



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #012
Jesus’ 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
Jesus’ Birth and Growth into Maturity

The Birth of John: Zechariah’s Journey From Discipline to Praise
Luke 1.57-66

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57 When the time had come for Elizabeth to have her baby, she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord was increasing his mercy to her, and they were rejoicing with her.

59 On the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they were about to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

61 They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

62 Then, they made signs to his father to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." They all were astonished by this.

64 Immediately, his mouth was opened and his tongue was set free, and he continued speaking and blessing God.

65 All the neighbors were filled with reverent awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea, people continued talking about all these things. 66 All who heard this wondered about it, asking in their hearts, "What is this child going to be?" For the Lord's hand was with him.

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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	Elizabeth’s Home; The Hill Country of Judea
Time	6 Months Before the Birth of Jesus
Jesus’ Life Context	Jesus’ 30 Years of Preparation for Ministry
	Jesus’ Birth and Growth Into Maturity
Title	The Birth of John: Zechariah’s Journey from Discipline to Praise

In today's reading we can savor a fore-taste of the obedience that Jesus came to produce in all his disciples, and the joy and thanksgiving that will accompany it. The remarkable circumstance of John the Immerser's birth was another major step in preparation for the Messiah's birth and ministry.

Over the 9 months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Zechariah's silence had worked a deep transformation in him, under the disciplining hand of God. He had much time to reflect, repent, and pray. The silence became a "fast" of human speech, so that he could seek after God with all his heart, and be ready to speak out his faith, rather than his disobedience.

When John was born, Zechariah was more than ready. The law prescribed circumcision on the 8th day for male babies. It was the custom to name the first born son after his father, or some other important relative, because the family line would continue through the first-born son. However, Zechariah now fully believed everything Gabriel had spoken to him, and so he was committed to giving his son the name that God had commanded: "John."

God honored Zechariah's faith expressed in obedience by instantly ending Zechariah's condition of being unable to speak. Zechariah responded by bursting forth in prayers of praise and thanksgiving to His God. In the next reading we will see how that prayer turned into prophecy.

God's disciplining love led to wonderful growth and transformation for Zechariah, culminating in a heart so full of the Holy Spirit that God's aged servant was ultimately used to write Scripture that will last forever. This is the kind of fruit that Jesus came to produce in those who believe in him--eternal glory for God and man.

Zechariah's journey from silence to becoming an author of Scripture--a powerful ministry in praise and proclamation of the Messiah--not only prepared the way for the coming of God's Son, but it also demonstrated the God-glorifying kind of change that His grace works in everyone who believes in Jesus.

APPLICATION:

God's discipline can be very tough. But it is all an expression of His love, designed to bring us into unfathomable depths of intimacy with Him. Jesus himself would later declare: ***"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline. Be zealous, therefore, and repent."*** (Rev. 3:19)

Discipline leads to new vistas of usefulness and power in ministry. It's more than worth the painfulness of cleansing and pruning. Zechariah is such an encouraging example of this truth.

Is your desire to seek after God with all your heart as strong as it can possibly be? Is your repentance as full and deep as you can conceive?

Specifically, what still remains in you that God is seeking to remove? How will you yield it up to God? When will you do that?

Think of specific times and ways God's discipline has created growth and blessing for you in the past. Thank and praise Him for each transformation again.

Be encouraged...failure and weakness is the seedbed of abundant grace when we yield it up to Him!