

## **John the Baptist – Parents/Birth, Study Leader’s Questions – Luke 1:57-80**

### ***John is Born, Luke 1:57-66***

1. *Why are the neighbours surprised at Elizabeth’s choice of a name for the baby? Why are they so surprised when Zechariah writes ‘John’ on a wooden tablet (Luke 1:60-63)?*
2. *Why would Luke bother to include the account of a family argument over the name of a child?*

### ***Zechariah song of praise, Luke 1:67-79***

3. *How are the terms ‘salvation’ and ‘rescue’ used in Zechariah’s prophecy (Luke 1:69, 71, 74, 77)?*
4. *What is the purpose of Messiah’s salvation in Luke 1:74-75? What kind of lives does God expect us to live?*
5. *What are John the Baptist’s chief tasks as outlined in Luke 1:76-77?*
6. *What kinds of ministries of preparation do we see in the church today? Why is preparation so important for the future?*
7. *What characterises the first recorded words of Zechariah?*
8. *What Old Testament prophecies does Zechariah mention? Why are they important?*
9. *Describe Zechariah’s beliefs about what God would do for His people through the Messiah, Luke 1:78-79.*

### ***John’s ‘hidden’ years, Luke 1:80***

10. *Like John we are a people called to be different from the world. What is the nature of our separation from the world?*
11. *What principles can we learn from John’s desert experience?*

## John the Baptist – Parents/Birth, Study Leader’s Questions – Luke 1:57-80, Answers

### *John is Born, Luke 1:57-66*

1. *Why are the neighbours surprised at Elizabeth’s choice of a name for the baby? Why are they so surprised when Zechariah writes ‘John’ on a wooden tablet (Luke 1:60-63)?*

Zacharias’s and Elisabeth’s choice of name was God’s choice, Luke 1:13 ***“thou shalt call his name John”*** and therefore Luke 1:61 indicates a break with family tradition but also that God had very possibly told Zacharias and Elisabeth not to tell the neighbours and cousins of Gabriel’s visit. This could well have been for security reasons, with God’s foreknowledge of Herod’s eventual reaction when he was asked ***“Where is he that is born King of the Jews?”*** Matthew 2:3, the Lord’s birth also having been announced by Gabriel, Luke 1:26-35. See Jeremiah 31:15, Matthew 2:13-18 and note that after her visit from Gabriel, Mary communicated only with Elisabeth, her cousin, Luke 1:36, 38-41.

Mary would therefore not have been among Elisabeth’s cousins, Luke 1:58, who were perplexed at John’s naming but she was probably wise enough to apply Luke 2:51 in principle, ***“but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.”***

Nehemiah 2:12 also enjoins caution with respect to disclosures about what God is doing.

***“And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.”***

2. *Why would Luke bother to include the account of a family argument over the name of a child?*

It may well have been to show that God can override family objections with respect to God’s calling of an individual within that family in accordance with Proverbs 19:21.

***“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.”***

Family influence can, however, be very strong and can interfere with God’s calling, as Luke 9:59-62 reveals.

***“And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”***

### *Zechariah song of praise, Luke 1:67-79*

3. *How are the terms ‘salvation’ and ‘rescue’ used in Zechariah’s prophecy (Luke 1:69, 71, 74, 77)?*

The following notes are drawn largely from the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1332.

The terms ***“salvation,” “saved”*** and ***“delivered”*** are used in Luke 1:69, 77, 71, 74 with respect to the ***“horn of salvation”*** i.e. the Lord Jesus Christ at the Second Advent as described in Habakkuk 3:4 returning to save and deliver ***“his people”*** i.e. Israel from the Gentiles.

***“And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.”***

See Deuteronomy 33:29, 1 Chronicles 16:35, Zephaniah 3:15.

***“Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”***

**“And say ye, *Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.*”**

**“The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, *he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.*”**

4. *What is the purpose of Messiah’s salvation in Luke 1:74-75? What kind of lives does God expect us to live?*

The purpose in Luke 1:74, 75 is primarily so that the people of Israel can serve the Lord joyfully, holily and righteously all their lives. See Jeremiah 30:7-10, Ezekiel 34:24-25, 28 and the context of those verses. The Lord is here referring to ***“a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah”*** Jeremiah 31:31, Hebrews 8:8, in fulfilment of ***“The oath which he sware to our father Abraham”*** Luke 1:73. The rule of both the Lord Jesus Christ and David is described in the following passages.

See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* pp 1026, 1028-1029, 1114, 1606-1607.

**“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: *it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.*”**

**“And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.”**

**“And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beast of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid.”**

The Lord wants Christians, His sons by adoption, Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5 to live holy and righteous lives.

**“According as *he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*”** Ephesians 1:4.

**“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; *even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness*”** Romans 6:19.

**“But thou, *O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*”** 1 Timothy 6:11.

**“But as he which hath called you is holy, so *be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy*”** 1 Peter 1:15-16.

5. *What are John the Baptist’s chief tasks as outlined in Luke 1:76-77?*

Luke 1:76-77 cross-reference with Isaiah 40:3 **“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, *Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*”**

John’s responsibilities as expressed in the passage were to urge ***“his people”*** i.e. Israel to be ready to receive the promised ***“Messiah the Prince”*** Daniel 9:25, the Deliverer, according to Isaiah 59:20 and Romans 11:26 and receive His salvation for the *nation* of Israel.

**“And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD.”**

**“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, *There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*”**

This will happen at the Second Advent as Peter explains in Acts 3:19. See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1434. **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”**

“His people” were exhorted to repent in preparation for the Messiah because their sins had been remitted, or forgiven, by means of God’s mercy as Luke 1:77, 78 show. That is why John baptized, as Mark 1:4 shows **“And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”** and as Paul explains in Acts 19:4, to urge Israel’s repentance for, *i.e. because of*, the remission of sins in readiness to receive and submit to Israel’s Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.”**

6. What kinds of ministries of preparation do we see in the church today? Why is preparation so important for the future?

Family examples include Mike preparing for a preaching ministry, see *The Troubled Heart*, [vimeo.com/32928643](https://vimeo.com/32928643)\* and Dave with his acquisition of a foreign language, which by the grace of God, 1 Corinthians 15:10, God will use according to **“that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** Romans 12:2. \*Since removed by the church, AJO’R 30/01/2013

Preparation is important because proper preparation prevents pitifully poor performance. Faithful preparation and **“the prayer of faith”** James 5:15 go together.

**“The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.”**

A good example of proper preparation is that of Captain Arthur Henry Rostron, captain of RMS *Carpathia*, who rescued the survivors of the *Titanic* disaster of April 14<sup>th</sup> 1912. See [www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-biography/arthur-henry-rostron.html](http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-biography/arthur-henry-rostron.html) .

Emphases are this writer’s.

*On the night of 14 April 1912 Rostron was asleep in his cabin when wireless operator Harold Cottam burst in and told him of Titanic’s distress signal. Captain Rostron immediately set course to the the liner’s last known position, over 60 miles [away]. A very devout Christian man, after all the orders were issued and the desperate preparations were underway, he was observed walking away to a place where he thought he would be unobserved, and bowed his head for a long prayer. At 4.00 a.m. the Carpathia arrived at the scene after negotiating surrounding ice fields. The Carpathia picked up the survivors and lifeboats from the Titanic. 712 people were saved and 1,503 perished. As there were insufficient resources on board to make it to Europe, Captain Rostron decided to sail back to New York. When the Carpathia arrived at New York the full horror of the Titanic tragedy was learnt. After the last survivor had disembarked and Captain Rostron had completed his statement for the US Senate inquiry the Carpathia returned to its usual service.*

7. What characterises the first recorded words of Zechariah?

Genuine Holy Ghost prophesying, in accordance with 2 Peter 1:21.

**“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”**

The word **“holy”** has been cut out of the NIV/TNIV/2011NIV and disputed in the margin of the NKJV. The TNIV/2011NIV try to evade the issue by changing **“holy men”** to **“prophets,”** forgetting that the Lord has **“holy prophets”** Luke 1:70, Acts 3:21, 2 Peter 3:2, Revelation 22:6. The NIV/TNIV/2011NIV all cut **“holy”** out of Revelation 22:6.

Nestle's 21<sup>st</sup> Edition of the Greek New Testament cuts "**holy**" out of 2 Peter 2:21 but Berry's Edition of the 1550 Stephanus Edition of the Received Text and the Farstad/Hodges 'Majority' Greek Text Edition retain it.

The Douay-Rheims Challoner Revision of 1749-1752 retains "**holy**" in 2 Peter 1:21 but the JB, NJB, NWT remove it.

The Wycliffe, Tyndale, Coverdale, Great, Bishops' and Geneva Bibles read "**holy**" in 2 Peter 1:21.

As is usual when the modern versions depart from the AV1611, the AV1611 reading of "**holy**" in 2 Peter 1:21 has overwhelming support from ancient sources. See *Early Manuscripts and the Authorized Version* by J. A. Moorman.

8. *What Old Testament prophecies does Zechariah mention? Why are they important?*

These prophecies include Psalm 132:17 in Luke 1:69, Psalm 105:8, 9 in Luke 1:72, Genesis 22:16 in Luke 1:73, see below, Isaiah 40:3-8 in Luke 1:76-78, Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, 42:6-7 in Luke 1:79.

They are important because they show God's faithfulness in keeping His promises, as in Luke 1:72-73 "**To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham.**"

That oath is found in Genesis 22:15-18, with respect to Abraham's descendants, especially Genesis 22:16-17.

**"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;"**

Note the reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, Abraham's seed, Galatians 3:16, with respect to "**his enemies**" and compare with 1 Corinthians 15:25.

**"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."**

As Jeremiah observed in Lamentations 3:22-23:

**"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."**

9. *Describe Zechariah's beliefs about what God would do for His people through the Messiah, Luke 1:78-79.*

As the Deliverer "**come out of Sion**" Romans 11:26, see *Question 5*, the Messiah would fulfil Isaiah 9:2, 42:6-7 for His people, although complete fulfilment will take place at the Second Advent. Observe in Isaiah 42:6-7 that light to the Gentiles i.e. the whole world is included in the prophecy.

**"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."**

**"I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."**

Observe also in the fulfilment of Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 1:79 that the Lord Jesus Christ is "**The Prince of Peace**" and "**Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.**"

**John's 'hidden' years, Luke 1:80**

10. Like John we are a people called to be different from the world. What is the nature of our separation from the world?

The essential aspects of the Christian's separation from the world is that he is no longer among "the children of disobedience," "the children of wrath" Ephesians 2:2, 3 and "the children of the devil" 1 John 3:10 but he is of "the children of God" according to Romans 8:15-16.

**"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"**

11. What principles can we learn from John's desert experience?

Based on Luke 1:80, these principles include spiritual growth, Ephesians 4:15, 16, spiritual strength, Ephesians 6:10, spiritual sword skill, Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12 and spiritual patience, Hebrews 10:36. Pray that Dave and Mike continue to acquire these principles.

These principles according to a desert experience are encapsulated in Isaiah 49:2-4, which includes the element of spiritual patience, compare Matthew 11:3, Luke 7:19, 20 with Hebrews 10:36.

**"And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me; And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God."**

1 Corinthians 15:58 should therefore always be remembered.

**"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."**

Alan O'Reilly  
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