

## Comments on Luke 1

**1 FORASMUCH as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.**

v1-4 As other disciples of Christ have written concerning the Messiah's advent (v. 1), Luke also undertakes the effort being a firsthand witness of Jesus' ministry (v. 2). Luke sees it fitting to chronologically write what he has thoroughly investigated, so he may communicate it to Theophilus (v. 3). Thus, may Theophilus be certain in the truth of what he is studying.

Luke's obvious intent is to communicate the firsthand witnesses' testimony concerning Jesus' ministry to Theophilus. Luke also wrote the book of the Acts of the Apostles for the same person, cp. Acts 1:1.

v2 The KJV is obscure. The New American Standard (NAS) renders the text as follows:

just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses  
and servants of the word have handed them down to us,

Luke is making reference to the OT Scriptures written "from the beginning" and handed down to his present day. Luke's intent is to document the history of the Messiah. Note Luke is also saying the OT contains the "word" or the gospel.

v3 "Theophilus", nothing is known of who this individual is. The appellation "most excellent" applied to him is similar to that used by Paul in addressing Felix (cf. 23:26; 24:3) and Festus (cf. 26:25), who were both Romans of notoriety. So, Theophilus may be a Roman of notoriety as well.

As the name "Theophilus" means "God-love", perhaps Luke is using the name as a general appellation to all those who love God as opposed to it being a first-person pronoun.

**5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife [was] of the daughters of Aaron, and her name [was] Elisabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were**

[now] well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. 11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw [him], he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. 14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. 15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. 18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. 19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings. 20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. 21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple. 22 And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. 24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on [me], to take away my reproach among men.

v5-24 The birth of John Baptist is foretold and his conception is accomplished. Zacharias and Elizabeth are both of the lineage of Levi through Aaron and have never had any children (v. 5-7). Zacharias is in the Temple performing the priest's duties when an angel appears to him and tells him he will be having a son who is the prophesied forerunner of the Messiah (v. 8-22). After finishing his duties as priest, Zacharias returns home his wife conceives (v. 23-25).

v5 John Baptist' parents were both of the tribe of Levi through Aaron, so John bears the birthright to the Aaronic Priesthood. This coincides with his calling as explained in D&C 84:27-28.

v6-7 Both parents were just and observed the Law (v. 6), were childless, and beyond the age of childbearing (v. 7). Luke's intent is to make it clear the couple were eligible for a miracle because they were just, and when it does occur it is definitely a miracle because Elisabeth was post-menopausal.

Luke is also placing Elisabeth among the other OT matriarchs who are childless, but not because of unrighteousness, and therefore have their fortunes reversed by Providence. Other OT matriarchs who experience reversal: Sarah (cf. Gen. 16:1), Rebecca (cf. Gen. 25:21), Rachel (cf. Gen. 30:1), mother of Samson (cf. Judges 13:2), Hannah (cf. 1 Sam. 1-2).

v8-10 Zachariah's responsibility as a Temple Priest is to clean the incense altar from the previous burnings and offer the daily incense offering per Exod. 30:7-8.

Apparently this activity was well attended by prayerful people. Although there is no scriptural requirement for such, it apparently was an observed tradition. Apparently the people who congregated at this time recognized the symbolism of the incense smoke rising to heaven to be representative of their prayers rising to heaven, and so they congregated at this hour. This would agree with the angel's statement in v. 13 as he is responding to Zachariah's petition concerning the barren state of his wife.

The activity at present is not the Avodah service on Yom Kippur where the high priest would approach the Holy of Holies and burn incense before the altar. Zacharias is not presented as the high priest and there is nothing in the text to suggest it is a festival week. Rather, the course of his actions are presented as part of the more mundane service priests were required to perform as part of their duties.

v11-17 While administering in the Temple, an angel appears to Zechariah (v. 11). He is disturbed by the appearance and is afraid (v. 12). The angel informs him not to fear, and that the Lord has heard his petition to have a son, who will be named "John" (v. 13). He will be very happy at his son's birth, as will many others as well (v. 14), because his son will be a great spiritual man (v. 15) who will cause many to return to the Lord (v. 16). The angel then informs him his son is the one predicted by Malachi to be the forerunner of the Messiah (v. 17).

v11 "on the right side of the altar", being on the right side means one is in good favor, like being on the right hand of God. Thus, the angel comes as a messenger of good will to him.

v12-13 "fear fell upon him...fear not", a standard scriptural

formula for mortals viewing obvious heavenly messengers. Some heavenly messengers appear in such a manner they cannot be discerned as anything but mortal, as in the case with Gideon. In this case it is plain the angel is a heavenly being, and therefore must be appearing in glory and light. Hence his fear, and the angel's letting him know there is nothing to fear as he is bearing good news.

v13 "thy prayer is heard", he was obviously petitioning the Lord for a son. Whether this was some long sought after importuning, or a more immediate prayer while performing the altar service we are not informed.

It may be possible the petition was in fact Elisabeth's and not his and the angel is treating them as a unity. This seems likely given his incredulity in the ensuing verses, as why would he be disbelieving if he were to receive the thing he was petitioning for. This is also supported by v. 25 where Elisabeth says the Lord has seen her and taken note of her to take away her reproach.

"John", the name yohanan means "the Lord has shown favor". The Lord applies names with meaning to people when He has plans for them, cf. Gen. 16:11, Gen. 32:28, Isa. 7:14, Isa. 8:18.

v14 "joy...gladness...rejoice", a rather emphatic description over the birth of this child. This joy is seen in part in the exultation of both parents in v. 41-43 and v. 67-79.

v15 The child is to be raised as a Nazarite, a consecrated man (cf. Num. 6), and as such the child will be filled with the Spirit. The abstinence from the physical wine is put in contrast to his drinking deeply of the Spirit. John will be filled with Holy Spirit as opposed to unholy spirits.

v16 John's ministry is to turn the people to the Lord, to call them to repentance.

v17 John is to act as the messenger in Malachi 4:6 in that he is to turn fathers and sons together and all to the Lord. John falls into that category of the spirit of Elijah as one who is to bring about spiritual revolution in Israel.

v18-23 Zacharias is surprised and incredulous, as was Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:8), at the promise of a child as both he and his wife were old (v. 18). The angel responds with an authority statement (v. 19) and a sign (v. 20) addressing his unbelief. The people praying outside wait for Zacharias to come out and wondering at his delay (v. 21). When he finally emerges he is

deaf and dumb and therefore must motion at them. They realize he has had some epiphany (v. 22). After his stint at Temple service is finished he returns home (v. 23).

v18 It appears Luke's intent is to deliberately draw parallels between the miraculous births of both Isaac and John.

"Whereby shall I know this?", the NAS renders this "How shall I know this [for certain]?", the Concordant Literal NT (CLNT) renders it "By what shall I know this?" Zacharias is asking for a sign. He is asking the angel for proof that this seemingly impossible thing will come about. And he gets it when the angel strikes him deaf and dumb. This, his sign-seeking, is what the angel is referring to in v. 20 when he is addressing his disbelief.

v19 "I am Gabriel", this is the same angel that subsequently visits Mary in v. 26. LDS sources equate Gabriel with the mortal Noah.

"that stand in the presence of God", an authority statement. When his pronouncement of the imminent miraculous conception of John is questioned, Gabriel responds by informing him that he bears the authority and endorsement of God.

"am sent", the angel has left the presence of God to deliver the good news. This necessarily implies the message he carries is one from God and he is sent by God.

v20 "thou shalt be dumb", he was apparently both deaf and mute as the people beckon to him in v. 62 just as he beckons to them in v. 22.

This kind of punitive miracle is rare in the Scriptures. Perhaps the underlying issue is the Lord wants him silenced until the event takes place so as to prevent news of the miraculous from spreading and attracting sign-seekers. The punishment may also be derivative of Isa. 6:5. There Isaiah is confessing his lowliness before the Lord when seeing a vision, but here he questions the Lord when seeing a vision. The result is instead of being purified as was Isaiah, he is instead struck dumb as Isaiah feared he himself would be.

In any case, the punishment fits the situation as he has questioned the angel's authority with his mouth and doesn't believe what he has heard with his ears, so they are both summarily stopped up.

It is also ironic, as he asks for a sign as evidence, and he gets it, but it ends up being punitive against him.

Also, note the punitive action against him is not that he is

not permitted to have the promised son, as that would thwart the Lord's plans. Instead, he is humbled by being smitten and convinced of the power of the Lord.

v21 The people praying outside were apparently waiting for him to reemerge so as to conclude the prayer session. His delay caused them to wonder what was going on.

v24-25 With Zechariah's return home Elisabeth conceives. She symbolically hides herself from view to represent how the Lord hid Himself from her in that she was not granted any children these many years. But, she will ultimately unveil herself as the Lord has unveiled Himself, taken note of her, and taken away her disgrace at being childless.

v24 "hid herself five months", why five months for seclusion is obscure. Apparently she simply went into seclusion and it wasn't until Mary's visit, apparently during the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy per v. 26, that she came out of seclusion. This would fit as the seclusion would have started once she knew she was pregnant and Mary visits during the 6<sup>th</sup> month, thus it would have persisted for about 5 months. If this is the case, then the length of 5 months is arbitrary.

**26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name [was] Mary. 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, [thou that art] highly favoured, the Lord [is] with thee: blessed [art] thou among women. 29 And when she saw [him], she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. 34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. 38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.**

v26-38 Gabriel, the same as who visited Zacharias some six

months earlier, visits Mary, who is betrothed to a man named Joseph, who is lineage of David (v. 26-27). The angel salutes and blesses her as highly favored of the Lord (v. 28), at which she is surprised and even troubled (v. 29). The angel senses her anxiety and tells her not to fear because she is favored of God (v. 30). He then informs her she will be bringing forth a child named Jesus (v. 31), who shall be the Son of God and the Messiah on the throne of David (v. 32), who shall reign over Israel eternally (v. 33). Mary asks the angel how this is possible as she is chaste (v. 34). The angel responds that the conception shall not be after physical means, but the Holy Spirit via the authority of God shall bring about the conception, and therefore the child shall be the Son of God (v. 35). As evidence of the miraculous nature of the work presently at hand, the angel informs her concerning Elisabeth's conception (v. 36), he then states nothing is impossible with God (v. 37). And Mary submits to the angel, thereby submitting to the will of God. The angel then departs, closing the interview (v. 38).

v27 "virgin", the Greek here is "parthenos" which necessarily implies chastity as in not "knowing" a man per v. 34.

"espoused to a man", betrothed in the sense of promised in marriage, but not yet legally married. The typical betrothal period at that time was one year. During the betrothal the couple were effectively legally married, but were not permitted to consummate the marriage.

"Joseph...Mary", both of the parents have names drawing on ancient OT tradition. Joseph taking his namesake from the son of Jacob, and Mary taking her namesake from Moses' sister Miriam.

v28 "Hail", a better translation would be "Rejoice!"

"the Lord is with thee", a standard statement of divine support granted to all those whom the Lord calls, cp. Exod. 3:12, Num. 14:9, Josh. 1:9, Isa. 43:5, Jer. 15:20.

v29 Mary's surprise and agitation would be understandable given an angel manifesting itself, apparently in her own home, telling her to rejoice because the Lord has chosen her. Chosen her for what? The angel hasn't even told her for what yet, so Mary is surely overwhelmed at this point.

v32-33 The angel's statements concerning Jesus' ministry is derivative of Nathan's oracle delivered to David appearing in 2 Sam. 7:9-16.

v34 Mary is certainly baffled as to how she can conceive without marital relations. However, there is also certainly a concern about matters of adultery as she is betrothed to Joseph at this point. Fornicating while betrothed was a capital offense according to the Law.

Also, contrast Mary's doubt with Zacharais' in v. 18. Mary doesn't understand how she can conceive outside of the physical means known to her, which are at present prohibited to her. Zacharias' doubt is that it is even possible that he and his wife can have children, and he asks for a sign.

v35 This verse states unequivocally that Mary's conception is achieved via the Holy Spirit, as does Matt. 1:18. The Holy Spirit is bearing the Father's authority and edict in doing so, and this Son who is conceived is in fact the Son of the Father and not the Holy Spirit. This is corroborated by Alma 7:10, which reads:

And behold, he shall be born of Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God.

Furthermore, in the present verse, as the Anchor Bible states, the Greek employed is:

highly figurative; neither verb, 'eperchesthai', 'come upon', or 'epikiazein', 'overshadow, cast a shadow over', has an immediate connotation of conception, let alone sexual implication. They are otherwise unattested in a context that would suggest these nuances. They are figurative expressions of the mysterious intervention of God's Spirit and power which will bring about Jesus' Davidic role and his divine affiliation." This is the exact opposite of that appearing in v. 34 where Mary says "I know [Gr:ginoskein] not a man". The Greek 'ginoskein' is a euphemism for marital relations well attested in both Hellenistic Greek and the LXX.

'eperchesthai' is used by Luke in 11:22, 21:26 as well as in Acts 1:8, 8:24, 13:40, 14:19. And he uses 'epikiazein' in 9:35 and Acts 5:15. In none of these uses is there anything even remotely sexual in the context, and 'epikiazein' is used in a transfigural setting.

Despite these clear and unequivocal scriptural statements, early LDS Church leaders, including Brigham Young and Orson Pratt



(as is well documented in the Journal of Discourses), forwarded the view that Mary was caught up into heaven by the Spirit where she and the Father conceived the Son in the only manner they could consider possible. J. Fielding Smith and B. R. McConkie also forwarded this view, presumably out of deference to Young, despite it being branded as questionable in a First Presidency statement on the 1st ed. Mormon Doctrine issued during David O. McKay's tenure.

This ascriptural folk doctrine persists today among LDS Church members. And, it is not uncommon for anti-mormons to make light of this.

"Holy Ghost...holy thing...Son of God", as Mary is betrothed to Joseph and a virgin, her concern is losing her virginity and committing adultery as is expressed in v. 34. The angel's response to her addresses her concern by emphatically stating her virtue will not be compromised in this conception: the Holy Ghost will bring it about, the child will be holy, and will bear the name the Son of God, which God is clearly Holy. There is no risk over her virtue being compromised.

v36 Elisabeth's conception is held up as evidence of another miraculous birth. The KJV says "cousin", but the Greek means "relative" and how closely related they are we are not informed. As both Mary and Joseph are Judah via David and Zachariah and Elisabeth are Levi via Aaron, chances are they are connected by marriage through kin.

v37 The statement is probably intended to be a paraphrase of Gen. 18:14. God, being the Creator, can exercise power over nature in ways we cannot fathom. Things that seem impossible to us can be achieved by Him because of His great knowledge and power. To Mary at that time conception without knowing a man seemed impossible. To us today, we see that as possible via such means as invitro fertilization or partheogenesis, this only being accomplished by our increased understanding of these matters through medical science. But, God knew such things before we ever discovered them.

Taking this statement beyond the present context into some religion-philosophical debate on what God can and cannot do is pointless. In context, the issue is miraculous conceptions: one being a post-menopausal older woman, the other being a chaste young woman. Neither should be able to conceive, yet God's power is such that conception is made possible through unexplained means. God, the Creator of Adam and Eve from scratch, Who gave Sarah a child when she was post-menopausal, is still able to exercise His will over creation to achieve His ends.

v38 With her concerns addressed by the angel, Mary submits to the Lord's will and states she is His servant. The angel, having achieved his purpose, departs.

39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: 42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed [art] thou among women, and blessed [is] the fruit of thy womb. 43 And whence [is] this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 And blessed [is] she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, 47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. 48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy [is] his name. 50 And his mercy [is] on them that fear him from generation to generation. 51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He hath put down the mighty from [their] seats, and exalted them of low degree. 53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. 54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of [his] mercy; 55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. 56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

v39-56 Shortly after the angelic interview, Mary departs with haste to see Elisabeth (v. 39). She enters the house and greets her (v. 40), whereupon Elisabeth's babe leaps in her womb. She is filled with the Spirit (v. 41) and pronounces a blessing upon Mary and her child (v. 42). She then wonders aloud how she is so fortunate as to be graced by the presence of the mother of the Lord (v. 43), having determined Mary is this because the babe leaped in her womb (v. 44). She then pronounces another blessing on Mary according to her faith in believing that those things told to her by the angel should come to pass (v. 45). To which Mary replies with an exulting psalm praising the Lord (v. 46-55). Mary stays with Elisabeth about three months and then departs (v. 56).

A popular point of speculation to is to wonder whether Jesus and John Baptist were raised together, knowing one another. Since they were distant cousins and we have Mary here visiting Elisabeth, people typically wonder if they got together later on as well. If we pick through the various texts, what is available

suggests they probably had no contact prior to Jesus' baptism.

The present text indicates Elisabeth lives in the hill country of Judea, and Mary has to do some traveling to get to her place, so they don't live all that close.

Then, shortly after Jesus' birth Joseph and Mary are forced to flee to Egypt because of Herod's extermination order. After Herod's death, they then move into the city of Nazareth, which is in the province of Galilee, well over 50 miles north of Jerusalem.

In the mean time we are informed John Baptist is something of a recluse, growing up in the wilderness. He apparently has little to do with the local towns until he becomes active in his calling, and even then the people have to leave town to go and see him.

It is clear that during John's ministry the two of them have no contact whatsoever as his disciples do not know who Jesus is, and only when Jesus walks up after his baptism does he point out Jesus to them and say "That is the one I have been telling you about!"

And, while it is somewhat ambiguous, John 1:31 suggests that John Baptist did not previously know who was the Messiah. All of this suggests little previous contact.

Did Joseph and Mary stop by and visit John's parents on the route from Egypt to Nazareth? When Jesus was 12 and they took him to Jerusalem for Passover did they stop by for a visit since they lived nearby? How long did John's parents live after he was born, given their advanced age? Did they die in his youth, resulting in him having to live off locusts and wild honey in the wilderness? We really have no idea. What we do know is Jesus and John had little opportunity to meet. If they did meet, the text indicates they didn't spend much time together.

v41-45 The matter at hand is Elisabeth's discerning Mary is the mother of the Lord, whom her son is to be the forerunner of. She discerns this by the Spirit as the babe leaps in her womb upon Mary's arrival and greeting. Elisabeth deduces the babe in her womb leaps for joy because the babe Mary is carrying is the Messiah. Note Mary never tells Elisabeth what is going on, she simply enters the house and greets Elisabeth and Elisabeth then announces all that has happened by inspiration without Mary saying anything except "Hello".

v46-55 Mary's Magnificat is similar to various hymns of praise found among the Psalms, cp. Ps. 33, 47, 48, 113, 117, 135, and especially 136. It praises the Lord for exalting the humble while debasing the mighty of the world (v. 46-53). It also praises Him for keeping the covenants with Abraham so as to provide a savior for Israel (v. 54-55).

v56 Mary apparently stayed with Elisabeth until shortly before John's birth. Elisabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy per v. 26, and Mary stays another three, which would add up to the term of pregnancy.

Apparently Mary leaves before John's birth. We are not told why.

**57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. 58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. 59 And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. 60 And his mother answered and said, Not [so]; but he shall be called John. 61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. 62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. 63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all. 64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue [loosed], and he spake, and praised God. 65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. 66 And all they that heard [them] laid [them] up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.**

v57-66 With the full term of pregnancy Elisabeth delivers a son, as predicted (v. 57). Her friends and relatives rejoice with her over the great blessing of bearing a child in her old age, recognizing it as an act of Providence (v. 58). According to tradition, the circumcision and naming takes place on the eighth day after birth, and the people call him Zacharias after his father (v. 59). His mother states this is not the case, but he will be named John (v. 60). The people question her naming him thus as there is no obvious namesake (v. 61), and so they beckon to Zacharias for his input on the matter (v. 62). He responds by writing on a tablet that the child's name is to be John, and they are all shocked (v. 63). With this, symbolizing his submission to God's will per v. 13, his tongue is loosed and he praises God (v. 64). The witnesses of the events spread the news to the townspeople and the news spreads all over the cities of Judah. It becomes general knowledge, and all of Judea recognizes it as the Lord's hand at work. They take note of John wondering what will become of him. The Lord guides him in his life (v. 65).

v58 This is probably the first they have heard that Elisabeth was even pregnant at all as she had been in complete seclusion for five months, and apparently was in partial seclusion with Mary's presence. Thus, not only do they rejoice over the news of a miraculous pregnancy, but also the miraculous birth of a

healthy son. Regarding their rejoicing, cp. v. 14.

v59 Compare Lev. 12:3, D&C 84:27-28.

v63 Apparently the people are surprised the father wrote his name is to be John because at this point he is both deaf and mute. If he is deaf then he didn't hear Elisabeth name the child "John". And their question to him is not "Is his name John?" It is "What are you naming the child?" So, both the mother and father independently corroborated the child's name as John. It is safe to assume he communicated the matter of the child's name to her, but that was not in their presence. We would also assume there was some surprise because "John" wasn't a family name.

The significance lies in the name applied. See the comments on v. 13 above. If it isn't a family name, then it has no source in tradition. And if this is such an overwhelmingly miraculous event ordained by the Lord, then the name bears particularly special meaning. Hence their close attention to its meaning and the implications. Thus, they marvel over the string of events.

v65-66 If v. 67-79 is the praise mentioned in v. 64, then there is no wonder why the matter became so public and widely known. Zechariah's statements indicate the arrival of the Messiah is imminent and John is the Messiah's herald as predicted in Mal. 3:1. These are the types of events everyone is anticipating, and they are accompanied by a miraculous birth and miraculous healing.

v66 "the hand of the Lord was upon him", OT rhetoric indicating inspiration and revelation when used in a favorable context, cp. Ezek. 1:3.

**67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, 68 Blessed [be] the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; 70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; 72 To perform the mercy [promised] to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; 73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, 74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.**

**76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, 79 To**

**give light to them that sit in darkness and [in] the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. 80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.**

v67-79 This section is presumably the praise mentioned in v. 64. Zechariah announces the imminent advent of the Messiah which is to fulfil the promises to Abraham (v. 68-75). He then states John is to be that forerunner predicted by Malachi to prepare the way of the Lord, to herald the kingdom of God and preach repentance (v. 76-79).

The doxology draws heavily on various OT Psalms and Prophets, for example cp. v. 71 with Ps. 106:10, v. 76 with Mal. 3:1, and v. 79 with Ps. 107:10 and Isa. 59:8. Zachariah's inspired speech is presenting the literal fulfilment of various OT predictions concerning the Messiah.

Zechariah's statement also serves as something of an answer to the rhetorical question posed in v. 66.

v80 John's childhood and early life seems almost reactionary to his very public miraculous birth per v. 65-66. John apparently wants nothing to do with the notoriety surrounding his birth. Rather, he avoids the populace at large by staying in waste places. Luke also appears to be suggesting the context of Isa. 40:3.

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