

02 – Birth Announcement - John **Luke 1:5-25**

Step 1: Link (last week's Bible orientation)

This semester we are reading the story of Jesus in the book of Luke. Where can we find the book of Luke in the Bible – in which part? (*the New Testament*) Is Luke the first book of the New Testament? (*no, it's the 3rd*)

Step 2: Background (family of Aaron)

Today we are going to meet a married couple in our story, Zechariah and Elizabeth. (*write and practice*) They are both very old, and they do not have any children. They were childless. (*write*) What can you tell me about childlessness in the Bible? (*... it was a disgrace! A shame!*) What kind of people were they? Let's see what we can learn.

Let's read the beginning of our story. Let's **read Luke 1:5-7**. (*read*) What kind of people were Zechariah and Elizabeth? (*... good, obedient to God, he was a priest*) So, even though Zechariah and Elizabeth had this great shame, they still trusted God. They still had very strong faith. They were very good people. Let's see what happens in the story. Why are Zechariah and Elizabeth in the story of Jesus?

Step 3: Key Questions

- **What would John do?** (*v.16ff: lead many in Israel to turn back to God, get people ready for the Lord*)
- **Is Jesus in this story?** (*v.15ff; Jesus is "the Lord"!*)

Step 4: Read **Luke 1:8-25**

Step 5: Answer the questions

Step 6: Talk about it

John would prepare people for Jesus!

The announcement of John's birth was very special. Remember that the Old Testament was completely finished – how many years before Jesus was born? (*... 400 years*) For 400 years God had not said anything new to His people. Now God has sent an angel with a message. God is beginning to speak again! God is beginning to do a great work.

What was the angel's name? (... *Gabriel*) A meeting with an angel is often called a "vision." (*write: use word from your translation*) We will meet Gabriel again. The Bible tells the names of only two angels; one is Gabriel, the other is Michel. Gabriel is a very special angel. What does our story tell about Gabriel? (... *v.19 CEV says only 'God's servant'; NIV says 'stands in the presence of God'*) Gabriel was a very high angel. He stood by God's throne, in God's presence!

Zechariah was also in God's presence! The place where incense was offered was the holiest place in the temple. God was in this place. Zechariah was standing before God, and God sent Gabriel from the throne in heaven. It was a very holy meeting.

Was John's birth a miracle? (... *we think so, but let them answer yes or no*) The Bible doesn't tell us it was a miracle. But Zechariah and Elizabeth were both old. They were not looking forward to having children. Suddenly, an angel comes with an amazing message. Elizabeth becomes pregnant! God turned Elizabeth's shame into a great honor.

Finally, there was a special sign to the people. God gave a sign that told the people about the vision. What was the sign? (... *v.20 Zechariah could not speak*) Zechariah could not speak until John was born! This was a sign everyone could see and talk about. God was making people very curious. It was a punishment because Zechariah didn't believe the angel. But it was also a wonderful sign. How about Elizabeth? Could the people her getting fatter because of the baby? (... *v. 24; she did not leave the house. Only people who came to the house could see her getting fatter.*)

Do you have any questions or comments?

Teachers' Notes:

1. Elizabeth was also from a priestly family. The descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, were considered very special priests. Luke does not say that Aaron was a priest because it was common knowledge at the time.
2. Childlessness as a disgrace was a cultural thing, but the God does say in the Bible that He will close up the womb as a judgement for sin. But God is a great Redeemer – He turns shame into honor!
3. on teaching adults: When teaching adults, it's good practice to not drone on and on. Adults like to participate in their learning process, so it's good to give them that opportunity. That's why there are questions included in the "Let's talk about it" section. Those questions will not only get them involved, but give you a sense of whether they are following you or not. If not, do you need to slow down your speech a bit? Chunk more? Wait longer for them to come up with an answer?