

When Prophecy Starts to be Fulfilled

Luke 1:57-79

In Luke 1:5-25, the angel Gabriel told Zechariah the priest that he would have a son who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. The birth of John brings great joy and amazement at what God is doing (1:57-66). His birth also causes Zechariah to sing a song of great praise to God (1:67-79). John's birth demonstrates that *God prepares the way to complete his eternal mission of forgiveness and salvation for his people.*

□ The birth of John brings joy and amazement at what God is doing (57-66)

When the child was born, everyone—friends, neighbors, family members—celebrated God's good gift to Elizabeth. They recognized God's mercy and rejoiced (57-58).

Zechariah and Elizabeth followed the Old Testament Law and circumcised the child on the eighth day after his birth (Leviticus 12:3).

Everyone assumed the child would be named after a family member—father or grandfather. They pushed back when Elizabeth wanted to name the baby, John (60-61).

The visitors communicated with Zechariah in sign language, since he had been unable to speak (and hear?) since Gabriel's announcement (62). Zechariah settled the controversy by emphatically writing, "His name is John" (63).

God rewarded Zechariah's obedience by removing his temporary disability. After nine months of silence, Zechariah burst out in praise (64).

The surrounding countryside heard about the events (65). They concluded that John would be an unusual child because God's hand was on him (66). The question about "what" the child would be rather than "who" he would be emphasizes John's role as forerunner of the Messiah.

□ The birth of John brings praise to God (67-79)

The Holy Spirit fills Zechariah (67) as had previously done with Elizabeth (1:41) and John (1:15). Zechariah exclaims a psalm of praise, which is filled with allusions to and quotations from the Old Testament.

Zechariah praises God for four things—he kept his promises to David (68-71), he kept his promises to Abraham (72-75), what he would do through John (76-77), and that he is bringing a new day to everyone (78-79).

- Zechariah praised God that he kept his promises to David (68-71)

“Blessed” has the meaning of praise (68).

Zechariah praised God for visiting his people. He had done this by sending Messiah’s forerunner.

Zechariah praised God for redeeming his people. As he had done previously through the Exodus, God was now providing ultimate redemption, nationally and personally, through Messiah.

God was keeping his promise to David to raise up a horn of salvation through his descendants (69). An animal’s horn was its weapon for defense and vengeance, as well as an ornament of beauty.

- Zechariah praised God that he kept his promises to Abraham (72-75)

Zechariah alluded to salvation, mercy, and covenant fulfillment (72-73). Salvation would be both political and spiritual.

Rather than sit back passively, God’s deliverance should lead us to serve (74-75). We can do this without fear of persecution, negatively, and in holiness toward God and righteousness toward man, positively—forever.

- Zechariah praised God that he will work through John (76-77)

John would function as a prophet and forerunner of Messiah (76). He will give people knowledge about salvation and the forgiveness of sins (77).

- Zechariah praised God that he will bring in a new day (78-79)

For too long, Israel and the world lived in darkness—the darkness of foreign governments, the darkness of economic oppression, the darkness of their own sin. The light of God would guide people out of darkness and into the way of peace.

Praise God that he prepares the way for forgiveness and salvation.