

Give Him the Name 'John'

Text – Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

September 3, 2006

North Suburban Evangelical Free Church
Junior High Service, 10:40 am

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.

6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly.

7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

Notes: Both were dedicated – of priestly descent (whether Levite or not)

Note that Elizabeth was 'barren' – she could not have children. Elizabeth was also old, so having children at this point would be a miracle. Who else was in this position?

There were seven barren women in the Bible

→ Abram's/Abraham's wife Sarai/Sarah, who would have Isaac at a very old age.

→ Isaac's wife Rebekkah, who had Jacob & Esau.

→ Jacob's wife Rachel, who had Joseph and Benjamin.

→ Samson's mother.

→ Elkanah's wife Hannah, who had Samuel (though Hannah wasn't old).

→ *Michal, David's wife. No reported kids by Michal, though.*

→ Elizabeth (who had John the Baptist).

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,

9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John.

14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.

16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God.

17 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."

Notes:

Zechariah's response of fear – something amazing. How would you react if you saw a glorious angel standing there in front of you all of a sudden?

Note in verse 16 – bringing people back to the Lord their God is a major plus that Gabriel brings up about John the Baptist. He will bring them back and make them ready for the Lord (see v. 17).

John the Baptist was prophesied about in the book of Isaiah, which was about 740 years before this event.

Isaiah 40:3 - The voice of one calling in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a path for our God."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.

20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.

22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home.

24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.

25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Notes:

Gabriel's message was that he stood in the presence of God. This refers to a literal and physical place.

Zechariah's 'vision' in the temple can be more accurately translated 'sight' or 'noteworthy sight.'

Zechariah could not speak for quite some time because of his fear from believing what Gabriel told him. Even the most righteous of believers can have doubts. Note: Moses, Jonah, Peter, Thomas, and various others.

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son.

58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah,

60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

Notes:

Male Jewish children were named at their circumcision, and it was commonplace to name the child after someone within the direct family. However, the option here for Elizabeth is to follow what the Lord told them through the angel Gabriel or to fold and name the child after human custom.

They checked with the father to make sure that Elizabeth was serious and since the father had the ultimate authority of decision...

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child.

63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."

64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.

65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things.

66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

Notes:

Zechariah obeyed in suit, as well, and his mouth was opened. Note also that his first words were praise and not cursing.

Everyone at the scene, as we see in verse 66, could tell that this child would do something amazing.

So Zechariah praises God and prophesies about the coming Messiah Jesus (verses 68-75), as well as John (verses 76-79) –

Zechariah's Song

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

**68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his people.**

**69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David**

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

**71 salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—**

**72 to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,**

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

**74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear**

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**76 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,**

**77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,**

**78 because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven**

**79 to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."**

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Notes:

Note the split between Jesus and John the Baptist. What are some elements that Zechariah uses to describe each?

→ Jesus would bring salvation and peace and mercy.

→ John the Baptist would be a prophet who prepared Jesus' Way and who would lead people to Him.

Throughout the Gospels, John the Baptist's ministry is evident and large. He baptized many in preparation for Jesus' coming, and he even was granted the privilege of baptizing Jesus. How do the accounts in the Gospels describe him?

We will learn more about each one's ministry more as we delve more into Luke.