

## “John Is His Name”

### Luke 1:57-66

June 20, 2021

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- Remember that Elizabeth had “kept herself in seclusion” for the first five months of her pregnancy.

- She apparently had kept quiet.

- God used Elizabeth’s barrenness as an opportunity “to magnify His mercy.” This is about God.

- God is always merciful, but sometimes He desires to magnify it in 1 of 2 ways: 1. Usually through His providence or 2. Sometimes through a miracle. Here God removes Elizabeth’s barrenness.

- The social stigma is gone for blameless and righteous Elizabeth.

- With the birth everyone knows the great news and it’s a time for rejoicing.

- The birth of a baby boy in Israel was a very joyous occasion. As the time approached for the baby to be born, friends of the family and musicians would congregate near the home.

#### Luke 1:14

**14** “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

- “Joy demands fellowship.” - A.T. Robertson
- Are you a joy to the believers around you?

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- Mary is gone.

- Elizabeth gives birth, just as predicted.

#### Luke 1:13

**13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

- God is faithful to His promises.

#### 1 Kings 8:56

**56** "Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.

- God broke the silence of 400 years with a prophecy, and nine months later He fulfilled that prophecy.

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- “it happened that” is one of Luke’s favorite phrases and is used some 69 times in the Gospel.
- “they” - are the people who attended his circumcision. A custom – as many as 10 people.

#### **Circumcision**

**Gen 17:10-12,14**

10 "This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

11 "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.

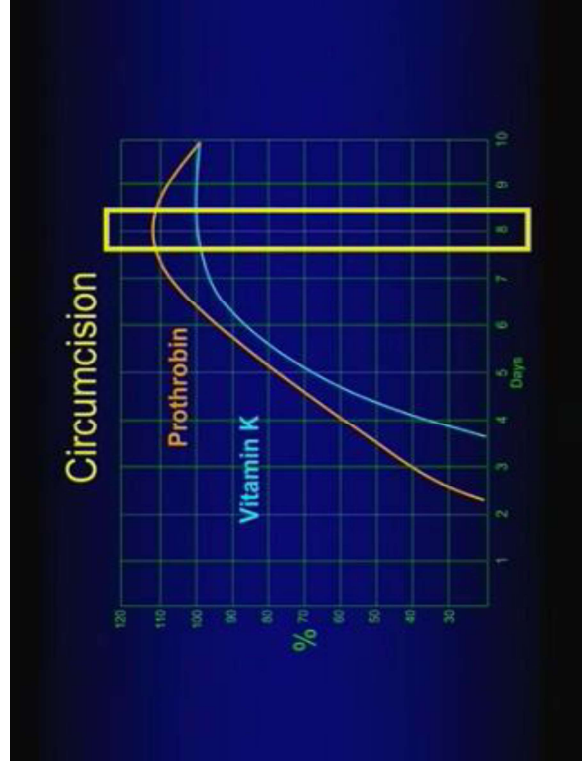
12 "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations,

14 "But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

- Circumcision was not done for salvation but for identity. It put you in a place where you could be saved and blessed.

**Prothrombin** is a protein produced by your liver. It is one of many factors in your blood that help it to clot appropriately.

- Both prothrombin and Vitamin K, used by the body for clotting, are at their highest on the 8<sup>th</sup> day.



- Two things here that indicate that Zacharias and Elizabeth followed the Abrahamic Covenant.

1. they recognized that circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. Circumcision was a sign that identified a person with Israel, the covenant people of God. This made a believer eligible for covenant blessings. Circumcising John joined him to the covenant promises of God.
2. they recognized that circumcision was to take place on the eighth day.

**Note:** Moses was circumcised on the eighth day and was named on the eighth day. Abraham’s name went from Abram to Abraham on the day that he was circumcised

#### **Phil 3:4-5**

- 4 If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:
- 5 circumcised the eighth day.

**59 And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.**

#### **Naming**

- The Romans usually named their child on the ninth day. That was Roman tradition. The Greeks did it on the seventh to the tenth day.
- “To this day, in Jewish tradition, practice, and custom, a male child is not named upon birth, but on the eighth day, which is the day of his circumcision.” - Arnold Fruchtenbaum
- In our culture we usually name a child for one of the following:
  - the name must “sound” right.
  - what are the popular names at the time.
  - match the name with the sex of the child
  - not have any unpleasant connotations.
  - use a relative’s name.

- In the culture of the O.T. and Israel, the name of a child was very significant. God sometimes changed the name of a person: 1. Abram to Abraham. 2. Sarai to Sarah. 3. Jacob to Israel.

- Sometimes God gave the name of the child before birth. Such is the case with both John and Jesus.

- Naming after the father was in keeping with Jewish tradition.

- It was normal for “they” to think the child would be named Zacharias or at least Zach, Jr.

#### **Ruth 4:16-17**

16 Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse.

17 The **neighbor women gave him a name**, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" So **they** named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

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### **Can't you just hear the conversation –**

**Elizabeth:** 'No. His name is not going to be Zechariah. His name is going to be John.'

**"They":** 'Elizabeth, there is nobody in your family named John! Nobody! You can go back twenty generations and there's nobody named John. You don't have any cousins named John. Your father is not named John. Your husband's father is not named John. There are no John's in your family!'

**60 But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."**

**61 And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name."**

- Elizabeth's response: "Absolutely not." "No way, Hosea" "Over my dead body."
- Elizabeth is answering negatively about as forcefully as one can in Greek. She is holding her ground, putting her foot down, drawing a line in the sand.
- Elizabeth was having to stand against Jewish cultural pressure to name the child after the father. That wasn't an easy thing to do.
- They could not accept her decision. They are protesting.
- There is nothing wrong with the name John. There is the John who wrote the Gospel of John, there is John the elder, and other John's in the NT. It was a common name. But it was not a common name in this family. The name John means "YHWH has been gracious."

- Why was the naming of the child so important, and so emotional?
- Why would Luke bother to include the account of a family argument over the name of a child?
- It is only in Luke's Gospel that the birth of John is recorded.
- It is only in Matthew and Luke that any events in the early life of these two boys is recorded. Why, then, when there is so much that could have been reported about the early life of these two men, is this account selected by the author?

### **Expectations and Disappointments**

- The naming of the son after his father implied that this child would "walk in the steps of his father," that he would carry on the father's name, and thus his work as well.
- He would have been expected to grow up as a priest, just like his father. He would have carried out his priestly duties, learning how to do things, just like his dad did them.
- This is the reason for the name John.
- The friends, neighbors, and relatives, viewed Elizabeth's insistence that the boy be named John as a renouncing of the family, its work, and its perpetuation through the next generation.
- Obedience to God often involves "going against the grain", "swimming against the current", going against what the rest of the fallen world is doing or believing. God is saying, "John will be different – different name, different walk in life, different life-style, different mission. He is just going to be different."
- Who John was and his calling could not be explained by his being the child of his parents. He was different from them in nearly every way.

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- So let's turn to the father – "What do you say?"
- After all, it was the father who named the child.
- They may have thought that Elizabeth picked the name because Zacharias was mute.
- Zacharias puts "John" in the emphatic, "John is his name." – puts the name up front for emphasis.
- For nine months he had to write everything.
- And he asked for a tablet - The writing tablet requested by Zacharias would have been a wooden tablet covered with wax.
- He would have a sharp object like a stick or a stone in which he could write on the wax. Then he could rub the wax again and rub it out. It would be something that could be used again and again. Original "Etch-A-Sketch."
- The fact that Zacharias confirms his name as John shows that he now believed all that the angel had told him in the Temple that day, and that his son would serve in the role of being the forerunner of the Messiah who would turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord.
- Even though he had failed before, God gave Zacharias a second chance.
- **"they were astonished"** - Tradition is a strong force in the lives of people.

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• This is the fulfillment of Luke 1:20 -

### Luke 1:20

20 "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

• **Note:** This did not happen at the birth of John but at his circumcision.

• God waited until Zachariah declared his belief in the promises of God's Word.

• We walk by faith and not by sight. Zachariah wanted to see a sign. Now he demonstrates his faith.

• Do we doubt God's Word? Is God waiting for us to trust Him? The world says: "Show me and I'll believe."

God says: "Believe me and I'll show you."

• The first thing coming out of his mouth was praise.

• His mouth was closed in doubt, it was opened in praise.

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• When God moves in dramatic fashion, we are jolted by what He does. We have a certain sense of insecurity: What does this mean? What will He do next?

### Acts 2:43

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

### Acts 5:11

11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.  
• "being talked about" -

if this occurred today, we might say -

"People were 'liking', 'sharing', and 'posting' all these things on Facebook or the things that were happening to Zacharias and Elizabeth were the 'trending' items on Twitter."

• "all these matters" - what were they talking about -

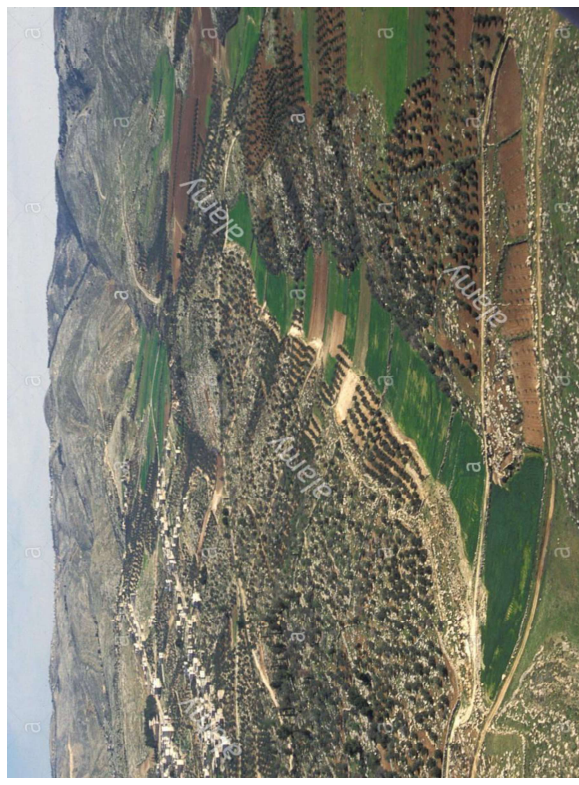
• the strange day at the temple when Zacharias went in to offer incense on the altar and how he delayed because of the appearance of Gabriel and when he finally came out he was unable to speak.

• how his wife Elizabeth, a woman barren from youth and now old had become pregnant and borne a son.

• the unnatural name she gave this son, John, and how when pressed, the father also said, "John is his name."

• the sudden ability of Zacharias to speak.

• whatever Zacharias spoke in praise to God



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"mind" – νοῦς – heart – seat of reflection.

### Luke 2:18-19

18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

• **"them"** – a miracle conception, a miracle birth, a miracle name, a miracle healing.

• What is God going to do with this child? What is God's plan for his life? How will God use Him?

• "All we know is that God is up to something."

• **Think about it:** We need to ask of ourselves, "what will we become?" What is God up to in our lives?

• What we will be tomorrow is being determined by what we do today.

• Don't let the cares of this world take your focus away from becoming like Jesus Christ.

"God's hand that holds the ocean's depths

Can hold my small affairs;

His hand that guides the universe,

Can carry all my cares."