

Bible Stories for Adults

Mary & Elizabeth / John is Born

Luke 1:39-80

Opening

Gathering: How does it feel when your heart leaps for joy being in the presence of someone for whom you care?

Today's Focus: Mary and Zechariah both praised God for the great things that He did through them.

Key Verses: *Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!*
Luke 1:45

Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?"
Luke 1:66

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Review of Two Weeks Ago (Luke 1:1-25)

How did the historian Luke transition from the Old Testament into his story of Jesus?

Luke 1:5, 8, 11, 13 = God sent an angel to tell an old priestly couple they'd have a son, John

Why would God send an angel just to tell an elderly couple they would have a child?

Luke 1:16-17 = He'd be the messenger who would prepare the people for the Messiah

How did the angel reply when Zechariah couldn't believe what he was seeing and hearing?

Luke 1:19-20 = Introduced self as Gabriel sent by God; Made Z deaf and dumb as proof

Review of Last Week (Luke 1:26-38)

What was the next job for this arch-angel Gabriel?

Luke 1:26-27, 30-31 = Sent 6 months later to tell Mary she would bear Jesus

Was Mary told anything about who this child really was?

Luke 1:32-33 = Great, Son of God, Promised Messiah to rule on David's throne forever

Did Mary ask for proof or help believing this amazing announcement as Zechariah had?

Luke 1:34 = No, she believed it but asked *how it would happen*

How would Mary become pregnant even though it would be months before Joseph took her in?

Luke 1:35 = Was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin

Although she didn't ask for it, what proof did Gabriel give Mary for this impossible birth?

Luke 1:36-37 = Elizabeth's pregnancy shows *nothing is impossible with God*

How faithfully did Mary accept this promise? = Handmaid was lowest form of female servant

Luke 1:38 = Accepted her job as *the Lord's servant* (handmaid) - willing submission

A Small Select Sorority (Luke 1:39-40)

With whom could Mary share this great news who wouldn't call her crazy? = 3-5 days, 50-70 mi

Luke 1:39-40 = Went to Elizabeth - Confide in each other, Followed angel's direction

Town assumed to be Hebron, a Levite town in the Judean hill country (Joshua 21:10-11)

Hebron - Promise to Isaac, circumcision instituted, Abraham's first land, David crowned,

Abraham/Sarah/Isaac/Rebekah/Jacob/Leah buried there = Jesus conceived?

Bible Stories for Adults

Mary & Elizabeth / John is Born

Page 2

The Spirit's Greeting (Luke 1:41-45)

- How was the promise to Mary confirmed by Elizabeth even before they saw each other?
Luke 1:41 = John leapt in womb, Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit
- How is it revealed that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and not just happy to see her relative?
Luke 1:42-43 = Only Mary knew she would become pregnant with Jesus
- What did Elizabeth say to explain how she knew Mary would be the mother of the Messiah?
Luke 1:44 = John leapt in her womb when they heard Mary's voice
- How could a baby leaping in a womb be taken as a sign from God?
Luke 1:15 = John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth – already here
- Did Elizabeth praise Mary for being so holy that she would bear God's Son?
Luke 1:45 = No, she praised her for having the faith to believe what God had told her

Magnificat anima mea Dominum (Luke 1:46-55) = Latin for the first line of Mary's Song

- How did Mary respond to Elizabeth's strange greeting?
Luke 1:46-47 = She sang a song of praise to God, Gave the glory to God
Hebrew poetry often used *synonymous parallelism* (second line reiterates the first)
- What great things did Mary praise God for that He had done for her?
Luke 1:48-49 = A great position in His eternal history though humble by human standards
- Was Mary boasting of herself when she said *all generations will call me blessed*?
1 Corinthians 1:26-31 = No, she was boasting in the Lord and what He had done for her
- What great things did Mary praise God for that He has done for us?
Luke 1:50-53 = Mercy and mighty deeds to His faithful over all time
- What is an example of how God has extended His mercy to generations of those who fear Him?
Nehemiah 9:30-31 = God continued to love and call back Israel even after continuous rejection
- How has God *scattered those who are proud and brought down rulers from their thrones*?
Matthew 23:2, 5-7, 11-12 (Romans 9:30-10:4) = Exalted→humbled, humbled→exalted
- How do we see *He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty*?
Mark 10:21-23, 26-27 = The hungry for the Spirit are filled, the self-full will be hungry
- How does Jesus later explain these contrasts of humility and self-righteousness?
Matthew 5:6 (3-12) = *The Beatitudes*, those hungry for righteousness will be filled
(See also Proverbs 3:34; Isaiah 2:11-12, 17; Ezekiel 21:26; Luke 14:7-14; 1 Peter 5:5-6)
- What great things did Mary praise God for that He has done for Israel?
Luke 1:54-55 = He remembered and kept His promises and will continue to do so
- Why is it important to us that God has remembered to be merciful to His chosen people Israel?
Deuteronomy 7:7-9 = He keeps His promises to those He has chosen out of grace

Mary Surprises Joseph (Luke 1:56)

- How long did Mary stay with Elizabeth?
Luke 1:56 = About 3 months, until the time John was born
- What surprised Joseph when he welcomed his betrothed Mary back to Nazareth?
Matthew 1:18-19 = She was 3 months pregnant, he decided to divorce her
- How did God protect the legal legitimacy of His only Son?
Matthew 1:20, 24-25 = Sent angel to explain, Joseph took her in but kept her virginity intact

Bible Stories for Adults

Mary & Elizabeth / John is Born

Page 3

John Is Born and Named (Luke 1:57-66) = *Jehohanan* - *Jehovah's gift* or *God is gracious*

What happened soon after Mary returned to Nazareth?

Luke 1:57-58 = Elizabeth had a son, her neighbors and relatives came and celebrated

When a birth was near, friends and local musicians would gather by the house

When a boy was born, the musicians started playing and everyone celebrated

If it was a girl, the musicians would leave quietly - Romans might throw the girl away

Double celebration at this birth - Barren Elizabeth was blessed with a son

What would happen to a Jewish boy eight days after his birth?

Genesis 17:12 = He would be circumcised, usually by the father, and named (tradition)

Names were descriptive, parent's names were often given

Neighbors and relatives would often help name a child:

Ruth 4:16-17 = Neighbors named Obed, Ruth's son and Naomi's legal grandson

What name did Elizabeth's neighbors and friends naturally want to give this child?

Luke 1:59-61 = Zechariah, after his father - No one in family had name *John*

How were the neighbors able to get Zechariah's decision since he couldn't speak or hear?

Luke 1:62-63 = Made signs to him, he wrote on a tablet, *His name is John*

Writing tablet - Hollowed out wooden board filled with wax, inscribe into the wax

What happened after Zechariah had officially given his son the unprecedented name John?

Luke 1:64 = *Immediately his mouth was opened*, he praised God

How did the neighbors respond to Zechariah's sudden ability to speak?

Luke 1:65 = They were *filled with awe*, talked about it to everyone around

How did others respond when they heard what had happened?

Luke 1:66 = Wondered what great plans God had in store for this boy

Benedictus dominus deus Israel (Luke 1:67-79) = Latin for first line of Zechariah's song

Besides the ability to speak, how else was Zechariah blessed after John was named?

Luke 1:67 = He was *filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied* - a Spirit-filled family

Did Zechariah praise God for sending him this special son despite his old age?

Luke 1:68 = No, he praised God for coming in the Messiah to redeem His people

Why did Zechariah praise God for coming? Didn't they believe He was always there?

Luke 7:16-17 = Yes, but here He personally visited in a prophet - first time in 400 years

If the people recognized Jesus as God come down, why did they kill Him?

Luke 19:41, 44 = Only some recognized Him, the leaders in Jerusalem didn't

Did Jesus' followers understand that He came to redeem (pay the price) for Israel?

Luke 24:20-21 = Yes, they were confused that He had died without doing so

What did Zechariah say that told those around that He was speaking of the Messiah?

Luke 1:69 = *A horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David*

What did Jews think of when prophets spoke about a horn? = Horns referred to kings

Daniel 7:8, 24 = Horns meant power because of great strength of horned animals

How would the people understand Zechariah's reference to a horn in David's house?

Psalms 132:17 = The promised king to come from David's lineage

Bible Stories for Adults

Mary & Elizabeth / John is Born

Page 4

Benedictus (Luke 1:67-79)

How does Zechariah make sure that those listening recognized what he was saying?

Luke 1:70 = Pointed out that he was referring to what the prophets had said

What was God doing for His people by sending this Messiah?

Luke 1:71-73 = Bringing salvation, showing mercy and remembering His promises

Why was God doing this?

Luke 1:74-75 = *To enable us to serve Him* free from worry of eternal judgment

How well did Zechariah understand his son's role in God's plan?

Luke 1:76-77 = *You will go before the Lord to prepare the way for Him*

What prophesy did Zechariah understand that his son John would fulfill?

Isaiah 40:3-5 = *A voice of one calling in the desert, Prepare the way for the Lord*

Why had Zechariah sung about the Messiah when thanking God for sending John?

Malachi 3:1 = He knew that the Messiah would come suddenly after John

Was Zechariah praising God for sending John or the *sun of righteousness* promised in Malachi 4:2?

Luke 1:78-79 = He refers to Malachi's reference to the Messiah as the rising sun

How would this rising sun shine on those living in darkness?

Isaiah 60:1-3 = Jesus is the light of the world - *Arise, shine, for your light has come*

Training for Messiah's Messenger (*Luke 1:80*)

How was John raised in preparation for his ministry? = Parents old, likely died before John was adult

Luke 1:80 = Grew strong in spirit, lived in desert

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. What friends or relatives do I have to whom I can confide?
(*Luke 1:39-40; Exodus 18; 1 Samuel 20; Job 2:11-13; Proverbs 3:26; 18:24; 20:19; 2 Corinthians 7:3-4; James 5:13-16; 1 Peter 5:7*)
2. What friends or relatives would come to me when they need someone to confide in?
(*1 Samuel 19:1-7; Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 11:13; 1 Timothy 5:1-2*)
3. Do I react with pride or humility when God does great things for or through me?
(*Luke 1:48-49; 14:7-14; Matthew 23; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6*)
4. When and how has God shown His mercy to me?
(*Luke 1:50, 72, 78; Psalm 103:8-10; Romans 5:6-8; 1 Timothy 1:15-16; Titus 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:3-5*)
5. When have I shown God's mercy to others?
(*Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 6:27-36; James 2:12-13; Jude 22-23*)