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Part of the Plan

Key References: Luke 1:57-79; *The Desire of Ages*, chap. 10, pp. 97-100; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 7, pp. 18-22; Our Beliefs nos. 9, 22, 18















power**text**

"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" (Luke 1:78, 79).

power**point**

God is personally interested in my salvation.

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 102.

Have you ever looked forward to something with so much eagerness that you thought you'd burst? How did you feel when it finally happened? Was it so great that it made you feel like singing? Imagine how Zechariah and Elizabeth felt.

The time is near, Elizabeth thought. *I know it can't be too much longer until this baby is born. In another week it will have been nine months since Zechariah served at the temple and the angel told him I would have a son. Nine months since Zechariah doubted the angel and questioned God's messenger. Nine months since Zechariah has spoken anything.*

Elizabeth sighed. Their made-up sign language and pitiful attempts at lip reading were getting old. Most of the time she couldn't figure out what Zechariah was trying to tell her. Writing messages was a better way of communicating, but it was so slow. *It will be over soon,* Elizabeth thought. *The angel said he wouldn't speak until the baby was born. And I'm sure that will be any day now.*

And so it was. Just as the angel said, Elizabeth gave birth to a son. The child was strong and healthy; the neighbors heard and came to offer congratulations and share her joy. And still Zechariah was silent.

One, two, three days went by. Zechariah still didn't speak. Six, seven, eight. The day of the baby's circumcision, according to Jewish law. The day the child would be named.

And again the friends and neighbors gathered. It was a happy, joyous occasion. The neighbors gathered and chatted, mostly about the baby and his father.

"What are they going to name him?" someone asked.

"I would assume they're going to name him Zechariah, after his father," answered another.

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Sunday

READ Read Luke 1:5-17 and this week's story, "Part of the Plan."

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask for an understanding of the plan of salvation.

Monday

READ Read Zechariah's song in Luke 1:18-25.

WRITE Think of Zechariah's encounter with the angel. What were his feelings, reactions, and experiences? Write your answers in your Bible study journal.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for His interest in your salvation.

Tuesday

READ Read all of Zechariah and Elizabeth's story in Luke 1:5-25 and 57-66.

THINK How did the miracle that took place with Zechariah at John's birth confirm God's plan for his life?

SHARE Share with someone the amazing things that God has done for your family and how these built your faith and confidence in Him.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God for showering you with His blessings.

"Maybe they're going to name him after his grandfather," someone else chimed in. "The baby is always named after someone in the family. Elizabeth, what are you naming the baby? Zechariah?"

"No," Elizabeth spoke firmly. There was no question. She and Zechariah had learned their lesson about doubting what angels had to say. And the angel had told them what to name the baby. "He is to be called John," she said resolutely.

Silence followed her declaration. Every face held the same question.

Finally someone spoke. "John? Why John? There's no one in your family named John."

"Are you sure, Elizabeth? Are you sure you don't want to name him Zechariah, after his father?"

"It's such a nice name, Zechariah. Elizabeth doesn't know what she's talking about. Someone, ask Zechariah what he wants to name the baby."

Zechariah was sitting quietly, unaware of the commotion around him. Someone tapped him on the shoulder to get his attention. Sign language followed. Zechariah's eyes brightened with understanding. His writing tablet. Where was it?

The neighbors gathered around and watched as the tablet was placed in his hands. He picked up the writing instrument and began to form the words. "His . . . name . . . is . . . John."

And suddenly Zechariah could speak! After nine months of silence, the words came tumbling out of his mouth in a torrent of excitement.

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel," Zechariah exclaimed, "because he has come to his people and redeemed




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Wednesday

READ Read Luke 1:67-79.

THINK Choose the three verbs from the passage that tell about God's plan of salvation. Think about them.

WRITE In your Bible study journal, write about what salvation means to you. You could refer to a story that illustrates what it means to be saved.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Ask God to reveal to you His plan for your life and for your salvation.

Thursday

READ Read Psalm 89:1, 2.

THINK What do those verses tell you about how long God has been concerned with our salvation?

SHARE Tell someone about the relentless love of Jesus, who is passionately interested in our salvation.

REPEAT Say your power text to someone else.

PRAY Ask God to guide your feet in paths of peace.

Friday

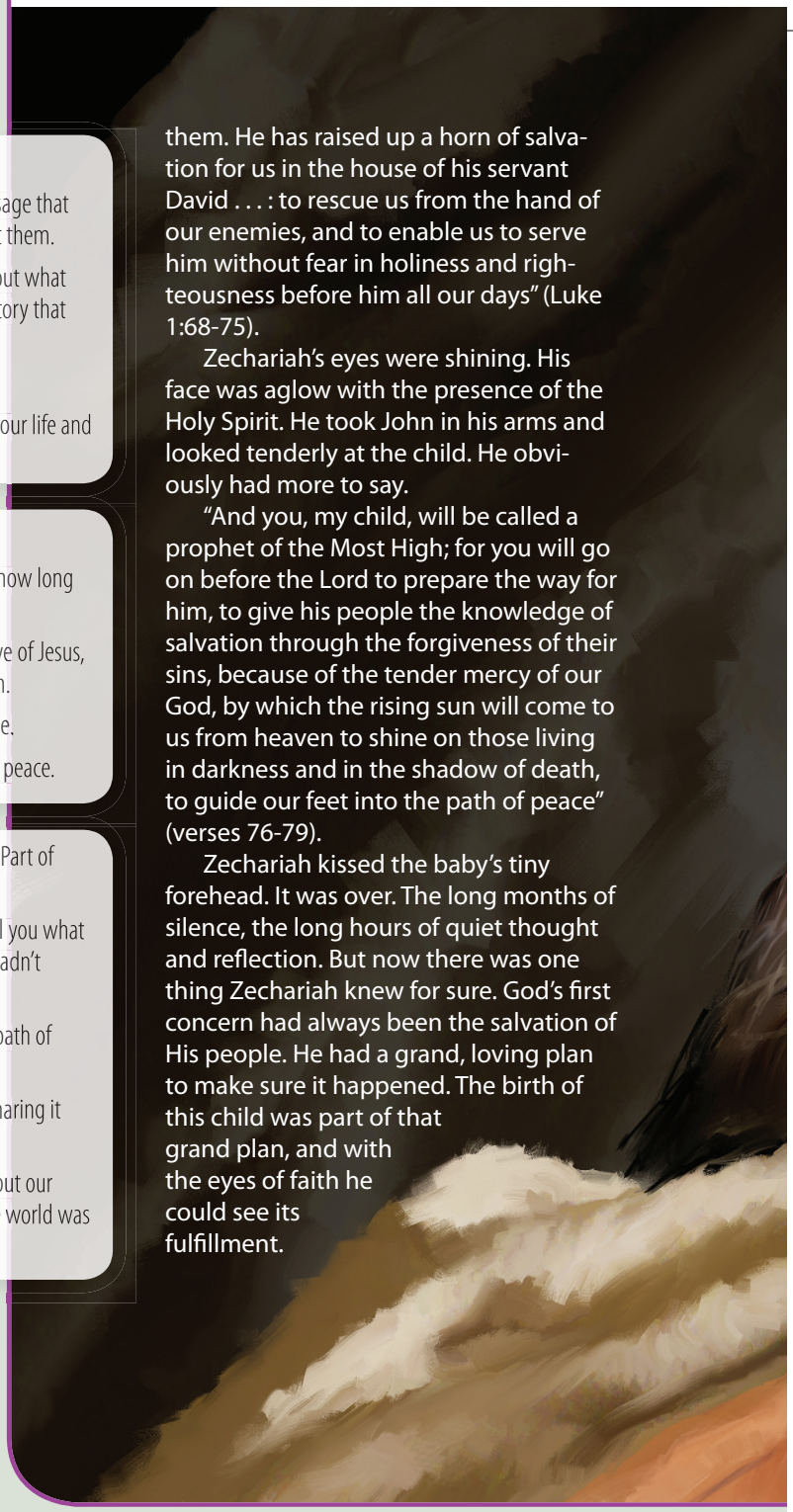
READ Read Genesis 3:15 and tell the story "Part of the Plan" to your family at worship tonight.

SHARE Ask each person in your family to tell you what they think their first words would be if they hadn't spoken for nine months.

DISCUSS With your family, discuss what a "path of peace" means.

REPEAT Practice saying the power text by sharing it with your family.

PRAY Thank God for being so concerned about our salvation that He developed a plan before the world was formed.

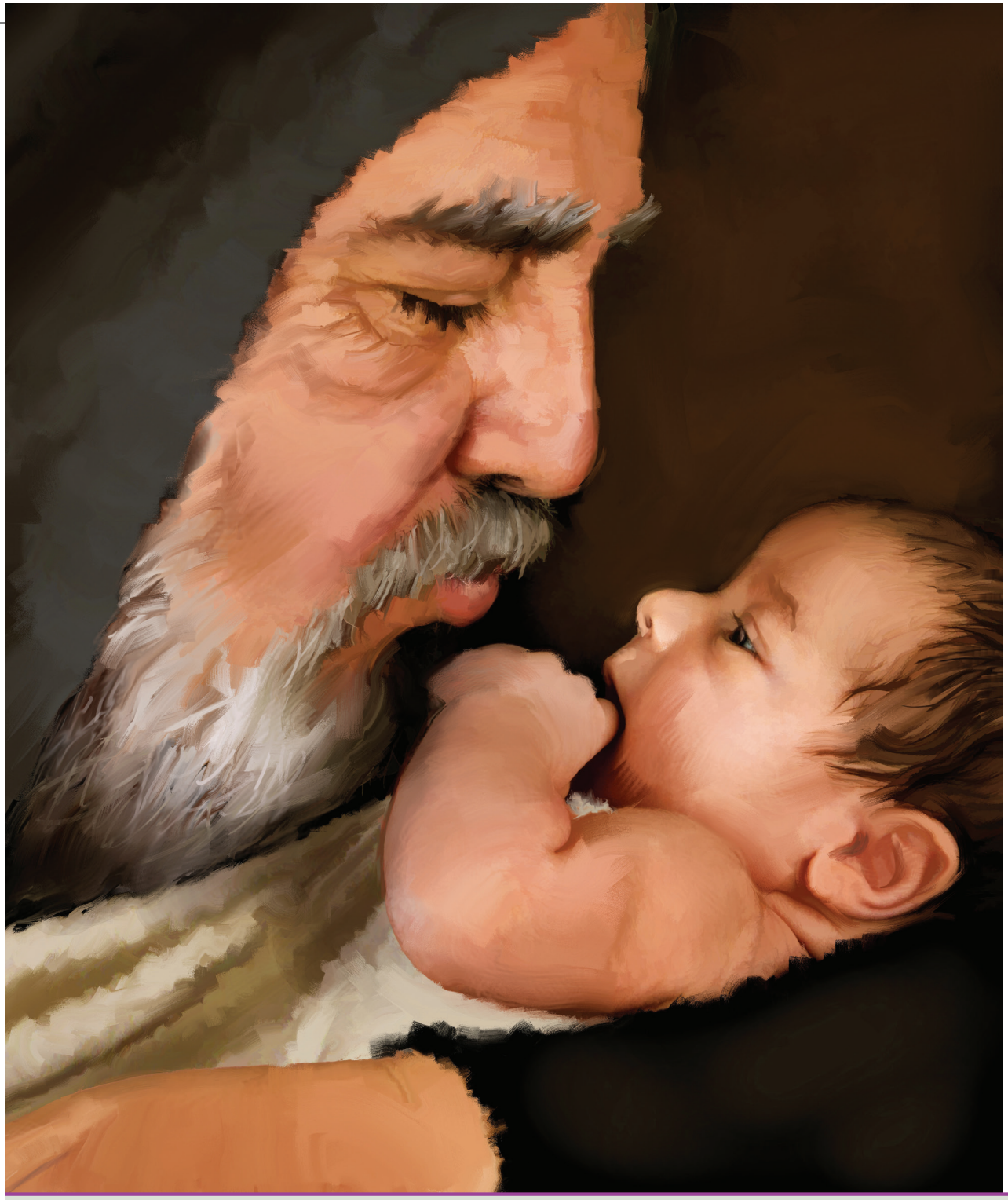


them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David . . . : to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" (Luke 1:68-75).

Zechariah's eyes were shining. His face was aglow with the presence of the Holy Spirit. He took John in his arms and looked tenderly at the child. He obviously had more to say.

"And you, my child, 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" (verses 76-79).

Zechariah kissed the baby's tiny forehead. It was over. The long months of silence, the long hours of quiet thought and reflection. But now there was one thing Zechariah knew for sure. God's first concern had always been the salvation of His people. He had a grand, loving plan to make sure it happened. The birth of this child was part of that grand plan, and with the eyes of faith he could see its fulfillment.



PUZZLE
13

JESUS IS OUR SALVATION

Instructions: Each letter is substituted for another; can you decipher this message? Use the letter patterns and trial and error to help you figure out this puzzle. Part of the cryptogram is done for you.

"Hng Cat ml di Rmbc kpad jabc zca; xw hpmbcl lzjqzgmab ab gxw wzpgx"
(Ylzjd 74:12).

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