

Materials I Need:

Legend:

 = Option 1, Appropriate for 1st – 2nd Grade

 = Option 2, Appropriate for 3rd – 6th Grade

Bolded Words in Story = Key Concepts to Highlight during the Bible Adventure

Memory Work:

“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare a way for Him.” Luke 1:76

Aim Questions:


1. Who were Zechariah and Elizabeth, and why are they important in Scripture?
2. What happened to Zechariah in the temple?
3. What things did Zechariah do the day his son was born?
4. What was wrong with Zechariah’s response to Gabriel?
5. What is it that you are trusting God for about which most people would have doubts?
6. What doubts do you have, and how do you think God views them?


 Hook:


Charades (Game). Play charades with the students using simple words found in Luke Chapter 1. Suggested words: Angel, Zechariah, Elizabeth, John, Mary, priest, baby, pregnant, etc. Today’s Adventure will introduce us to a person whom for many months God did not allow to speak. He had to use gestures to communicate with his friends and wife all that time. Why do you think God did that?

What’s in a Name? (Discussion). Discuss with the students how each of them may have gotten their names. Were they named after a close relative or friend, or do they have a Jr. after their name, which usually means they were named after their father? Or is it a combination of two names to make a unique name? Many names have a specific meaning to them. Bring in a book of names and let the students look up their names. Jewish babies were usually named after someone in their own family but today we will learn that God sent an angel to Zechariah and told him to name his son by another name.

Birth Announcements (Illustration/Discussion). Bring in several birth announcements to show the students. Discuss the different items that are included in the proclamation of this new birth such as boy or girl, date, time, height, weight, length, etc. Some even include a picture. Everyone remembers the day and year they were born, but do they know the time? How about their weight and how long they were? Who else was there when they were born? Which hospital and in what city and state?

-  **Incense (Illustration/Discussion).** Show students **BLUK01.GF1**, which illustrates some of the incense burners used in worship. Discuss how incense was used in the Old Testament.
- Psalm 141:2 “May my prayer be set before you like incense: may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice.” (NIV)
- Exodus 31:11 “...and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you.” (NIV)
- 1 Chronicles 6:49 “But Aaron and his descendants were the ones who presented offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense in connection with all that was done in the Most Holy Place, making atonement for Israel, in accordance with all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.” (NIV)
- 1 Chronicles 23:13 “The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart, he and his descendants forever, to consecrate the most holy things, to offer sacrifices before the LORD, to minister before him and to pronounce blessing in his name forever.” (NIV)
- 2 Chronicles 29:7 “They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel.” (NIV)
- How was this use of incense different from how it is used today?





-  **The Temple (Illustration/Overhead).** Describe briefly each location and each piece of furniture in the temple, **BLUK01.GF2**.

-  **Chosen for Service (Action Play).** Prepare a list of helpful tasks that students could perform in the classroom - such as taking attendance, arranging chairs, fetching supplies, leading songs, handing out worksheets, crayons, pencils, and scissors, leading in prayer, etc. Choose the students who will perform these acts of service by putting all their names on bits of paper and drawing them out of a bowl. Or to be more authentic, have several small objects (*such as buttons*) that are similar, but not identical. Let each student choose one of these as his own marker. Put them in a bowl and swirl them around as described in the Bible adventure and the preview (*second concept*). The student whose marker ‘flies’ out of the bowl is chosen for a particular task.



Book:

Presentation Ideas -

-  **Old to New (Bible Trivia).** Now that we have completed our study of the prophets, we know that prophecy really does come true. We are about to see more fulfilled. The eight writers of the New Testament all knew the Old Testament well. It was their Bible. The book of Mark has 33 quotations from the Old Testament. Luke and John tie with 40 each. But the one with the most quotations is Matthew, which has 70!
-  **Gabriel Visits Zechariah at the Temple (Overhead/Illustration).** Zechariah was in the sanctuary of the Temple performing his duties as priest when Gabriel appeared, standing to the right of the altar of incense, **BLUK01.GF3**.
-  **Zechariah Writes the Name (Illustration/Overhead).** Relatives and friends didn’t believe Elizabeth when she told them what their son would be named, so they asked Zechariah. Since he was still unable to speak, he wrote, “His name is John,” **BLUK01.GF4**.
-  **Silent with Zechariah (Role-play).** During the story, tell students to be completely silent for the time when Zechariah cannot speak. They should not even ask a question. But when they hear that Zechariah’s voice has returned, they can cheer.

Bible Adventure -

The expected birth of a baby is always a special event. The excited parents-to-be call up friends and neighbors to tell them the news, sharing their joy with anyone who will listen. The Bible tells about a couple of **birth announcements** that were quite out of the ordinary. You can read about them in the first chapter of the book of Luke.

Luke begins his book by saying that he had carefully investigated all the stories about Jesus and had written them down for his friend, Theophilus. He wanted Theophilus to know without a doubt that the things he had been learning about Jesus were true and reliable.

The first extraordinary birth announcement in Luke was given to a man named Zechariah. **Zechariah** and his wife Elizabeth were both of the family line of Aaron, the priestly line of God's people. You may remember that only priests were allowed to carry out the work of the temple. To serve within the walls of the central temple was a great honor. Some priests waited all their lives to serve inside the temple. Others never got the chance to serve there.

There were 24 divisions of priests. At regular intervals, a new division would take its turn to serve in the temple. One day when Zechariah's division was on duty, they **cast lots** to see who would go into the temple and burn incense. In those days, the casting of lots was a common way to determine God's will in a matter. Each of the priests would place his marker inside the same bowl. The markers were swirled around in the bowl until one of them escaped and was flung to the ground. The owner of the marker would be the one chosen. This time, Zechariah's marker was the one to fall to the ground. The priests considered Zechariah to be God's choice to approach the incense altar inside the temple.

Luke tells us that Zechariah and Elizabeth were both "upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both getting old." They had prayed for children for years. In the Jewish culture of that time, having no children was often considered to be a curse. Children were thought to be one of the greatest blessings God could give a man and his wife. Zechariah was a righteous man, but the fact that he had no children must have been difficult for him to bear. He may have been having such thoughts as he approached the temple after the drawing of lots. He was being granted a great honor in being chosen to go inside, and yet he must have wondered why God had not honored him and his wife with children.

The altar of incense stood in the Holy Place. It was right in front of the Ark of the Covenant but was separated from it by an enormous veil that was the boundary between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The burning incense symbolized the prayers that were being offered up to God continually in the temple. The incense was to be replaced twice daily, once in the morning before the sacrifice, and once in the evening after the evening sacrifice (*see Exodus 30:6-8*). What the priest had to do was simple. He entered the Holy Place, cleared away the ash, and put new incense on the altar. After he had done this, he was to go out of the temple, stand on the threshold and lead the congregation bowing on their knees outside in a closing prayer. As Zechariah was performing this service, he got a shocking surprise. Standing just to the right of the altar was an angel of the Lord. **Zechariah was filled with fear**, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and a delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." What an amazing thing this was. This baby was coming into the world to foretell the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and to warn the people that they needed to clean up their lives and get ready for the coming of the King of Kings. The birth of this baby, John the Baptist, was **a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy** you can read in Malachi 4:5 & 6 and in Isaiah 40:3-5. Zechariah hardly knew what to say. He and Elizabeth had prayed for years for a child, and now in their old age they were going to have one? "How can I be sure of this?" Zechariah asked the angel. "I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." It seems **Zechariah had lost faith** that God can work in spite of the fact that something seems impossible to us. Here he is, doubting the word of a heavenly messenger, and not just any messenger. "I am Gabriel," the angel told him. "I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And **now you will be silent** and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time." The people were waiting outside the temple for Zechariah to come and lead them in prayer, and now Zechariah had

a most embarrassing problem--he couldn't speak. Not one word! Since he did not believe the words of God's heavenly messenger, God had taken his words away from him.

After Zechariah's time of service was over, he returned home to Elizabeth and guess what? She became pregnant. In the sixth month of her pregnancy, the angel **Gabriel** appeared to a young woman named **Mary** with another unusual announcement. He told Mary she would become pregnant, too. The child would be Jesus, God's own Son. "How will this be," Mary asked Gabriel, since I am a virgin?" The angel told her that God would cause her to become pregnant in a miraculous way. He told her of Elizabeth's expected child and that these two pregnancies both showed that nothing was impossible for God. **Mary's response was wonderful.** "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Her question, "how can a virgin become pregnant?" is just that--a question. She did not doubt the words of God's messenger the way Zechariah did. Zechariah's unbelief was the reason he was struck dumb. He was unable to speak until after the birth of his son. When the people asked him what the child's name was to be, he wrote on a **tablet**, "His name is John." Immediately his voice returned and he began to speak, praising God.

Things don't always go the way we had planned. Sometimes it is hard to separate our will from the will of God. Zechariah had followed the Law of God all his life, and yet his family plans had not worked out the way he would have liked them to. You and I may have some hopes and dreams that we ask our God for. Maybe it is asking for someone's good health to return or maybe it is a request to be able to serve God in some special way. We need to remember that our plans are not always God's plans. Sometimes in chasing after something good, we can lose sight of what God says is best for us.

We need to let God be God and let Him work out His plan for our lives. God wants our first response to His Word and will to be like Mary's, "How are you going to do it?" instead of Zechariah's, "How can I be sure of this?" God wants us to trust that His words are true and absolutely reliable.



Look:



Contrast in Attitude (Discussion). The Bible tells us little about Mary, but the book of Luke shows us Mary's faith and character. Her response to Gabriel was very different from Zechariah's. Compare their responses to each other, brainstorming words or phrases that describe their different attitudes, **BLUK01.GF11**.



Zechariah Can't Speak (Worksheet). Color the picture of Zechariah in front of the temple with hundreds of people waiting for him to speak. What was he to do without a voice? Attach his arms to his body with brads and wave them around as he tries to get their attention, **BLUK01.GF5**.



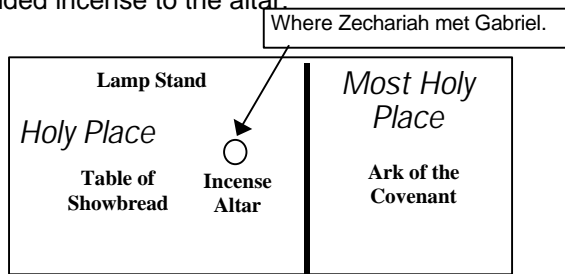
Zechariah's Tablet (Craft). Artifacts of writing "tablets" from the time of Christ have been found. They were very different from what we might think when we read Zechariah's story. The tablet that he probably used was a shallow wooden pan with wax in it. A message could be scratched in the wax with a writing tool. The tablet could be erased by simply melting the wax in the hot sun or by the fire. Simulate this kind of tablet as follows: Each student will need a copy of Zechariah's tablet, **BLUK01.GF6**, two crayons (*not markers*) - one light and one dark - and a plastic spoon. Color in the tablet area (*heavily*) with a bright or light colored crayon. Then color over the light crayon (*heavily*) with black (*or a very dark color*). Using the plastic spoon, scratch Zechariah's message in the "wax" **"HIS NAME IS JOHN."**



Incense Altars (Craft). Have the students make altars (*not idols*) of incense out of clay. Make a label or card that goes on them with Proverbs 3:5 & 6 as a reminder of what Zechariah's response should have been.

Zechariah's Prayer (Worksheet). Read Zechariah's prayer on **BLUK01.GF7**. As you discuss the possible meanings of the highlighted phrases have the students look up these Old Testament passages. They show that Zechariah had come to understand the deity and identity of the coming Savior and the role that his son John would play in fulfilling prophesy.
 ...horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... See II Samuel 22:3 and Psalm 18:2
 ...you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him... See Isaiah 4:3
 ...rising sun will come to us from heaven... See Malachi 4:2 (*notice vs. 5 and 6 also*)
 ...oath he swore to our father Abraham... See Genesis 17: 3-8
 Have the students write out in their own words what they think the highlighted phrases of Luke 1:68-79 mean. Share and discuss as a class.

Temple in Pieces (Activity). Cut out and place the cards from **BLUK01.GF10** in random order on the table. Have students tell you where things belong, which pieces are in the wrong spot. The Most Holy Place, also known as the Holy of Holies, was only entered by the High Priest once a year on the day of atonement. Zechariah's job was to replenish the incense on the altar directly in front of the Most Holy Place, and remove the ash from the burnt incense. He witnessed Gabriel in the Holy Place as he added incense to the altar.



Silent answer. Have students answer the following questions silently by writing their answers on a tablet. A correct answer doesn't count if a student speaks. Each student will need a note-sized 8-page 'tablet.' Cutting a blank sheet of paper into 8 equal pieces and stapling them at the top can make these. Or if the teacher wishes, he can supply small, inexpensive notepads to the students. Also, the kind of writing pads that have a plastic cover, which lifts to erase, are available in a small size as party favors. These would be fun and are fairly inexpensive.

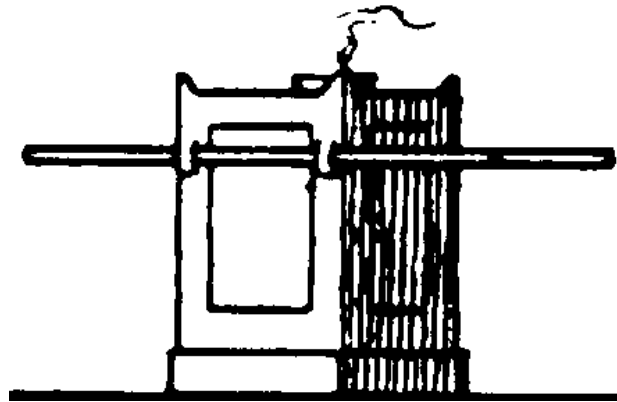
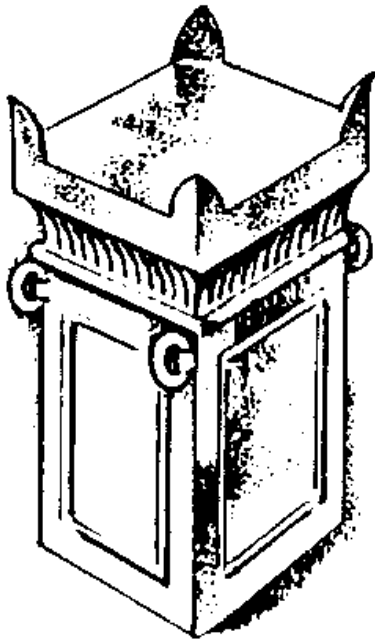
- #1 We are studying the book of:
L) Luke M) Matthew J) John
- #2 Zechariah was a:
W) writer P) priest T) temple guard
- #3 Zechariah and Elizabeth had ___ children.
(*indicate a number*)
- #4 When Zechariah was in the Holy place, he met:
L) the LORD E) Elijah G) Gabriel
- #5 Zechariah responded to God's message this way:
1) How will this be? 2) How can I be sure of this?
- #6 When Zechariah came out of the temple, he was unable to:
S) stand T) talk W) write
- #7 Gabriel appeared to another person who believed his message. That person's name was:
M) Mary L) Luke E) Elizabeth
- #8 When Zechariah's voice returned, he:
A) announced the birth of his son P) praised God T) told everyone what the angel said



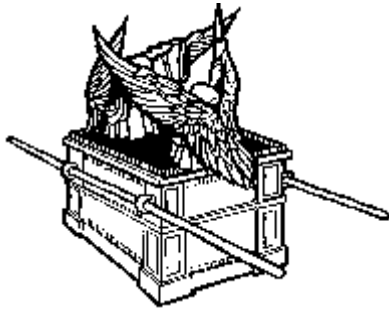
Took:

- Strong in Spirit (*Discussion*).** Luke 1:80 says that John the Baptist grew to be strong in spirit. What daily practices help us to become strong in spirit? Do you remember the Daily 4 P's? Praise, prayer, passage and practice? Just as a baby needs food to grow, so we as Christians need to feed on God's Word to become strong in spirit. Do you suppose Zechariah and Elizabeth raised John on the right spiritual food? Are you eating God's Word daily?
- What Will Baby Need? (*Game*).** Divide the class in two groups (*boys and girls would work well*). Have each group make a list of six (*or more as time allows*) things that you would need to have on hand to be ready for a new baby. Now play charades. Imagine Zechariah and Elizabeth trying to get ready for a new baby when he could not speak. Choose representatives from each group to communicate their items with the other group - without words. As in Elizabeth's case, those who are guessing can be as noisy as they like.
- A Doubtful Discussion (*Discussion*).** Zechariah had a hard time believing Gabriel's message, God did not reward him, but God still kept His promise and used Zechariah in His plan. Zechariah's punishment was actually something that proved God had spoken and helped Zechariah to believe. Do we sometimes doubt God's Word? What are some things that we find hard to believe? What might God do to help us believe? Read John 20: 24-29. What did Jesus do to help this doubter believe? We must believe God's Word in order for Him to use us, but our faith is a gift from God. See Ephesians 2:8,9.
- Birth Announcement (*Craft*).** Have students make their own birth announcements. Details can be filled in later with information their parents can give them. Each student needs **BLUK01.GF8** and craft supplies to embellish this announcement of such a momentous occasion. Other ideas: Have someone who knows calligraphy write the students' names with flair! Or designate someone to be a herald to proclaim their birth to all.
- Birth Announcements - Heaven Style (*Craft*).** Color these announcements of John's and Jesus' births, **BLUK01.GF9**.
- Atomic Reaction? (*Discussion*).** The Bible says Jesus was God's Son, not Joseph's. We can tell this by Jesus' godly reactions. Can people tell you are God's child by how you react to God's things? What is your friends' our family's reaction to God? What is God's view of these responses? Think of how Gabriel responded when Zechariah didn't believe him.

Incense Burners Used in Worship



The Temple



Ark of the Covenant
Exodus 37:1-9



Altar of Incense
Exodus 37:25-29

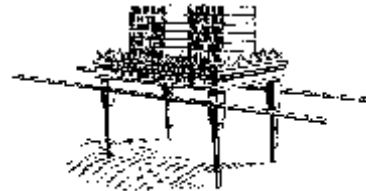
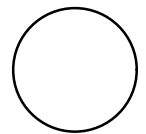
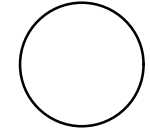


Table of Show Bread
Exodus 37:10-16



Lamp Stand
Exodus 37:17-24



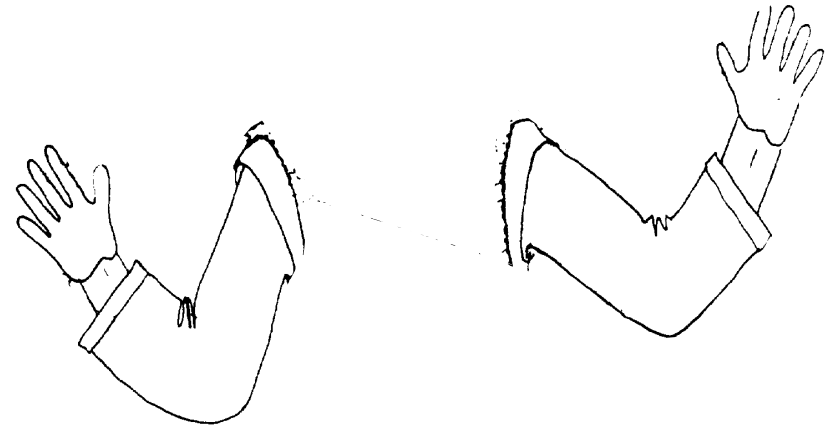
Gabriel Visits Zechariah



Zechariah Writes the Name

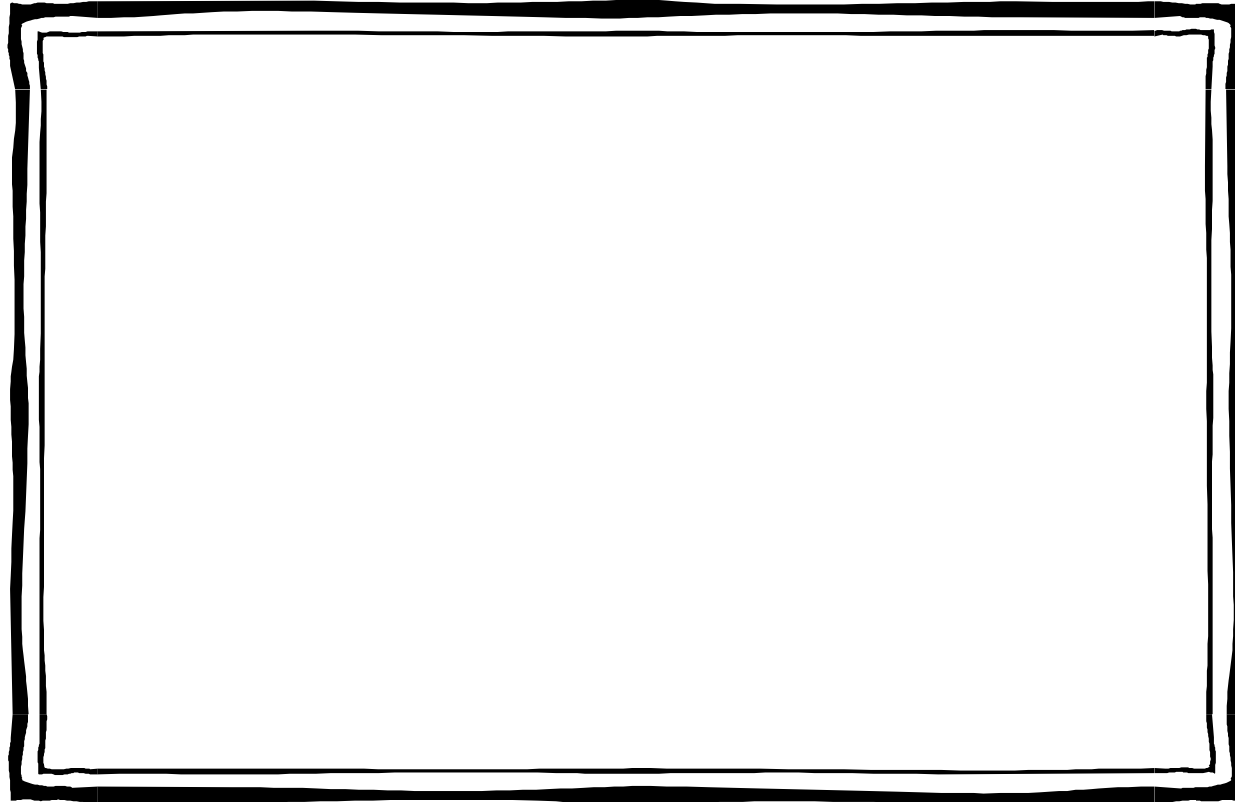




Zechariah Can't Speak



What was Zechariah to do without a voice? Color Zechariah and the separate pair of arms. Cut the sheet in half on the line. Cut out the arms and attach them with brads to his shoulders. Wave them around as he tries to get the people's attention in front of the temple. Read Luke 1:21,22

Zechariah's Tablet









(PARENTS' NAMES)

JOYFULLY ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF

(NAME)

___ POUNDS, ___ OUNCES ___ INCHES

-----, -----
(TIME) (DATE) (YEAR)







(PARENTS' NAMES)

JOYFULLY ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF

(NAME)

___ POUNDS, ___ OUNCES ___ INCHES

-----, -----
(TIME) (DATE) (YEAR)







(PARENTS' NAMES)

JOYFULLY ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF

(NAME)

___ POUNDS, ___ OUNCES ___ INCHES

-----, -----
(TIME) (DATE) (YEAR)





(PARENTS' NAMES)

JOYFULLY ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF

(NAME)

___ POUNDS, ___ OUNCES ___ INCHES

-----, -----
(TIME) (DATE) (YEAR)



YOUR PRAYER HAS BEEN
HEARD!!



ZECHARIAH,

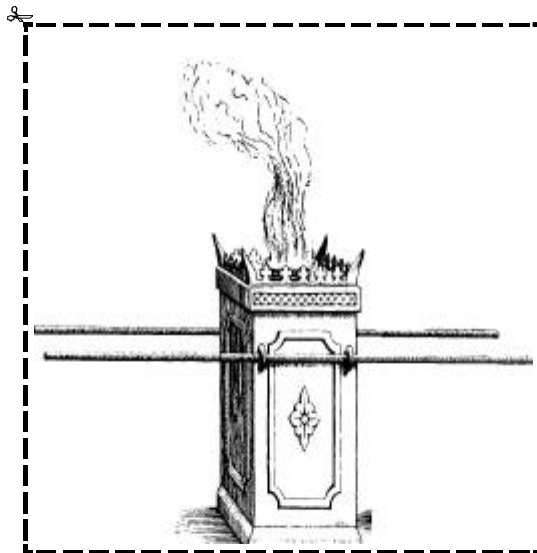
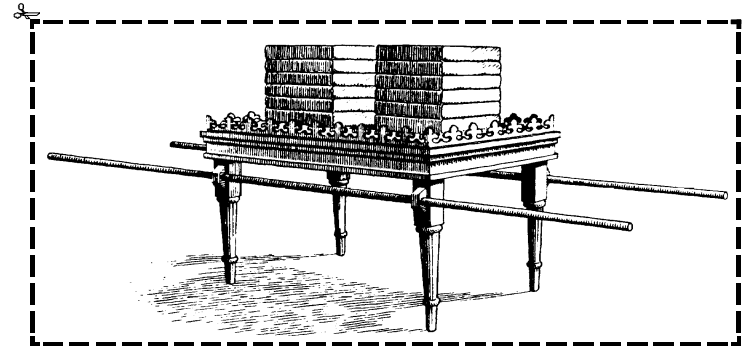
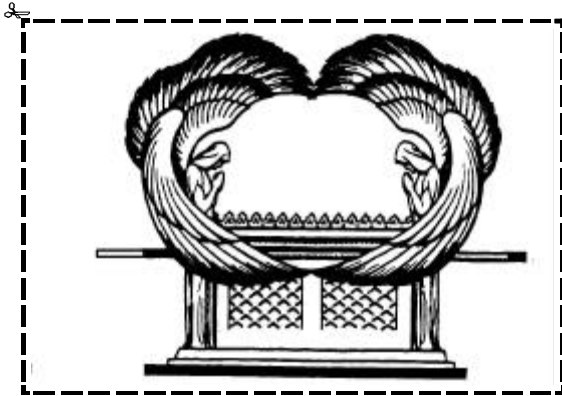


HE WILL GO ON
BEFORE THE
LORD...TO MAKE
READY A PEOPLE
PREPARED FOR THE
LORD.

...NAME HIM
JOHN

Temple in Pieces

Cut out & place each card in its correct location in the temple.





Contrast in attitudes



Think of several words or phrases that describe the different attitudes of Zechariah and Mary. Write them under the appropriate columns.

Zechariah

Luke 1:18 " how can I be sure..."

Mary

Luke 1:34 " How will this be..."

Luke 1:38 " may it be..."