

The Old-Time Evangelistic News

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The Kind of Preachers We Need and The Kind of Preacher I Want To Be (Part 2) Luke 1:13-17

Last month we considered an overview of John the Baptist's life and ministry, focusing especially on his faithfulness. We compared how many times he was mentioned in Scripture compared to some other men like Moses and Abraham. We also compared him to Isaiah and Jeremiah—they wrote long books that are in the Bible, but John wrote none. John also had a short ministry while others preached for years. Yet Jesus said of John in Matthew 11:11a—*“Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”* It is not length of ministry or accomplishments that matter. It is faithfulness.

We now move on to consider some other introductory thoughts. I cannot think about John the Baptist without thinking about **His Family**. John's birth was special and unique. Because of the age of his parents, it was miraculous—very similar to Isaac's birth. It is interesting what God recorded in His Word. As has been said so often, the Bible does not contain everything that God knows, but everything that He wants us to know. He records the births of some of His mighty men, but for others He mentions nothing about their births.

For example, many verses contain the promise of Isaac's birth. In Genesis 17 and 18, God gives specific details and promises that a son would be born and even gives the name—Isaac. Genesis 21 records the birth of Isaac. His father, Abraham, is a great man, but when we are first introduced to him at the end of Genesis 11, he is grown.

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Solomon's birth is recorded in II Samuel 12, but David is an older teenager when we encounter him for the first time in I Samuel 16 and he is anointed king. We know nothing of Elijah's family. He appears suddenly in I Kings 17 and is the dominant character in the rest of I Kings, but there is no record of his birth. Many other characters could be mentioned and comparisons could be made, but I mention these just as a matter of interest and observation. As we read through the Bible, our children will often ask why some detail is mentioned about one person, but for another person, some detail that we might like to know is omitted. I tell them plainly, “God did not want us to know that.” That is not to ignore the matter or to be short in my answer. It is the truth. Sometimes we make an issue of something that does not really matter or that the Bible is silent about. There is much in the Bible, and that is what God wants us to know. We should spend our time and energy on what is in the Bible, not on what is not in the Bible.

Notice some details that are given about John's father, Zacharias. He was a priest, belonging to the eighth course, the course of Abia. These courses had been set up by David and are recorded in I Chronicles 24:1-19. His duty in Luke 1:9 was to burn incense. Because the high priest was the only one allowed to burn incense (Exodus 30:7), some commentators think that Zacharias was the high priest at this time. By the time we come to the New Testament, the office of the high priest was an appointed position. It is said that the Roman leader appointed the high priest and would remove them as well. If this is the case, it is very possible that Zacharias was serving as high priest at this time. He would only serve in this position for a little while. Luke 2:23 says that when his time was finished, he went to his own house, which according to secular history was in the hill country south of Jerusalem.

Zacharias lived a righteous life and walked *“in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”* (Luke 1:6). This was mighty impressive and a great commendation, especially considering how the nation of Israel as a whole would respond to

Christ in just a few years. Also, many of the priests were very wicked men. Annas and Caiaphas would be high priests in later years, and they would lead in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. Do not ever accept the excuse that everyone else is doing wrong and compromising, so we had better join with them. The majority has always done wrong, but those who really love God did right, even if they stood alone. It is not said of many, but Zacharias did right, even when everyone else was doing wrong.

As Zacharias was performing his duty in the temple, Gabriel appeared to him and told him that his prayer was heard—Elisabeth was going to have a baby. He doubted and was struck dumb. At the baby's birth, Zacharias wrote that the baby's name would be John. His tongue was loosed, he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he offered one of the greatest anthems of praise to God.

Scripture also records some interesting thoughts about John's mother, Elisabeth. She was of the daughters of Aaron. It is said of her also that she was righteous and walked "*in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*" When her cousin Mary came to visit her, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and offered praise to God (Luke 1:41-45).

I cannot help but think of how influential John's parents were in his life. I know that he was a unique man and that his character and ministry was prophesied in Luke 1:15-17. But I think that Zacharias and Elisabeth helped to mold and make John all that he would be. It certainly was not an accident that they were his parents. God especially chose them to be the parents of John the Baptist. He chose parents that were righteous and practiced righteousness. He chose parents that would be filled with the Holy Ghost and would praise Him. Those characteristics alone are patterns that all parents should follow. To me the statement that they were righteous before God would apply to salvation. To rear godly children, parents must be saved. The "*walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*" refers to their service after salvation. It is not

enough just to profess salvation before our children, we must practice it before them as well. Children will see the difference. They know what you are like at home. In my opinion, that is why so many children who are brought up in good churches, end up in rebellion and out of church. They do not see parents who practice what they profess. John the Baptist turned out right and was mightily used of the Lord. One reason was because he had parents righteous before God and walking after God.

I must comment on the word "*all*" that is found in verse 6. Zacharias and Elisabeth did not pick and choose what they wanted to obey. They did not ignore something that they did not like. They did not skip over anything either. They followed "*all*" of God's Word. We in this 21st century must be like them. We cannot ignore any of God's Word. To sum up II Timothy 3:16-17, **all** Scripture is inspired and **all** is profitable. We must listen, obey, and practice all of God's Word.

John's parents were both filled with the Holy Ghost and both praised God. I know that the filling here is following the Old Testament pattern, but the example is still applicable. Besides we have the command in Ephesians 5:18 to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" We will never be the right kind of parents until we are filled with the Spirit. We need to follow the example of Zacharias and Elisabeth.

They both praised God. Our children need to see and hear us give thanks to God for His blessings on us. Do your children hear you pray? Do they hear you offer thanks to God when He does answer prayer? Zacharias and Elisabeth praised God. They are great examples of model parents. More of us should try to follow their example.

John was also unique in **His Features**. There are some things that I would like to emulate John in, but these I will leave to him alone. His Apparel is mentioned as being a "*raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins.*" His Appetite was locusts and wild

honey. Aside from the honey, all of this seems strange to us. But it indicates that John was a common man. He was not concerned about the finer things of this life or this world. He was intent on one purpose—doing what God wanted him to do. In that regard, we should be like John.

The final introductory thought concerns **His Fame**. There is The Declaration about John. He was prophesied about in the Old Testament in both Isaiah and Malachi. Isaiah 40:3 says, “*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.*” Malachi 3:1a says, “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.*” Both of these verses are quoted in the New Testament as fulfilled in John the Baptist.

We also see The Duration. John’s ministry lasted about six months. From what I can gather, it began when he was thirty and ended when Jesus’ began. Some Bible scholars do allow an overlap in their ministries, so John’s would have lasted a year, but either way, it was not long.

Lastly, notice The Dislike. John was imprisoned about two years and then beheaded. He made people mad, and his ministry was not long, but what an impact it had. He did what he was sent to do—prepare the way for Christ.