



# God Sends John the Baptist

*Luke 1:5–25, 57–67, 76–80*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will understand that God sent John the Baptist to prepare the Jews for the coming of Jesus.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Identify Zacharias, Elizabeth, and John the Baptist.
- Explain the miracle of the birth of John the Baptist.
- Describe what the angel told Zacharias (Luke 1:13–17).
- Distinguish Zacharias's first response from his later response.
- List Zacharias's prophetic description of John.

## KEY VERSE

“He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the LORD” (Luke 1:17).

## APPLICATION

- Be ready for God to fulfill His promises.
- Trust that God can and will do what He says.
- Worship God as Zacharias did.

## NEXT WEEK

The Wise Men Worship Jesus  
Read Matthew 2:1–18.

### Symbol Key



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

The Old Testament makes many references to the coming of the Messiah. As we have seen over the past few weeks, this Messiah would be the Son of God (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2). He would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21), and He would rule the nations (Gen. 49:10). But there is another prophecy that ties to the coming of the Messiah. That prophecy is about one who would prepare the way for the Messiah.

It was common for a king to send a forerunner to prepare for his visit to a part of his kingdom. The forerunner would remove obstacles from the roads and tell the people to be ready. God intended to do this in a spiritual manner in preparation for the Messiah.

God gave this ministry of preparing for the Messiah to John the Baptist. This can be seen in a quotation of Isaiah 40:3–5 in Luke 3:4–6: “As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the hearts of the people, and he did this faithfully. He was always mindful of his minor work compared to the One before whom he was going: “I am not the Christ’, but, ‘I have been sent before Him’....He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:28, 30). Though John was not the One, he prepared the way for Him.

John truly was a miracle baby. His father, Zacharias, was a temple priest. Zacharias helped make the appropriate sacrifices throughout the year on behalf of the people. Incense was constantly burning in the temple. Each day, a priest had to go into the holy place and light new incense. There were thousands of priests in Israel, and most of them would never get to perform this act of worship. It was customary to cast lots to see which priest would go into the holy place. By God’s providence, the lot fell to Zacharias.

While he was there, an angel appeared to him. Fear gripped Zacharias. The angel comforted him and told him that he was going to have a son. This was a surprise because Zacharias’s wife, Elizabeth, was too old to have children. Furthermore, she had been barren all her life. The angel told him that his son was going to prepare the way for the Messiah. Zacharias could not believe it. He questioned the angel and did not believe what he said. The angel responded by confirming his words, but he struck Zacharias with muteness. He told him that he would not be able to speak until after his son, John, was born.

Because Zacharias was taking so long, the people knew that something important must be going on inside. When he came out, he made motions to them but could not speak. They could tell that he had seen a vision. When he was finished with

### Additional Reference Materials

*The MacArthur Study Bible* by John MacArthur

his time of service, he went home, and, indeed, Elizabeth did conceive. She rejoiced that God was going to give her a baby.

John was born about six months before Jesus. His birth drew a lot of attention. Not since Sarah and Isaac had anyone seen something like this. Many people gathered for the circumcision. They all thought the boy should be named after Zacharias. But Elizabeth insisted that his name should be John. During the months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Zacharias had been able to explain in writing what the angel had said. The people asked Zacharias to write down what he wanted the boy's name to be. When Zacharias wrote, "His name is John" (Luke 1:63), his speech came back. All the people there marveled, wondering what God was going to do through this boy. Already, God was preparing them for the coming of the Messiah. Zacharias knew that John was going to announce to the world the coming of the Savior. He rejoiced that one day soon the people would be delivered from their sin. He rejoiced in God's rich mercy.

The circumstances of Jesus' arrival (that is, the arrival of the Messiah) among the Jews should not have come as a surprise because the ministry of John the Baptist preceded Jesus' ministry. John was preparing the way by "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3) and making it abundantly clear to those who heard him that he was not the one they, the Jews, were waiting for.

Later, in Luke 3:15–17, John gave the people further indication of who was to come. While the people were in a state of expectation, and all were wondering in their hearts whether John might be the Christ, he answered and said to them all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

The miraculous circumstances surrounding John's birth were another confirmation that God was going to fulfill His promise. All the pieces were being put into place for the King of the universe to come to earth. Christmas is a time to celebrate the miraculous and awesome ways of God.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

What angel came to talk to Mary, and what did he say?  
*Gabriel came and said that Mary would have a baby. That baby was going to be the Son of God and would one day rule the earth.*

What did Joseph want to do when he first heard the news?  
*He wanted to end the engagement.*

Why did Joseph change his mind?

*An angel of the Lord told him to marry Mary. Mary was going to give birth to the Savior, the Son of God.*



### Jesus Is Our Treasure

Find a treasure box (something that looks like a treasure box or a box that you have decorated). Put in copies of Scriptures prophesying Christ's coming, as well as items that represent John the Baptist, the word *joy*, and some of Christ's promises. Ask the students, "What is something you treasure?" Then ask "Why is it a treasure?" Then ask more specifically, "What is a treasure?" Try to elicit that a treasure is something of value. Tell the students that you are going to show them some treasure. Pull out the various items, and show them or read them to the students. When you have talked about each item, ask the students why they might treasure these items. (Answer: These are all things that point us to Jesus.) God promised us a Savior, and He has given us other promises that we can believe and reflect on. These promises are treasures for all mankind. Explain that in today's lesson, the students will learn that Jesus is the Promised One. We should value Him above all else because He is our greatest treasure.



### Preparations, Preparations

Assign volunteers to bring items needed to prepare for a certain activity and to be prepared to act out the activity in front of the class. Activities include

1. Going sledding (make hot chocolate, get dressed in snow clothes, carry a sled)
2. Getting ready for a picnic (make a sandwich, fold a blanket, pack food in a basket)
3. First day of school (sharpen pencils, put books in backpack, ask parents to sign a paper, dress in school uniform)
4. Leaving for vacation (pack a suitcase, check airplane tickets and passport, call a taxi)

Have the volunteers take turns acting out their preparation for the activity assigned to them. Make sure they reveal the items in order from least obvious to most obvious to keep the class guessing for a while. Allow the students to guess what the people will soon be doing by raising their hands as soon as they believe they have the right answer. Use this activity to introduce the role of John the Baptist in preparing the way for the Messiah.



### Prophetic Charades

Write the phrases on the board as written below. Draw blank spaces for the words that are underlined, leaving only the minor words to serve as clues.

After teaching through Luke 1:13–17, test the students' memories of the news the angel gave Zacharias regarding John the Baptist by playing Prophetic Charades. Select students to come up one at a time and act out a prophetic phrase listed below. Show the student his assigned phrase. Tie a handkerchief around the student's mouth to be certain that he remains mute during the activity. Instruct the student to make any hand or body motions necessary to act out the underlined words. Allow the class to guess the blanks as the correct answers are given. Do not allow students to have their Bibles open.

1. Do not be afraid
2. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son

3. Call his name John
4. Have joy and gladness
5. Many will rejoice at his birth
6. Great in the sight of the Lord
7. Drink neither wine nor strong drink
8. Be filled with the Holy Spirit
9. Turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God
10. Go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah
11. Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children
12. Disobedient to the wisdom of the just
13. To make ready a people prepared for the Lord



### Comparing Responses

Use the following acrostics to distinguish Zacharias's first response to God from his second response, as well as the order of events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist.

**F**righ<sup>t</sup>ened by the angel (v. 13)

**I**nqu<sup>ir</sup>ed about his old age (v. 18)

**R**equ<sup>est</sup>ed a sign (v. 18)

**S**peechless after the encounter (vv. 20, 22)

**T**ried to explain his experience with signs (v. 22)

**S**erved his remaining temple duty (v. 23)

**E**lizabeth conceived and hid herself five months (v. 24)

**C**hild was born and circumcised (vv. 57–59)

**O**beyed God's commands (v. 13, 60–63)

**N**amed his son John (v. 63)

**D**elivered a benediction full of prophecy (vv. 67–79)

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included to use during worship time. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.



### Bible Lesson

#### Reading of Text

Read Luke 1:5–25, 57–67, and 76–80.

#### Introduction

Before Jesus began His ministry of preaching and healing people, it was necessary for someone to announce that He, someone very special, was coming. The person who was going to make this announcement to the people was John the Baptist. In today’s lesson, we will learn about John the Baptist’s unique birth and the very important job that God had given him to do.

#### Leadoff Questions (LOQs)

**LOQ:** In this story, what were the names of the priest and his wife?

**Answer:** The priest was named Zacharias, and his wife was named Elizabeth.

**LOQ:** Were Zacharias and Elizabeth good or bad people? How do you know?

**Answer:** Verse 6 says that Zacharias and Elizabeth “were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” In God’s eyes, they were good.

**LOQ:** What three things does verse 7 tell us?

**Answer:** Verse 7 tells us that Zacharias and Elizabeth had no child, Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years—they were old.

**LOQ:** Do these three things remind you of another man and woman we learned about?

**Answer:** This should remind you about Abraham and Sarah. They had no children, Sarah was barren, and when God spoke to Abraham about having a son, they were both old too.

**LOQ:** What did the angel Gabriel say to Zacharias about Elizabeth when Zacharias was burning incense to the Lord in the temple?

**Answer:** Gabriel said, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son.” Even though Zacharias and Elizabeth were old and Elizabeth was barren (her body could not have children), the angel told Zacharias that they would have a child. Just like God promised Abraham that he and Sarah would

have a child, even though they had not been able to have one before, Gabriel told Zacharias that he and Elizabeth would have a child.

**LOQ:** Since Zacharias had read about Abraham and Sarah, and since Gabriel was an angel sent from God, how should Zacharias have responded to Gabriel's message?

**Answer:** Zacharias should have believed the angel, because nothing is too difficult for the Lord. If God was able to miraculously help Abraham and Sarah to have a child when they were not able to have one before, then He could do the same thing for Zacharias and Elizabeth.

**LOQ:** Gabriel told Zacharias many things about the child he and Elizabeth would have. What do we learn about the child in verse 13?

**Answer:** The child would be a boy; his name was to be John.

**LOQ:** What do we learn about the child in verse 15?

**Answer:** The child would be great in the sight of the Lord; he would drink no wine or liquor; he would be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

**LOQ:** What do we learn about the child in verse 16?

**Answer:** The child would turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

**LOQ:** What do we learn about the child in verse 17?

**Answer:** The child would go as the forerunner before Him (Jesus) in the spirit and power of Elijah, turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, turn the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Usually, when a king or a very important person was traveling, he had some of his people go before him. This way, if there were any problems, his people would be able to solve them so that when he came, he would not have to deal with those problems. From this verse, we see that John was to be the forerunner, the one who went before Jesus in order to prepare the way and prepare the people. Also, John would be a powerful person in the Lord, just like Elijah the prophet had been. Elijah was a man of God who served Him and was greatly used by Him. John would also be a man of God who served Him and whom God would greatly use.

**LOQ:** According to verses 18–19, why should Zacharias have believed what the angel Gabriel told him?

**Answer:** Zacharias should have believed Gabriel because Gabriel serves God (stands in the presence of God), he was sent to Zacharias by God, and his message to Zacharias from God was good news. And, of course, any message from God must be true.

**LOQ:** What happened to Zacharias when he did not believe the message from God that the angel Gabriel had told him?

**Answer:** Gabriel caused Zacharias to be unable to speak. This lasted until the child was born and was given the name John.

**LOQ:** What did the people believe happened to Zacharias in the temple?

**Answer:** Verse 22 says, "They perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple." The people knew that something unusual had happened to Zacharias while he was inside the temple.



**LOQ:** After the child was born, Elizabeth told the people that he was to be named John. But the people did not think this was right, so they asked Zacharias. What happened to Zacharias when he wrote, “His name is John” on the tablet?

**Answer:** Verse 64 says, “Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.”

**LOQ:** What happened when Zacharias was suddenly able to speak?

**Answer:** Fear came upon everyone who lived around them, and people talked about it in all the hill country of Judea. All the people remembered what had happened. They knew that the birth of John was not ordinary. God blessed Zacharias and Elizabeth with the ability to have a child. Zacharias had seen a vision in the temple and was made unable to speak. The people wondered what John would turn out to be when he grew up.

**LOQ:** When Zacharias praised God, he began to prophesy. What did he prophesy about John in verses 76 and 77?

**Answer:** Zacharias prophesied that the child, John, would be called “the prophet of the Highest [God]”; he would “go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways” (be a forerunner of Jesus); and he would “give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins.” John was to be a prophet of God. Before the Lord Jesus came, John would prepare the way. And John would teach the people of God, the Jews, about salvation, which could be gained only through forgiveness of their sins.

### Summary

When you think about John the Baptist, you should remember what the angel Gabriel said about him and what his father, Zacharias, prophesied about him. John had a very special job. He was born to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ. He was born to prepare the way by announcing to everybody that the Messiah was coming. He was born to teach the people about salvation, which they could have only by being forgiven of their sins. When you hear and read about John the Baptist, remember each of these things. And if you do not remember, go back and read this story about the birth of John the Baptist.

### Application

God does exactly what He says. He is never late and never early. John the Baptist played a crucial part in Jesus’ ministry. God carefully orchestrated John’s ministry and prepared the hearts of the people for the coming of the Messiah. This is another confirmation of God’s great plan to redeem His people and to take His place as Savior and Lord. God visited the nation of Israel. God has also visited us. Worship God because of His boundless mercy and kindness. Romans 2:4 says, “Do you despise the riches of His goodness...not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” God was good to send John to prepare for Jesus. God was supremely good to send Jesus Himself. At Christmas we should be consumed with God’s goodness to us; we should not be consumed with toys and material things. We should be consumed with the worship of the King.



## Presentation Ideas

### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.



### Classroom Promise Board, Week Four

This activity is continued from last week. For instructions, see the Classroom Promise Board in the Proclaim section of the first lesson. This week, write the following on separate pieces of 4 ¼ x 5 ½-inch cardstock and then place Velcro on the backs: Malachi 3:1 and Luke 1:17. During class, place these in the Passage section. Using the same size cardstock, write, “the Lord’s messenger” and “prepare the way for Jesus.” During class, place these in the Promise section. Again, using the same size pieces of cardstock, write, “Israel” and “Zacharias.” During class, place these in the Person section. Use this board to teach this week and/or to review past lessons.

## Praise and Worship

*Joy to the World!*

*Praise the Name of Jesus*

*Silent Night (third stanza)*

*Trust and Obey*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments” (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### “God Sends John the Baptist”

Use this work sheet to reinforce the key truths of this week’s lesson. The work sheet is located at the back of the lesson.



### Journal Page: “God Sends a Forerunner”

Give the students a copy of the journal page at the back of the lesson. They can work on the page individually, in small groups, or at home.



### Dayspring Discoveries

Pass out a work sheet to each student in your group. Read through the passages together, and underline any references to light, glory, sun, shine, rise, or morning. Use this activity to help students understand the meaning of the messianic reference to Dayspring in Luke 1:78.



### **Coloring Sheets**

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of this lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:23).



# Dayspring Discoveries

## Old-Testament References

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined” (Isaiah 9:2).

“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1–3).

“But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves” (Malachi 4:2).

## New Testament References

“And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

“And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:28).

“I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16).

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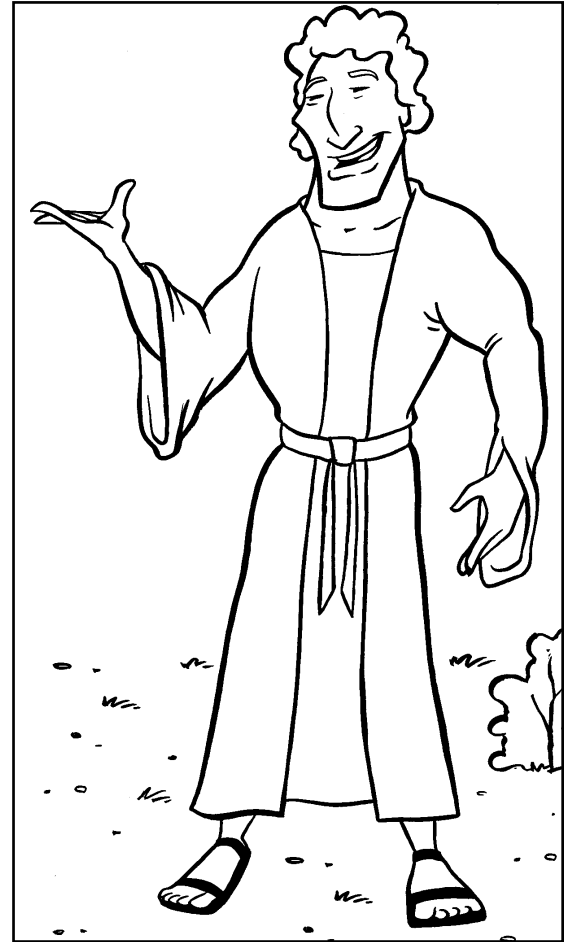
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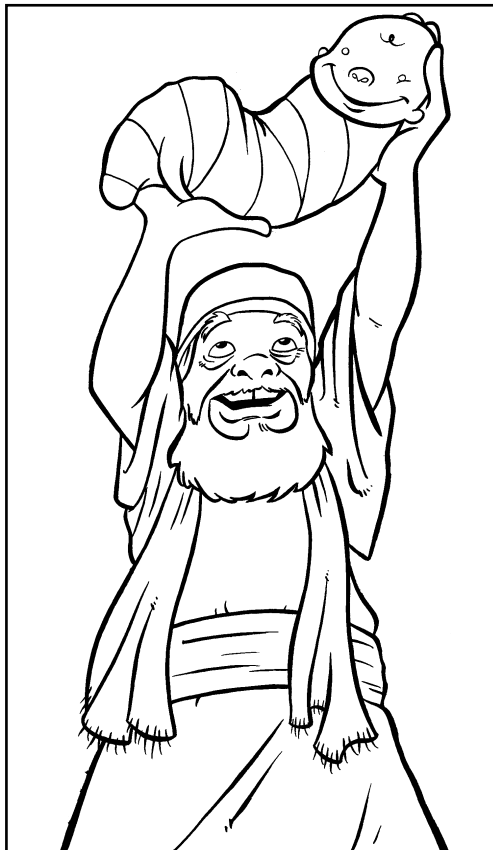
# Nothing Is Impossible with God



Mary



Gabriel



Zacharias





# God *Sends* John *the Baptist*



Luke 1:5–25, 57–67, 76–80

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why did Zacharias and Elizabeth not have a child? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Circle the correct answers. The child of Zacharias and Elizabeth was \_\_\_\_\_.

a boy

a girl

named Jesus

named John

3. Circle the correct answer. A forerunner is a person who goes \_\_\_\_ another person.

before

after

4. John the Baptist was the forerunner to \_\_\_\_\_.

5. What is the question the people were asking about John the Baptist in Luke 1:66?

6. Read Zacharias's prophecy in Luke 1:76–77. Fill in the blanks.

The child would be called the prophet of \_\_\_\_\_.

He would go before the Lord to \_\_\_\_\_.

He would teach the people about \_\_\_\_\_.

The people needed salvation for the forgiveness of their \_\_\_\_\_.



# God Sends a Forerunner

Long before Christ was born, God had promised to send a forerunner to prepare the way for Him. A forerunner is one who announces and prepares the way for the coming of another. The forerunner who announced Jesus' coming was John the Baptist. He was sent to prepare the hearts of the people to repent of their sins and accept the Lord as Savior. Answer the questions below, and then read the verses provided. In the Promise section, write out the promise that God gave. In the Fulfillment section, write out how He fulfilled that promise.

Why did God send John the Baptist? \_\_\_\_\_

**Promise One:** Read Malachi 3:1 and Luke 7:24, 27.

Promise

Fulfillment

**Promise Two:** Read Luke 1:17 and Luke 1:76-77.

Promise

Fulfillment

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**Promise One:** Read Malachi 3:1 and Luke 7:24, 27.

Promise

Fulfillment

**Promise Two:** Read Luke 1:17 and Luke 1:76-77.

Promise

Fulfillment

What does one need to do to prepare his heart for Christ?

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Zacharias doubted God when He told him he would have a son. Because of this, God closed Zacharias's mouth, and he was not able to speak until after John the Baptist's birth.

Why was it wrong for Zacharias to doubt God? \_\_\_\_\_

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After God opened Zacharias's mouth, Zacharias worshiped Him.

Why did Zacharias do this? \_\_\_\_\_

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God has always fulfilled His Word; because of this I should

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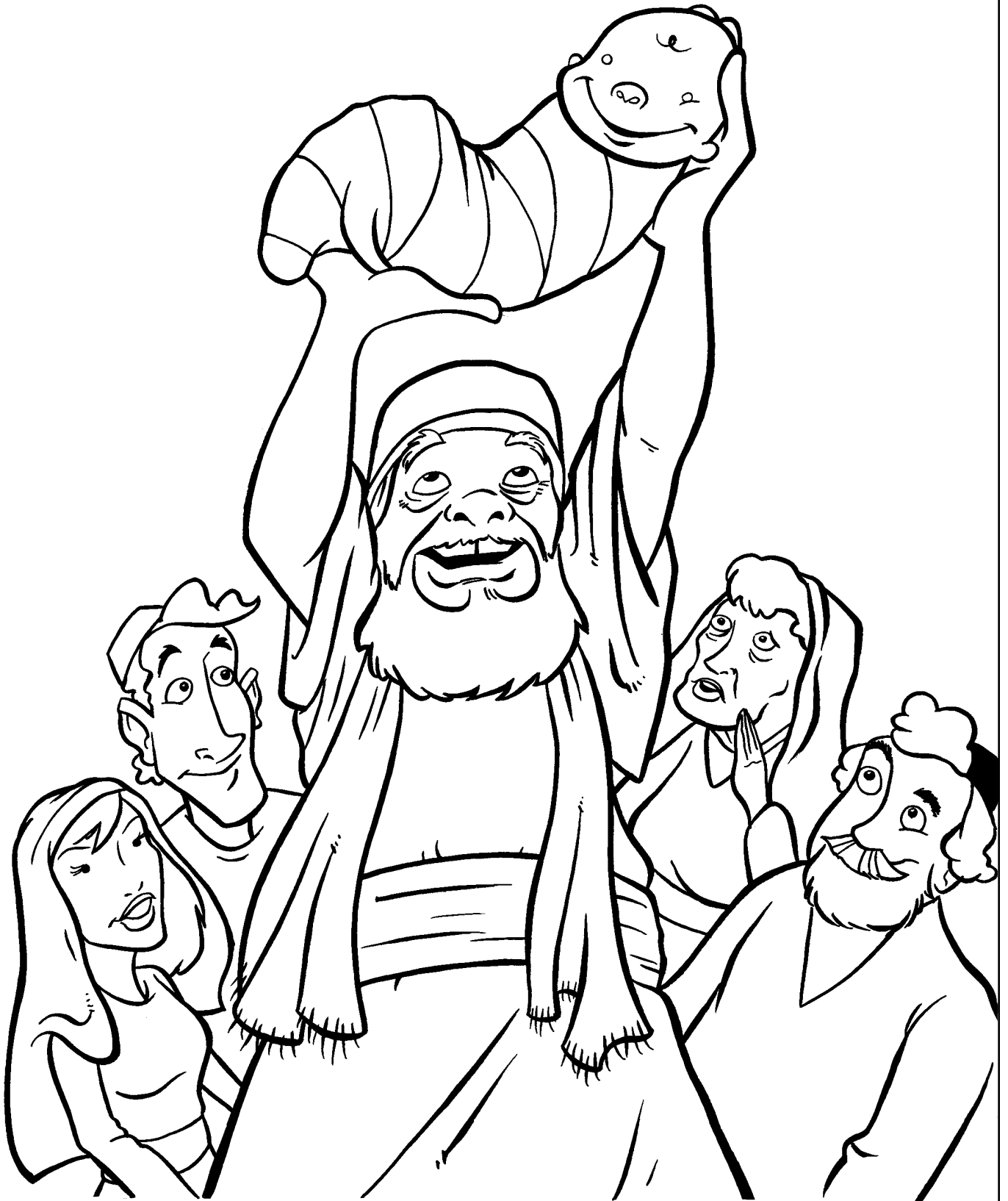
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**Zacharias said, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the LORD to prepare His ways" (Luke 1:76).**





**“Then an angel of the LORD appeared to Zacharias...[and] said to [him], “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John” (Luke 1:11–13).**

