

**STORY**

Zacharias - Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

**TEACHER PRAYER**

Dear Father in Heaven, we are all on a journey of faith where we must simply trust your promises and lay aside our reason and doubts. Help me, O Lord, to trust that you will bless Your Word as I speak it to the students in my care. Help us to see that you do indeed keep all your promises to us so that we firmly believe that you also forgive us our sins through Jesus' work and will bring us through life to eternity with You in heaven. Amen.

**VOCABULARY**

*lot* - different colored stones from which one was selected at random; this was a way the Lord used at that time to show whom He had selected.

**OUTER AIM**

God sends John as a messenger to prepare for Jesus' coming.

**INNER AIM**

God keeps His promises.

**BACKGROUND**

*(Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 2, pp. 2-11)*

About 4,000 years had passed since God gave His first promise of the Savior to Adam and Eve.

Through the years God had revealed increasingly more information about the coming Savior, but it had been 400 years since the Lord had last given information through Malachi the prophet. Malachi, besides speaking of the Savior coming, also prophesied that God would send a messenger ahead of Jesus to prepare the people for His coming (Mal 3:1). This story tells of the events surrounding the birth of that messenger, John the Baptizer.

Below are notes on each verse of the account:

v. 5

- ▶ John's parents: Zacharias: a priest of the course (or division) of Abijah (Abia in Greek).
- ▶ Each course of priests took turns ministering in the Temple for one week.
- ▶ There were about 2,000 priests at the time of Jesus.
- ▶ Elizabeth: "God her oath," descendant of Aaron and relative of Mary— though of a different tribe.

v. 6

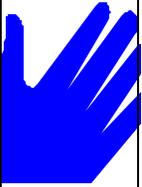
- ▶ Both parents are described as "righteous before God, walking .. blameless" which describes believers in the coming Savior.

v. 7

- ▶ They had no children, which in those days was considered shameful.
- ▶ Children were regarded as a great blessing of the Lord.
- ▶ Because of their age, it seemed impossible to sire and bear children.

vs. 8-10

- ▶ Zacharias was chosen to perform for one week the twice daily public ceremony of prayer and of burning incense in the temple.
- ▶ God had given this ceremony to picture how Christ would bring the people's (that is the Jews) prayers to God.
- ▶ Their prayers would rise to God like the smoke of the incense.



vs. 11-12

- ▶ An angel suddenly appeared beside the altar where Zacharias was worshipping.
- ▶ Zacharias, knowing his own sinfulness, was immediately afraid in the presence of the holy angel.

vs. 13 - 17

- ▶ But the angel told Zacharias not to fear, for he was bringing joyous news.
- ▶ The prayers of Zacharias and Elizabeth and other believers of Israel were indeed being heard.
- ▶ A special son would be born to them who would be dedicated as the forerunner of the Lord.
- ▶ Malachi prophesied (Mal 4:5), John would go before the Savior to prepare people's hearts to believe in Jesus.
- ▶ John would be great as a Spirit-filled preacher boldly calling people to repent and believe in the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

vs. 18 - 20

- ▶ Zacharias' human reason got in the way of his believing God's message, causing him to doubt Gabriel, the messenger from the very presence of God.
- ▶ For that reason the angel chastised him by taking away his voice until the Lord should fulfill also this promise.
- ▶ Gabriel was also the "messenger of God" sent to Daniel and Mary.

vs. 21-22

- ▶ Zacharias' loss of voice also became a sign for the people who had gathered outside to pray.
- ▶ They perceived that he had seen a vision.

vs. 23-25

- ▶ Zacharias was allowed to continue his service at the temple before he returned home to his wife with the good news.
- ▶ As the Lord promised, she conceived.
- ▶ Then she hid herself for five months, perhaps to be a picture of how— for a time, but not permanently — the Lord's blessing had seemed hidden to them.

vs. 57-58

- ▶ About nine months later, when the full time after Elizabeth had conceived had passed, as God had promised, she gave birth to a boy.
- ▶ This brought much rejoicing from neighbors, friends, and relatives for this blessing.

v. 59

- ▶ Through the rite of circumcision, the child entered into the life of the nation of Israel and into the covenant made with Abraham.
- ▶ God had commanded circumcision (Gen 17:10-14) (Baptism had not yet been instituted.) to be performed on the 8th day after birth; the child was customarily named then as well.
- ▶ Children were often named after their parents or close relatives.

vs. 60-63

- ▶ But in testimony to their faith in God's message sent by the angel, both parents insisted that his name was John.
- ▶ "John" was an unusual name for them to pick, going against the custom of their day, since they didn't have any relatives by that name.

vs. 64-66

- ▶ As soon as Zacharias demonstrated his faith by declaring the God-given name of John, the promise was fulfilled to loose his tongue.
- ▶ Praises, with no hint of blame, flowed from his heart toward God.

- ▶ All those around them were awed by God's amazing work causing them to wonder what God had in mind for this child.
- ▶ We notice that the hand of the Covenant Lord blessed John as he grew up into the role the Lord had preset for him.

vs. 67-75

- ▶ The Holy Spirit moved Zacharias to proclaim in joyous prophecy that the Lord indeed was keeping His greatest promise, that of the coming Savior.
- ▶ God was now fulfilling all His ancient promises for deliverance from the spiritual enemies of His people.

vs. 76-79

- ▶ Zacharias prophesied of John's important role in God's plan.
- ▶ John would proclaim Jesus to the people and show them how they would find light and peace in Jesus to replace the darkness and trouble of sin.

v. 80

- ▶ John became strong in the Spirit, learning from the O.T. Scriptures to prepare for the role set for him.
- ▶ Until age thirty, when he would be allowed to preach to Israel, John chose as his home the solitude of the deserts between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea.

## **STUDENT PRAYER**

Dear Father in Heaven, We have learned that You keep all Your promises to us. When our reason would make us doubt Your Word and our patience wears thin, overcome our doubt and strengthen our faith to believe Your promises will be fulfilled according to Your wise plans. Send Your Holy Spirit on us that we may be bold in believing Your promises of forgiveness, of life and salvation in Jesus and so reach the home You have promised to all who believe in Jesus. Amen

## **PRESENTATION**

Ask the children to think of promises that they have made or that others have made to them. Sometimes these human promises are broken by circumstances, forgetfulness, or their impossibility. When people break promises, they hurt each other and cause mistrust. But God never breaks His promises to us. God showed this when He kept His promise by sending John to Zacharias and Elizabeth. For God had promised them a son when He foretold, some 400 years earlier, that He would send a messenger to prepare people for Jesus.

Briefly review the previous story as time allows. Make links to the new story when possible.

Tell the story: Teachers, be encouraged to tell the story in your own words while remaining faithful to the scriptural account. When scripture records the story in more than one place, you may want to harmonize the accounts (including extra details found in each account.) Let the students know where they can find the additional details in the Bible.

Discuss the story: While reviewing the major events of the story, discuss the possible applications to the students' lives. Ask questions that make them think about the story and show that they understand the story.

## APPLICATIONS

1. God made many important promises in the Old Testament about Jesus. Those made about His life on earth have all been kept. He promised that Jesus would suffer and die to take away the sins of the world and Jesus did that. And God promised that by believing in what Jesus has done for us, we too will have eternal life in heaven. This is God's promise to us. Can we trust God's promise to us? Why?
2. What is faith? It is trusting or relying on God's promise, even if our human reason doubts God's message. Discuss Heb 11:1; 12:1-2.
3. God has promised that He will be with us always, in every trouble or problem that we face. And He promises that all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Can we believe those promises? Why is it good to look back over our lives to see how God has kept His promises to us? How does that help us face the future?
4. What are some other promises that God has made in His Word? Have we seen all of them fulfilled yet?
  - a. Noah - no more great floods.
  - b. Continuous seasons of sowing and harvesting.
  - c. Christ coming as a man.
  - d. Christ coming a second time.
  - e. Abraham having countless children.
  - f. God's promise to never leave or forsake His people.

## PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

### Lower

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Matthew 28:20 - Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

### Middle any of the above and...

Joshua 1:9 - Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Hebrews 11:1 - Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

### Upper any of the above and...

Romans 8:28 - And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Hebrews 13:5 - Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Malachi 3:1 - Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.

## HYMN CHOICES

"Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" (TLH 91 1-4)

"We Have a Sure Prophetic Word" (TLH 290 1-4)

"I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus" (TLH 428 1-6)