

**The birth of John  
Luke 1:5-25**

**Intro:** In our first lesson on Luke we noticed the testimony of Luke to assure us that we have in his gospel an accurate account of all that Jesus did and taught. It is interesting that the gospel of Jesus Christ should begin with another person. Luke devotes a significant space to John the Baptizer. Through the years, I have rarely spoken about him; yet his life offers powerful evidence to support our faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Let consider tonight why Luke tells us the story of John's birth.

**In the OT God predicted by his prophets a forerunner of the Christ.**

*Isaiah spoke of the future comfort of Israel when the Lord would come and reveal His glory to them.*

*A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isaiah 40:3-5)*

*The prophet Malachi gives God's last word to his literary prophets. He says that a day of judgment is coming in which the faithful would be spared, but the unfaithful would be destroyed. Only if Israel was faithful to the covenant of God could God's coming be welcomed. God would send someone to prepare the way.*

*"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. (Malachi 4:5)*

*Such were the hopes of the Jewish people that their Messiah would come and that His coming would be heralded by a prophetic forerunner.*

**God announced to Zacharias in the most unique circumstances that they would have this child of destiny.**

*It is interesting to notice the circumstances in which Zacharias received this vision.*

*Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. (Luke 1:8-10)*

He was from the priestly tribe. From the time of David the priesthood was divided into 24 orders. (Zacharias was of the order of Abijah.)

That meant that each order had only a short time to serve in the temple. There were undoubtedly thousands of priests of this order by the first century. The person privileged to go into the temple to burn incense was chosen by lot. Most priests would have this opportunity, if at all, very rarely in their lifetime. Yet, at this very time, Zacharias

was chosen to hear this vision in the presence of all who gathered around the evening incense offering.

***It is interesting to notice the commands given in connection with the child.***

*“...you are to give him the name John” (Lk. 1:13).*

That name meant “the Lord is gracious” and calls attention to the favor of God in providing this forerunner to bring God’s people back to Him and deliver them from destruction.

*“He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” (Lk. 1:15).*

He was to be devoted to God as a Nazarite, that is consecrated to God all His life like Samson and Samuel in the OT.

***It is interesting to notice the angelic prophecies made in connection with the child.***

He would be a delight to his parents (because of his obedient life).

He would cause many to rejoice (because of the hope he would bring to the people)..

He would be great in the Lord’s sight (because of his humble service).

He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb (endowed as a prophet with God’s power for his ministry.)

He would bring back many to the Lord (by preaching repentance).

He would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children (and thus would fulfill the prophecies of the forerunner).

***Is there any doubt that God through Gabriel was making clear that John would be the promised forerunner of the Messiah? All these unique evidences surely show us God’s hand working in it all. However in addition to these evidences...***

**God gave four miraculous signs to confirm the truth that John would prepare the way for the Christ.**

Luke a medical doctor believed and reported four miraculous signs.

***He made Zacharias mute until the child was born.***

*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.” (Luke 1:20)*

This was a punishment for his lack of faith. In not speaking, Zacharias could not teach the Law to others. Does this indicate that God does not want doubters to be a voices of His message? In addition, this sign would continue to build anticipation toward the expected fulfillment of God’s promise.

***He enabled Elizabeth to conceive though she had been barren all her life.***

*After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. “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.” (Luke 1:24-25)*

In Jewish society barrenness was considered a reproach and an indication of God's disfavor. Elizabeth had born this stigma all her married life; and had possibly given up hope of ever having a child. Clearly we see divine intervention here like we also see in the life of Abraham and Sarah. God wanted everyone to see that this child was special.

***He released the tongue of Zacharias at the very moment he obeyed God's command to name the child John.***

*Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. (Luke 1:64)*

This sign confirms God's forgiveness of Zacharias for doubting and God's favor for being obedient to his messenger. Surely, every person present was profoundly affected by the timing of this miracle.

***He prophesied of the child's destiny by the Holy Spirit through Zacharias.***

It is interesting that Zacharias had not been able to teach anyone for months. Now God exalts him as a prophet by giving him a prophetic message by the Holy Spirit. Zacharias' message reveals important truths and he speaks of them in the prophetic perfect, that is, as if they have already happened!

God has not forgotten the promises He made to Abraham to give his descendants deliverance from their enemies by a ruler He would raise up among them of the family of David, the Jewish Messiah.

Through His deliverance, they would be able to serve God without fear and in holiness and righteousness.

The prophet John would prepare the way for God's deliverance by showing that it is through repentance and the forgiveness of sins that God's deliverance will be made possible. There would be no deliverance for the impenitent.

Through God's mercy the "rising sun" (a reference to Jesus) will come to the Jewish people and bring to them "light" and "peace".

**The effect of these events was to fill the people of that day with wonder and expectation.**

*The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, "What then is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him. (Luke 1:65-66)*

***Although John himself would never perform any sign of his own, God had confirmed once for all that John was the prophet that would prepare the way for the Messiah to come.***

**Conclusion: This evidence has been written and recorded by Luke to help our faith in Jesus Christ. Though there may be other lessons to learn from the story of John's birth, this is the one that the Holy Spirit gave us to convince us to believe the testimony of John. It is written that we may know for certain that Jesus is the Christ of the OT and the Savior of the world.**