



Luke's Christmas Chronicles

December 2023

Luke 1:57-80 A Birth and a Blessing

(sermons: Dec 17)



Luke 1: 57-66 The Birth of John the Baptist

v.59 *to name him after his father – a common practice, or perhaps Zechariah himself had said this before he heard the angel's message*

v.62 *they made signs to his father – perhaps Zechariah had been made deaf as well as dumb*

v.63 *he wrote, "His name is John." – this showed Zechariah's acceptance of the angel's message, which he had previously doubted*

v.64 *his mouth was opened... – in accordance with the angel's words in v.20*

1. How did both Elizabeth and Zechariah show that they accepted the angel's message about their son? What was their reaction, and that of their friends and neighbours, to the birth?

Luke 1: 67-75 Zechariah's Song: Fulfilment of God's Promises

v.67 *filled with the Holy Spirit – another example of God being at work in every aspect of the births of John and of Jesus; as well as the rebirth of prophecy after 400 years since Malachi*

v.68 *Praise be to the Lord – or Blessed be the Lord: 'Benedictus' in Latin, giving the name to this song*

v.68 *he has come and has redeemed his people – Zechariah speaks as though these things have already happened to show his belief that the work God has begun in the birth of his son John will be brought to completion; the Old Testament prophets spoke about their future hope in this way.*

v.69 *a horn of salvation for us – a strong power that will bring salvation to us*

v.69 *in the house of his servant David – through a new King like David, and descended from him*

v.72 *to remember his holy covenant – God's commitment to his people, whose terms they had failed to keep, but which God was still going to fulfil in some way*

2. What is Zechariah's message for his people? What does he sound as if he expects God to do for them? Should we interpret some of these promises as referring to a spiritual kingdom?

Luke 1: 76-80 Zechariah's Song: The Child's Mission

v.76 *to prepare the way for him – John's role is to be getting people ready for the Messiah King, who will also be God's Presence amongst his people*

v.79 *to shine on those living in darkness – an echo of Isaiah 9:2, one Old Testament quotation of many*

v.80 *the child grew – similar words to those Luke uses for Jesus as a boy (Luke 2:40,52) but John went away from people out into the desert (perhaps when his elderly parents died? perhaps to one of the ascetic groups who lived out there?), whilst Jesus stayed with his family and neighbours*

3. What does Zechariah say about his son John's mission? How was it to be a fulfilment of God's promises? How was it to be similar to, but also different from, Jesus's mission?
4. Pick out one or two words or phrases from Zechariah's song that show you something new, or challenging: about John the Baptist and what he was called to do; or about the way that God works; or about how we should respond.