

# Luke 1d: HG Bishop Youssef

His Grace Bishop Youssef ~ فسوي ابن الالة فاين تاطع • LUKE 1: 57 - 80 ~ Bible Study (Eng/Arabic - يبرع)

## Birth and Circumcision of John the Baptist

<sup>57</sup> Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. <sup>58</sup> When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

- The nine months are now complete and St Mary had stayed with her about three months. St. Mary leaves in order to avoid the company which will be at the delivery of the child.
- Elizabeth conceiving and giving birth to John the Baptist was the fulfillment and first part of the angel's annunciation to Zacharias: "Do not be afraid Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son"
- They rejoiced with her
  - They rejoiced because God granted her a boy despite two obstacles: her barrenness, her and Zacharias' old age.
  - They rejoiced because the angelic message and annunciation of John made them wonder... who could this be that an angel is announcing his birth?

<sup>59</sup> So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. <sup>60</sup> His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." <sup>61</sup> But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." <sup>62</sup> So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. <sup>63</sup> And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. <sup>64</sup> Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. <sup>65</sup> Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup> And all those who heard *them* kept *them* in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

- Since the time of Abraham, circumcision is a was the sign of entrance into the covenant with God and to be a part of the family of God. According to the covenant between God and Abraham every male child should be circumcised on the 8th day.
  - The custom was to invite all the relatives to attend the celebration and to be witnesses that the child is formally incorporated into the covenant
  - It was also the custom to name the child on the day of his circumcision
    - It was important for them to keep the tribes and the families within the tribes distinct because they were tracking the Messiah to see which tribe/family He

would come from

- In order to avoid any confusion, they would name kids in a tribe after their ancestors in that tribe
  - For example, St Paul's Jewish name was Saul because he was from the Tribe of Benjamin. So he is named after the first king of Israel, King Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin.
  - They wanted to name him Zacharias like his father, but Elizabeth said "No, he shall be called John" and they said "No one from your tribe or your family is called John!" So they went to Zacharias and made signs to him asking him what he would be called... Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote John.
    - Tablet: Piece of wood covered with a coat of wax, and people would write with a thin instrument to kind of engrave into the wax
- John means "The Compassion of God" - Youhanna - "Yahwah 7annan"
  - Zacharias "God Remembers"; Elizabeth "The Oath of God" - God remembered His oath to the forefathers and sent His Compassion
  - Psalm of 1st Sunday of Kiahk: "You will arise and have compassion on Zion; for the time of compassion, Yes, the set time, has come." (102:13)
  - Ezekiel 16:8 "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love"
- Immediately his mouth was loosed
  - He has been mute for nine months
  - Everyone probably thought that he would never speak again... but at the birth of John, his mouth was open
  - The people witness another miracle (first, the miracle of the birth, now the miracle of the loosing of his tongue)
  - The first thing Zacharias did when his mouth was opened is to praise God
  - All the people feared God - this doesn't mean they were scared, but rather great reverence to God
- What kind of child will this be?
  - They expect that this child will be involved with the work of God

## Zacharias' Prophecy

<sup>67</sup> Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

- This whole family was filled with the Holy Spirit:
  - John from his mother's womb
  - Elizabeth when Mary visited her (Christ in her womb)
  - Zacharias here when his tongue was loosed
- He is filled here with the Spirit of Prophecy and he will prophesy

<sup>68</sup> "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,

For He has visited and redeemed His people,

<sup>69</sup> And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of His servant David,

<sup>70</sup> As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,  
 Who *have been* since the world began,  
<sup>71</sup> That we should be saved from our enemies  
 And from the hand of all who hate us,  
<sup>72</sup> To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers  
 And to remember His holy covenant,  
<sup>73</sup> The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:  
<sup>74</sup> To grant us that we,  
 Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
 Might serve Him without fear,  
<sup>75</sup> In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

- This song is an answer to the question "what kind of child will this be"
  - Before this part, we view Zacharias in a negative way - he doubted God, he was punished by being mute, etc. but in a period of 9 months of silence, he contemplated so much and spent time with his thoughts, and now he's completely different and has a prophetic spirit starting with blessing God
  - This song focuses on the Messiah who is coming to redeem His people, and how John will prepare the way for the Messiah who is coming to redeem His people, and this is the visitation of God to His people (spoken of in Ezekiel and the Psalms)
- God has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David
  - He starts with "God has visited and redeemed His people" and then that John will be part of the visitation of God and the economy of redemption.
  - Redemption and Salvation is the grand theme of the Holy Scripture
  - Redeem means "to buy back for himself" - that which was stolen from Him and sold into slavery and bondage ("whereby we were bound and sold on account of our sins")
  - He is the Son of God before all ages, but in the fullness of time, He became man from the seed of David through St Mary
  - "Horn" is a symbol of strength and power
    - Deuteronomy 33:17
    - Psalm 75:10
- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began that we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us
  - Many prophecies in the Old Testament about how the Messiah will come and save them from their enemies
  - The work of salvation is deliverance from enemies (another theme in Scripture)
    - This hope and longing was since the world began - since the time of Adam and Eve in the garden
      - The Seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent
      - Christ will crush the head of Satan
    - As God delivered Israel from the hand of Egypt, so He will deliver us from our enemies...
  - Who are our enemies?

- Unfortunately, in the mind of the Jews, even until the Crucifixion of Christ, they perceived the enemies to be their temporal enemies... human beings (the Romans). This is not the intent of the Scripture
- All of the prophecies about "enemies" are about our spiritual enemies... who hates us? Satan and his armies.
- To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant. The oath which He swore to our father Abraham
  - This salvation is not because we are worthy or because we earned it.
  - It is a free gift because God loves us... because He chose to have mercy and compassion on us
  - The merciful deliverance was promised to all our forefathers in Israel
  - Holy Covenant
    - Zacharias has a certain covenant in mind... the covenant with Abraham
      - Genesis 12:1-3
      - Genesis 17:7
      - Genesis 22:16-18
    - God will bless Abraham, Abraham will be a blessing, in the Seed of Abraham **all the tribes of the world will be blessed**
      - God gave Abraham a land of his own (the Promised Land) like a down-payment for the fulfillment of His promise. In the mind of Israel, God will deliver them from Roman occupation and they will have their own kingdom and restore the Kingdom of David!
      - That's why on the day of Palm Sunday, they said "Hosanna to the Son of David" and "This is the King of Israel" - and even until now, Israel wants the land restored to them.
      - But the blessing to Abraham was not only to Abraham and his descendants, but for all the earth.
    - How are we to understand the covenant with Abraham?
      - God will bless Abraham - He is blessed because the Messiah will come from his seed
      - Abraham will be a blessing - Through the Seed of Abraham, all of us will be blessed
      - All the tribes of the world - Both Jews and Gentiles are blessed by the Seed of Abraham
- To grant us that we, being delivered from the hands of our enemies, might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life
  - We will worship God without fear
    - Biggest fear for anyone is death and what's after death.
      - Atheists say there is nothing after death, but in their heart, there is no true evidence or valid evidence that there is nothing after death. So they fear.
      - Those who believe in an afterlife is "what will be my destiny?" - "Am I going to heaven?"
    - Through the redemption and salvation, we will be serving and worshipping Him without this fear.

- "Do not be afraid little flock, for it is Your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"
- "Now we have boldness to enter into the holy of the holies through Jesus and through the way He consecrated to us"
- If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are not afraid or fearful
- We will worship and serve God in holiness
  - I am not a slave of Satan anymore. I choose to be holy and I can live a holy life.
  - We receive the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us
  - Even when I sin, I have repentance, confession and the Eucharist to wash me and make me holy and pure again
- We will worship God in righteousness
  - Righteousness is to do what's right
  - When someone is baptized, they are dressed in white clothes - the righteousness of God that was given to them as a free gift. And it is received through the blood of Christ (hence the red ribbon)
  - Christ came and fulfilled all the requirements of righteousness that no single person on earth was able to fulfill, so through Him we receive this righteousness freely

<sup>76</sup> "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;  
 For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,  
<sup>77</sup> To give knowledge of salvation to His people

By the remission of their sins,

<sup>78</sup> Through the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

<sup>79</sup> To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
 To guide our feet into the way of peace."

<sup>80</sup> So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

- John will fulfill the Jewish prophecies and will be called "prophet of the Highest"
  - He will be the greatest prophet (as Christ said "Among those born of women there is none greater than John the Baptist")
  - The Angel Gabriel told Zacharias that John will prepare the way of the Lord
    - This is why we call him the forerunner
- Two tasks:
  - Prepare the way of the Lord
  - Give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins
    - John came and preached "Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand"
    - He gave the people the true information about the deliverance of the Messiah
    - The Ministry of the Messiah was preceded by the Ministry of the Forerunner because the concept of salvation was distorted and falsified in Israel. So he came to correct this concept and give them the knowledge of Salvation
      - Not carnal or moral, but spiritual salvation from the condemnation that happened at the Fall of Adam and Eve by the removal of this corruption and condemnation from us through forgiveness of sins

- So St John the Baptist came preaching salvation by remission of sins
- Why are we granted this salvation?
  - Not of our own merit, but through the tender mercy of our God
  - the Dayspring from on high has visited us
    - Dayspring is the Lord Jesus Christ (see capital letter) because He is the agent of God the Father of redemption
    - Dayspring means a "new beginning" or a "new era"
    - There is some disagreement as to how to translate this word. Some translate this word to English as the "Dawn" or the "East" or the "Sunrise" or the "New Day"
    - Clearly we are talking about a new era here which is the New Testament
  - Jesus will bring the mercy of God when He visits and enlightens those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.
    - We are sitting in darkness of ignorance and sin
    - We are in the shadow of death because we are under the sentence of death
    - To guide our feet into the way which will bring us to eternal peace, at last and spiritual peace in our life (fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, PEACE)
    - This passage mirrors Isaiah 9:1-6
- So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.
  - Bodily, Mental, Spiritual development of John the Baptist
  - Where did God prepare John for his ministry? In the desert, a place of solitude - like Moses and Elijah
  - John the Baptist - "A voice of one crying in the wilderness" so God prepared him in the wilderness

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Revision #5

Created 22 September 2021 08:20:56 by Morcous Wahba

Updated 21 October 2021 13:00:14 by Morcous Wahba