

great in the sight of the Lord. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. And he will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Zechariah asked the angel: “How can this be? I’m already old and so is my wife”

Responding, the angel said, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you didn’t believe my words, which will come true at their proper time.”

“What happened to Zechariah?” people asked.

“He’s excited! Look at the way he is moving his arms back and forth like that”

“Actually I think he’s trying to tell us something,” said someone.

When he had finished his responsibilities at the temple, Zechariah went home with his wife Elizabeth. One day she came home with good news. “Zechariah, we’re going to have a child! God has answered our prayers.” Six months later, Mary, a relative of Elizabeth’s, went to go visit her. When Elizabeth heard Mary enter her home and greet her, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will

bear!”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. When the time came, Elizabeth gave birth to a baby boy, just like the angel told her. The neighbors and family members celebrated with her.

“What will you call him,” they asked her.

“Maybe you should name him Zechariah like his father,” suggested the men.

“No! His name is John,” said Elizabeth.

The neighbors and family members asked, “Why? There is no one in your family with that name.” Then they asked the father what he thought they should name the baby and he asked for a tablet and wrote on it, “His name is John.” At that very instant, Zechariah could talk and he blessed God.

John lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel. His clothing was made of camel skin and he had a leather belt and he ate locusts and wild honey. When it was time, he began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

He also said that he was the prophet to whom Isaiah was referring to when he said, “In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.” All of the people from Jerusalem, Judea and from around the Jordan came to hear John preach.