

Luke 1:57-80

NIV Harmony 34-35; Compassionate 26-30

Introduction

1. How did you get your name?
 - a. My father's name was Joseph Lyman Bryan, Jr.
 - b. My parents debated about giving me my father's name but decided on William Joseph Lyman Bryan.
 - c. I named my firstborn son Joseph Lyman Bryan.
 - d. Family names are important and choosing a name can have an impact on the child receiving it throughout his/her lifetime.
 - e. In this lesson we consider the birth and naming of John the Baptist.
2. **Read Luke 1:57-80.**

A. John's Birth and Dedication (57-66)

1. John's Birth (57-58)
 - a. Elizabeth's pregnancy came to full term as she birthed her baby boy. (57)
 - b. Everyone, neighbors and relatives alike, rejoiced at the news of his birth. (58)
 - 1) They knew God had shown great "mercy" (Gk., *eleos*) to Elizabeth and Zechariah. (58a)
 - 2) As we would expect, ". . . they shared her joy (Gk., *sunechairon aute*)."
2. John's Dedication (59-66)
 - a. According to the Law, a Jewish male was to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth. (59a)
 - 1) Circumcision was the mark of the covenant (cf., Gen 17:12-14; 21:4; Lev 12:3).
 - 2) Jesus would also experience this event after His birth (cf., Lk 2:22ff).
 - b. Part of the process of circumcision included giving the child a name. (59b)
 - c. Everyone assumed the baby would receive a family name from the line of Zechariah. Perhaps some even suggested naming him Zechariah after his father since he was a miracle baby.
 - 1) However, Elizabeth interrupted by stating that his name would be John (60).
 - 2) Those present could not believe this since John was not a family name (61).
 - d. They asked Zechariah for his decision (62-63).
 - 1) Zechariah still could not speak/hear due to his unbelief at Gabriel's announcement (cf., Lk 1:20).
 - 2) They made signs to Zechariah, and he wrote out his answer, "His name is John" (63b).
 - e. With this affirmation of the angel's announcement, John's speech/hearing was restored (64).
 - 1) The first thing John did was to praise God.
 - 2) All of his neighbors were filled with "awe" (Gk., *phobos*) at the miraculous return of his speech/hearing.
 - f. This miracle-baby's birth and name became the talk of the region.
 - 1) The name John means "Yahweh is gracious."
 - 2) Many people wondered if he might be the long-awaited Messiah or at least His forerunner.
 - 3) They knew that the Lord was with John and had great expectations for his life and ministry.

B. Zechariah's Song (67-80)

1. As Elizabeth had been Holy Spirit filled in giving her blessing to Mary and Jesus (cf., Lk 1:41-45), so Zechariah was now ". . . filled with the Holy Spirit" (67).
2. Charles Erdman writes, ". . . here was no hesitation, no uncertainty, no question in his mind, for this name had been predicted by the angel, and Zacharias showed by his decision and firmness that he believed absolutely in the fulfillment of all that the angel had promised concerning the career of the son who was to be regarded by his fellow men as a gift of divine grace and a prophet of divine appointment" (Charles Erdman, *Gospel of Luke*, 29).

3. Zechariah's silence was now broken with a beautiful song known as the *Benedictus*.
 - a. The title *Benedictus*, comes from the first word of Zechariah's "Praise" which in Latin is *Benedictus* which means "a good saying; blessing"
 - b. G Campbell Morgan notes, "We have already heard two songs that broke forth in connection with this marvelous event in human history, the coming of God's Son as son of man. We listened first of all to Elisabeth's Beatitude. Then we heard Mary's answering Magnificat. Now we come to the third of these songs; the Benedictus of Zacharias. Mary celebrated God in adoration. Zacharias adores God in celebration. . . . The songs are complementary; the one precedes the other. . . . this song is not in adoration of the God Who acts, but in celebration of the acts of God. . . . The theme of the song is salvation, and salvation is the activity of the grace of God" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 30).
4. Zechariah's song of praise to God is best heard in at least three parts. (68-75)
 - a. Praise to God for His Past Action (68-75) – Zechariah celebrated the past action of God to save His people through the Old Covenant.
 - 1) In vv. 68-70 Zechariah praised God who has "redeemed" (Gk., *lutrosin*) Israel and who "raised up" (Isa 53:13) "a horn of salvation" in the heir of King David.
 - a) Zechariah also knows that the long-awaited Messiah is on the way (69).
 - b) Warren Wiersbe notes, "The word *redeem* means 'to set free by paying a price.' It can refer to the releasing of a prisoner or the liberating of a slave. Jesus came to earth to bring deliverance to the captives' (Luke 4:18), salvation to people in bondage to sin and death" (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate*, 27).
 - c) God's power is on display as He fulfills in Jesus His covenant promise to David which was given by His prophet Nathan long ago (v. 70, cf., 2 Sam 7:11-16).
 - 2) In vv. 70-73 Zechariah praised God for sending salvation from "enemies . . . and all who hate us" in prophetic fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham (cf., Ge 12:3).
 - 3) In vv. 74-75 Zechariah praised God for the result of God's salvation from Israel's enemies. They are delivered so that they are free from "fear" (Gk., *aphobos*) and enabled by God to serve Him "in holiness and righteousness" (Gk., *osioteti kai diaiosune*) forevermore.
 - b. Praise to God for His Future Action through John (76-77)
 - 1) The verbs at this point move from the past tense of God's action to the future tense of His action in vv. 76-79.
 - 2) Zechariah praised God as he addressed his son, who will be a prophet "of the Most High" (cf., Lk 1:15-17) with the important mission of announcing God's "salvation" and "forgiveness of their sins."
 - 3) Mark records, "And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4).
 - c. Praise to God for His Future Action through Messiah (78-79)
 - 1) Zechariah linked the ministry of John to that of the Messiah who will bring the climax of God's promise of salvation for all people.
 - 2) Messiah will be a minister of God's "tender mercy" (Gk., *splagchna eleous*) to His people. (78)
 - a) The word *splagchna* literally means "bowels, guts" but it points to a depth of emotion for others expressed as compassion.
 - b) It is a word often used in the Gospels to describe Jesus' response of compassion in His ministry to the needs of people (cf., Mt 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 18:27, 20:34; Mk 1:41, 5:19, 6:34, 8:2, 9:22; Lk 7:13-15, 10:33, 15:20).
 - 3) Messiah will be God's "rising sun" (Gk., *episkepsetai*) from heaven. In the KJV the word here is "Dayspring" which means "sun rise."
 - 4) He will be a minister of God's "peace" (Gk., *eirenes*; Hb., *shalom*) and will ". . . shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death" (cf., Jn 1:4-9, Isa 9:2, 42:6).

5. Morgan gives an important insight about the personal nature of Zechariah's praise. ". . . he was thinking of his boy; he was thinking of himself; he was thinking of his wife; for the meaning of all the names is there The boy's name is John, which means the grace of God. His name was Zacharias, which means, God will remember. His wife's name was Elisabeth, which means, the oath of God. 'To sow mercy,' John's name, the grace of God; 'To remember His holy covenant,' his own name, God remembers; 'the oath which He sware (*sic*) unto Abraham' his wife's name, the oath of God" (Morgan, 31).
6. The early life of John the Baptist
 - a. John the Baptist ". . .grew (Gk., *euksanen*) and became strong in spirit (Gk., *ekrataiouto pneumati*)" (80a). – See Lk 2:52 for a similar description of Jesus' growth.
 - b. "He lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel" (80b) – See Mt 3:1ff, Mk 1:4ff, Lk 3:1ff regarding the beginning of John's public ministry.
 - c. The people would wait thirty years for John's ministry to begin, and what a ministry it would be!
 - d. Morgan concludes, "The herald is prepared; and in the song of Zacharias the progress of God on His pathway out of the old and into the new is celebrated" (Morgan, 33).

C. Questions/Thoughts for Reflection

1. What good news has caused you, your relatives, and your neighbors to rejoice? Have you rejoiced with your relatives and neighbors over the good news of Jesus?
2. What great potential every child has. We must do our part not only to rejoice over a child's birth but also to help him/her to grow and develop a relationship with the Lord and find his/her place in God's kingdom service.
3. What praise do you have in your heart for the goodness of God to you? Let your praise be not only in your heart but also upon your lips to God and those around you in all that you say and do.
4. The results of our salvation victory in Jesus are holiness and righteousness, that is sanctity and service.
 - a. What does this mean to you personally?
 - b. What does it look like as you live it out in your life?