

Lower Elementary

Zechariah and Elizabeth

Checklist

☐Hula hoops

☐bells

Introduction:

Have children hold hula hoops with bells on them. Invite one child at a time to go through the bell obstacle course, trying not to ring the bells.

Talk about how hard it was to not make any noise. Christmas bells are a reminder that we are ringing out the good news of Jesus' birth. When you are excited about something, it's so hard not to let everyone know about it. We just want to shout out praise.

John the Baptist's job was to ring out the good news about Jesus. Later, he would go around telling everyone that Jesus was on His way. Even his birth happened just before Jesus'-- letting everyone know something even more special was on the way.

Let all the children take turns ringing the bells of good news for about thirty seconds. They can sing out Gloria! Jingle Bells! or Happy Birthday Jesus! while they do it.

For hundreds, in fact, thousands of years, God had been promising to send the Rescuer, the Redeemer, the promised Savior, to the earth. The Israelites called this person the Messiah. Prophets wrote about Him, but what would He actually be like?



After so many promises, there was a long time of silence, when there was no prophet in Israel to tell the people what to expect. No one to share God's message. Nearly four hundred years had passed since Ezra and Nehemiah led the Israelites out of Babylon and back to their homeland. But when they returned to Israel they were still under the rule of the Persian Empire.



Just as Daniel had said about Nebuchadnezzar's dream, power in the land would change many hands.



A man named Alexander came and conquered Israel and all of its neighbors. Everyone learned the language and ways of their Greek rulers.

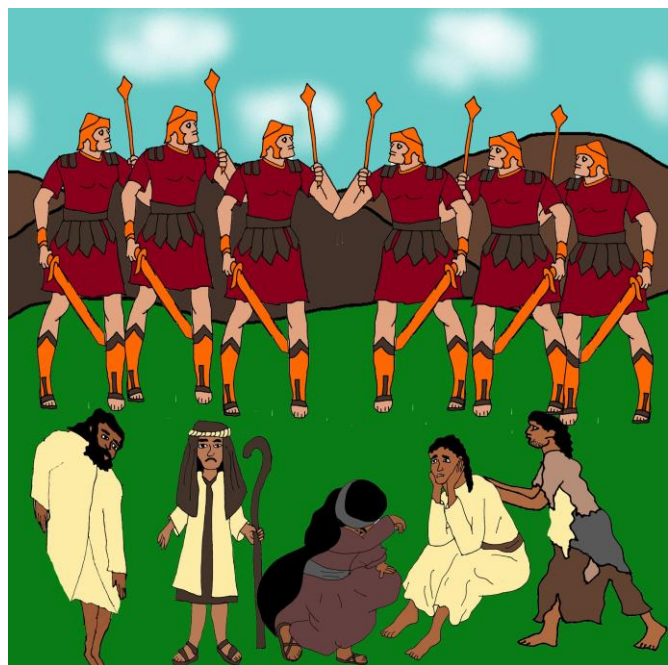


Then a group of Jews called the Maccabees revolted and Israel was under Jewish rule for a short time.



But when the Roman Empire took over the Greek Empire, they conquered Israel, too. The Roman ruler, called a Caesar, put King Herod in charge of Israel, and called it Judea.

God the Father was getting ready to send His Son, Jesus, to earth to rescue people from sin. Just like a king is announced by a herald, Jesus was going to have a very special friend announce Him. He would go ahead of Him every step of the way, including being born just before Jesus.



There was a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. They both loved God very much and always tried their best to live their lives in a way that pleased Him. But despite this, God had never given them the one thing they longed for more than any other: a child. For many years they hoped to become parents, but as the decades passed, they realized that it was no longer possible, because they were too old.



One day when it was Zechariah's turn to burn incense in the temple as the people stood outside praying, he was stunned by a bright light. The angel Gabriel stood right beside the altar. Zechariah was silent with shock.

"Don't be afraid!" the angel told Zechariah. "The desire of your heart will be given to you. God has heard your prayers and will give you a son. But not just any son. Your child will be a great blessing to all people. He will speak to the hearts of the people and help them to remember how much God loves them.

You will name him John, and he will be the one to introduce the Lord when the time is right. He will have Elijah's spirit and power.



Zechariah listened to the angel's words, but struggled to believe them.

"My wife and I are so old, though!" he protested. "What proof are you going to give me that this will actually happen?"

"I am God's servant," Gabriel reminded him. "The Lord sent me to tell you this good news. You should have believed this message, but if you really want proof, then you will be unable to speak until all these things happen. That should convince you!"



Just like Gabriel had said, Elizabeth became pregnant with a baby boy. When all her neighbors and friends and relatives heard about it, they were so happy for her. They knew how long Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed for a baby, and that at their age, God must have performed a miracle for it to happen. All this time, Zechariah could not speak a word. He could only communicate with people using his hands and by writing.



When the baby was born, Zechariah and Elizabeth brought him to the temple to dedicate him.

“Naming him after his father would be nice!” Everyone suggested. “It is a tradition, after all.”

“No!” Elizabeth shook her head. “His name is John.”

“John!” they argued. “No one in your family is named John. Why on earth would you want to name him that?”

Then Zechariah waved his hands to let them know he wanted a tablet to write on. He wrote the words, “His name is John.”

As soon as he did this, Zechariah could speak again.

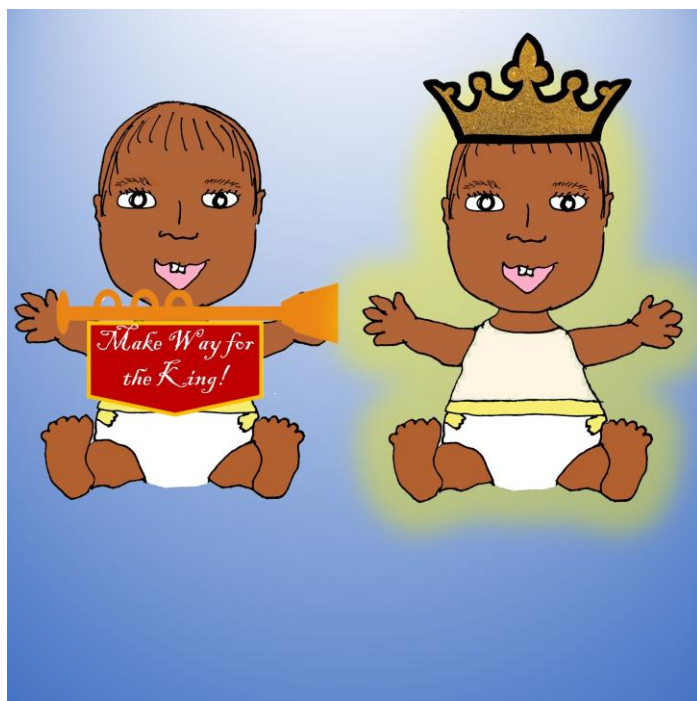


After nine long months of having to hold his tongue, Zechariah's first words were praising God. The Holy Spirit took over his words.

"Praise to the Lord, the God of Israel!" he called out. "God has finally sent us the Messiah, the one who will rescue all people."



Then, turning to his newborn son, he blessed him, saying, "My precious boy, you will be called a prophet of God, delivering His messages from heaven. You will tell everyone about the Messiah. You will prepare their hearts. You will let people know they can come to God for forgiveness to have their sins washed away." Everyone there who saw this could barely believe it. Soon the whole town was talking about baby John, and wondering what kind of person he would grow up to be.



Closing Discussion:



What did Elizabeth and Zechariah want very badly? (a child) What did the angel tell Zechariah they would have? (a baby) How would you have reacted if you were Zechariah?

Why didn't Zechariah believe the angel? (they were too old to be parents) Is anything impossible for God? What happened to Zechariah because he didn't believe? (he couldn't speak)

What did Elizabeth and Zechariah's friends want to name the baby? (after his dad) What did Zechariah do? (write John on a tablet)

The people of Israel had to wait a long time for the promised Messiah to arrive. Zechariah and Elizabeth had to wait a very long time to become parents. Then Zechariah had to wait a very long time before he could speak. Do you think this helped them to become more patient? Do you ever get impatient waiting for Christmas to arrive? What are you thinking about when you're being impatient? (food, presents, games, parties) What is Christmas really about? (Jesus' birth) Can thinking more about Jesus at Christmas help you be more patient? What can you do to show patience? (help others, say thank you, wait nicely)

Craft:

Paper bag Zechariah puppet

Closing Activity:

Imagine Zechariah coming home to tell Elizabeth about everything that happened. There was only one problem. He could not speak. Imagine you are Zechariah, how would you act out the events that you just experienced. Have students take turns acting out what Zechariah experienced. They can act out, "baby," "angel," "God," "Christmas," "name," "praying," "good news," "candle."

Zechariah and Elizabeth

Name: _____



**But the angel told him: Don't be afraid, Zechariah!
God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth
will have a son, and you must name him John.
~ Luke 1:13**

- ❖ Children color and cut out face and beard
- ❖ Children glue face and beard onto paper bag, leaving top part of beard unglued
- ❖ Children glue yarn to top of head
- ❖ Children move top of beard to show when Zachariah could and couldn't speak

