

<sup>7</sup>Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. <sup>58</sup>Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. <sup>59</sup>On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. <sup>60</sup>But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." <sup>61</sup>They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." <sup>62</sup>Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. <sup>63</sup>He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. <sup>64</sup>Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. <sup>65</sup>Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. <sup>66</sup>All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him. <sup>67</sup>Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke (this prophecy) a prophecy.

On the surface, when you read this text you may think, "why are we reading about the story of John the Baptist now"? Kinda reminds me of Advent or Christmas. And I might agree with you, but there are some good "nuggets" of knowledge that we can glean from this text.

This passage is important to us Christians because it lays a foundation of understanding of what God is doing in sending John the Baptist and then Jesus the Messiah within six months of each other. As we study the prophecies, we begin to get a glimmer of what God has in mind.

The Jewish ceremony of circumcision on the eighth day after birth represents placing the sign of the Covenant upon each male child that becomes part of the nation (Genesis 17:11; Leviticus 12:3). In some ways, as a naming ceremony, it corresponds to christening or baptism practiced by many Christian groups.

Apparently, Zechariah was seen by the townspeople as both dumb AND deaf, though the angel had said only that he would be unable to speak until the child's birth (1:20). How Elizabeth knew the child's name was to be John we aren't told, but likely Zechariah had communicated this to her. At any rate, the townspeople won't take Elizabeth's word for it. They go to Zechariah, who requests a "little (wooden) writing tablet, especially of a writing-tablet for notes "(Greek *pinakidion*)." When he writes "John" they are all dumbfounded that he confirms Elizabeth's name. "Astonishment" (NIV) or "marveled" (KJV) is the common Greek verb *thaumazo*, "to be extraordinarily impressed or disturbed by something, "wonder, marvel, be astonished."

That Zechariah gave the same name as Elizabeth may have been a sign to the townspeople, but suddenly a much greater sign is given. After bestowing the name the Angel had given to him -- John, "beloved" (1:13) -- Zechariah now begins to speak after at least nine months of silence.

The word "salvation" occurs in this prophecy in verses 69, 71, and 77 and represents a major theme of the message. The root idea of the Greek noun *soteria* is "deliverance, preservation" from impending death, and then "salvation" or deliverance from any threat, enemy, or captor.[10] In the Old Testament salvation often refers to military and political deliverance from Israel's enemies. In the New Testament, however, salvation almost always refers to a spiritual concept -- salvation from the power of sin.

Something in us wants to be recognized, acclaimed, appreciated. We usually want to get credit for the good we do (and our sins forgotten). But, if the truth be told, few get the credit they deserve. Many, like John, carry on ministries of tremendous importance to prepare for the future, but are seldom recognized for that role. If John had not prepared the people with a spiritual revival that emphasized repentance from sin, baptism, and forgiveness, Jesus' could not have built on this foundation -- he would have had to build it himself, diverting him from his chief ministry and emphasis.<sup>1</sup>

You may be one of God's preparers so that the ministry of your church in the future can be more effective. It doesn't matter whether or not people appreciate you. But it does matter that you are faithful to God who called you to this ministry of preparation so that his work might go forward unimpeded. Go and do the work to which you were called- even if it is from your couch or office. Fully live your vocation knowing that the salvific work of Christ goes before us, leading us by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God.

Always a servant of Christ, Pastor Rosy <><

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Ralph Wilson, website: JesusWalk: Luke's Gospel, "Birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 57-80), [http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/1\\_57-80.htm](http://www.jesuswalk.com/lessons/1_57-80.htm)