

Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Birth: John the Baptist

After two Birth Announcements from God, the “natural” birth occurs
The scene: an undisclosed town in Judea (Luke 1:39)

Last time...Mary the virgin espoused of Joseph, who is supernaturally with child,
came to visit her cousin Elizabeth

This time...the birth of John the Baptist...

- the voice of one crying in the wilderness
- the Forerunner to prepare the way for the Messiah
- foretold about 700 years prior

Continuing in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 1...

v56-58 Mary's visit lasted 3 months, after which time she returned to her home in
 Nazareth
 Why did Mary stay with Elizabeth for three months?
 Gabriel told her of Elizabeth's pregnancy...
 she is an old woman in the last trimester and could use the help

But now it is “Go Time” for Elizabeth...

- time to “come out of retirement”
- time for John to come forth
- a great excitement around Elizabeth is about to erupt and Mary,
in her socially dangerous condition, can't be around that

Timestamp (speculation): it is the time of Passover...
time for Mary to go home to be with Joseph

- John was born 6 months before Jesus
- Jesus was born in the fall (Sept/Oct of lunar calendar)
 - ministry of 3½ years
 - dies on...Passover (fulfillment as Lamb of God)
 - started His ministry in the fall
 - Passover/spring less 3½
 - when he turned 30 (Num 4)

Now...and not until now...does Elizabeth's family learn of the amazing news she
has kept to herself for these 9 months!

Imagine their surprise and joy after all her suffering!

And in Elizabeth's joy we see the pattern revealed throughout Scripture:
Great suffering then great joy

Q: Do you rejoice at the good fortune (the blessings of God) of others?
Or are you envious?

v59-63 John is born and, according to the Law, circumcised on the 8th day
And on this occasion the child is named...which created a hubbub because
Elizabeth's family did not approve of the name she had chosen –
no one in their family had that name

It is amazing how often so many people get their noses out of joint over
things that are none of their business

So they ask mute Zacharias...and to their amazement get the same answer

v64-66 And, in keeping with v13...
when the Lord named Zacharias' son John (vs when John was born)...
v20 is fulfilled...completely
dumb/mute until **all** these things were performed (including the naming)

Zacharias has not spoken for 9 months (try it!) but when he writes "John"
he starts to speak
His first words: to praise God

He who could not speak the name of his son burst into praise of the Lord!
His last words were of unbelief, his next words are of praise...

- his unbelief was silenced
- his faith is given a tongue to PTL

In v6, Zacharias was called righteous and blameless
Yet he did not believe Gabriel's message (v20)
He was weak in the faith and staggered at the promise of God...
unlike Abraham (Rom 4:17-21)

But for 9 months now he has been fully persuaded that God was able to perform
as He had promised
For 9 months...watching is elderly wife grow with child, just as God had said thru
His messenger Gabriel...he has silently repented and PTL
As Elizabeth had retired from society and communed with the Lord,
so had Zacharias
Now, when his son was born, fulfilling the Word of God, his tongue is "set free"
and Zacharias proclaims the truth

Good News: Unbelief (staggering at the promise of God) can be "reversed"!

All present were startled by Zacharias suddenly freed tongue...and

- his speaking...breaking of his “vocal fast”
- the words he spoke
- the “manner”/significance of his son

became the #1 Trending Topic town-wide in social media/circles

His hometown was all “a-Twitter” with this news!

Not only was Zacharias’ son all the buzz, so were Zacharias’ 1st words after 9 months of being mute after seeing a vision in the Temple – the vision would finally be explained

v67-75

Filled with the Holy Ghost...the power of God to be His witness... the old priest prophesied/proclaimed the Word of God about...

- the Messiah vs his long-yearned-for son
- the glorious and faithful Lord vs the Lord’s servant, his son

Bless the Lord God of Israel...the Messiah

- God has visited/seen and redeemed/ransomed His people...
 - His centuries of silence are about to be broken
 - He had not forsaken His people, as He promised He would not
 - He sees, cares, hears, and acts
- God has raised up the Messiah
 - The horn/power of salvation
 - The Son of David promised/foretold 1000 years prior
 - He, the Messiah, will
 - save us from our enemies
 - have compassion for us

Q: Where is the Messiah at this moment?

In the womb of a virgin...

- 6 months from coming forth
- 34 years from saving His people
- God has remembered His contract with us
 - to deliver us from our enemies
 - so we can serve Him all our days
 - without fear
 - in holiness/separateness (from and unto)
 - in righteousness

Thoughts:

- Spoken is God's prophetic Word...history told in advance
God tells His friends what He is going to do before He does it
His friends are those who believe God will in fact do as He said
He will do...in His perfect way and in His perfect time
- We cannot be witnesses of Jesus Christ...even or especially to our own family and friends...unless we are filled with the Holy Ghost
- Israel's enemies:
 - their perspective (carnal): Rome
 - God's perspective (spiritual): sin, death, the devil

Zacharias is not finished...and changes his focus to his son John

v76-79

His son and his son's mission:

- called the prophet of the Highest (Is 57:15)
- to go before the Lord to prepare His way – the hearts of His people
- to give God's people knowledge of salvation (from their enemies)
 - repent
 - receive the forgiveness of sin
 - by grace of God thru faith in God's Messiah,
the dayspring/"dawning light"/Morning star
- to give light to those in darkness
- to guide God's people in the way of peace (with God)

Thoughts:

- John will be the voice promised in Is 40:1-3
John is the prophet going before the Highest, the Lord...
John went before Jesus
Jesus is the Highest, the Lord, the dayspring/Messiah
(deity of Jesus Christ spoken by a Spirit-filled witness)
- Darkness and Light
The darkness is not physical, it is spiritual
So the light is spiritual, not physical
John 8:12
- The Way to peace with God
John 14:6
Is 9:6
John 3:16 with Rom 6:23

v80

John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, grew

- physically
- spiritually

as all of God's children are expected to (vs remain infantile)

But John did not grow in Jerusalem, the stomping grounds of a
corrupt priesthood and religious leadership...Pharisees, Sadducees
but in the desert, out by the Jordan River and the Dead Sea...
with the Essenes
until his appointed day.

In Zacharias and Elizabeth – can we see ourselves?

- declared by God (vs themselves) to be righteous (Gen 15:6)
- one stumbled at the promise of God, one rejoiced in solitude
- both were fully persuaded that God was able to perform as He said (at different times)
- both were faithful to proclaim the glory of God...when they were Spirit-filled

Meanwhile...Joseph, the husband of Mary, is “clued in” as the next Birth looms on the horizon
Matt 1

v18-19

The birth of the Messiah, the Christ named Jesus, was as foretold to be of a virgin
That virgin was Joseph's espoused

Now, before they were even married, Mary is found to be with child
Perhaps she told him when she returned from Elizabeth's house
Perhaps because she was starting “to show” after her 1st trimester or
early in her 2nd trimester

All Joseph knows...his only frame of reference...is

- that Mary must have
 - cheated on him...unfaithful to her husband
 - committed fornication...sexual sin
- pain and confusion

Mary's offense is worthy of

- divorce
- death

Joseph was an honest, honorable, and fair man who loved his espoused
so he was going to divorce Mary, but quietly vs publically so she would
not be killed

- v20-23 While he meditated on these things but before he could act, the angel of the Lord
- not Jesus
 - presumably Gabriel
- announced the birth Mary's child to Joseph via a dream
- gender...in the days when only God knew the gender of the unborn
 - name...given by God Himself
 - Messiah...to save His people from their sins (Luke 1:71)
- fulfillment of Scripture
 - the Son of David, his house (2 Sam 7)
 - when was the last time someone addressed him with "son of David"?
 - virgin birth (Is 7:14)
 - incarnation (supernatural by God the Holy Spirit) vs fertilization (natural by man)
 - "God with us"
 - Son of God AND Son of Man...100%, 100%

Now Joseph has even more to meditate upon!

Joseph is told what God is doing

Joseph is comforted regarding his faithful wife

Joseph is assured regarding his marriage to Mary

- v24-25 The angel then instructs Joseph to get up and immediately marry Mary...
- to finalize the legal relationship
 - to protect her from society, uninformed until God breaks His silence

But the marriage would not be consummated for at least another 6 months

But it would be consummated, as evidenced by Joseph and Mary having children, contrary to the queen-of-heaven-worshipping dogma of RCC that says

- Mary was a perpetual virgin
- Jesus' half bros/sis were cousins

In today's parlance, Mary has a "dirty little secret" that is harmful to her health, something ugly and condemning

Have you ever learned a "dirty little secret" about someone else?

What did you do with that knowledge?

1. Mercifully overlook it because you know you have your own secrets?
2. Selfishly exploit it to your own advantage, at the expense of that person?
3. Graciously do something to that person's advantage, even at expense to yourself?

The mind of Christ = 3

There are no secrets from Him, He is all-knowing
He knows all the ugly and condemning secrets we all have
He denied Himself, took on our ugliness and condemnation so that it
might, by faith in Him, be removed from us

Rom 5:1

Rom 8:1

The mind of anti-christ = 2

Any “dirty little secret” is like gold to “climber” in a competitive environment

- politics
- Corporate America
- youth sports and professional sports
- entertainment
- churches

We are called to have the mind of Christ

Joseph had the mind of Mary’s unborn son, God’s Son

Lessons:

Unbeliever:

We can look back on what Zacharias looked forward to: the Coming of the Messiah,
the Lord Who came to save us from sin and death
God’s invitation to “Come, just as you are and I will make you new” is still on the table
Come to peace with God by the grace of God...a right mind
The most rational thing you can do is believe in Jesus Christ
Do not stagger at the promise of God but believe...and wait patiently

Backslider:

The invitation of “Come” you first heard is being given again
The world has nothing to offer except lies and hopelessness
Do not stagger at the promise of God but trust Jesus!

Believer living in fear:

Be a witness of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, buried, risen, ascended, and returning
Be Spirit-filled...by faith
Let your light shine in the darkness of this nation

Next week: the time has come for the Seed of the Woman to come forth
And the world has not been the same since