

CHRISTMAS ACCORDING TO ZECHARIAH AND ELIZABETH

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

JESUS MESSIAH SAVE PROMISED

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Isaiah 40:1-5; Matthew 3; Mark 1:1-14; Luke 1:5-25, 1:39-45, 5:57-80

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the children comprehend how God prepared his people to receive the promised Messiah

MEMORY VERSE

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Zachariah and Elizabeth were irreproachably obedient to God’s law. Both had asked God for a son, even though they lived in a time where very few people believed in the Lord’s power.

Then came the angel Gabriel and he told Zachariah that his wife Elizabeth would give birth to a baby, whom they would call John; and the baby, even in Elizabeth’s womb, would be filled with the Holy Spirit. Even though this promise came from an angel, Zachariah doubted it was true because Elizabeth was far too old to be having children.

Because of Zachariah’s inability to believe, the angel made him mute until his son was born.

When the baby was born, their neighbors and family members wanted to call him Zechariah like his father. Even though this was customary in their town, Zechariah and Elizabeth were sure that they had to name their son John, just like the angel had prophesied. This showed the people that this child was very special, that God’s hand was on him.

When John was an adult, he was a prophet whose message was about repenting from sin, and many people came to hear him.

John baptized people in water, but he taught that the Messiah would come and baptize them in the Holy Spirit and fire. He

recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah.

The promises of God are clear, and there is not any doubt that he will reward the honesty and loyalty of His children (Psalms 5:11b-12; Psalms 92:12-15).

In the example of Zachariah and Elizabeth, Luke talks about the two characteristics that God's children should have:

To be upright in the sight of God and obedient to His every law.

It is interesting to think about how a priest – Zechariah, surrounded by a religious structure and living in a period where people doubted the power of God, because of the social and political oppression – remained upright and obedient in the sight of the Lord. No matter what was going on around them, Zechariah and Elizabeth maintained their loyalty to God. How many Zechariah's and Elizabeth's do we need today?

Even through our social difficulties, our economic situation, and cultural pressure, we need to remain upright in the sight of God and obedient to his every law (Luke 1:6).

The calling of God is that we be a people who can make a difference, not people who are following the world's models (Romans 12:2).

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Ask the group: "In the example of Zachariah and Elizabeth, what are two characteristics that God's children should have?" (allow responses) Then say: "To be upright in the sight of God and obedient to His every law."

Ask the children: "How do you think a priest named Zechariah remained upright and obedient in the sight of the Lord even though he was surrounded by a religious structure and living in a period where people doubted the power of God?" (allow several responses) Then say: "Even there was social and political oppression, no matter what was going on around them, Zechariah and Elizabeth maintained their loyalty to God." Then ask: "How many Zechariah's and Elizabeth's do we need today?" (allow responses) Finally say: "Even through our social difficulties, our economic situation, and cultural pressure, we need to remain upright in the sight of God and obedient to his every law (Luke 1:6). The calling of God is that we be a people who can make a difference, not people who are following the world's models (romans 12:2)."

TEACH THE LESSON

Read with your children the Bible Story "Preparing the way for the Savior."

"Is it true that one day we'll have a son?" Elizabeth asked Zechariah.

"I do not know, we are so old already and we've prayed for this for so long," responded Zechariah. Zechariah was a loyal priest who served while Herod was the king of Judea. He and his wife were righteous before God.

One day when it was Zechariah's turn to enter the sanctuary and burn incense, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. Seeing him, Zechariah was startled and scared, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be 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 did not 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, visited 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 said, "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.

Talk to the children about God having prepared his people even before Jesus came.

Ask them how people get ready for Christmas.

CONNECT THE LESSON

Review

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #310-A and #310-B and help the group review the lesson.

Christmas lists

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #310-C and have the students talk about preparations that they make to celebrate Christmas.

Say: "What is it that you do with your family to get ready for Christmas?" (Bake cookies, clean the house, decorate, go shopping, etc.)

"How did God prepare for the first Christmas?" (First he chose a family that would give birth to his Son, the family of Abraham; God chose the people he knew would help him.)

"Do you know how God did that?"

Ask the children to answer the questions they find on their activity sheet, writing the answers on the blank lines.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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Pass the gift

Practice the verse of the month (Matthew 1:21). Ask the children to sit in a circle. While you play music, have the children pass a present around the circle. When you stop the music, the child who is holding the gift should recite the verse in order to keep playing.

Ask them who they talked to this week about the prophecies that spoke about Jesus' coming. Also ask if God helped any of them to keep promises this past week.

WRAP-UP

Pray

For the end-of-session prayer, thank God for sending John the Baptist to prepare the world for when Jesus came. Pray for the

students to remember the real reason for Christmas while they prepare to celebrate.

Encourage

Thank the group for their attendance and encourage them not to forget what they learned.

Invite

Announce something about the next session to increase the students' interest. Tell to be sure to welcome visitors.