

# Elizabeth and Zechariah

CHARACTERS: 1 M, 1 F

COSTUMES: Biblical

PROPS: Baby

SETTING: Israel, just before Christ is born

*AT: Rise. A room in a Jewish home. A cradle is the central feature with a stool beside it. Elizabeth enters carrying a baby.*

ELIZ: John, child of my old age. Sleep well tonight. *(Places baby in cradle)*. Until you came, my life was one of longing and emptiness *(She sits on the stool. Remembering the shame and heartbreak)* I understood when Rachel cried out to her husband – give me children or I die. *(Zechariah enters)* But now, like it was with Sarah it is with me, a child born to me in my old age. It is a time of gladness!

ZECHARIAH: *(Laughing, playfully)* Elizabeth, it is time to let our son get some rest.

ELIZ: Yes, he has quite a task set before him. Tell me again what the scriptures say.

ZECHARIAH: *(Quoting)* And 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. Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. *(Pause)* He will be great in the sight of the Lord.

ELIZ: *(Smiling)* Yes, in time he will be. But he is such a tiny thing now. *(With pride)* Our John, our joy and delight. As Gabriel said, many will rejoice because of his birth. And they did. This house was filled to overflowing with singing and praises to God. And you made up a song. Sing it for me. *(Zechariah shakes his head “No”)* Then at least repeat the words. *(Zechariah starts to decline; mischievously)* You never know when an angel may take the power of speech from you again.

ZECHARIAH: *(Chuckles.)* Very well. *(Zechariah pauses to collect his thoughts. He speaks to God using a commanding voice, yet not loud enough to disturb the baby. Elizabeth keeps one hand on the baby but her eyes never leave her husband as he speaks. She nods in affirmation of the words)*

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come and has redeemed his people.  
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David  
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),  
salvation from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us—  
to show mercy to our fathers  
and to remember his holy covenant,  
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,  
and to enable us to serve him without fear  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

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*Zechariah pauses, steps closer to the cradle and places one hand upon the baby*

And you, my child, (*Elizabeth begins smiling broadly and steals a glimpse or two at John*) will be called a prophet of the Most High;

for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

to give his people the knowledge of salvation

through the forgiveness of their sins,

because of the tender mercy of our God,

by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

to shine on those living in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace."

ELIZ: We have a son, one ordained by El Shaddai himself! But I fear it will not be so easy with Mary. Her time must be at hand and with her having to travel to Bethlehem for the census.... If John were older I'd suggest we go meet them ourselves.

ZECHARIAH: (*Face becomes clouded*) She is young, Elizabeth. God is with her.

ELIZ: But the place is crowded with not only those registering from the house of David but also all the Romans. The Romans are not kind to us Jews.

ZECHARIAH: I do not fear the Romans in this instance but King Herod himself. Herod never hesitated to put anyone, including his own family, to death when they threatened his throne. If word gets out of a Messiah – a future, rival king – Herod might act violently to protect his throne.

ELIZABETH: Yes, Herod might do that. He had his brother in law the high priest killed.

ZECHARIAH: And we both know who it is Herod will find and where he will be found.

ELIZ: (*Concerned*) Then Mary, Joseph and the baby will all be at risk. (*With dawning horror*) Do you think that puts our John in danger?

ZECHARIAH: (*Far away*) It could. (*Snaps back to the present*) My time of service is over at the temple. Rather than stay here I thought we might move into a quiet place in the desert....

ELIZ: (*Quietly, no opposition evident in her voice*) Move? Away from our home? Our families? Before seeing Mary's child?

ZECHARIAH: Yes. I think we might endanger them by even visiting them. Everyone knows what a miracle John is.

ELIZ: When?

ZECHARIAH: I feel we must do so right away, Elizabeth, if you think you have gained enough strength.

ELIZ: God has given me a son in my old age. He will give me whatever strength I lack. (Not whiny, matter-of-fact) But Zachariah, it's lonely and harsh in the desert. It's not a hospitable place.

ZECHARIAH: Exactly. A perfect place to raise our only son, Elizabeth. If Herod comes looking for the Messiah it will not be to worship him. I fear for our son's safety. We did not wait all these years to see harm come to him.

ELIZ: Of course we did not. Our son has a vital mission and no sacrifice is too great to see that he fulfills his destiny.

ZECHARIAH: Moses, young David spent years in the wilderness. And Elijah. Elijah hid from Ahab in the desert.

ELIZ: *(Almost dreamy)* Yes, Elijah. *(In the present)* And our John will come in the spirit and power of Elijah

ZECHARIAH: We waited for years for him to be born. A few more years and Herod will be dead. Is that too much?

ELIZ: No, nothing is too much. *(Resolutely)* Nothing is too much for either our son or our God. I'll start to gather a few things. *(She rises, gives John a lingering caress and exits. Zachariah smooths the hair on John's head tenderly then looks upward)*

ZECHARIAH: Thank you for John. Lord, make us the kind of parents he needs, ones who will bring him up in the nurture and admonition of your name. And we ask that you be with Mary and Joseph as you are with your son. Your son who was with you from the beginning, by whom all things were created. Who is coming now in a body of flesh and blood. *(Drops his head to gaze at John)*

*(Toward the audience but not at the audience)* The Messiah – the hope and consolation of Israel. The counselor, Prince of Peace, Mighty God. *(With awe)* How wondrous. *(Picking up baby from cradle and looking at him intently)* Our Messiah will be here soon. *(Pause to cradle child closer)* Maybe even tonight. *(Zechariah bows his head until it gently rests against the John's tiny forehead)*