

Exegetical Notes, Luke 1:57-80
“Praising God”

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Luke 1:57-80

Verse 57-58

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

- See exegetical notes for Luke 1:5-25. These notes explain the scripture which deals with the extraordinary circumstances of the conception of John the Baptist.
- People of that time believed that being barren, as were Elizabeth and her husband, was a sign of God’s disfavor. The child’s birth removed any of those concerns. In those times barrenness was always assumed to be the woman’s fault. In this case, the birth of the baby brought joy to her for the shame was lifted.

Verse 59-63

On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.” They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.” Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.”

- See verse 14 and notes. The name means, “YHWH is gracious.”
- Normally, the first born male would have been given his father’s name. Elizabeth’s instructions concerning the name were a little scandalous since there were no males in her family or Zechariah’s family who had the name John. People would have raised their eyebrows and wondered whose name Elizabeth was giving to this child.
- They turned to Zechariah to settle the matter. They “made signs to him,” apparently assuming that because he could not speak, he could not hear.

Using a clay writing tablet, he confirmed Elizabeth's instructions. The boy was to be called John. This astonished the people because they did not know the angel's instructions and it violated customs.

Verse 64-66

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

- Because Zechariah was obedient to Gabriel's command, the curse pronounced on his unbelief was lifted. He could again speak. See verses 18-20.
- The story about these events spread throughout the region and caused people to wonder what God was up to and about who this child was in the plan of God.

Verse 67

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

- In those days, the Holy Spirit did not abide with people as he now does with the followers of Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit visited or came upon people for a moment or a time. That is what happened to Zechariah at the moment his voice was restored. The Holy Spirit of God moved on him causing him to prophesy.

Verse 68-75

*"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his people.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David.
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us--
to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."*

- The first part of Zechariah’s poem/song of prophecy praises God for fulfilling his ancient promise/covenant made with Abraham. See Genesis 12:2-3 and exegetical notes on this passage. He praises God for the coming of the Messiah from the house and line of David. This is Jesus. For this descendant of David will bring salvation to Israel in two ways. He will keep them safe from their enemies and enable them to be useful servants of God.

Verse 76-79

“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, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

- The second part of the prophecy addresses John. It declares that John will be he who goes before the Messiah to prepare people for his message. John will tell people that God has forgiven their sin and invite them to come to Jesus, the “rising sun of God,” who will lead them to peace. (see Matthew 3:1-12)

Verse 80

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

- As Matthew 3:1-12 says, John lived a quiet and secluded life until the time of his public ministry. True to his father’s words, John called Israel to repentance and proclaimed the coming of God’s Messiah, Jesus.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Praising God*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)