

## §5: THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

**Luke 1: 57–80**

### **The Birth of John**

1:57–58

**57** Now for Elizabeth the time was fulfilled for her to give birth, and she bore a son.

**58** And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had magnified His mercy with her, and they rejoiced with her.

### **Circumcision and Naming of John**

1:59–63

**59** And it came about on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they were calling him by the name of his father Zacharias.

**60** And his mother answered and said: No, indeed, but he shall be called John.

**61** And they said to her: There is no one of your relatives who is called by this name.

**62** And they were making signs to his father as to what he wanted him called.

**63** And having asked for a small [wooden] writing tablet, he wrote as follows: John is his name. And all were astonished.

### **Zacharias Speaks Again**

1:64–66

**64** And his mouth was opened at once, and his tongue, and he was speaking, praising God.

**65** And fear came upon all those living around them, and in the whole hill country of Judah all these matters were being talked about,

**66** and all who heard took it to heart [lit. placed in their heart], saying: What then will this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.

### **Zacharias Filled With the Spirit**

1:67

**67** And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying:

### **Zacharias' Song**

1:68–79

**68** Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has shown concern and has accomplished redemption for His people.

**69** And He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant,

**70** just as He spoke through the mouth of His holy prophets from of old:

**71** Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,

**72** to do mercy with our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,

**73** the oath which He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us,

**74** that we, being delivered from the hand of enemies, might serve Him fearlessly

**75** in devoutness and righteousness before Him all our days.

**76** And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways,

**77** to give the knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins,

**78** because of the heart [lit., entrails] of mercy of our God,  
with which the [sun]rise from on high shall show concern for us,  
**79** to appear to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death,  
to direct our feet into the way of peace.

### John's Growth and Development

1:80

**80** And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit,  
and he was in the deserts [or, isolated regions] until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

### Notes

1. **Mercy (Lk. 1:58).** Kind or compassionate treatment, relief of suffering, something to be grateful for, a blessing.
2. **Circumcise (Lk. 1:59).** See Genesis 17.
3. On the giving of the name, note that the Hebrew form of Zacharias means “Yahweh remembers.” John means “Yahweh is gracious.” We are not told why God chose this name (Lk. 1:13).
4. **Show concern (Lk. 1:68,78).** Literally, the word means “to look upon,” then “inspect, with a view to caring for.” To look at may require that one first go and see, thus the word is often translated “visit.” It is used of God’s “visitation” in Lk. 1:68,78; 7:16; Acts 15:14; Heb. 2:6; to visit the sick in Matt. 25:36,43; Jas. 1:27; to go and see in Acts 7:23; 15:36; to look out or search out in Acts 6:3.
5. **Horn of salvation (Lk. 1:69).** The horn of an animal, such as a ram, ox or bull, is one of its main weapons and means of defense (Ps. 22:21). Horns of iron were made for battle purposes (1 Kings 22:11); by using them to scatter the enemy, one was “saved” thereby. Horns were also part of the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 27:2), and a person might feel safe by taking hold of them (1 Kings 1:50–51; 2:28–34). The idea of a “horn of salvation” in Zacharias’ prophecy is that we are “saved,” not by a literal horn, but by Jesus. Through Him we scatter all our enemies. See also: Num. 23:22; Deut. 33:17; Ps. 18:2; 1 Sam. 2:10.
6. **Devoutness (Lk. 1:75).** “*Devoutness, piety, holiness of life*” (BAGD,585). See Eph. 4:24.

## Word Study: “Serve” (Luke 1:74)

The word “serve” in Luke 1:74 is from a root that is found in both a verb form (as here) as well as a noun form meaning “service or worship (of God)” (BAGD,467). These words for “serve” or “worship” are not restricted in the New Testament to our “worship assemblies,” but are intended to influence our entire lives. Below are some examples of how these words are used in the N.T.

### 1. Verb: “to serve” (**l atreuw, latreuo**) (occurs 21 times in the N.T.)

Luke 2:37: Anna never left the temple, but was “*serv*ing night and day with fastings and prayers”

Rom. 1:9: Paul writes that he *serve*s God in his spirit in the gospel of His Son

Phil. 3:3: We, the true circumcision, *worship* in the Spirit of God

2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14: We, like Paul, should *serve* God with a clear conscience

Heb. 12:28: Then we can *offer* to God an acceptable *service* with reverence and awe

Rev. 22:4; 7:15: In heaven, we His bond-servants will *serve* God day and night

Heb. 8:5; 9:9; 10:2; 13:10: Old Testament worship is insufficient

Acts 7:42; Rom. 1:25: Some people *serve* the creation rather than the Creator

[Other passages: Matt. 4:10 = Luke 4:8; Acts 7:7; 24:14; 26:7; 27:23]

### 2. Noun: “worship; service” (**l atreia, latreia**) (occurs 5 times in the N.T.)

Heb. 9:1; 9:4; 9:6: There were various regulations of the divine temple *worship* in the O.T.

Rom. 12:1: Our *worship*, or *worship service*, or spiritual *service of worship*—

Consists of (“which is”):

- (1) Presenting our bodies (Rom. 12:1)
  - (a) A living and holy sacrifice
  - (b) Acceptable to God

And this involves (Rom. 12:2a):

- (2) Not being conformed to this world
- (3) Being transformed by the renewing of our mind

So that (Rom. 12:2b):

- (4) We can prove what the will of God is, that which is:
  - (a) Good
  - (b) Acceptable to God
  - (c) Perfect

So that (Rom. 12:3):

- (5) With the proper mindset:
  - (a) We do not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think
  - (b) We think with sound judgment about what God has allotted to each one of us
- (6) We serve with our differing gifts in proportion to our faith (Rom. 12:4–13).

John 16:2: Some people think they are *offering service* to God when they are mistaken.