

The Heights Baptist Church

* Christmas at Luke's * The Birth of John the Baptist * Luke 1:57-80 * 12/05/2021 *

MAIN POINT

Immediately after Zechariah's muteness was removed after the birth of his son John, praise poured out of him. As we remember the birth of Christ, praise should be pouring out of us too!

INTRODUCTION

Describe an experience has led you to praise God.

What obstacles in your own life prevent you from offering praise to God?

Previously, we looked at the angel Gabriel appearing and giving a message to Zechariah the priest. After years of praying for a child, the angel Gabriel approached Zechariah and told him his prayer had been heard—and his wife Elizabeth would bear him a son (1:13). Stunned and unsure of this news, Zechariah was made mute (1:19-20) until after the birth of their baby in verse 57. In today's lesson, we see Zechariah and Elizabeth, the joyful new parents of their son John.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:57-66.

How would you characterize Elizabeth and Zechariah's response to the birth of John?

God silenced Zechariah after he doubted Gabriel's message and asked for a sign. How did Zechariah respond as soon as he got his voice back (v. 64)? Why do you think he responded this way?

Zechariah's ability to speak was restored when he obediently named his son "John" (Luke 1:13 and 63-64). Months of pent-up silence brought forth a burst of praise.

Note that the people signed to Zechariah, asking him about his son's name. It may be that Zechariah was not just struck mute, but also deaf. It could also be that there is a wider group of people present for John's circumcision, and they may have assumed he was deaf, since he couldn't speak.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:67-80.

Filled with the Holy Spirit and finally able to speak, Zechariah prophesied. Much of his prophecy was based on Old Testament scriptures. We will look at Zechariah's prophecy in three parts.

1. Prophecy related to Christ's first coming in verses 77-79, where Christ gives his people knowledge of our salvation through the forgiveness of our sins.

2. Prophecy that may be related to Christ's first and second comings in verses 68-75, where Christ saves Israel from their enemies, remembering his holy covenant he swore to Abraham.
3. Prophecy about the role of John the Baptist in verse 76.

Looking at verses 77-79, what does Zechariah prophesy about Jesus in these verses?

These verses immediately follow the prophecy about John in verse 76, so this prophecy may include John's roll preparing the way for these events to occur. But it is only Jesus who would actually bring salvation through the forgiveness of sins. He also is our light, guiding our feet into the path of peace.

Read John 8:12. In what way is Jesus the light of the world (Luke 1:78-79)?

The example of the blind man.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 9:1-9, and 24-41.

How is the physical healing of the blind man a picture of what Jesus does in our lives (verse 39)?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 2 CORINTHIANS 4:2-6.

In these verses, we see God speaking light into existence during the creation week being compared to the gospel message.

How does God creating light during the creation week ("Let light shine out of darkness") picture the gospel message?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:16-21.

On Day One of the creation week, God created light. He didn't illuminate everything, but rather created light, then separated the light from the darkness. Considering John 3, what does separating light from darkness picture?

1. From the time of Genesis 3:15, God promised a deliverer who would crush Satan. God promised Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18). This promise went from Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, to Judah (Gen. 49:10), and finally through Jesse and David. Jesus came from the line of David, and Zechariah rejoiced in God's faithfulness.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ISAIAH 9:6-7.

There are wonderful prophecies in the Bible about Jesus reigning in Jerusalem in justice, righteousness, and peace. Zechariah prophesied in Luke 1:68-75 about God rescuing Israel from their enemies. This will be literally fulfilled during Christ's millennial reign (Revelation 20:1-6).

Luke 1:68-75 also likely applies spiritually to Christ's first coming, when he rescued us from our slavery to sin.

2. Zechariah also prophesied about his own son, John, and the unique task he would have. John would tell others about and point them to Jesus, the Messiah.

Have volunteers read the following prophecies about the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke 1:14-17 (Malachi 4:5-6); Luke 1:76 (Malachi 3:1); and Matthew 3:1-3 (Isaiah 40:3).

According to these prophecies, what would the ministry of John the Baptist's entail?

John's preaching prepared the people for the coming of Jesus. This was not a message of "Great news everyone, the messiah is coming!" but rather "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" John preached repentance, and warned them of the wrath of God that was coming upon those who would reject the messiah. John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the answer to God's promises to save the people. That is why when John saw Jesus he proclaimed, "Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the One I told you about" (John 1:29-30).

In what ways was John's message preparing the way for the Lord?

APPLICATION

How can we better praise God this Christmas season?

Have a volunteer read Philippians 2:14-16.

In what ways can we let our light shine to our family, neighbors, and coworkers this Christmas season?

PRAYER

Praise God for who sending Jesus to be our light, for making the way for our salvation, and for his promised return to reign in glory.

COMMENTARY

Luke 1:57-66 Zechariah, as the angel had said, had his son named John. Then, after months of silence, he spoke. This resulted in both a private response and a public reaction. The people were amazed and fear came upon all those who lived around them. The people who heard about these events took them to heart. They were filled with awe, and wondered, what is this child going to become? Throughout the hill country of Judea, people were talking about it.

Luke 1:57-66 "The sentiments of the people are not to be slighted, but taken notice of. We are here told, (1.) That these sayings were discoursed of, and were the common talk all about the hill-country of Judea. It is a pity but a narrative of them had been drawn up, and published in the world, immediately. (2.) That most people who heard of these things were put into consternation by them: Fear came on all them that dwell round about there. If we have not a good hope, as we ought to have, built upon the gospel, we may expect that the tidings of it will fill us with fear. They believed and trembled, whereas they should have believed and triumphed.

(3.) It raised the expectations of people concerning this child, and obliged them to have their eye upon him, to see what he would come to. They laid up these presages in their hearts, treasured them up in mind and memory, as foreseeing they should hereafter have occasion to recollect them. Note, what we hear that may be of use to us, we should treasure up, that we may be able to bring forth, for the benefit of others, things new and old, and, when things come to perfection, may be able to look back upon the presages thereof, and to say, "It was what we might expect." They said within themselves, and said among themselves, "What manner of child shall this be? What will be the fruit when these are the buds, or rather when the root is out of such a dry ground?" Note, When children are born into the world, it is very uncertain what they will prove; yet sometimes there have been early indications of something great, as in the birth of Moses, Samson, Samuel, and here of John. And we have reason to think that there were some of those living at the time when John began his public ministry who could, and did, remember these things, and relate them to others, which contributed as much as anything to the great flocking there was after him. Lastly, It is said, The hand of the Lord was with him; that is, he was taken under the special protection of the Almighty, from his birth, as one designed for something great and considerable, and there were many instances of it. It appeared likewise that the Spirit was at work upon his soul very early. As soon as he began to speak or go, you might perceive something in him very extraordinary." *Matthew Henry's Commentary on Luke*

1:59 "On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child...." The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. See Genesis 17:12 and Leviticus 12:3.

1:67-68 Zechariah then was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. Just as his son would later preach the profound message of God, even so Zechariah proclaimed the glory of the Lord, the God of Israel. The priest blessed the Lord for having visited and for having provided redemption for His people. Whereas Mary's song in verses 46-55 likely was patterned after the Psalms, Zechariah's prophecy probably was modeled on Old Testament prophecies and well may have been the last prophecy of the former age and the first of the Messianic age. His prophecy has two parts. Verses 68-75 focus on God's providing salvation in the coming Messiah. Verses 76-79 address John's role and God's great gift. John would be the forerunner of Jesus, the Messiah.

1:69-70 In His active care, God was in the process of providing redemption. At cost to Himself, God was making possible liberation for His people, first for our sin, then for the nation of Israel from their enemies. He was offering salvation first to the Jews and then to all people. An animal's horn signified strength. The words refer to the Messiah, who would be in the house (or lineage) of God's servant David. God was fulfilling His promise of a descendant of David whose throne God would establish forever (see 2 Sam. 7:12-13).

1:71 "This is a citation of Psalm 106:10, which celebrated God's intervention for Israel at the Red Sea (Psalm 106:7-9; Exodus 14:28-30). The Exodus from Egypt was both a literal rescue from slavery and a powerful symbol of spiritual salvation (Galatians 4:3-5). That rescue proved God's promises to men like Abraham and Isaac were true (Exodus 6:8). Other guarantees came in the form of prophecies (Luke 1:70) about a Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7) and a herald who would announce Messiah's ministry (Malachi 3:1; 4:6; Isaiah 40:3)." *What does Luke 1:71 Mean? Bibleref.com*

All these ideas are celebrated by Zechariah, a priest (Luke 1:5, 67). His wife has given birth (Luke 1:57) to the man later known as John the Baptist (Luke 1:13; 3:2-3). John's role will be to

announce the Savior, Jesus Christ, whose impending birth was recently announced by an angel (Luke 1:31–33). Jesus' first coming to earth will establish a means for mankind to be saved from sin (John 3:16–17), while His second coming will establish an eternal end to all sin and evil (Revelation 19:11–15; 21:1–5).

1:71-75 In poetic parallelism (repeating a thought, emphasizing a point), Zechariah described the Messiah's work on behalf of God's people. Not only does Jesus redeem us, but He also is able to deliver us from elements in our lives that defeat us. Through dependence on Him, we can be victors instead of victims as we face anything and anyone attempting to overcome us. Zechariah celebrated God's following through on His promises to Israel. In sending the Messiah, God dealt mercifully with Israel's fathers. Not only was He extending mercy to people at the time of the Messiah's coming and through the coming centuries to our time; God also was making good on the promises of His holy covenant. Zechariah had God's covenant with Abraham in mind (see Gen. 22:16-18). God's provision of the Messiah would result in people's being rescued from the clutches ("hand") of their enemies—not the Romans at his first coming, but the bondage of sin. Deliverance from sin's dominance would free people from fear of judgment and would give them the matchless privilege of serving God. Believers' service involves worshiping God and ministering to people.

1:76 Zechariah moved from praising God for His gift of the Messiah to address John, his son and the Messiah's forerunner. John would be God's prophet, preparing the people for the Messiah's arrival. The name Most High for God reflects the Hebrew term that means "the Exalted One." In Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel announced that Mary's child would be "the Son of the Most High." In contrast, John would be the Most High's spokesman; thus, Jesus would be superior to John. Later, when John began his ministry, he acknowledged Jesus' superiority to him (see John 1:19-30). Israel was missing God's goal for them. John's God-assigned task would be to prepare the people for the messiah and the salvation message by which God would provide a means for the forgiveness of their sins. Through Jesus, God would pay the penalty for their sins. John would announce this astonishing good news, call people to repentance as a basis of their forgiveness, and tell them about the coming One.