

Zacharias' Prophecy

Key Verse: “*You, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.*”

—*Luke 1:76, New King James Version*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:57-80

God. Emotions were soaring for him, his wife, and their fellow Israelites. They knew that there was something very noteworthy about this promised child. His birth was broaching on the miraculous. How could an aged woman conceive and bear a son? Long ago it had happened with Abraham and Sarah, but now it had occurred right in their own day! Surely God was working.

Many were aware that something extraordinary had happened to Zacharias. On the day God's angel had visited him, “the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.” (Luke 1:21,22, *NKJV*) Zacharias' enforced silence accomplished two things. First, it apparently focused his attention on the angel's words and Scripture prophecies. Secondly, it

HIS TONGUE AT LAST freed from nine months of enforced silence, Zacharias could now express his stored-up feelings. Would they be words of resentment, anger, or frustration at being made mute for such a long period of time? No, they would not. He opened his mouth and gave praise to

raised a great degree of anticipation among the Jews waiting for this child of promise to be born.

It was customary among the Jews of the time to name the firstborn son after the father. All were surprised when the name John was chosen. The moment Zacharias confirmed that the name was to be John, in obedience to the angel's instruction from God, "his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God." (vs. 64, *NKJV*) All who were within hearing listened as Zacharias extolled God's benevolence and faithfulness relative to his great plans for Israel and all mankind. The birth of John, and his role as God's messenger, had been determined far in advance. Zacharias declared that God had now "raised up a horn," a power, to deliver his people, "spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old."—vss. 69,70, *English Standard Version*

The great work of John the Baptist would find its focus in the Abrahamic promise. Zacharias affirmed that the promise was still in effect. God would now "remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham." (vss. 72,73, *ESV*) Jehovah had promised Abram, "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen. 12:2,3, *NKJV*) Therein lies the essence of the Gospel—the blessing of all the families of the earth.

Zacharias prophesied of the great blessings that would now come to his people. First, a great reformation was beginning, and repentance for sins was available. Second, salvation was near at hand through remission of sins. Third, the great light of the Gospel would enlighten the hearts and minds of God's people. May the vision of Zacharias' prophecy still excite and encourage us each day. ■