

A Faithful Birth and Faithful Act

Luke 1:57-66

1. Introduction.

- a. The back and forth structure of the “Birth Narrative” between John and Jesus.
 - i. Both are prophesied figures of Old Testament prophetic tradition.
 - ii. God would bring forth His Messiah, but the coming of the Messiah would be made ready by the Forerunner (John the Baptist).
 1. Mal. 4.
 2. The role of the forerunner is to identify the true Christ.
- b. This passage is the fulfillment of the angelic prophesy in verses 5-25.

2. The Birth (57-58).

- a. Typical of Luke, he uses unadorned language to describe a significant event.
 - i. John is born.
 - ii. There is rejoicing.
- b. However, instead of giving commentary on the grand fulfillment of John’s birth, Luke spends the bulk of the passage talking about confusion over his name.

3. The Naming of John (59-63).

- a. The custom of circumcision (59a).
 - i. Happened on the eight day, according to Mosaic Law (Lev. 12:3).
 - ii. The practice functioned as a covenantal marker.
- b. They were calling him, “Zacharias” (59b).
 - i. The Father was in charge of naming.
 - ii. Father’s would often name their firstborn son after themselves.

- c. Mary responds with a very empathic, “no,” asserting his name shall be “John” (60).
 - i. We don’t know how Elizabeth knew this. Most likely she learned from her husband via his tablet (63).
 - ii. This shows all the more her incredible faith.
 - 1. We’re not told she receives direct revelation of the things concerning John.
 - 2. We can reasonably assume she learns from her husband. As such, she believes the word of God based upon a human messenger.
 - iii. It’s important to understand the biblical concept of naming, which communicates authority over the one being named. It also gives expression to a person’s meaning.
 - 1. The fact that God names John, and not Zacharias, shows that John has been set apart for a unique purpose of God.
 - 2. He was not to carry on the role of a priest, like generations before him, but the role of a prophet.
 - d. The people ignore Elizabeth, and turn to Zacharias to see what they might call him (61-62).
 - e. Zacharias’ response (63).
 - f. The result of Zacharias’ response (64).
 - i. In obedience to God, Zachariah’s tongue is loosed and he immediately praises God.
 - ii. The significance of this event is that Zacharias’ faith is not true faith until he acts.
 - iii. The first response of Zacharias is to burst forth in praise.
4. The Response of the People (65-66).
- a. These verses exude with anticipation of what’s to come.

- b. The people respond in awe and fear (65a). Word of what happened begins to spread (65b).
- c. The people don't wonder "who" John will be, but "what" John will be (66).
 - i. The point is that they actually start wondering if John is truly the Forerunner.
 - ii. They begin to wonder if this means that they are indeed the generation that will see the Messiah.
- d. The people recognize the hand of the Lord was upon John (66).
 - i. They knew there was something special about him.
 - ii. "Hand of the Lord" is a common Old Testament phrase in reference to God's power. Specifically, His power regarding divine deliverance.

5. Conclusion.

- a. God was always at work, and He is to this very day.
- b. God initiates promises and always fulfills them.
- c. His great promise for our day is that whoever may call upon the name of Jesus Christ shall be saved.
 - i. Our call is to hear, understand, and believe.
 - ii. However, our faith must be more than mere knowledge, but real live trust and hope.

Small Group Question

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. In what areas of your life does your knowledge of God's Word fall short of a true faith in God's Word.
3. How much of your praise and thankfulness to God focuses on yourself, rather than on what God is doing in the others, the Church, the world, and history?
4. Who are you currently praying for that they might come to a true faith