

A GIFT TOO WONDERFUL FOR WORDS

“Christmas: When God Came Downstairs with a Baby in His Arms”

Study Number Three – The Birth of John the Baptist – Luke 1:5-80

The Word of God in a lot of places exhorts us to humility. Peter says:

1 Peter 5:5

Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility to serve one another, for God is resisting the proud but He’s giving grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

We read in Philippians:

Philippians 2:3-4

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others.

In Romans, as Paul is challenging the Roman Christians, he

says:

Romans 12:3

Don't cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

Humility is to make a right estimate of one's self.
(source unknown)

One poet put it very clearly when he said:

I have the cutest ego
It's important neat and prim.
He thinks he's fine and dandy,
No other quite like him.

He's always making excuses
for all that I do wrong,
He never blames me any
But flatters me along.

He knows just why I blunder,
He sees the whole thing through,
So kind and very tender,
To me but not to you.

Today I got to see him,
His camouflage was thin.
A boastful evil fellow
Coal black and vile as sin.

No longer I'll protect him,
I'll bring him to the light.
He is a mean deceiver,
His judgment is not right.

If you by chance should spy him,
Just rap him on the head.
'Twill do me good, for really,
That fellow should be dead.
(source unknown)

And another writer, speaking on the whole subject of felling oftentimes that we are more important than we really are, says:

Sometimes when you're feeling important,
Sometimes when your ego's way up,
Sometime when you take it for granted
That you are the prize-winning pup.
Sometime when you feel that your absence
Would leave an unfillable hole,
Just follow these simple instructions
And see how it humbles your soul:

Take a bucket and fill it with water,
Put your hand in it up to your wrist,
Now pull it out fast and the hole that remains
Is the measure of how you'll be missed.

You may splash all you please as you enter,
And stir up the water galore,
But stop and you'll find in a minute
It's back where it was before.
(source unknown)

Probably one man who epitomizes humility and the one man born greatest of women is John the Baptist. He was a man who knew that his role through life was secondary and he accepted it, and performed it very, very successfully.

In John 3, when he is interviewed by several of the disciples because there are more following Jesus than him, John tells them that he is the voice. He is not the bridegroom. He is the friend of the bride and his joy is fulfilled in the success of Jesus Christ. (see John 3:26-30)

One of the most subtle instruments that Satan uses to perpetrate upon mankind his desires is the instrument of **PRIDE**.

1. He will use pride to **KEEP US OUT OF THE FAMILY OF GOD** by causing us to believe that we can do it on our own. And to admit need would certainly be a lack of pride.

2. When we become part of the family of God, we then find him having a desire through pride causing us to do it our way, rather than the Lord's way. We remain CHILDISH AND CARNAL.

3. There is another group among us and this is a group of super spiritual saints who have lived with the Lord for so long they are no longer teachable. They have pride over the level of their SPIRITUAL MATURITY. And oftentimes we hear them say, "That sermon sure was for somebody else," or "You're too basic. I need more of the meat of the Word." And invariably these people are just as vulnerable to pride as are the rest.

Now as we look at the birth of John the Baptist in this beautiful passage that comes under consideration, let's meet the parents. They are in verses 5-7.

I. Introduction of the Parents — vv. 5-7

v. 5 There was in the days of Herod, King of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

"There was in the days of Herod, King of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth."

1. ZACHARIAS—Now this is a beautiful, compatible, godly, religious marriage. Zacharias is a priest. That means that he's

of the tribe of Levi. He is of one of the 24 sections called “Abijah.”

In David’s time he divided the priesthood into twenty-four sections and Zacharias served in the section called “Abijah.”

2. ELIZABETH—He married Elizabeth, who is one of the “daughters of Aaron,” a very religious line.

It’s interesting how their names blend together.

“Zacharias” means “God remembers.”

“Elizabeth” means “His oath.”

Put them together—“God remembers His oath.” That is beautiful. And when we put that together that’s exactly what’s going to happen in this passage.

In Psalms the Lord says:

Psalm 89:33-34

My covenant I will not violate
nor will I alter the utterance of my lips.
Once I have sworn by my holiness,
I will not lie to David.

**v. 6 And they were both righteous in the sight of God,
ordering their lives blamelessly in all the**

commandments and requirements of the Lord.

“And they were both righteous in the sight of God, ordering their lives blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”

Man looks on the outward appearance, doesn't he? God looks on the heart. And as God looks down, He sees these two people—we can call them Zach and Liz for short—He looks at Zach and Liz and they are “righteous.” They're godly people.

They read the Word and then they're careful to be obedient to the Word. So we've got a beautiful couple that is stepping onto center stage here.

But there is a problem in their family. And that problem is in verse 7.

v. 7 And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both had gone far in their days.

“And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both had gone far in their days.”

In other words, they're older. They've gotten up in years. They probably, if they were living in our day, would already be retired.

“they had no children”—Elizabeth is like Sarah, like Rachel, like Rebekah.

Remember Rachel in Genesis 30 said to Jacob, after waiting all these years:

Genesis 30:1

... “Give me children, or I die!”

It was a desire, of course, of the woman, to have a child and have that child to be a male child so that the name could be passed on. Elizabeth is barren.

And it says, “they had both gone far in their days.” That means they’ve lived quite a while.

Zach and Liz could probably tell us time has made a mess of them. They’ve gotten on in years and they have a trial, and there aren’t any children yet.

Now Gabriel is going to visit Zacharias—verses 8-23. That’s the second part of our story. We’re going to meet some beautiful people and see some wonderful things happen in this message.

II. Gabriel Visits Zacharias — vv. 8-23

v. 8 Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,

“Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,”

Okay, he’s got a responsibility. These 24 divisions had two week periods of service in the temple each year. And those two week services were designed so that these men came and functioned at that time and then got to be off during the rest of time. So it’s time for them to be there as he serves his two week tour of duty.

v. 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot when he entered into the temple of the Lord to burn incense.

“according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot when he entered into the temple of the Lord to burn incense.”

Now some of the guys got to choose and when they chose, if their number came up, they got to serve the incense on the altar.

To get a picture of the Tabernacle in our story, when they come into the main outer court, they have the burnt offering—the place of the sacrifice, the laver, and then they go into the holy place. Over here on the left is the seven-branch candlestick, on the right is the table of showbread, and right in front is this altar—the altar of incense—the place of prayer.

Right behind that is the veil that separates the Holy of holies,

where the Ark of the Covenant is located. He's coming in to offer the altar of incense at three in the afternoon, the normal evening time of sacrifice.

v. 10 And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the burning of the incense.

“And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the burning of the incense.”

v. 11 Now there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

“Now there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.”

Here he is, he just comes in and gets ready, all of a sudden there is Gabriel standing right there.

Now there's significance in that. For 400 years the Lord has been silent. He hasn't spoken to anybody for 400 years. Malachi was the last prophet. This is the first time that God has spoken since that last prophet spoke in the Old Testament. This is God now speaking for the first time. He comes to Zacharias here.

v. 12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

“And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell

upon him.”

When the supernatural touches the natural, we always get scared. That’s why people have a real fear about dying. Because they know they’re going to touch the supernatural pretty quick and they don’t know whether they’re ready or not and they’re just scared to death.

And here Zach is too. He just about falls out here. He’s frightened and fear falls on him.

v. 13 But the angel said to him, “Stop fearing Zacharias, because your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

“But the angel said to him, ‘Stop fearing Zacharias, because your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.’”

“Zach, don’t get shook. I’ve brought you the answer. You’ve been praying all these years to have a child and you’re going to have one!”

In Genesis 25:21 Isaac prayed with his wife Rebekah, because she was barren for twenty years. And then God answered and gave them twins—Jacob and Esau.

Being a religious couple, many times this couple was by their bed praying about this very personal need of being able to

have a child. It could have been, since this was the chance, to have the altar of incense and the lot fell on him that he was actually praying this right now. Because he was not only praying for the multitude, he was praying for his own personal needs.

And as he stands there, maybe those very words are coming out of your mouth. “Your petition has been heard! Guess what? You got a yes! Your wife Elizabeth’s going to bear you a son. You shall call his name John.”

Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity, right? His delays are not His denials.

v. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will be rejoicing at his birth.

“And you will have joy and gladness, and many will be rejoicing at his birth.”

That message has FIVE PARTS:

1. “your petition has been heard,”
2. “your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,”
3. “you’ll call his name John,”
4. “you will have joy and gladness,” and

5. “many will be rejoicing at his birth.”

v. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb.

“For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet he in his mother’s womb.”

Does that make him sort of a special person because he doesn’t do any of those things?

Well, he’s taking the Nazarite vow. Samson was a Nazarite too. They didn’t cut their hair, didn’t touch dead bodies, didn’t take strong drink, and there were several other things that were involved in the Nazarite vow.

John is going to be one of those people set apart for a very special purpose. When John is finally martyred for the cause of Christ in Matthew 11, Jesus said about this man that there was no man who was ever born greater of a woman, that has ever risen greater than John the Baptist.

v. 16 And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.

“And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.”

v. 17 And he will go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; to prepare for the Lord a people having been made ready.”

“And he will go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children,”—he’s going to have a fabulous ministry—“and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; to prepare for the Lord a people having been made ready.””

He’s getting everybody ready for the coming of the Lord.

Now he isn’t the Lord. His is a secondary role. He is going to have a very specific ministry of preparing people to meet the Lord.

Amos 4:12

Prepare to meet your God.

Isaiah 40 says:

Isaiah 40:3

There will be a voice calling, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness and make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.”

That's predicting 750 years before Christ that this John was going to come.

Malachi 3:1, the last prophecy says:

Malachi 3:1

Behold, I am going to send my messenger and he will clear the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. ...

v. 18 And Zacharias said to the angel: “Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife has advanced in her days.”

“And Zacharias said to the angel: ‘Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife has advanced in her days.’”

Now it's one thing to stand up here and preach it and it's another thing to believe it. Right? He's a priest. Of all people who should have known the biblical record and known of God's sovereign, supernatural intervention in human history, it should have been old Zach here.

And yet, just like we do sometimes when the Lord answers our prayers, “How am I going to know this? Rules. We can't have kids.”

Invariably a lot of times we just think that God can only use

natural means to meet our needs, right? And so we have it all figured out.

Now he had prayed often, “Oh God give me a son!” And now God says, “I’m going to give you a son.” He says, “How shall I know? We’re old and there’s no way Jose. We aren’t going to make it. This is a bad situation we’ve got here. I don’t believe you. People as old as we are do not become parents.”

Skepticism, with regard to the promises of God, right? In Genesis 18 God says to Abraham, “You’re going to have a baby this next year. Sarah’s going to have a child.” And it says Sara laughed in the tent.

The Lord said, “Why did Sarah laugh?” Sara said, “I didn’t laugh!” The Lord said, “You did too.” (see Genesis 18:9-15)

You know it never says in the Bible that Sarah did not stagger in unbelieve. It only says that Abraham did. Sarah was beyond her ability. She’d already passed the years of being able to bear children, so it’s going to have to be supernatural in her case and she just laughed.

Zacharias is kind of like that. If it’s going to be explained, it has to be explained in natural terms. And this just can’t happen. Notice verse 19.

v. 19 And the angel answering said to him: “I am Gabriel, the one who stands before God; and I was sent to speak to you and to bring to you this good

news.

“And the angel answering said to him: ‘I am Gabriel, and I stand before God; and I was sent to speak to you and to bring to you this good news.’”

“I didn’t expect this kind of reception Zach from you, a godly, religious leader in the land. I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and He has sent me down here to tell you this good news.”

v. 20 And behold you shall be silent and not able to speak until the day these things come to be, because you believed not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”

“And behold you shall be silent and not able to speak until the day these things come to be, because you believed not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.””

Having great difficulty in silence, trying to be able to be vocal.

“You didn’t have faith. You didn’t trust me. You’ve used your tongue in the wrong way so now you’re not going to be able to use it for a while.”

That’s tough.

“because you believed not my words,”—look at that next phrase—“which shall be fulfilled in their season.”

God never makes a promise but He intends to fulfill it.

Hebrews 11:1

Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please him,

Hebrews 11:6

for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

We can't see it all, but God says, "Put your faith and trust in Me! I'll take care of the whole thing!"

Everything He's promised He will fulfill in their season.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He will make all things beautiful in His time.

Galatians 4:4

When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son.

v. 21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple.

“And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple.”

Why was he tarrying in there for? He was embarrassed. He had to come out and tell this crowd that he had finished and lead them in a benediction and a blessing, and he couldn't do it. He couldn't talk. He had to come out and tell the guys sorry, no sermon today.

“No words can I speak.” And of course it's embarrassing to him.

v. 22 But when he came out, he was not able to speak to them; and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he continued beckoning them (making signs), and he remained dumb.

“But when he came out, he was not able to speak to them; and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he continued beckoning them (making signs), and he remained dumb.”

v. 23 And it came to be when the days of his ministry were fulfilled, he went to his house.

“And it came to be when the days of his ministry were fulfilled, he went to his house.”

After his two-week tour of duty in the temple, he went back home again. And isn't that interesting? After he goes back

home again, Elizabeth gets pregnant, and that's the next point in the story.

Just like God said it was going to happen!

III. Elizabeth Is Pregnant — vv. 24-25

v. 24 Now after these days, Elizabeth his wife conceived and hid herself five months, saying,

“Now after these days, Elizabeth his wife conceived and hid herself five months, saying,”

v. 25 “For in this way the Lord has dealt with me in days wherein He looked upon [me] to take away my reproach among men.”

“For in this way the Lord has dealt with me in days wherein He looked upon [me] to take away my reproach among men.”

The Lord always does exactly what He says He will do! He will be faithful!

2 Chronicles 16:9

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him.

And just like He said, Elizabeth conceives, even in her old age.

Now that brings us to the fourth part of the story. Gabriel is now going to visit Mary.

Notice the angel is not sent to Joseph. Now the angel was sent to Zacharias because he was going to be involved in that situation with Elizabeth. And we're going to see Zach with the baby in his arms here at the end of this story, pronouncing blessing upon their child.

But Mary is the only one that figures into this thing. Whereas he visited a man in Jerusalem, he is now going to visit a woman in Galilee—the city of Nazareth—because she's the only one involved in what's about to take place.

IV. Gabriel Visits Mary — vv. 26-38

v. 26 Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, the name Nazareth,

“Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, the name Nazareth,”

“Where it says it's been six months since Elizabeth has conceived, I want you to go down and talk to Mary. She's a virgin who lives in the city of Nazareth, up in Galilee in the north.”

v. 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was

Joseph, of the house of David; and the name of the virgin, Mary.

“to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the name of the virgin is Mary.”

v. 28 And coming in, he said to her, “Hail! You who have been endued with grace, the Lord is with you.”

“And coming in, he said to her, ‘Hail! You who have been endued with grace, the Lord is with you.’”

And just exactly like Zacharias had done, Mary gets scared too.

v. 29 Now she was greatly troubled at the saying and was considering of what sort a greeting this might be.

“Now she was greatly troubled at the saying and was considering of what sort a greeting this might be.”

v. 30 And the angel said to her, “Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God.

“And the angel said to her, ‘Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God.’”

v. 31 And behold you will conceive in your womb, and you will bring forth a son, and you will call His

name Jesus.

“Behold you will conceive in your womb, and you will bring forth a son, and you will call His name Jesus.”

“Elizabeth, you’ll call yours John, but Mary you’re going to call the name of your child Jesus.”

v. 32 This one shall be great and He shall be called Son of [the] Most High; and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David.

“This one shall be great and He shall be called Son of [the] Most High; and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David.”

Remember he said about John, “He’s going to be great.”

But Jesus is going to be great too! He’s going to be the “Son of the Most High.”

v. 33 And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and to his kingdom there shall be no end.”

“And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and to his kingdom there shall be no end.”

It’s an eternal kingdom. Christ coming to sit upon the throne of His father David is yet future and is a literal happening, yet will take place and probably very soon.

v. 34 But Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be since I am not knowing a man?”

“But Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be since I am not knowing a man?’”

Now what’s the difference between verse 34 and Zach’s response back up in verse 18?

She’s only asking a question, “How?” She does not doubt in one way that this in fact is going to happen. This is not a statement of unbelief. It is a question of how.

She’s saying to Gabriel, “Gabriel, I’ve never been with a man. I’ve never had a physical experience. How is this going to come about since this is true, that I’m going to have a child?”

v. 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; wherefore also the one begotten shall be called holy, the Son of God.

“And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; wherefore also the one begotten shall be called holy, the Son of God.”

v. 36 And behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman she also

has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month to her, the one called barren.

“And behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman she also has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month to her, the one called barren.”

Here’s our KEY VERSE. This is the most precious verse in today’s exposition—verse 37.

v. 37 For no word from God shall be impossible.”

“For no word from God shall be impossible.”

Isn’t that beautiful?

“Look, since I’m sent from God and I’m telling you this is going to happen, Mary, you don’t have to worry. How it’s going to happen is really secondary. It’s just going to happen, because with God nothing is impossible.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is the one who calls you, who also will bring it to pass.

Jeremiah 32:27

Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is anything too difficult for me?

Nothing at all.

v. 38 Now Mary said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

“Now Mary said,”

“I really appreciate you thinking about me, but why don’t you see if you can get somebody else.” Is that what she said?

We know she had a lot to think about. She’s engaged. This is going to interrupt her plans for marriage. She will have to face the stigma and the onslaught of people saying things behind her back that aren’t true.

No, she says:

“Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to your word.”

“Do whatever you have to do.”

“And the angel departed from her.”

Mary immediately goes to visit Elizabeth in the next verses.

Mary takes a little trip from Nazareth all the way down south to a little village there close to Jerusalem where Zach and Liz

live. And so she immediately takes this trip because she wants to be with her.

V. Mary Visits Elizabeth — vv. 39-56

v. 39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah.

“Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah.”

v. 40 And she went into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

“And she went into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.”

Why in the world didn't she greet Zach? Then we realizes he couldn't greet back. For six months he has to sit around and listen to the ladies talk. He hasn't been able to say anything. There wouldn't be anything to say to him anyway, so she immediately greets Elizabeth. She's the only one who can talk back to her.

v. 41 And it came to be when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

“And it came to be when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with

the Holy Spirit.”

v. 42 And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

“And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said: ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’”

v. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

“And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

v. 44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby in my womb leaped in exultation.

“For behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby in my womb leaped in exultation.”

Just as Jacob and Esau wrestled within the womb of Rebekah before they were born, so this child prenatal leaps with joy and ecstasy at the words that Mary is there and she too is going to have a child.

Here these guys come and say, “You know what? Statistics tell us you’re losing John. Jesus has got a lot more people following Him than you.” What does he say?

John 3:9

The one having the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, the one who stands expectant and hears him, with joy is rejoicing because of the voice of the bridegroom. This, therefore, my joy has been fulfilled.

He realized who he was even before he was born. He knew he was only a voice crying in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord. But he accepted that. He was willing to play that role because service, whether it's first or secondary in the eyes of God, makes no difference—or in the eyes of man. In the eyes of God, all service is the same. It's been faithful in what God has given us to do.

v. 45 And blessed is she who believed, for it shall be completed, the things having been spoken to her by the Lord.”

“And blessed is she who believed,”— she believed—“for it shall be completed, the things having been spoken to her by the Lord.””

“Maybe the reason you're different from Zach is you believe this and it's going to be accomplished just like the Lord said it's going to be. For no word from God shall be impossible.”

v. 46 And Mary said: “My soul is magnifying the Lord.

“And Mary said: ‘My soul is magnifying the Lord.’”

There’s our second beautiful verse. Can we say today our “soul is magnifying the Lord” as we sit here studying the Word?

v. 47 And my spirit rejoiced in God my Savior.

“And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

Are we excited, rejoicing in the Lord?

Elizabeth and Mary had faith and Zacharias didn’t. Elizabeth is old and Mary is young. And here they sit, two women on the opposite ends of life’s pole, discussing these beautiful things that God has permitted. And Mary just says, “my soul is magnifying the Lord and I’m rejoicing in God my Savior.”

Mary is not sinless is she? She needs a Savior too and she’s giving birth to her own Savior.

v. 48 For He looked upon the low estate of His handmaid; for behold, from now all generations shall call me blessed.

“For He looked upon the low estate of His handmaid; for behold, from now all generations shall call me blessed.”

Oftentimes we say women brought sin into the world in the Garden of Eden. We forget to realize that woman was the instrument that God used to bring the Savior into the world.

v. 49 For the Mighty One did great things for me, and holy is His name.

“For the Mighty One did great things for me, and holy is His name.”

Psalm 48:1

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.

v. 50 And His mercy is from generation to generation to the ones fearing Him.

“And His mercy is from generation to generation to the ones who are fearing Him.”

v. 51 He showed strength in His arm. He scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

“He showed strength in His arm. He scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.”

v. 52 He tore down princes from their thrones and exalted them of low estate.

“He tore down princes from their thrones and exalted them of low estate.”

He could have come as a prince. He comes to one of humbled

and low estate.

v. 53 The hungry ones He filled with good, and the rich ones He sent away empty.

“The hungry ones He filled with good, and the rich ones He sent away empty.”

v. 54 And He helped Israel His servant, that He might remember mercy,

“And He helped Israel His servant, that He might remember mercy,”

v. 55 even as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever.”

“even as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever.”

She speaks of Abraham. She remembers what happened to Sarah. She’s just a young lady but she knows enough about the Word of God to know that if God did it for Sarah, He can do it for Mary.

And He had some special purpose in all of this. And verse 56 tells us that:

v. 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned unto her house.

“Mary remained with her about three months and returned unto her house.”

Now if we put that all together, we realize that she’s just about ready to go into labor. She’s at the point of birth when Mary leaves. Mary is three months pregnant and so she’s heading back home again to a place of refuge and security in anticipation of what’s going to happen in six months.

Elizabeth is now at that point of giving birth. And so our last verses are the record of the birth of John the Baptist.

VI. The Birth of John — vv. 57-80

v. 57 Now Elizabeth’s time was fulfilled to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

“Now Elizabeth’s time was fulfilled to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.”

Did the Lord say it? He said, “Stop fearing Zach. You’re going to be a daddy. You’re going to have a little child and about this time next year that little child is going to be born and his name will be John.”

And sure enough, just like the Lord said, it happened.

Alright, and when babies are born the neighbors and everybody gets all excited, don’t they?

v. 58 And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord magnified His mercy towards her, and they were rejoicing with her.

“And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord magnified His mercy towards her, and they were rejoicing with her.”

v. 59 And it came to be on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him by the name of his father, Zacharias.

“And it came to be on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child,”—this was part of Jewish tradition—“and they were going to call him by the name of his father, Zacharias.”

This is critical right here.

“on the eighth day”—they always gave the name of the child. They had eight days to figure out what they were going to name the kid, and then they made it public on the eighth day when this took place.

And they’re figuring since Zach hadn’t had any kid, this is Zach, Jr.. And that’s exactly what they had in their minds. Men have to have Junior—especially if it’s a boy.

v. 60 And his mother answered and said: “No indeed,

but he shall be called John.”

“And his mother answered and said: ‘No indeed, but he shall be called John.’”

v. 61 And they said to her, “There is none of your relatives called by this name.”

“And they said to her, “There is none of your relatives called by this name.””

v. 62 And they were making signs to his father, as to what he might desire him to be called.

“And they were making signs to his father, as to what he might desire to have him be called.”

He had nine and a half months of silence to get him to shape up on this one.

“they were making signs” to him and wanted to know.

v. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and he wrote, saying, “John is his name”; and they all marvelled.

“And he asked for a writing tablet, and he wrote, saying, ‘John is his name’; and they all marvelled.”

v. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he was speaking, blessing God.

“And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he was speaking, blessing the Lord.”

The act of obedience when it's finely done, the Lord restores him to be able to speak.

v. 65 And fear came upon all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

“And fear came upon all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.”

And the response of the people is FEAR. The response of the people, they talked about this in the hill country of Judea.

v. 66 And all who heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: “What then shall this child be? For indeed the hand of the Lord is with him.”

“And all who heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: ‘What then shall this child be? For indeed the hand of the Lord is with him.’”

v. 67 And Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying;

“Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he

gives a prophesy, saying;”

Get the picture of an old man with a little babe in his arms. He speaks these final words in our exposition:

v. 68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and made redemption for His people,

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and made redemption for His people,”

v. 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—

“He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—”

v. 70 Even as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

“Even as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—”

v. 71 Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who are hating us;

“Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who are hating us;”

v. 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, and to

remember His holy covenant,

“To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,”

v. 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

“The oath which He swore to Abraham”—and he’s had a lot of time to think about that—“our father,”

v. 74 To give to us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,

“To give to us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,”

v. 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

“In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

And then he looks at the child and says:

v. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways:

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways:”

To know a secondary task and to perform it is a great task in the eyes of God.

v. 77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,

“To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,”

And he’s the one who stood as Christ came into the back of his audience and he says:

John 1:29

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

v. 78 Because of the heart of mercy of our God, in that the Sun rising from on high shall visit us,

“Because of the heart of mercy of our God, in that the Sun rising from on high shall visit us,”

Malachi 4:2

The sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings.

v. 79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

“To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

v. 80 And the child was growing and becoming strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

“And the child was growing and becoming strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”

We get six lessons out of that exposition:

Lesson #1: You can trust the Lord to fulfill His promises.

Lesson #2: The Lord will always do exactly what He says He will do.

Lesson #3: For no word from God shall be impossible.

Lesson #4: Is your soul magnifying the Lord today and your spirit rejoicing in God your Savior?

Lesson #5: What great things has He done for you?

Lesson #6: Jesus came to bring the knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sins. Have you come to know Christ as Savior?

It's the relationships, isn't it? It's Zach and Elizabeth. It's Mary with the Spirit of God. Life is going on and beautiful things are happening.

The Lord really wants to talk to us. He wants to show us that the road we travel is not impossible and His grace is sufficient. His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

This love letter from Jesus is fitting to conclude our message:

A LOVE LETTER FROM JESUS

How are you? I just had to send you this letter today to tell you how much I love you and care about you. I saw you yesterday as you were walking with your friends. I waited all day, hoping you would walk and talk with Me also. As evening drew near, I gave you a sunset to close your day, and a cool breeze to rest you. Then I waited, but you never came. Oh yes, it hurt Me, but I still love you because I am your friend.

I saw you fall asleep last night, and I longed to touch your brow, so I spilled moonlight on your pillow and your face. Again I waited, wanting to rush down so we could talk. I have so many gifts for you.

You awakened late this morning and rushed off for the day. My tears were in the rain. Today you looked so sad and so alone. It makes My heart ache because I understand. My friends let me down and hurt Me sometimes, but I love you. I try to tell you in the quiet green grass. I whisper it in the

leaves of the trees, and breathe it in the color of the flowers. I shout it to you in the mountain streams, and give the birds love songs to sing. I clothe you with warm sunshine and perfume the air. My love for you is deeper than the oceans and bigger than the biggest wave or need you could ever have.

We will spend eternity together in heaven. I know how hard it is on earth. I really know, because I was there, and I want to help you. My Father wants to help you too. He's that way, you know. Just call Me, ask Me, talk to Me. It's your decision...I've chosen you, and because of this, I'll wait...Because I love you.

Your Friend,
JESUS

(source unknown)

Father, we come to the conclusion of this exposition of such a beautiful and warm intimate passage of scripture. We pray that wherever the truth touches us today, the lesson will come across loud and clear. Father, if we're waiting for some great dramatic moment to do some great sacrificial act of service, forgive us for that and help us to be willing to be spent right now for each other. Paul could say, "If my life is poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Lord, we realize that in the Upper Room there were a lot of proud hearts and dirty feet, because nobody wanted to be a servant. Teach us the lesson of humility. Teach us the lesson of being like John. He, Christ, must continually be increasing and I must be decreasing, because He's the bridegroom. I'm just a friend. We love You

Father and thank You for Your patience in working in our lives in so many wonderful ways. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A GIFT TOO WONDERFUL FOR WORDS

“Christmas: When God Came Downstairs with a Baby in His Arms”

Study Number Three – The Birth of John the Baptist – Luke 1:5-80

NOTES

I. Introduction of the Parents — vv. 5-7

v. 5 There was in the days of Herod, King of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

v. 6 And they were both righteous in the sight of God, ordering their lives blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

v. 7 And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they both had gone far in their days.

II. Gabriel Visits Zacharias — vv. 8-23

v. 8 Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,

v. 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot when he entered into the temple of the Lord to burn incense.

v. 10 And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of the burning of the incense.

v. 11 Now there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

v. 12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

v. 13 But the angel said to him, “Stop fearing Zacharias, because your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

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v. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will be rejoicing at his birth.

v. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

v. 16 And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.

v. 17 And he will go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; to prepare for the Lord a people having been made ready."

v. 18 And Zacharias said to the angel: "Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife has advanced in her days."

v. 19 And the angel answering said to him: "I am Gabriel, the one who stands before God; and I was sent to speak to you and to bring to you this good news.

v. 20 And behold you shall be silent and not able to speak until the day these things come to be, because you believed not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

v. 21 And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and they marvelled while he tarried in the temple.

v. 22 But when he came out, he was not able to speak to them; and they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he continued beckoning them (making signs), and he remained dumb.

v. 23 And it came to be when the days of his ministry were fulfilled, he went to his house.

III. Elizabeth Is Pregnant — vv. 24-25

v. 24 Now after these days, Elizabeth his wife conceived and hid herself five months, saying,

v. 25 "For in this way the Lord has dealt with me in days wherein He looked upon [me] to take away my reproach among men."

IV. Gabriel Visits Mary — vv. 26-38

v. 26 Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, the name Nazareth,

NOTES

v. 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the name of the virgin, Mary.

v. 28 And coming in, he said to her, “Hail! You who have been endued with grace, the Lord is with you.”

v. 29 Now she was greatly troubled at the saying and was considering of what sort a greeting this might be.

v. 30 And the angel said to her, “Fear not, Mary, for you have found grace with God.

v. 31 And behold you will conceive in your womb, and you will bring forth a son, and you will call His name Jesus.

v. 32 This one shall be great and He shall be called Son of [the] Most High; and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David.

v. 33 And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and to his kingdom there shall be no end.”

v. 34 But Mary said to the angel, “How shall this be since I am not knowing a man?”

v. 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; wherefore also the one begotten shall be called holy, the Son of God.

v. 36 And behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman she also has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month to her, the one called barren.

v. 37 For no word from God shall be impossible.”

v. 38 Now Mary said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord. Be it unto me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

V. Mary Visits Elizabeth — vv. 39-56

v. 39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah.

v. 40 And she went into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

v. 41 And it came to be when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

v. 42 And she lifted up her voice with a loud cry and said: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

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v. 43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

v. 44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby in my womb leaped in exultation.

v. 45 And blessed is she who believed, for it shall be completed, the things having been spoken to her by the Lord.”

v. 46 And Mary said: “My soul is magnifying the Lord.

v. 47 And my spirit rejoiced in God my Savior.

v. 48 For He looked upon the low estate of His handmaid; for behold, from now all generations shall call me blessed.

v. 49 For the Mighty One did great things for me, and holy is His name.

v. 50 And His mercy is from generation to generation to the ones fearing Him.

v. 51 He showed strength in His arm. He scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

v. 52 He tore down princes from their thrones and exalted them of low estate.

v. 53 The hungry ones He filled with good, and the rich ones He sent away empty.

v. 54 And He helped Israel His servant, that He might remember mercy,

v. 55 even as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed forever.”

v. 56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned unto her house.

VI. The Birth of John — vv. 57-80

v. 57 Now Elizabeth’s time was fulfilled to be delivered, and she brought forth a son.

v. 58 And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord magnified His mercy towards her, and they were rejoicing with her.

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v. 61 And they said to her, “There is none of your relatives called by this name.”

v. 62 And they were making signs to his father, as to what he might desire him to be called.

v. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and he wrote, saying, “John is his name”; and they all marvelled.

v. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he was speaking, blessing God.

v. 65 And fear came upon all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

v. 66 And all who heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: “What then shall this child be? For indeed the hand of the Lord is with him.”

v. 67 And Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying;

v. 68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and made redemption for His people,

v. 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant—

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v. 71 Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who are hating us;

v. 72 To show mercy toward our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant,

v. 73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

v. 74 To give to us that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,

v. 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

v. 76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways:

v. 77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins,

v. 78 Because of the heart of mercy of our God, in that the Sun rising from on high shall visit us,

v. 79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

v. 80 And the child was growing and becoming strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

Lesson #1: You can trust the Lord to fulfill His promises.

Lesson #2: The Lord will always do exactly what He says He will do.

Lesson #3: For no word from God shall be impossible.

Lesson #4: Is your soul magnifying the Lord today and your spirit rejoicing in God your Savior?

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ADDITIONAL NOTES:
