



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #007
Jesus’ 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
Jesus’ Birth and Growth into Maturity

The Promise of a Special Prophet to Prepare for Jesus’ Ministry
Luke 1.11-17

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11 Then, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 Because Zechariah saw him, he was troubled, and fear gripped him.

13 But the angel said to him, "Stop being afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and great delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

16 "He will also turn back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people permanently prepared for the Lord."

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus.*

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Temple in Jerusalem
Time	15 Months Before the Birth of Jesus
Stage of Jesus’ Life	Stage II: His 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
Chapter 2	Faith, Prayer and Prophecy Prepared for Jesus’ Incarnation
Section #007	The Promise of a Special Prophet to Prepare For Jesus’ Ministry

We begin our meditation on today’s reading by noting its direct connection to the lesson on Prayer of the last reading. "*Stop being afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard.*" God answered the

fervent, persevering prayers of Zechariah and Elizabeth abundantly beyond their wildest hopes and dreams. It was a miraculous answer, for both Elizabeth and Zachariah were infertile--far beyond the ability to conceive children together.

Not only did the promise of a son meet their personal needs in a wonderful way, but it was crucial to the progress of the kingdom of God. Because the promised child had a special relationship to Jesus, he was given a unique role and status as a prophet, that none of the other prophets in the Old Testament (OT) were blessed to receive.

The uniqueness and glory of the birth and life of Jesus was accented by having his own, personal prophet to serve him, and prepare the way for his ministry. No other person in history has been served in this way by a bonafide, God-sent prophet. There is no one like Jesus.

John would be unique in many ways. Each aspect of that uniqueness was an expression of the greater glory of the Messiah whom John served. The angel Gabriel mentioned several aspects of John's uniqueness in his announcement of God's answer to the prayers of the elderly couple. We will consider these now.

The first part of Gabriel's announcement addressed John's uniqueness to his parents, friends, and family (LK 1.13-15A). Here they are:

(1) John was an answer to prayer. (2) He would not be named in the traditional way, after his father or other near relative, but he would be named by God himself, like Jesus was. "John" means "beloved of God"--a human name. Jesus would be given a Divine name, appropriate to the God-man. (3) As a miraculous child of their old age, John would be a great source of joy to his parents, extended family, and friends. (4) More than anything else, his parents and everyone who knew him would rejoice in the way this child would be great in God's eyes, and serve him faithfully. This is the greatest source of joy that godly parents can have in their children--to see them love and serve their God.

The second part of Gabriel's announcement described John's uniqueness as God's servant (1.15B-17). (1) He would be dedicated to God from birth as a Nazarite (see Num.6). (2) Not only would he be anointed by the Holy Spirit as a prophet, he would actually be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. (This was fulfilled when his mother Elizabeth met Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus. LK 1.41-44) (3) He would be the prophet that the final words of the Old Testament spoke of:

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents, lest I come and smite the land with a curse." Malachi 4.5-6 (NASV)

We can see how the words of Gabriel referenced this prophecy several times. John was the only prophet (beside Jesus) whose coming was prophesied in the Scriptures. This uniqueness was intended to point in a small way to the much greater way that the birth and life of Jesus was prophesied by the OT.

Gabriel went on to say that John would have a special role in preparing the way for Messiah. He would minister *"in the spirit and power of Elijah."* Elijah performed many miracles. John did none. The "power" of Elijah referred to here was not the power to do signs and wonders, but of his Spirit-given ability to create change (repentance) in the lives of those he ministered to. The ability to affect change in the human heart is much more powerful and important than the ability to do a physical miracle.

The change of mind and heart--repentance--that would be the hallmark of John's prophetic ministry would cause parents to turn their attention to their children, and vice-versa. This is a key point that is often misunderstood. God gave the responsibility for spiritual instruction of children to their parents

under the Law. Duet 6.4-9 is the prime example. When parents get right with God, and passionately love him with all their hearts, the spiritual nurture of their children becomes their priority. Creating homes filled with the Word, worship, and inimitable love and effervescent joy of ceaseless fellowship with God is the proof that parents really know their God. True spirituality even thrives in the nitty gritty of family life.

In addition to everything above, John's uniqueness as the last of the OT prophets--the first to appear in 400 years--was nothing compared to the honor of actually introducing the Messiah to the world. Every other OT prophet looked forward to Jesus' coming. John actually prepared and inaugurated it. He was the only prophet to know Jesus in the flesh, and to minister simultaneously with him for a period of about six months. For this reason Jesus said that John was the greatest of the OT prophets.

This cumulative answer to prayer was so spectacular that Zechariah could not even believe it!

APPLICATION:

God uses deep suffering to drive us to Him in urgent, persistent prayer. Then he bends our desires into harmony with His eternal kingdom purposes, and brings His eternal glory to pass in every answer. The Trinity longs to involve us in their fellowship and work through the mystery of prayer.

Therefore, God always works through prayer, the promises of his Word, and His Spirit. He perfectly prepared the life of Jesus like this, in order that He can work through every member of Christ's body today n exactly the same way.

How is the combination of prayer, the Word, and His Spirit directing your life today?

What do you need more of? How will you pursue that need?

How will you influence your family toward God's fulness in Jesus?