriage
- *to divorce*: to break a marriage or, in Bible times, a betrothal

Scripture: (ESV)

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, 60 but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” 61 And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” 62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife . . .

Introduction/Review:

Announcements by Gabriel the angel came to two people. Who were they? [First, Zacharias; second, Mary.] Which baby would be born first? What is his name to be? {John.} What is the name of the baby to be born second? [Jesus.] How much time would elapse after John was born? [Six months.] Where was Mary for the first three months of her pregnancy? [With Elisabeth in Judea.]

Story: (This story uses the KJV spellings for *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth*.)

It was time for old Elisabeth to have her baby, John. All went well, and Elisabeth’s neighbors and relatives were excited and happy for her because the Lord had been so good to her.

John’s birth

Eight days went by. It was time to circumcise John. This was also the official day to name the baby. ✓“Aw! Baby Zacharias, you are so cute!” the neighbors and relatives of Elisabeth and Zacharias might have said.

“No, not Zacharias,” replied Elisabeth. “His name is John.”

Why did Zacharias let his wife respond instead of speaking up with the name God had given his son? [He was unable to speak because he had not believed the angel Gabriel’s announcement.]

But the neighbors and friends protested. “Surely you are going to name this baby after his father, aren’t you? ✓It’s a good name, one to keep in the family. None of your relatives is called John! No? Then, let’s settle this issue by asking his father.”

Now, Zacharias was not deaf. Usually a mute person (one who cannot speak) is also deaf. The Bible doesn’t tell us Zacharias was deaf. Nevertheless, the people acted as if he couldn’t hear. They made signs to him, trying to make him understand.

Let’s pretend we are the neighbors. How would you motion to Zacharias to ask him the name of the baby? [Students might point to a baby and mouth the words, “What is his name?”]

Zacharias asked for a writing tablet. Then he wrote on it, “His name is John.”

✓“What!? Really?! You want to name him John?! What? . . . Listen! Zacharias is talking!”

Zacharias’s prophecy

Yes. It was true. Zacharias was speaking, and what he had to say was a great prophecy of the coming kingdom of the King of kings and Lord of lords and John’s part in it. Here are some of the points he made: [See enlarged chart below.]

Jesus’ Part in the Plan

1. The Lord God of Israel is about to save his people through the tribe of David.
2. Prophecy is being fulfilled.
3. The covenant of mercy and deliverance God made with Abraham and others is coming to pass.
4. Our people will be able to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all our days.
5. The sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

John’s Part in This Plan

1. You will be the prophet of the Most High.
2. You will go before the Lord to prepare his ways.
3. You will give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.

Fear came on all those neighbors. All through the hill country of Judea, they talked about these things. Everyone who heard them thought about these miraculous events, saying, “What then will this child be?” It was obvious to them that the Lord was with John.

Joseph’s dilemma

Meanwhile, back in Nazareth, not long after Mary’s return from her visit to Elisabeth, ✓rumors were flying about that young lady. Let’s consider life from the viewpoint of her fiancé, Joseph. Listen to his story.

[Teacher, dress yourself in a Bible costume to represent Joseph or use a puppet for the following monologue.]

“I was betrothed to a lovely young lady name Mary. As was the custom among us Israelites, our marriage would take place a year after our engagement. Nothing would stop us from marrying unless—and this was unthinkable—unless my bride were to become pregnant by another man. In that case, our laws stated the lady would be stoned or at least divorced, never to marry.

“How I looked forward to our marriage. But horror of horrors, one day a friend of mine accosted me with the unthinkable.

“‘Mary,’ said he, ‘is expecting a baby. I know ✓you have not even seen her since your betrothal vows were spoken nearly a year ago. Surely she has been unfaithful!’

“His words struck a blow to my heart as heavy as a hammer blow strikes the wood in my carpenter shop. My Mary? Unfaithful?! Surely my friend was wrong! But, no, ✓others came to my shop with the same sad story.

“The Law was quite clear. The best choice for the least embarrassment to Mary and to me was to divorce her privately and quietly. (I couldn’t just break the betrothal; according to the law, ✓stopping the marriage at this point required a divorce.) ✓‘I’ll write her a bill of divorcement this very night,’ I thought.

The angel’s message

“However, while I was thinking all of this over, I fell asleep. The angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream, saying, ‘Fear not to take unto you Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, which means “the One who saves,” for He shall save His people from their sins.’

“I was astonished! What had been unthinkable was not sad but *glad* news! Mary would be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah! He would save His people from their sins. He would save *me*!

“I knew the prophecy in Isaiah: ‘Behold, the virgin’—(Mary had *not* been unfaithful to me; she was a virgin)—‘shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means “God with us”).

“When I awoke from sleep, I determined to do exactly as the angel of the Lord had commanded me. I took Mary to be my lawfully wedded wife. Together we would rear her Son, the promised Messiah.”

Lessons from this lesson:

- Jesus is God: The angel said He was conceived of the Holy Ghost; Jesus was to be His name because He would “save His people from their sins”; another name, Immanuel, means “God with us.”
- Like Mary, like Joseph, be pure.

- “He shall save *His people* from their sins.”

Activities:

- Play dough: baby; letters *J-O-H-N* or *J-E-S-U-S*
- A week or more before teaching this class, get photos of students as babies. Play “Name That Baby” by showing a photo and asking students to identify the person.
- Sing both stanzas of “Zacharias and John” found in Lesson 28.01 and on the Songs page at teachingthebibletokids.org.
- Review Questions: (Game: Use the angels from the last lesson.)
 1. Baby boys were circumcised how many days after birth? [Eight days.]
 2. What was the thinking by neighbors and relatives about the name of Zacharias and Elisabeth’s baby? [He should be named after his father.]
 3. How was the incident resolved? [John wrote, “His name is John,” on a tablet.]
 4. What did Zacharias do after he could talk again? [He blessed God and prophesied of the work of the Messiah.]
 5. To whom was Mary betrothed? [Joseph.]
 6. Who was Jesus’ Father? [God.]
 7. When Joseph was considering divorcing Mary, what happened? [An angel spoke to him in a dream.]
 8. What did the angel say? [He should go ahead and marry Mary; he should call Mary’s baby Jesus.]
 9. What does the name *Jesus* mean? [The one who saves.]
 10. What does the name *Immanuel* mean? [God with us.]

Memory Verse[s]:

- Matthew 1:21—“Call His name Jesus, for He shall save his people from their sins.” (See visual below.)
- If you want to have your students memorize a passage of Scripture, begin John 1:1-14 today:
 - 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - 2 He was in the beginning with God.
 - 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
 - 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 - 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
 - 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
 - 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.
 - 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
 - 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
 - 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
 - 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
 - 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:
 - 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
 - 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Handwork:

- The students will mount their baby photos on card stock and take them home.

to circumcise

betrothal

to divorce

Jesus' Part in the Plan

- The Lord God of Israel is about to save his people through the tribe of David.
- Prophecy is being fulfilled.
- The covenant of mercy and deliverance God made with Abraham and others is coming to pass.
- God's people will be able to serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness all their days.
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John's Part in This Plan

- You will be the prophet of the Most High.
- You will go before the Lord to prepare his way .
- You will give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.

CALL HIS NAME
JESUS



Matth. 1:21













