

Luke 1:57-66 – John's Birth

The birth of a child is always a special time. This one was especially so; the child came through a special promise, and had a special work to do, to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. In Luke so far we have met Zechariah, and then his wife Elisabeth, and then Mary the mother of the Lord. But God had unfinished business with Zechariah, and so we return to him.

1. Zechariah humbled by God

Zechariah had been humbled by God, by losing his speech (and hearing, v62), after he disbelieved God's message to him (v19-20). God humbled Zechariah because he loved him. He had a purpose, to teach him. We train our children and let them experience hard things, to help them. God does the same with his children, Hebrews 12:5-11.

When we are humbled for our pride and unbelief, we are ready to draw nearer to the God of the humble. This humbling continued in Zechariah's life for the nine months of the pregnancy (v36, 57). This must have seemed long; but God always has the right time – he is not impatient like we are. Have you been humbled under God's mighty hand? We are all sinners, and all full of unbelief, until God changes us. There is no religion of continual victory; the Bible teaches us that we must be tested and refined (1 Peter 1:6-9). Has God shown you your sin, and have you mourned over it? If God is showing you your sin, then it is to prepare you to come to Christ.

2. Zechariah tested by God

The child had been born, but Zechariah was still unable to speak. Had God forgotten him? His friends and neighbours came, and wanted to call the child "Zechariah". This was a test to Zechariah. They wanted to honour him; this could well be his only son. It was "only" a name – what did it matter? Tests come to those who would follow Christ. Will they follow him completely, or will they stay back? (Luke 9:57-62, 14:26) Christ saves those who become his disciples, but nobody else – we must "count the cost", and give up everything to follow him. Zechariah passed the test; he said "his name is John" (v63), in obedience to God's word (v13). Then his mouth was opened and he received God's blessing. God commands us to come to him by faith. We cannot see Christ, hell, heaven, the last judgment, forgiveness or eternal life, yet. We must simply believe God's word "in the dark" and obey it. Then we can receive the blessings of salvation.

3. Zechariah blessed by God

Zechariah's speech came straight back and he praised God. When God has completed his purpose in a trial, he can take it away instantly. The result was that God's name was praised. Zechariah rejoiced. The neighbours were in awe. The news spread and people wondered what God was doing (v65-66). God's name was greatly lifted up. This is God's purpose. Has his name been lifted up in your life? Have you received salvation so that now you rejoice? Do your neighbours see the power of God in a new life – honesty, hard-working, loving your family, rejoicing at all times? God was working in Zechariah, preparing for the coming of Christ. Where are you in relationship to Jesus Christ? Are you part of this great history?