

## Elizabeth & Zechariah (1)

\*Note: Zechariah can't speak at this point in the story, so he holds up boards with his words on at the appropriate moments.

**Ryan:** So, whilst things were going very nicely for Mary and Joseph, something strange was going on with a relative of Marys. Her cousin Elizabeth, who is much older than Mary, is married to Zechariah, who is also quite old. So, let's hook up to them via video link and find out what's going on. Zechariah, would you like to tell us what's been happening with you?

**Zechariah:** I can't speak.

**Elizabeth:** He can't speak, so I will tell you what happened. The thing is, we had always wanted a baby. A son or a daughter, we would have loved them equally...but it just wasn't to be.

**Zechariah:** It was my fault.

**Elizabeth:** No, it wasn't dear. It was nobody's fault. He always says it's his fault because he doesn't want me thinking it's my fault. But I had long since come to the conclusion that it just wasn't what God had in mind for us. He just didn't allow me to get pregnant, and as much as I was able, I had come to terms with that. But then came one of the biggest days in our lives. You see, Zechariah is a priest. He leads the synagogue in our village, so he has the responsibility of nurturing the spiritual lives of our little community. But on this great day, Zechariah had been selected to set light to the incense in the Holy Place, just next to the Most Holy Place, in the Jerusalem Temple.

I remember you were quite anxious about it, weren't you Zechariah. You were worried about what you would do if the incense didn't light, or something else went wrong. We both lost a lot of sleep that night didn't we?

Do you know, they actually tied a rope around him before he went into the room, just in case he dropped down dead? They could then pull his body out without having to go into the room. That just shows you how serious it was going into this part of the Temple.

**Zechariah:** Tell them about the angel.

**Elizabeth:** Tell them about the angel? Yes dear, I hadn't forgotten. How could I forget something like that? Of course, Zechariah had no trouble getting the

incense to light, and he stood watching it for a minute or two. Then he began to say his prayer of blessing for the nation when, all of a sudden, he found himself falling onto the floor. He told me his legs just couldn't hold him up. One moment he was standing up and the next he was lying flat on the floor. You wondered if you were ill, didn't you...but he generally felt fine. Then he looked up and he saw a young man standing by the altar looking at him.

At first, Zechariah wanted to tell him to leave. Nobody else was supposed to be in there! But when Zechariah tried to speak he couldn't get any words out, he just started coughing. That was right, dear, wasn't it? You started coughing.

**Zechariah:** Yes.

**Elizabeth:** The people outside, we found out later, had heard the coughing and they wondered if Zechariah had been taken ill. But back in the room, this young man, and afterwards you decided he was an angel, had started to speak quietly to Zechariah. He told Zechariah that I was going to have a baby, a son, and we were to give him the name John. That he would bless a lot of people by leading them back to God.

**Zechariah:** The wrong man.

**Elizabeth:** The wrong man? Oh yes, Zechariah wondered if the angel had got the wrong man...that he was talking to the wrong man! Can you believe that? As if God would make a mistake like that. I've not mentioned that to anyone... silly old fool! But he did point out to the angel that we were both probably a little bit too old to have a baby.

I mean, if it had been me, I would have said to the angel, "Yes sir. Thank you very much sir. I'll be off now to tell my wife the good news now sir." Instead, he questions whether what the angel has said to him is true. Well, the angel didn't take too kindly to that and so Zechariah was struck dumb. So that is why he is unable to talk. We have to write messages to each other all the time. This means that the house is really quiet these days.

Mind you, to tell the truth, he never was much of a talker anyway...so things aren't that different.

**Zechariah:** Tell them the news.

**Elizabeth:** The news? Oh yes, the news. Well...I'm going to have a baby.