

“His Name is John”

Sermon Notes

Reading: Malachi 2:17-3:5.

□ **The birth of John proclaims, but does not inaugurate the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God.**

1. Zechariah's _____ and deafness reflects the spiritual barrenness of the unsaved, no matter how great their own _____ efforts to achieve a right relationship with God.

2. God's rescue plan outstrips human effort and defies human understanding, requiring a _____ and undeserved gift: the long-awaited _____.

3. As a sign of God's faithfulness and mercy, John's _____ birth pointed not to himself but to the One for whom he was simply the _____.

Next Week

Christmas Eve: “You Shall Call His Name Jesus” – Luke 2:1-7

Christmas Day: “Good News of Great Joy” – Luke 2:8-21

Community Group Study Guide
For the Week of December 18th - 24th

Please read Luke 1:57-80.

1. In verse 60, Elizabeth insists that the child's name is not Zechariah, but John.
 - a. Do you find it strange that Elizabeth knew that the child should be named "John"? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you think this implies an independent revelation to Elizabeth? Or do you think Zechariah might have found a way to communicate the story of his temple experience to her? Explain.

2. The friends and neighbors are reluctant to accept Elizabeth's declaration that the child's name will be John.
 - a. Why do you think they objected to the name?
 - b. The Hebrew word for John means "Yahweh is merciful." Do you think the name may have had special relevance to Elizabeth? Why or why not?
 - c. Do you think the name might have had an entirely different significance to a father cursed with muteness?
 - d. Why did the relatives and neighbors find it so surprising that Zechariah agreed with Elizabeth's name for the child?
 - e. Do you know something at this point that most of the people present for John's circumcision did not know?

3. In verse 68, as Zechariah regains his ability to speak, he praises God for having redeemed his people.
 - a. Who are God's people as Zechariah utters this prophecy?
 - b. Redemption means release from bondage. To whom are God's people in bondage?
 - c. Is this bondage physical (see verse 74), spiritual (see verse 77), or both (see verse 79)?

4. In verse 69, Zechariah praises God for having "raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David."
 - a. According to Psalm 18:2, who is the horn of salvation?
 - b. In 1 Kings 1:50-51 and 2:28, Adonijah and Joab grab hold of the horns of the altar of sacrifice when they seek mercy from King Solomon. What is the connection between the altar of sacrifice and mercy?

5. The name Zechariah means "Yahweh remembers." For the meaning of the name John, see question 2b, above. Notice that mercy and remembrance are both mentioned in verse 72.

- a. According to verse 72, what is the connection between memory and mercy?
- b. Why does Israel need God's mercy? (See Deuteronomy 11:26-28).
- c. Who has forgotten what?

6. Zechariah names John as the forerunner predicted by Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3) and Malachi (Malachi 3:1).

- a. Is it clear from the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi that this forerunner will precede the coming Messiah?
- b. In the metaphor of preparing the Lord's road, what sort of road is John going to prepare?
- c. What must one first appreciate before seeing the news of salvation as good news?