

Birth and Childhood of John the Baptist

Texts:

Luke 1:57-66,

57. Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.

58. Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

59. And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

60 But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.”

61. And they said to her. “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.”

62. And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

63. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished.

64. And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

65. Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

66. All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, “What then will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

Commentary:

Luke 1:57, Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.

I. These events fulfilled the word of God through Gabriel to Zecharias.

Luke 1:58, Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

I. Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives rejoiced with her when they heard of the birth of her son.

A. They recognized the hand of the Lord in the birth of John.

B. Some of the relatives and kinsfolk may not have known of Elizabeth's pregnancy and may have just heard of the birth of John.

C. The birth of John was a community event.

II. The Bible teaches us that we are to rejoice with them that rejoice.

A. We are to be happy about the happiness and success of others.

B. Romans 12:12, 15, rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

C. 2 John 4, I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.

D. 3 John 3, For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth.

Luke 1:59, And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

I. On the eighth day, friends and relatives came to circumcise the child. Circumcision and Sabbath observance were identifying marks of God's people.

II. On this occasion it was customary for a child to be named.

III. In this close community the neighbors assumed that the child would be named Zacharias after his father.

Luke 1:60, But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."

I. Elizabeth told the neighbors and relatives that the child's name was John.

A. Zacharias had undoubtedly informed Elizabeth of the events surrounding the appearance of Gabriel to him in the temple.

B. This communication must have been in writing.

Luke 1:61, And they said to her. "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name."

I. The neighbors and kinsfolk argued that John was not a suitable name for this child because no one in the family was named John.

II. Tradition was playing a major role in these events.

III. It is strange to us that neighbors and relatives would feel they had a right to name someone else's child.

Luke 1:62, And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

I. The neighbors and relatives made **signs** to Zachariah asking him what name should be given the child.

II. The signs indicate that Zachariah was speechless and deaf.

III. Zachariah settled the argument by writing, “His name is John.”

Luke 1:63, And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished.

I. Zachariah “asked” for a table on which to write a response.

A. Zachariah could have “asked” for a writing tablet by gestures.

B. Writing tablets in those days were usually made of wood covered with a thin coating of wax.

C. Writing was with an iron stylus.

II. Zachariah named his son John in direct obedience of the angel’s command.

A. The pressure from the people did not affect Zachariah’s decision.

B. Zachariah obeyed the angel.

Luke 1:64, And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

I. When Zachariah obeyed the angel regarding naming his son John, his ability to speak was immediately restored.

II. Zachariah blessed God **first** when his speech was restored.

III. Zachariah's speech was restored in keeping with Gabriel's word.

A. Luke 1:19, 20, The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

Luke 1:65, Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

I. "Fear" (respect, awe, anxiety, dread) came upon all the people who heard about these events.

A. Everybody was talking about these happenings.

B. Everyone heard of the appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias, Elizabeth's giving birth in advanced years, Zachariah's mutism, and the strange naming of this child.

Luke 1:66, All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

I. Everyone wondered, based on these wondrous happenings, what would be accomplished by this child as it was obvious that the hand of the Lord was upon him.

II. The people also realized that, having been born to parents advanced in age, he might be orphaned early in life.

III. Luke and other Biblical writers use anthropomorphic metaphors in speaking of God, a spirit (John 4:24).

A. The hand of God. Luke 1:66.

B. The feet of God. Exodus 24:20.

C. The finger of God. Exodus 31:18.

D. The eyes of God. Deuteronomy 11:12.

E. The ears of God. Numbers 11:18.

Zachariah's Song

The Benedictus

Luke 1:67-79,

67. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

69. And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant –

70. As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old –

71. Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

72. To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant,

73. The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

74. To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear.

75. In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

76. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS:

77. To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

78. Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

79. TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Commentary:

Luke 1:67, And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

I. Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.

A. Prophecy is not limited to foretelling future events.

B. 1 Corinthians 14:3, But one who prophesies speak to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.

II. The Holy Spirit motivated Zachariah to speak and guided him in what he said.

A. Zachariah was inspired (breathed into) in regard to the truth of what he said.

B. These twelve verses variously referred to as Zachariah's Song or the Benedictus is a thanksgiving for the arrival of the times of the Messiah.

Luke 1:68, 69, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant –

I. Here Zachariah:

A. Praised/blessed the Lord God of Israel.

- B. Recognized that God has visited and wrought redemption for his people in the Christ child.
- C. Proclaimed that Christ was a “horn of salvation for the Jews.” This is a metaphor suggesting very great strength. Abraham, Moses, and now Jesus are referred to in this manner.
- D. Christ arose from the family of David.

Luke 1:70, 71, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old – Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

I. Zachariah was reminded that the Messiah was spoken of by the Old Testament prophets.

- A. There are 333 prophecies in the Old Testament relative to the coming of the Messiah.
- B. Psalm 106:10, So He saved them from the hand of the one who hated them, And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

II. Zachariah proclaimed that the Messiah would bring the Jewish people salvation from their enemies and from the hand (power) of all who hated them.

- A. God provided salvation through the Messiah on a larger scale than simply from the Romans.
- B. The Messiah brought salvation from sin, Satan and eternal death.
- C. Often those who spoke by inspiration didn't fully understand everything the Holy Spirit led them to say.

D. Among the first century Jews the idea of a political deliverance had taken the place of a moral salvation.

E. 1 Peter 1:10-12, As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy spirit sent from heaven – things into which angels long to look.

Luke 1:72, 73, To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

I. Zachariah attributed the coming of the Messiah to:

A. God's showing mercy to the Jewish ancestors.

B. God's remembering his covenant with Israel.

C. God's remembering his oath to Abraham.

II. The Old Covenant connected with the New Covenant.

A. All the families of the earth would be blest through the Messiah.

1. Genesis 12:1-3, Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you: And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will

curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

2. Genesis 22:16, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son.

3. Hebrews 6:13-15, For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.

B. The new covenant makes it plain that the promises were ultimately to be fulfilled through Israel’s spiritual descendants rather than his fleshly descendants only.

Luke 1:74, 75, To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear. In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

I. Christ the Messiah, having delivered his people from their enemies, would be served:

A. without fear.

B. in holiness.

C. in righteousness.

D. all our days!

Luke 1:76, “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS:

I. John was to be called the prophet of the Most High.

II. John would go before the face of the Lord (Christ) to make ready his ways.

A. Malachi 4:5, 6, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”

B. John was a herald preparing the way for the royal visitor.

C. Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.

D. Isaiah 40:3, A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God,

III. Zachariah waited until now to mention his son John.

Luke 1:77, 78, To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

I. John was to give knowledge of salvation; that is, the remission of sins which Jesus came to provide.

A. Only Christ can forgive.

B. Man cannot achieve divine forgiveness for himself.

II. Remission of sins, salvation, resulted from the tender mercy of God.

III. By the tender mercy of God the day spring from on high visits us.

A. This literally can be translated, “In which shall shine upon us the light from on high.”

B. John 1:9, There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

C. Malachi 4:2, “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

D. 2 Peter 1:19, So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Luke 1:79, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

I. Those who “sit in darkness and the shadow of death” refers to Gentiles.

A. Isaiah 9:1, 2, But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

II. “The way of peace” is forgiveness, the restoration of fellowship with the Creator.

III. The coming of Jesus is being compared to a sunrise which dispels the dark of night.

A. Christ’s coming was a new day dawning with hope of salvation for God’s people.

B. Matthew 4:16, “THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED.”

C. Luke 2:32, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.

D. John 1:4-9, In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

E. John 3:20, 21, “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

F. John 8:12, Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

Growth and Emergence of John

Luke 1:80, And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Commentary:

I. John grew physically.

II. John became strong in spirit.

III. John lived in the deserts until he began his public ministry.

A. “Deserts” refers to the desolate and forbidding wastelands south of Jericho and along the Dead Sea.

B. This was the region of the Essene Qumran settlement.

IV. Thirty years of John’s life are here compressed into one sentence.

A. Luke 2:52, 52, “He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

B. It is not said of John that he increased in favor with men.

C. The strong, rugged, ascetic character of John contrasts with the loving, sociable nature of Jesus.

Birth and Childhood of John the Baptist

Questions

1. At the birth of John the Baptist, his _____ and _____, heard that the Lord had displayed his _____ toward Elizabeth and _____ with her.

2. On the _____th day they all gathered to _____ the child and planned to name him _____ after his _____.

3. _____ said, "No indeed; he shall be called _____." The relatives argued with _____ and said, "There is no one among your _____ by that name."

4. The relatives made _____ to _____ to see what he wanted the child called. _____ asked for a _____ and _____," His name is _____."

5. Having named his son _____, _____'s speech was restored and he began to _____.

6. We are to _____ with those who _____, and _____ with those who _____.

7. Luke and other _____ use _____ in speaking of God; for example, the _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____ of God.

8. Zachariah _____ / _____
God, _____ that God had _____ and wrought
_____ for his people, _____ that Christ was a
“_____ of _____ for the Jews.”

9. _____ proclaimed that the _____ would
bring the _____ people _____ from their
_____ and from the _____ (power) of all who
_____ them.”

10. God’s people are to serve him _____
_____, in _____ and _____ before
him all our days.

11. Of _____ said, “For you, child, will
be called the _____ of the _____
_____; for you will go on before the _____ to
_____ his _____.”

12. John continued to _____ and to become
_____ in _____, and he lived in the
_____ until the day of his _____
_____ to _____.

Finished exam can be mailed or dropped off at:
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