

We have been amazed by the miraculous nature of the births of Isaac, Obed, Samuel...
Now we travel down through the ages some 1600 years to again see the miraculous nature of the workings of God... in a baby.

God's ways are wonderful.

1. God's ways are recorded in God's Word. vss. 1-4

author = Luke: same as Acts ("we" portions), extensive vocabulary, attention to detail (historian)
and Luke did his homework in writing. Some people, even scholars who want to cast doubt on the Bible...
but in Luke we find many historical details... and they all fit with or even correct what we know of the times.
why the effort on Luke's part? vs. 4 Every little bit matters!
"the exact truth" = nothing wrong, precisely what God did... revelation... an amazing God!

2. God's ways fit God's purposes. vss. 5-17

Let us recognize the timing of this miracle. Again, like the time of the judges, things are not good in Israel.
Those ruling are not godly people.
There have not been good leaders and prophets.
The Lord seems not to be speaking and acting on behalf of His people.
God's people are oppressed, now by the Romans.

Now, God meets with one man. He is not famous nor would you have picked him out as important or influential.
Not him or his wife.

meeting with God vss. 5-10

Zacharias = "Yahweh has remembered again"
Elisabeth = "My God is my fortune"
their heritage was priestly, their lifestyle was "righteous before God", they had no child... a deep sadness.
But, though they do not know it yet, it is part of the secret plan of God... like Naomi, like Hannah
For Zechariah, this is the high point of his career, chosen by lot to present the evening offering,
An offering (Ex. 29:38-42) during the evening prayers in the Temple in Jerusalem (well attended)

leads to a miracle vss. 11-13a

He was going in to meet with God... and God met with him! Isn't this how it so often happens?
How can we expect God to meet with us if we are not taking time to meet with Him?
how did he respond? Fear fell upon him... but angel says, "no need to fear" Why?
Because of the reason the angel is there: an answer to prayer... God loves to do things in response to our prayers.

results in a man vss. 13b-14 (a son... John... God picks good names)

"joy and gladness" for them (collateral blessings of God's purposes), "joy" for many = Salvation

with a mission vss. 15-17

Great before the Lord... no wine or liquor, filled with the Spirit (before birth **Luke 1:41**) **Eph. 5:18**
vs. 16 "will turn many... back to the Lord..." = call of the OT prophets
vs. 17 "will go before Him (Jesus)" = (Luke 3) like Elijah... in 3 ways (all related to his message)

- turn hearts of fathers back to the children... Mal. 3:24 (relational reconciliation) *real change begins with adults*
- turn disobedient to the attitude of the righteous: What attitude makes disobedient righteous? Desire to please God.
- make ready a people prepared for the Lord... filled with OT meaning 2 Sam. 7:23-24, Is. 43
- Look how God used John's message to prepare people for Jesus.

He still uses this message to prepare people for Jesus:

His way = lead us to repentance (seeing you cannot please God on your own)
His purpose = to save (turning to God in humble trust... look to Jesus to make you righteous, complete, to please God)

3. God's ways are to be trusted by God's people. vss. 18-23

Zacharias has a very human response... old, wife is old...
He is living at a time and place when they are unused to God's miracles... only trials, difficulty, disappointments...
Angel's answer, "Who do you think you are talking to?"

His ways are not to be doubted... He loves to do things in ways we would never think of.

Rom. 11:33

Is. 55:9ff

What He does is not open to debate or deliberation... not a democracy... cannot ask God for a recount.

In fact, His will carries with it a threat of discipline: "When God speaks... listen!"

So, he went out to the people... mute.

4. God's ways are full of God's blessing. vss. 24-25

five months alone... marveling at God's goodness.

He really notices us with His goodness: Why? Who knows? His ways are wonderful

God loved to take away the disgrace of those who love Him... why He says, "He who honors Me I will honor."

He cares even for the little things (and people)... that (who) often are really not so little.

Now, let us look forward to the fulfillment of the Lord's words.

The birth of this baby:

5. John's birth was a testimony to God's goodness. vss. 57-58

God shows his mercy to Elizabeth.

vs. 58 "The Lord had magnified His great mercy toward her." = rather than looking small... it looked big!

"They were rejoicing with her" = happy because of the goodness of God to Elizabeth.

6. John's birth was a testimony to God's grace. vss. 59-66

God shows His mercy to Zacharias.

vs. 59 The usual way of things was that the firstborn was named after his father.

"John" = God has been gracious.

God's naming the child (rather than his dad's) = importance of the child to God's work and plans

vss. 61-62 The crowd didn't believe Elizabeth!

vs. 64 He regained his speech... look at vss. 8-23

vss. 65-66 "fear came on all those living around them..."

What happens when people realize that God is really doing something!

7. John's birth was a testimony to God's greatness. vss. 67-80

God shows His mercy to all people.

He does so by saving us... this prophesy, prayer, song is all about salvation...

vs. 68 "redemption"

vs. 69 "salvation"

vs. 71 "salvation"

vs. 72 "mercy"

vs. 74 "rescued"

vs. 77 "salvation" "forgiveness"

vs. 78 "mercy"

vs. 79 The reality of the Lord's guiding presence...

vss. 68-69 God is great in His salvation. He believes it even before it happens.

vss. 70-75 God is great in saving through the prophets and patriarchs.

vss. 76-79 God is great in using Zechariah's son, John, to prepare the way for the Messiah.

vs. 80 conclusion... John's preparation for a great purpose. **Luke 7:24-30**