

**Gabriel Announces the Birth of John the Baptist****STORY ELEMENTS:****TEXT:** Luke 1:5-25**Setting:** circa 6 BC in Jerusalem.**Main Characters:** God, Gabriel, Zacharias, and Elisabeth**Plot:** The angel Gabriel announces the birth of John the Baptist.**Key word(s):** "to make ready a people

prepared for the \_\_\_\_\_"

**Climax:** *Luke 1:20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.***Background**

1. There is a period of 400 years of silence between the Old Testament and New Testament – termed "silence" because no \_\_\_\_\_ of God was given to Israel.
2. But many important historical events transpired that directly impacted Israel's culture in the New Testament:
  - (a) \_\_\_\_\_ ruled Israel for over 200 years, affording the Jews religious freedom and an element of autonomy.
  - (b) In 331 BC, Alexander the Great defeated Darius III and the Greek Empire became the new world empire (Dan. 8:5-7, 20-21; 11:3). Under Alexander's rule, the Jews still enjoyed \_\_\_\_\_ freedom.
  - (c) Upon Alexander's death in 323 BC, the Greek Empire was divided amongst his generals. Judea fell under the control of the Ptolemies for about 100 years. Then in 198 BC, Antiochus III the Great defeated Ptolemy V Epiphanes and took control of Judea. Under Seleucid control, the Jews suffered tremendous religious persecution. In 170 BC, Antiochus Epiphanes \_\_\_\_\_ the Jewish temple. (Dan. 8:9-14, 23-25; 11:21-35)
  - (d) Mattathias the priest and his five sons led the Jewish resistance against the Seleucids. One of Mattathias' sons was named Judas \_\_\_\_\_ (lit. "the Hammer") and the revolt became known as the Maccabean Revolt. The descendants of Mattathias founded the Jewish Hasmonean dynasty.
  - (e) The Hasmoneans took over the office of high priest even though they were not part of the line of \_\_\_\_\_. Ironically, it was the Hasmoneans who furthered the Hellenization of Judea. The Hasmonean dynasty was fraught with rivalries over the high priesthood.
  - (f) Finally, in 63 BC, Pompey the Roman general conquered Jerusalem. To quell Hasmonean in-fighting, Rome appointed \_\_\_\_\_ as "king of the Jews" in 37 BC.

## Breaking the Silence

3. (1:5) \_\_\_\_\_ was a priest who lived during the reign of Herod the Great. The priesthood was divided into 24 groups according to families, and Zacharias belonged to the course of Abiah. (1 Chron. 24:10) Each division would serve the temple for twice a year for one week.
4. (1:6-7) Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth were righteous Jews who had no \_\_\_\_\_.
5. (1:8-10) Zacharias was chosen by lot to do the honors of burning the incense in the temple before the \_\_\_\_\_ that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Zechariah and no doubt the highlight of his priestly career.
6. (1:11-13) As he attended to his duties inside the temple, an angel appeared to him and announced, "Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name \_\_\_\_\_."
7. (1:14-17) The angel described John's future mission and methods:
  - (a) He would be a \_\_\_\_\_, and as such he would avoid all contact with the fruit of the vine and alcoholic drink. His living a separated life would illustrate his special calling.
  - (b) He would experience the fullness of the Holy Ghost in an unusual manner – from his mother's womb. This divine empowerment would enable him to serve in the spirit and power of the great prophet \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (c) His mission would be to prepare the people for the coming Messiah by preaching repentance – or by "\_\_\_\_\_ hearts."
8. (1:18-20) Zacharias' initial reaction was unbelief. For this, he was rebuked and made a \_\_\_\_\_ by Gabriel. His inability to speak would continue until John's birth.
9. (1:21-23) Meanwhile, outside the temple, the gathering of the faithful began to wonder at Zacharias' lengthy session inside the temple. As he emerged from the temple unable to speak, motioning with his hands, the people realized Zechariah had seen a \_\_\_\_\_.
10. (1:24-25) Zacharias returned home, and his wife Elisabeth conceived. She hid herself for five months, probably as an act of devotion. Elisabeth praised God saying, "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my \_\_\_\_\_ among men."

## Observations & Applications

11. Though Zacharias was a godly man, he was not perfect. His reaction to Gabriel was not mere wonder but unbelief. His question, "Whereby shall I know this?" was tantamount to demanding \_\_\_\_\_.

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### Answer Key

Key word(s): "Lord" 1) revelation | 2) a) Persia; b) religious; c) desecrated; d) Maccabeus; e) Zadok; f) Herod the Great | 3) Zacharias | 4) children | 5) veil | 6) John | 7) a) Nazarite; b) Elijah; c) turning | 8) mute | 9) vision | 10) reproach | 11) evidence