

“John’s Birth/Zacharias’ Prophecy”
(Luke 1:57-80)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning, we saw
Mary going to rejoice with Elizabeth
And to tell her the good news
Of what the Lord had done for her;

We saw John leap for joy
Before he was born,
Because being renewed
And filled with the Spirit,
He rejoiced that Jesus was near.

We saw Elizabeth also filled with the Spirit
Speak what He revealed to her:
That Mary was blessed
Because she had been chosen
To carry the Messiah.

And we saw Mary’s Magnificat –
Her exaltation of the Lord –
For choosing someone as worthless as her
To fulfill His promise to Abraham,
And to bring her Savior into the world.

B. Preview.

Tonight, we see the fulfillment

Of the Lord's promise to Zacharias:

John is born (vv. 57-66);

And Zacharias' prophecy

Regarding the Messiah,

And his son who would prepare His way (vv. 67-80);

II. Sermon.

A. First, we see the fulfillment

Of the Lord's promise to give Zacharias a son.

In verse 57,

We read the time was completed:

Elizabeth gave birth to a son,

As the Lord had promised.

When her neighbors and relatives

Heard about how the Lord mercy on her,

They rejoiced with her –

And when it was the eighth day,

Her neighbors and relatives

Came together to circumcise him –

The Law required

That this take place on the eighth day,

And that there be at least ten witnesses present.

Anyone could have performed this ritual –

A priest, Levite or layman,

The father or mother,

Or a friend,
Whether a man or a woman;
But not a Gentile.

The father usually did it,
And would have in this case,
Except for one thing:
The one who performed this rite
Had to pronounce this blessing –

If it was the father, he was to say:

“Blessed are You, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who has sanctified us by his precepts, and has commanded us to enter him into the covenant of Abraham our father” (Gill) –

The problem here was
That Zacharias couldn't speak –
This may be the one blessing he missed out on
Because he doubted the Lord –

The Lord disciplines us
Because He loves us;
But our sins can still cost us:
We can *learn* from the sins we commit,
But we can also *lose* from them.

It was also customary –
Though apparently not required –
To name the child
When this rite was performed.

When the time came to name him,
They were going to call him “Zacharias,”
After his father –

But Elizabeth –
Remembering what the angel had said –
Answered, “No indeed; but he shall be called John” (v. 60).

They objected,
“Why would you call him John
When no one in your family
Is called by that name?
That’s not how we do it.”

You’ve heard the saying:
“We’ve never done it that way.”
Sometimes we need to learn to be flexible,
Especially in this case,
When the Lord specifically told them
What He wanted the child named.

So they turned to Zacharias
To see what he thought.

After asking for a tablet,
He wrote, “His name is John” (v. 63) –
And they were all amazed
That he would break with tradition

And introduce a new name into the family.

It was then the word of the Lord through Gabriel was fulfilled:

He had told Zacharias

That his wife Elizabeth would conceive a son,

And that he would name him John.

When Zacharias doubted,

Gabriel told him, “You shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when *these things* take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time” (v. 20).

Now that this child was born,

And he had named him, John,

The discipline was over

And Zacharias could again speak:

“And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he *began* to speak in praise of God” (v. 64).

Dick Nielsen often used to pray,

That as receivers of gifts, we should be givers of praise.

Zacharias had been given the gift of a son in his old age,

And he had learned some valuable lessons through God’s discipline;

And so he praised His Lord.

This had just the opposite affect

On the others who were present,

As well as those living around him:

They became afraid (v. 65):

Because they realized the Lord was at work –

Whenever the Lord displays His power,
It makes people stop and pay attention –

They began talking about this
Throughout the hill country of Judea,
Wondering what this child would turn out to be,
Since God was certainly with him (vv. 65-66).

B. But the Lord actually had another reason

For giving Zacharias his voice back

At this particular moment:

With all these gathered together,

Zacharias, now filled with the Spirit,

Began to prophesy:

First, about Messiah;

And second, about how his son would be involved.

1. First, he spoke of the Messiah:

How He was the fulfillment

Of the promise made to David (vv. 67-75);

What he says here

Again sounds very much like a psalm –

He uses OT imagery

To speak of the blessings Messiah would bring.

He blessed God for visiting His people in His mercy

And bringing about their redemption (v. 68).

He speaks as though it was already done –

As far as God was concerned, it was:

Whatever God had determined to do,

He will do –

And nothing can stop Him.

Zacharias connected this redemption to God's promise to David –

God has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David (v. 69):

A horn is a symbol of strength:

Of royal dignity and power –

The Lord has raised up a king

From David's line:

The promised king

Whose kingdom He would establish forever.

This is the One He promised

Through His prophets from ancient times (v. 70):

Who would deliver them from their enemies (v. 71) –

It's possible that Zacharias and those listening

May have understood this politically –

Prophets didn't always fully understand their prophecies:

Peter, "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” (1 Pet. 1:10-11) –

But the Lord intended to fulfill this spiritually –

Jesus came to deliver us from our spiritual enemies:

The devil, world, flesh;

From death and damnation –

Zacharias also connected this blessing

To God’s promise to Abraham:

“To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father” (vv. 72-73).

Jesus is the fulfillment of all God’s redemptive covenants.

But notice the reason for this deliverance:

That being rescued by Him,

They might serve Him

Without fear of their enemies (v. 74) –

Jesus didn’t save us

Just to make us safe,

But that we might serve Him

Without fear from our enemies –

He has overcome them

By the blood of His cross.

He also didn’t free us from sin,

That we might feel free to sin –

But that we might serve Him

In holiness and righteousness

All our days (v. 75) –

2. Second, Zacharias turned to John

To tell him/them how he would be involved (vv. 76-79).

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on
BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS” (v. 76).

“You will be His prophet” –

The Lord’s spokesman/representative –

“To prepare His ways” –

His job would be to expose their sins,

And to warn them of God’s judgment:

That they might see their need for Jesus –

And to point to Him –

To tell them who He was:

So that when He came,

They would know whom to trust,

That they might receive God’s forgiveness (v. 77).

God, in His mercy,

Was about to send His Son –

The sun of righteousness was about to rise (v. 78, cf. Mal. 4:2) –

To shine on those who sat in darkness –

In sin, ignorance, and death –

That He might guide them into the way of peace –

To reconciliation with God,
Not through the Law,
But through the blood of His cross (v. 79).

Jesus is the “true light
Which, coming into the world,
Enlightens every man” (John 1:9).

He tells us the truth about God:
What He is like,
What He loves,
How we can be reconciled to Him –
If we want to know the truth,
We need to come to Jesus.

3. Finally, we see

That John “continued to grow and to become strong in spirit;
And he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel” (v. 80).

The Lord separates us from the world,
So that He might use us for His work.

He separated John,
That He might prepare him
For his very important ministry.

Next week,

We’ll see the birth of the Messiah. Amen.