

That You May Know The Certainty

LESSON 2: JOHN AND JESUS ARE BORN (LUKE 1:39-2:7)

Luke's gospel record was written so that Theophilus would know the certainty about the events of Jesus's life, providing a carefully investigated and orderly account of them. The record has begun with two birth announcements. Zechariah and Elizabeth would have a son who was to be named John. Mary would have a Son who was to be named Jesus.

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH (LUKE 1:39-56)

1:39-45. Gabriel had revealed to Mary that Elizabeth was pregnant (v. 36). Now, Mary traveled to where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived (in the hill country of Judah). When Mary entered the house and greeted Elizabeth, the baby inside her leaped for joy (note that this preborn child is called a baby; the same term used for Jesus after His birth, 2:12, 16). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to loudly cry out blessings for Mary. She indicated that Mary was blessed (favored) among women for how God was using her, as would be her Child. Elizabeth considered it a great honor for the mother of her Lord to come to her and even knew that preborn John was joyful about this. Mary would be favored by God for her faith that God would do according to what He had said!

1:46-56. After Elizabeth spoke, Mary spoke. Her words (often called "Mary's Song" and the "Magnificat") can be divided into two main sections – one about what God did for Mary and one about what God did for those who fear Him. Mary praised God as her Lord and Savior and would rejoice in Him. Despite her lowly rank in life, God (who is the Mighty One and whose name is holy) had looked favorably on her and she would be blessed in all generations for her role with the Messiah! God had done great things for her. Then, God was to be praised for what He has done for those who fear Him. The points she makes were both historically true and were being fulfilled in their greatest sense now through the Messiah! God has demonstrated His strength, scattered the proud,

topped the mighty, exalted the lowly, satisfied the hungry, and sent the rich away empty – and would do all this spiritually through Jesus. God was now helping Israel in bringing the Messianic King into the world, according to all God had promised their ancestors (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:16-19). Then, after visiting Elizabeth for about three months, Mary returned to her home (near the time of John's birth).

JOHN IS BORN (LUKE 1:57-80)

1:57-66. Elizabeth gave birth to a son and all her neighbors and relatives rejoiced with her for the mercy God had shown her. On the eighth day, when he was taken to be circumcised (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3), the others wanted to name him Zechariah (after his father). However, Elizabeth knew this was not God's will (v. 13) and said he was to be named John. When they inquired about this with Zechariah, he (still unable to speak) was obedient to what he had been told and wrote that his name was John. The people were amazed at this and immediately Zechariah was able to speak (v. 20). He then began to praise God! Fear came on all the people and people throughout the hill country of Judea talked about what happened. They were asking what this child would become. Certainly, all these events made it clear that the Lord's hand was with John and God was going to use him in special ways (Malachi 4:5-6)!

1:67-80. Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy and praise God. In all that Zechariah said, he stated it in the past tense, indicating the certainty of what would transpire through Jesus. Particularly, God had provided redemption for His people and raised a horn (symbol of strength) of salvation in David's house. Everything was fulfilling what God had promised. By bringing John into the world, God showed that the Messiah would soon come! So, while the Old Testament prophets did not understand how God would fulfill His promises (1 Peter 1:10-12), God was now keeping them! God had dealt mercifully with the Israelites in that He had always preserved a remnant and was now keeping the oath He had made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:15-18). Now, having been rescued, they were to serve God without fear (Romans 8:31-39; Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 13:5-6)

in holiness and righteousness. John would be a prophet of the Most High God (Matthew 11:9) and go before the Lord to prepare people for Him (Malachi 4:5-6; Isaiah 40:3-5), giving people knowledge of salvation and forgiveness (Luke 3:3). Through God's merciful compassion, God was bringing a great dawn of Light to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7; John 1:1-9; 3:19-21; 8:12)! John then grew up and became strong in spirit, in obscurity in the wilderness until the time of his public appearance to Israel (Luke 3:1-2).

JESUS IS BORN (2:1-7)

2:1-5. During the time Caesar Augustus (Octavius, given the title "Augustus") was emperor (27 B.C. – 14 A.D.), there was a decree concerning a registration (likely in connection with taxation). Quirinius was also mentioned in connection to governing Syria (perhaps distinguishing this registration from a later one, Acts 5:37). This resulted in everyone going to the town of their ancestral roots. Joseph went from Nazareth (in Galilee) to Bethlehem (in Judea, where David was from, 1 Samuel 16:1). For, Joseph was a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1-17). Mary (who was pregnant and engaged to Joseph at the time) went with him. Therefore, God used this event to providentially cause Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem, where it was prophesied that the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3-8)!

2:6-7. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth to Jesus, her firstborn (Romans 5:6; Galatians 4:4-5)! Likely due to the great influx of visitors to Bethlehem at this time, there was no guest room available and Jesus (the Messianic King) came into the world through very humble conditions, wrapped in a cloth and laid in a feeding trough (manger).

CONCLUSION

Just as God had promised, both John and Jesus have been born! The messages that have been recorded demonstrate that John would be a prophet and work to get people ready for Jesus. Then, Jesus would demonstrate Himself to be the Messianic King the Jews had been waiting for!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What did Elizabeth say concerning Mary and her Child?

What are some ways Mary praised God for what He had done for her and for those who fear Him?

Why was the naming of John both shocking and important?

Why is Zechariah prophesying in the past tense significant?

What was God doing through Jesus?

What role did John have in God's plan?

Why was it important for Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem and what caused them to go?

What were the humble conditions Jesus experienced upon being born?

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