

## December 8

Character: John the Baptist

Setting: Today's story begins 8 days after Elizabeth gave birth to the son the angel of the Lord told her husband, Zechariah, they would have. It is customary in the Jewish culture to have a circumcision ceremony on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after a son is born in Israel. God commanded the Israelites to circumcise all Jewish baby boys as part of His covenant with Abraham in the book of Genesis, and He reaffirmed this requirement through Moses. These ceremonies are meant to be a joyful celebration of new life for the Jewish community. They are a time when families come together to praise God for the child, and also when the child's name is revealed by his parents. Family names were very significant to the Israelites. Male children were usually named after their fathers, or after another important family member. In today's story, we'll read about the name God chose for this child and the people's reaction to his name. Our scripture begins in the book of Luke, chapter 1 verse 57.

Scripture: Luke 1:57-66 (Read)

Application: God broke Zechariah's months of silence to allow him to confirm the name of his child. Everyone was astonished that the child's name would be John. Well, everyone, except the child's parents. They were simply following the instructions God gave them through the angel, Gabriel when he told them to name him John. His name selection became the source of great wonder and awe in this community. But the true wonder wasn't his name but his purpose. The last words spoken by a prophet in the Old Testament prophesized this child's life. Malachi ended his book by saying God would send a prophet who would turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. That was the last prophecy spoken for 400 years. Then, God broke His silence to fulfill this prophecy and bring this child into the world. Spend some time today with your family researching and discussing the 400 years of silence. Write down in your advent journal any interesting things you discover about events that took place during this period of silence that led to the prophecies being fulfilled exactly as the Old Testament prophets said they would be.

Prayer: Praise God for His perfect timing in the birth of John, Jesus and all of us. Thank Him for creating a person in John the Baptist to prepare the world for Jesus birth and ministry. Ask God to unseal our lips and give us the courage He gave John the Baptist to reveal to this world who Jesus is, and prepare the way for Jesus' second coming.