



John the Baptist

Lesson Overview

1. Watch a video

Watch *Mary Visits Elizabeth* (3min 20sec) at bit.ly.com/MaryVisitsElizabeth

2. Discuss

3. Read

Read the story of the promise and birth of John the Baptist, pp. 1-2.

4. Discuss

Look at similarities and differences between John's birth and Jesus' birth. A list of parallels is provided on p. 3. Characters in the Word are parts of us. What do John and Jesus represent, and why must John be born in us before Jesus can be born in us?

New Church Concept

The Word

In the Word there are many who represent the Lord in respect to the Word. Chief among these are Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist.... The "wilderness of Judea in which John was" signifies the state in which the Word was when the Lord came into the world. See *Arcana Coelestia* 9372

FaithBuilder 2 | Lesson 12 | Christmas

Watch a video

Watch *Mary Visits Elizabeth* online at bitly.com/MaryVisitsElizabeth (3min 20sec). (Enter bitly link in the web browser bar at the top of your screen.)

Discuss

1. Mary and her relative Elizabeth were both expecting babies. Who were their babies?
2. How did Elizabeth's baby respond when Mary came to visit?
3. When was the next time John and Jesus met? (When John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.)

Read

John the Baptist was sent to prepare for the Lord. As you read Luke 1, think about events that are similar to the Lord's birth.

There was in the days of Herod...a certain priest named Zacharias. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years.

So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel 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. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 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."

And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."

And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel...and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time...."

So it was...that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.

And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him. Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied....

Compare John's birth with Jesus' birth. Use the chart on p. 3 to help you identify similarities. (If you do not have time for the activity, look at the chart on p. 4.)

Discuss

Choose questions for discussion.

1. How many similarities did you find between Jesus and John?
2. There are some important ways in which Jesus and John are different. What are they? (Hint: Who were their fathers? What did John and Jesus baptize with?)
3. What was John's job? What was Jesus' job?
4. The characters in the Word are parts of our minds and lives. What is the birth of "John" in our life?

John represents the Word and teachings from the Word—especially teachings that are clear and easy to understand. He is the light of truth from the Word in our mind.

5. The Writings for the New Church tell us there are 2 important states or stages in our journey to heaven. The first of these is called "repentance". During this state, true ideas we know guide our actions. Our job is to read the Word for the sake of learning how to act. This is John's birth into our lives.
6. The second state or stage of our journey to heaven is reformation and regeneration. This is the Lord's birth into our lives. He comes when we allow ourselves to be willingly led by Him.
7. Is it possible to get to heaven without the birth of John in our lives? Why or why not?

Because the waters of Jordan signify truths introductory to the church, which are the knowledges of truth and good from the Word, and since washing in it signifies purification from falsities, and thence reformation and regeneration by the Lord, therefore baptism was instituted, and it was first administered in Jordan by John (Matthew 3:11-16; Mark 1:4-13). The rite of baptism signified initiation into knowledges from the Word concerning the Lord, His coming, and salvation from Him. And because man is reformed and regenerated by the Lord by means of truths from the Word, therefore baptism was commanded by the Lord (Matthew 28: 19). For truths from the Word are the means by which a person is reformed and regenerated, and it is the Lord who reforms and regenerates. *Apocalypse Explained* 475.19

As the Word teaches that the Lord was about to come, John was sent before to preach respecting the Lord's coming, according to the predictions in the Word. And as John represented the Word, therefore he represented the ultimates of the Word, which are natural, by his raiment and also by his food. *Apocalypse Explained* 619.16

John the Baptist	Jesus
<p>Gabriel appears Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.</p>	Luke 1:26
<p>Fear not And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zachari-</p>	Luke 1:29
<p>Child foretold ...your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.... He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.</p>	Luke 1:31, 32
<p>Name given ...and you shall call his name John.</p>	Luke 1:31
<p>Questions “How...?” And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.”</p>	Luke 1:34
<p>Answer And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.”</p>	Luke 1:35
<p>Sign given “But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place....”</p>	Luke 2:36
<p>John’s birth Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.</p>	Luke 2:6
<p>Circumcision So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child</p>	Luke 2:21
<p>Naming He asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.”</p>	Luke 2:21
<p>Response—joy When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.</p>	Luke 2:20
<p>Miracle Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.</p>	Luke 2:9

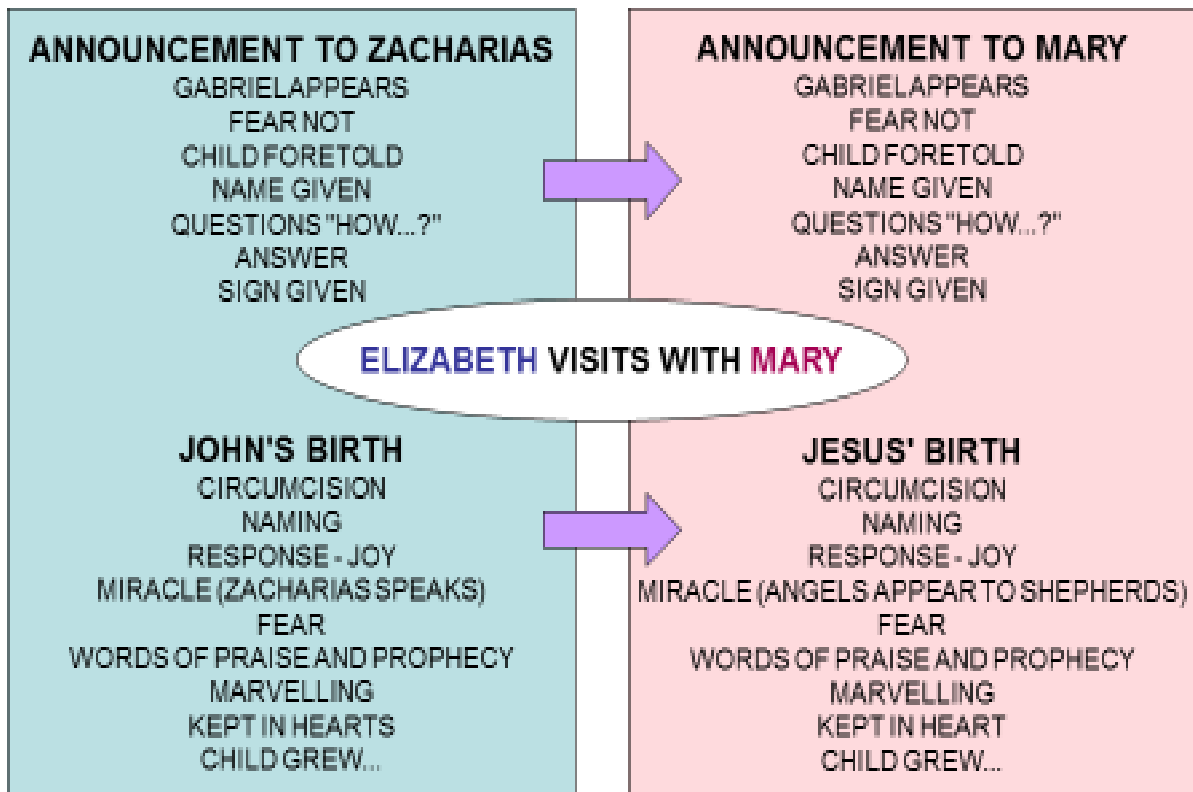


Chart by Rev. Grant Odhner. Used with permission.