

## Text— Luke 1:57-80

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our Scripture selection continues from where last week's ended. Therefore, as today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent, with Christmas Day being later this week, we will ponder:

### "JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH AND ZACHARIAS' WORDS OF PRAISE AND PROPHECY"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What are interesting details concerning John's birth
- 2) What are wonderful details concerning Zacharias' words of praise and prophecy

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Verse 57 & 58, ----- (Luke 1:57-58)

God's promises are sure, for that which God's holy angel Gabriel had said to Zacharias the husband of Elisabeth came true: Elisabeth conceived and gave birth to a son when she was well past the age when women can normally do so. Note well that our text informs us it was the Lord who showed great mercy upon Elisabeth in granting her and Zacharias a son in their advanced age. Hence, children are a blessing from God; oh, let us regularly pray that more people today would realize that such is the case and would stop the murderous abortion of unborn babies.

Elisabeth's neighbors and cousins – friends and relatives – rejoiced with her at the birth of her son. It was right to do so, for Psalm 127:3 declares, "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward."

Verses 59-63, ----- (Luke 1:59-63)

Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth were God-fearing

Jewish people. Accordingly, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day after Elisabeth gave birth to a son, they came to circumcise the child in accord with the command given by God to Abraham. It's as we read in Genesis 17:9-14, "God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

The most important part of God's covenant with Abraham is that which we read of in Genesis 22:18, where the Lord said to him, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." You see, Abraham was a believer in the promised Messiah, the Christ, who would be descended from him according to the flesh, for Galatians 3:16 reports, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Yes, Jesus Christ is the promised SEED who is the divine Deliverer, the Provider of salvation who is to be believed upon, sent by God the Father into the world to redeem the world, "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Romans 4:3)

Circumcision then, was a sign and token of the covenant God made with Abraham: the promise that the Messiah, the Christ, the Savior would come from his family line according to the flesh. Thus, Zacharias and Elisabeth saw to it that their

son was circumcised.

Now, the firstborn son of Jewish couples was normally named after the father, but such was not the case with Zacharias and Elisabeth's son, for, *his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.* So, we again see that Elisabeth and her husband Zacharias were people of faith who believed in the Lord God, for they did as they had been instructed by God's holy angel Gabriel, as we read in Luke 1:13, "the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." Let us likewise be obedient to God's Word.

Verses 64-66, ----- (Luke 1:64-66)

Recall that Zacharias in weakness, upon hearing from the angel Gabriel that he and his wife Elisabeth would have a son, had "said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless." (Luke 1:18-22) So it happened, for Zacharias was mute until his son had been born, circumcised and named John, for then John's father Zacharias' *mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.*

It is wonderful that the first thing Zacharias did

when his power of speech was restored was to praise God. Zacharias did not moan, groan and complain to God about his ability to speak being removed for so many months. Rather, Zacharias was surely strengthened in his faith when all came to pass as God had said through His holy angel Gabriel. But notice how the people reacted— fear came upon all those who *dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.* Yeah, the people spread the news as to what had happened throughout the entire area.

The news of John's miraculous birth made the people wonder what manner of child John was, for they certainly knew he was special, based upon all that had taken place. Oh beloved, John was indeed special, for *the hand of the Lord was with him.*

Accordingly, our text has supplied us with interesting details concerning John's birth, for it was a miraculous birth accompanied by the miracle of his father's speech being restored.

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As we ponder our text to its conclusion, let us see what are wonderful details concerning Zacharias' words of praise and prophecy.

Verses 67-75, ----- (Luke 1:67-75)

Here we observe Zacharias' words of praise and prophecy in regards to One who is greater than John. Notice that John's *father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied.* Indeed, Zacharias did not speak his own thoughts and opinions; Zacharias spoke words given to him by God the Holy Ghost. Thus, we are assured that Zacharias spoke the truth.

And what was it that Zacharias said? Our text reports that Zacharias prophesied, saying, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets,*

*which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.*

Note well that Zacharias did not prophesy first about his son John; Zacharias first prophesied concerning the Savior foretold of old, the Redeemer sent by the Lord God of Israel, the Horn of salvation who sprung from king David's royal line according to the flesh. Zacharias prophesied about the Horn of salvation whom David himself believed in, for David confessed in 2 Samuel 22:2-3, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence."

So, Zacharias spoke about God's promise of mercy given again and again by Old Testament prophets being fulfilled. Zacharias spoke of the oath – the unilateral covenant of God – made with Abraham being fulfilled. Yes, Zacharias' prophecy first and foremost spoke about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who was then already in the world in that He had been conceived by the Holy Ghost and was then being carried in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

There were no doubts in Zacharias' mind that the promise of God found in Genesis 3:15 was taking place, the words the Lord God spoke unto the serpent within earshot of our first parents, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

There were no doubts in Zacharias' mind that the words penned by Isaiah, chapter 7:14 and chapter 9:6-7, were being fulfilled, the words which read, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and

shall call his name Immanuel. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Yes, the oath sworn to Abraham – that in his Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed – was being fulfilled since Jesus Christ the Savior was then about to be born and would carry out His mission of mercy, our redemption. Subsequently, we would finally be delivered out of the hand of our enemies – sin, death, and the power of the devil – and be free to serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life here on earth.

Think about it. In themselves even our best works are filthy and sin-stained since we are all sinners who do the works, for Isaiah 64:6 states, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Nevertheless, when an individual believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, "his faith is counted for righteousness," declares Romans 4:5. Thus, we who believe on Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord are truly blessed.

Indeed, we who believe on Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord are truly blessed, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:16, 36)

Verses 76-79, ----- (Luke 1:76-79)

Zacharias continued in his words of praise and

prophecy given by God the Holy Ghost, by speaking things concerning his son John. Zacharias, most likely while looking at his infant son John, said, *And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

John would indeed be the prophet of the Highest, the prophet of the Lord Jesus Christ. John went before the Lord as His forerunner, to prepare people's hearts to sincerely repent of their sins and receive Jesus Christ by faith as their personal Savior and Lord.

The forgiveness of sins truly came upon the world by God's mercy in a big way when He sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem the world, for Jesus Christ IS the "dayspring from on high" – the Light of the world – who supplies true peace, the peace of heart that comes by knowing one's sins are fully forgiven for Jesus' sake and that everyone who is a believer has Jesus' perfect righteousness imputed to him or her by God.

John's mission and character are revealed to us in John 1:6-9, where we read, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Thus, when John grew up he did exactly what he was commissioned by God to do: he prepared people for Christ.

It's as John 1:19-31 relates, "this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that

prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water." Hence, John as an adult did exactly what he was sent to do: John prepared people's hearts and pointed them to Jesus Christ, the one true Savior.

Fellow Christians, we are so very blessed in that we are believers in Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, for Romans 5:1-2 declares, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Yes, Jesus Christ has opened heaven to us! We look forward in hope of the glory of God, knowing that we will one day be with the Lord forever in perfect bliss and happiness.

Verse 80, ----- (Luke 1:80)

Observe that the child John grew both physically and spiritually so that he was ready and well-fitted to accomplish his mission as the forerunner of Christ. John remained a desert-dweller until he began his public ministry.

This morning we've considered John the Baptist's

birth and Zacharias' words of praise and prophecy. We've seen the importance of John's birth and the work he would and later did accomplish. We've also seen the wonderful work the Savior – the Lord Jesus Christ – would and later did accomplish in that He has provided us with the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Let us therefore daily and sincerely repent of our sins. Let us place and keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. And, let us go forward never forgetting God's grace and mercy in His providing us with deliverance from never-ending doom, for 1 John 4:9-10 states, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." All thanks and praise be to our gracious God. Amen.

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