

Birth of John the Baptist

Scripture Reference: [Luke 1:5-25, 36-37](#)



Suggested Emphasis: God can make things happen that are impossible to man.

Memory Verse: “Nothing is impossible with God.” [Luke 1:37](#) NIV



Background
Study



Story
Introduction



Telling
the Story



Review
Questions



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Activities



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Story Overview:

A priest and his wife were well beyond the years when it is possible to give birth to a child. The angel, Gabriel, gave Zechariah the incredible news that his wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to a son who would become a great preacher. They were to name the baby John.

Background Study:

Zechariah and his wife, Elisabeth were Jews who patiently waited the coming of the Messiah. Zechariah was a priest and both he and his wife were from the priestly line of Aaron ([Exodus 28:1, 43](#); [1 Chronicles 24:19](#)). Though married for many years, this couple had never been blessed with a child. This would have been both disappointing and humiliating for a Jewish couple of that time.

The priestly groups took turns in temple service. Zechariah's group was serving at this time. Within the group the priests chose lots (similar to drawing straws) to decide who was to perform certain temple duties. In today's story, Zechariah was chosen and he had the honour of burning incense in the temple. While the priest burned incense, he was to pray. The people worshipping outside in the temple court were to pray also. Zechariah was supposed to be alone in the temple. As he prayed, he was suddenly aware of an angel standing near him at the right of the altar. Seeing Zechariah's fright, the angel told him not to fear because his prayer had been heard. His wife would give birth to a son who would be filled with the Holy Spirit. They were to name him John (which means "the Lord is gracious"). The prayers of Zechariah for Israel's salvation were beginning to be answered.

Poor Zechariah. It was too wonderful to believe, and he questioned the angel. ([Luke 1:18](#)). The neighbours had been puzzled by Zechariah's inability to speak and were even more puzzled when Elizabeth wanted to name the child John instead of after his father or a relative. So they asked Zechariah by signs what the child's name should be. Zechariah wrote, "His name is John."

Suddenly Zechariah was able to speak and he began to praise God and prophesy. First he praised God for visiting and redeeming his people. Zechariah said that the Messiah was soon to come to bring salvation to His people. Now all the prophecies and covenants would be fulfilled. Zechariah's son, John, was to be the one who would prepare the way for Jesus.

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)

-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

When the students are assembled in the story area, begin moving your lips and gesturing, as if telling the story, but do not speak aloud. Act frustrated that they do not seem to understand what you are saying. Continue for another minute. “Oh, I guess you were having trouble understanding me, weren’t you? What was the problem? That’s right. I was talking but no sound was coming out. Listen to our Bible story to find out who had this kind of problem. When the story is over, you tell me his name, why he had this problem, and how the problem was solved.

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The Story:

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were two old people—like grandparents—except that Zechariah and Elizabeth were not grandparents. They weren’t even parents. They had no children, and that made them sad. But all their lives they had followed God’s commands, and that had made their lives happy.

Zechariah was a priest who helped in God’s temple. One day a very special thing happened to him. He was chosen to be the one priest to go inside the temple and burn incense while the people stood outside and prayed. Zechariah must have felt especially happy as he entered the temple.

Suddenly an angel appeared in front of him! Zechariah was terrified. The angel comforted him, “don’t be afraid, Zechariah. God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son. You will name him John. He will help people follow God’s chosen leader.

That seems impossible doesn’t it? Can old people have babies? Only God could make that happen! Zechariah should have believed the angel and rejoiced. But he didn’t.

“How can this happen?” he asked. “My wife and I are old.”

“I am the angel Gabriel. God sent me to deliver this good news to you. But now, since you did not believe my news, you will not be able to talk until my words come true.

Outside the temple the crowd was getting impatient. They wondered why Zechariah was taking so long inside the temple. But when he did come out, he couldn't tell them. The angel's words had come true: Zechariah couldn't talk.

And more of the angel's words came true. Zechariah and Elizabeth soon discovered that they were going to have a baby. The neighbours and relatives rejoiced along with the parents. And when the baby was born, it was a boy, just as the angel had said.

When the baby was eight days old, many friends and relatives of Zechariah and Elizabeth came for a party to give the baby his name. As people gathered for the party, they talked about how the baby would be named Zechariah after his father. But Elizabeth heard them and said, “No, his name will be John!”

The guests were surprised. “But none of your relatives have that name.”

They turned to Zechariah and gestured for him to show what he wanted the baby to be named—he still could not talk. He asked for a writing tablet and on it wrote, “His name is John.”

All of the sudden Zechariah realized that he could talk! He began praising God for the wonderful way He had kept His promises. He explained to the people that John indeed was a special baby, and God had a special plan for him: John would prepare people to follow Jesus (who would soon be born.) Zechariah and Elizabeth were excited to have a son after all these years. But they were even happier that God had chosen them as the parents of a boy who would grow up and help others follow God's own Son.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Who were the parents of John the Baptist? Zechariah and Elizabeth.
2. Who told Zechariah that Elizabeth was going to have a baby? The angel Gabriel
3. What was so unusual about Zechariah and Elizabeth having a baby? They were old.
4. Quote Luke 1:37. "For nothing is impossible with God." (NIV)

Song Suggestions:

- My God is so Big
- He's Got the Whole World In His Hands
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- To help reinforce the fact that God's power made it possible for an elderly

couple to have a baby, show a magic trick. After fooling the class, then explain how the trick worked. Talk about the difference between magic tricks and God’s power (magic tricks are just “tricks” but God’s power is real.) Try the simple magic tricks at <http://www.grandparents.com/gp/content/activitiesandevents/everyday-activities/article/3-easy-magic-tricks-you-can-do.html>.

- Memorize Luke 1:37. A fun way to do this is to write words like “fast, slow, baby talk, bass voice, opera singer, etc on small cards. Children can draw cards and then say the memory verse according to the card they choose. Example: Child draws a card with “opera singer” on it so they sing the verse as an opera singer would. Or try another [memory verse activity](#).
- Obtain birth announcements and have students fill them out for John the Baptist.
- Hide baby items around the room and have students find them.
- Younger children can practice writing “His name is John” (verse 63).
- If you plan on teaching about [The Birth of Jesus](#) in the next few weeks then ask students to bring baby photos so that these can be used as an introduction to that story.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for the “Birth of John the Baptist” printables to print on A4 size paper](#)
[Click here for the “Birth of John the Baptist” printables to print on Letter size paper \(USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets about the birth of John the Baptist \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page and puzzle worksheets about Zechariah and Elizabeth \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring Page and Worksheets about Mary's visit to Elizabeth \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring Page of the naming of John the Baptist from conutman.com](#)
- [A good selection of puzzles and games to print from gardenofpraise.com](#)

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