

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

LUKE 1

When we go from the Old Testament to the New Testament, we just have to turn a page or two in our Bibles. But there were almost four hundred years between Nehemiah and the birth of Jesus. In Jesus' day, Israel was once again ruled by foreigners. Now it was the Romans instead of the Persians. And the people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah. Would he ever come? The answer was on the way!

The first step of God's plan to send the Messiah was about to unfold with a man named Zechariah. Zechariah served God as a priest in the temple. He and his wife Elizabeth followed the Lord and obeyed his commands, but one thing made them sad: they had no children and they were getting old. One day Zechariah was chosen to burn incense in the Most Holy Place of the temple. While he was there the angel Gabriel appeared to him.

This certainly didn't happen every day! Zechariah was afraid. But Gabriel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. God has heard your prayers and he is going to give you a son. You are to name him John. The Holy Spirit will be with him before he is even born. When he grows up he will bring many people back to the Lord. And he will prepare the way for God to come to his people."

This was a lot for Zechariah to understand. He didn't know what to think. "How can I be sure of this?" he asked. "My wife and I are very old." That was true, but Zechariah forgot that God can do anything. Gabriel told Zecha-

riah that because he didn't believe God's word, he wouldn't be able to speak until everything God had told him came true. At that moment, Zechariah discovered that he couldn't speak. He had a lot of time to think about what the angel had said, especially when Elizabeth discovered that she was going to have a baby at long last!

Six months later, something even more amazing happened. This time the angel Gabriel came to a young woman named Mary, who was Elizabeth's cousin. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph, but she wasn't married yet. When Mary saw the angel she was afraid too. But Gabriel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. You are going to have a baby son, and you are to call him 'Jesus.' He will be the most special baby that has ever been born, because God himself is going to be his father. God will make him a king in the family line of David and he will reign over a kingdom that will never end." Mary had questions too: "How will this happen, since I am not married yet?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you," Gabriel said, "and because of this, Jesus will be the Son of God." Mary believed the angel and agreed to be part of God's plan. Before he left, Gabriel told Mary that Elizabeth was also having a baby—because nothing is impossible for God.

Soon everything happened just as Gabriel had said. Mary went to visit Elizabeth and, as soon as Elizabeth saw her, Elizabeth's baby jumped inside her. Elizabeth said Mary was blessed to be the mother of her Lord and Mary praised God too. Zechariah couldn't say a word, but when his son was born, Zechariah told the family in writing to name his son John, and at once he could speak again!

Did you know that Mary's son Jesus was both man and God at the same time? That is very important. As a man, Jesus carried our sins for us on the cross and took our punishment. He lived a perfectly holy life without ever sinning. And because he was God, he grew up to heal the sick and raise the dead. Death could not win over him. Jesus came back to life on the third day so that some day we can rise and be with him in heaven.



Let's Talk About It!

According to the angel, who is going to give Mary a baby?

What name is Mary to give her baby?

What special things does the angel say about Jesus?

Week 1

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Story 79 – *The Gospel Story Bible*

Prior to Bible study, find a photograph of some people (in a magazine or online) that has a lot of detail. Make a list of questions to ask your children that will test their skills of observation. The children will look closely at the photo and then answer questions to see how well they remember the details. Questions like, “What color shirt was the man wearing?” or “What was sitting on the table?” will work well to test the skill of your eyewitnesses. During Bible study, give everyone one minute to study the photograph taking in as much detail as they can. Then ask the questions from your list to see how observant they are. Explain to your children that this week you will be reading from Luke’s Gospel, which was written from eyewitness accounts.

DAY ONE

Picture It

Can you remember a time when you were startled? Perhaps someone walked up behind you in a quiet room, and you didn’t know anyone was there until you felt a hand on your shoulder. If something like that can scare us, imagine what it would be like to be alone in your room and suddenly see an angel appear out of nowhere. Probably you would either scream in fright or be scared into silence. Let’s see what happened to Zechariah and Mary in our story today when angels suddenly appeared to them.



Read Luke 1:1–38.

Think about It Some More

When we read the story it can seem like seeing angels was a normal part of life, but it wasn’t. Zechariah had been a priest all his life but he’d never seen an angel before. Serving in the temple was scary enough, for God’s presence lived inside the temple. Even before he saw the angel, Zechariah would have walked very cautiously into the temple’s inner room. He knew God was holy and that he was a sinner. If he made a mistake, he could die—like Uzzah, who had touched the holy ark with his hand and been killed (2 Samuel 6:6–7). So when the angel suddenly appeared, fear must’ve shot through him like a lightning bolt. Similarly, when the

angel appeared to Mary, she also was afraid. Angels had to calm people's fears before speaking their messages.

Talk about It

- ∴ Why did Zechariah lose his voice? (*Zechariah lost his voice because he didn't believe the angel's words to him.*)
- ∴ How was Mary's answer to the angel different from Zechariah's answer? (*Mary trusted that what the angel said to her was true. She had faith and did not doubt.*)
- ∴ Whose throne was Jesus going to sit on? (*Verse 32 tells us that Jesus would sit upon David's throne. If you have smaller children, you can read verse 32 and ask them to raise their hands when they hear whose throne Jesus would be sitting upon.*)



Pray about It

Thank God for sending his Son, Jesus, to the earth to die on the cross for our sins.

DAY TWO

Remember It

What do you remember about yesterday's story? What do you think is going to happen today?



Read Luke 1:39–45.

Think about It Some More

After the angel told Mary about God's plan, Mary went to see Elizabeth, a relative of hers. When Mary arrived and walked through Elizabeth's front door, the little baby growing in Elizabeth's tummy jumped, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Even before Mary could tell Elizabeth that she was pregnant, Elizabeth already knew. The Holy Spirit told her that Mary was going to have a baby, a very special baby. She said that Mary's baby would be her Lord! That means that she knew Mary's baby was God and would rule over her life.

Talk about It

- ∴ What was amazing about Elizabeth's greeting? (*She knew what happened to Mary even though Mary didn't tell her.*)
- ∴ What did Elizabeth's baby do when Mary arrived? (*Elizabeth's baby, who was later to be known as John the Baptist, jumped inside of her.*)
- ∴ Why did Elizabeth's baby jump inside her? What was so special about Mary's baby? (*Jesus was no ordinary baby; he was the Son of God. Jesus came to earth so that he could die on the cross for our sins. He is only a little baby in our story, but he is still the Savior of the world.*)

Pray about It

Thank God for the way he used Mary and Elizabeth to work out his plan to send us Jesus.

DAY THREE ---

Connect It to the Gospel

Today is the day we connect this week's Bible story to the gospel. The gospel is the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for our salvation. Can anyone guess how our story this week looks forward to or back at the gospel?

 Read Luke 1:46–56.

Think about It Some More

When Mary saw that Elizabeth was also going to have a baby, she realized that all that the angel Gabriel had told her was true, and she began to praise God. Mary understood that the baby inside of her was no ordinary baby. He was going to grow up to become her Savior—the one who would save her from her sins. Although Mary was very special to be chosen to give birth to Jesus, she was a sinner like you and me. She needed to be forgiven and saved from her sins too.

Her prayer tells us that she understood that God's promise to Abraham was connected to the baby growing inside of her. When God told Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3), he was pointing to Jesus. Jesus was born into the family of Abraham and died on the cross so that people from every nation could be saved.

Talk about It

- :: What does the word *savior* mean? (*A savior is someone who rescues. Jesus is our Savior because he rescues us from our sins.*)
- :: Why did Mary call God her Savior? (*Mary called God her Savior because she knew that she was a sinner and that only God could save her from her sin.*)
- :: Do we also need a Savior? Why? (*Yes, we also need a Savior. Our sin separates us from God. As sinners, we can never save ourselves. It is only by God's mercy in sending Jesus that we can be saved.*)

Pray about It

Thank Jesus for coming to earth to save us from our sin.

DAY FOUR

Remember It

What has God been teaching you this week through our Bible story?



Read Luke 1:57–80.

Think about It Some More

Can you imagine losing your voice for almost a year? That is what happened to Zechariah. From the day the angel appeared to him until the day his newborn son was named John, he could not speak. It all happened just as the angel of the Lord said it would. Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and as soon as Zechariah wrote on a tablet that the child’s name was John, he was able to talk again. And when he spoke, God used Zechariah as a prophet to announce that the time had come for God’s people to be saved.

He said that God was raising up a “horn of salvation” from the house of David to save them (v. 69). The people listening didn’t know it yet, but Zechariah was talking about the baby Jesus, who was soon to be born as the Savior of the world. Zechariah’s son John grew up to be the man God used to announce the start of Jesus’ ministry.

Talk about It

- ● KIDS, ask your parents if they can remember why they picked your
 - ● name for you when you were born.

(Parents, let your children know why you picked the names you did for them.)

- ∴ Do you remember why Zechariah and Elizabeth named their baby John? *(The angel told them to call him John [Luke 1:13].)*
- ∴ After Zechariah could talk again, he spoke a prophecy about Jesus. What do we learn about Jesus from what he said? *(Parents, if you have younger children, reread verses 68–79, and instruct them to raise their hands when they hear something about Jesus. Jesus is the “horn of salvation” [v. 69] from the house of David. Jesus will bring “holiness and righteousness” [v. 75] to God’s people, and will save us from our enemies [v. 71]. “Holiness and righteousness” speaks of Jesus’ perfect, sinless life that he would give all of us in exchange for our sins when he died for us on the cross.)*
- ∴ What did Zechariah say about his own son? *(Zechariah said his son, John, would become a prophet and go before the Lord to prepare a way for him [v. 76].)*



Pray about It

Praise God for his wonderful plan of salvation. God had a plan to save us through Jesus long before Jesus was even born.

DAY FIVE

Discover It

Today is the day we look at a different Bible passage—from the book of Psalms or one of the prophets—to see what we can learn from it about Jesus or our salvation.



Read Isaiah 4:2–3.

Think about It Some More

After God gave Zechariah his voice back, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak words that God gave him—he began to prophesy—about what was going to happen in the future. He said that God was bringing salvation out of King David’s family line, just as the prophets of old had foretold. Isaiah was one of the prophets who talked about Jesus long before Jesus was ever born, and he wrote the Scripture we read today.

In his prophecy, Isaiah talked about a “branch” that will be “beautiful and glorious.” The word *branch* is something like a code word the prophets used in their prophecies to describe the Savior. Jeremiah and Zechariah also called the coming Messiah the branch. We know that Jesus is the branch Isaiah is talking about. This branch, Isaiah said, was going to grow out of the family tree of King David and Jesse, David’s father (see Isaiah 11:1, 10), and become a king who would rule forever.

Talk about It

- ∴ What words did Isaiah use to describe the branch? (*Isaiah said the branch was beautiful and glorious.*)
- ∴ What are all the people left in Jerusalem going to be called? (*The people left in Jerusalem—all of God’s people—will be called holy.*)
- ∴ How do you think sinners—who are not holy because they sin against God—will become holy? (*Jesus, the branch, is going to die on the cross to take their sins away and then give them, as their own, his perfect, obedient life to make them holy.*)



Pray about It

Thank God for sending the branch—his Son, Jesus—to die on the cross so we could be forgiven and have our sins taken away.