

## **John the Baptist – Parents/Birth**

### **Study Leader's Questions – Luke 1:1-25**

#### ***Zechariah and Elizabeth***

1. *Do you think that Genesis 49:10 is the Biblical setting for Luke – why?*
2. *What do we know about Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7)?*
3. *How could Zechariah and Elizabeth be described as righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly (Luke 1:6)?*
4. *How can we move forward when our prayers go unanswered?*

#### ***Zechariah in the Temple***

5. *How did Zechariah get chosen to perform the daily task in the Temple (Luke 1:8)?*
6. *What was Zechariah chosen to do and why was it important (Luke 1:8-9)?*

#### ***Zechariah and Gabriel***

7. *What significance is there in the act of offering incense and the Angel's message to Zechariah: 'your prayer has been heard' (Luke 1:9-10, 13)?*
8. *What prayer (singular) could this be referring to (Luke 1:13)?*
9. *Why was the sign to Zechariah that he should be struck dumb (Luke 1:20)?*

#### ***The Promised Child***

10. *Is there any significance in John being in the ancestral line of Aaron*
11. *What can we learn from the description of the child given to Zechariah (Luke 1:13-17)?*
12. *What can we learn by comparing Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6 with Luke 1:13-17?*

## Study Leader's Questions – Luke 1:1-25, Answers

### *Zechariah and Elizabeth*

1. Do you think that Genesis 49:10 is the Biblical setting for Luke – why?

Yes. The scripture shows why.

Genesis 49:10 states that **“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”**

The reference is to the Lord Jesus Christ according to Isaiah 9:7 **“For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda;”** Hebrews 7:14.

**“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”**

“The sceptre” in Genesis 49:10 refers to “his government...upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom” and therefore “unto him shall the gathering of the people be” in Isaiah 9:7. As “a lawgiver” for “his kingdom” he will “establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” Isaiah 33:22 is another important cross reference, noting again the Lord’s rule “with judgment and with justice” “and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” whom He has saved.

**“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”**

Genesis 49:10 is the first appearance of the name “Shiloh” and here it is a reference to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the Prince of Peace” Isaiah 9:6, noting both the definite article for the Lord’s individuality, Isaiah 45:21 and that the word “Peace” is capitalised, denoting a name. The second time the word “Shiloh” appears is in Joshua 18:1 is as a place-name but note the last sentence.

**“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there. And the land was subdued before them.”**

“Shiloh” is associated with subduing i.e. peace, noting Judges 3:30, 8:28, 1 Chronicles 22:18 and the associations between God subduing His people’s enemies and the resulting peace, with peace, rest and quietness being associated with Solomon 1 Chronicles 22:9, whose reign typifies that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest fourscore years.”**

**“Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon.”**

**“Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.”**

**“Is not the LORD your God with you? and hath he not given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.”**

“Shiloh” in Genesis 49:10 is therefore a name for the Lord Jesus Christ as “the Prince of Peace” such that **“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”** in Isaiah 9:7.

A Peace Prince is needed, not a peace process.

The cross reference that associates Genesis 49:10 with Luke via Isaiah 9:7 is Luke 1:31-33. Note the reference to the throne of David and the everlasting nature of the Lord's kingdom. God will be zealous to bring it about at the Second Advent, see Luke 17, 21.

**“And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”**

2. What do we know about Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-7)?

Besides what the verses actually say i.e. a priestly, godly, elderly, childless married couple, Zacharias was of **“the eighth to Abijah”** 1 Chronicles 24:10 and the number eight is associated with a new beginning. See *Bible Numerics* by Dr Peter S. Ruckman pp 27-28. Luke 1:13-17 heralded a new beginning for Israel.

Zacharias and Elisabeth also exemplified right living for Christians, who are **“a royal priesthood”** 1 Peter 2:5, 9 according to Leviticus 21:6-7 and Ezekiel 44:15, 22-23, showing that the same or higher standards for priestly right living apply when the Lord comes back. Zacharias and Elisabeth therefore had a right basis for being godly parents.

**“They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God.”**

**“But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD:...Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.”**

The equivalent Christian standard is in 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1.

**“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”**

3. How could Zechariah and Elizabeth be described as righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly (Luke 1:6)?

God judged an individual's righteousness in the Old Testament according to his *works*. See Psalm 15:1-2 for the plan of Old Testament salvation, as Dr Ruckman describes it in *Volume I of the Book of Psalms*, Psalm 15. Zacharias and Elisabeth were still living under **“the old testament”** 2 Corinthians 3:14 because **“the new testament”** 2 Corinthians 3:6 would not come into force for another thirty-three years, Matthew 26:28 **“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”** It would be another thirty-three years before the Lord Jesus Christ could be anyone's **“righteousness”** 1 Corinthians 1:30. Psalm 15:1-2 states:

**“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.”**

See also Ezekiel 18:26-27, 33:18-19, with respect to Old Testament righteousness, iniquity and salvation.

**“When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.”**

**“When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.”**

4. How can we move forward when our prayers go unanswered?

The same way as when prayer is answered. Follow 1 Corinthians 15:58.

**“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”**

John 11 shows that God may delay answers to prayer to strengthen and deepen faith in Him, John 11:15, give more than was asked for, John 11:21-26, teach humility, John 11:32-35, manifest the power of God for His glory, John 11:39-40. See the *Ruckman Reference Bible* p 1405.

### ***Zechariah in the Temple***

5. How did Zechariah get chosen to perform the daily task in the Temple (Luke 1:8)?

**“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”** Proverbs 16:33.

6. What was Zechariah chosen to do and why was it important (Luke 1:8-9)?

He was chosen to burn incense in ***“the temple of the Lord.”*** An important phrase that occurs four times in scripture is ***“incense before the LORD”*** Exodus 30:8, Leviticus 4:7, Numbers 16:40, 1 Chronicles 23:13, as ***burnt “incense before the LORD,” “perpetual incense before the LORD,” “sweet incense before the LORD,”*** voluntary i.e. ***offered “incense before the LORD”*** and ***“holy...incense before the LORD.”***

Incense is as prayer in both Testaments.

**“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice”** Psalm 141:2.

**“And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God”** Revelation 8:4.

As it was the priest who was chosen to burn incense ***“in the temple of the Lord,”*** frankincense was one of the gifts that the Lord Jesus Christ received in Matthew 2:11 because the three gifts pictured His three offices as prophet, priest and king, and the Lord Jesus Christ is ***“the Apostle and High Priest of our profession”*** and ***“he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”*** Hebrews 3:1, 7:25.

See this writer’s study on ***“Behold, there came wise men”*** Matthew 2:1.

See [www.timefortruth.co.uk/content/pages/documents/1324483626.pdf](http://www.timefortruth.co.uk/content/pages/documents/1324483626.pdf).

Being part of ***“a royal priesthood”*** 1 Peter 2:5, 9, the Christian is now meant spiritually to burn incense as prayer ***“in the temple of the Lord,”*** according to 1 Corinthians 3:16 **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”**

His prayer should be ***“fervent”*** i.e. burning, James 5:16, ***“perpetual”*** i.e. persistent, Luke 18:1, ***“sweet”*** i.e. ***“wellpleasing to God”*** Philippians 4:18, a voluntary offering of ***“the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”*** Hebrews 13:15 and ***“holy,”*** i.e. ***“praying in the Holy Ghost”*** Jude 20.

## *Zechariah and Gabriel*

7. *What significance is there in the act of offering incense and the Angel's message to Zechariah: 'your prayer has been heard' (Luke 1:9-10, 13)?*

See answer to *Question 6*, i.e. incense is as prayer in both Testaments. Zacharias, like Elias, James 5:17, Luke 1:17, fulfilled James 5:16 in that ***"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"*** and even though Zacharias did not understand the answer, Luke 1:18, God nevertheless fulfilled Psalm 21:2 for him in response, according to Zacharias's testimony in Luke 1:67-79. See *Question 8*. Psalm 21:2 states ***"Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah."*** Note the Second Advent reference ***"Selah."*** See Dr Ruckman's commentary *Volume I of the Book of Psalms*, Psalm 3. Much of Luke 1:67-79 awaits fulfilment at the Second Advent.

8. *What prayer (singular) could this be referring to (Luke 1:13)?*

Luke 1:18 suggests that Zacharias may not have been praying for a son to be born.

***"And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years."*** Zacharias expressed three doubts in a row.

Parents who prayed for children to be born included Leah, Genesis 30:17, Rachel, Genesis 30:22, Isaac, Genesis 25:21, Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:11. They did not react the way Zacharias did in Luke 1:18 (666). See Hannah's testimony in 1 Samuel 1:27.

***"For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him:"***

Samuel of course became a priest, as shown in that he offered a sacrifice and prayed for the people of Israel.

***"And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD; and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him"*** 1 Samuel 7:9.

***"Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way:"*** 1 Samuel 12:23.

Being part of ***"a royal priesthood"*** 1 Peter 2:5, 9, a Christian's prayer should also be intercessory. See *Question 6* above.

***"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;"*** 1 Timothy 2:1.

Continuing with Zacharias, his prophecy in Luke 1:67-79 suggests that as part of his priestly ministry in the temple he had been interceding for Israel after the manner of Samuel above and had discerned his son's part in God's intended deliverance of Israel as part of that answer to prayer, although Zacharias hadn't perceived a son as part of the answer. See Luke 1:67-68, 76. Again, Zacharias does not react like Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:27.

***"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,"***

***"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;"***

God doesn't always answer prayer the way it is perceived that He will.

***"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"*** Romans 8:26.

9. Why was the sign to Zechariah that he should be struck dumb (Luke 1:20)?

**“...because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.”**

Lesson: John 4:50 shows that it is better to follow the Capernaum nobleman’s example than that of Zacharias in Luke 1:18. See John 4:51-53.

**“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”**

God could and did react severely in the Old Testament to anyone who doubted what He said. See 2 Kings 7:18-20. (God was, however, merciful to **“Abraham my friend”** Isaiah 41:8 in Genesis 17:17-22 and therefore to Sarah in Genesis 18:9-15. The Christian, even though **“by grace...saved through faith”** Ephesians 2:8 is always in need of God’s mercy from **“the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;”** 2 Corinthians 1:3 according to Luke 18:13 **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”**)

**“And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.”**

### *The Promised Child*

10. Is there any significance in John being in the ancestral line of Aaron?

John’s ministry has a parallel with that of his ancestor Levi through Aaron.

**“The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity”** Malachi 2:6.

**“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God”** Luke 1:16.

**“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; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,”** Luke 1:76-77.

11. What can we learn from the description of the child given to Zechariah (Luke 1:13-17)?

John has certain parallels with the Christian.

He has a special name, John, Luke 1:13, 59, 60, 61, 62. The Christian has a special name, Acts 11:26, 1 Peter 4:16, **“that worthy name by which ye are called”** James 2:7.

Many would rejoice at John’s birth, Luke 1:14. The Christian’s spiritual birth, 1 Peter 1:23, brings **“joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth”** Luke 15:10.

John would eschew alcohol and **“be filled with the Holy Ghost”** Luke 1:15. The Christian is commanded **“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”** Ephesians 5:18.

John would be a witness to turn many in Israel back to the Lord God, Luke 1:16 **“in the spirit and power of Elias”** Luke 1:17. The Christian is called as a witness to **“preach the gospel to every creature”** Mark 16:15 in **“the power of the Holy Ghost”** Romans 15:13 in Acts 1:8 **“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”**

John is a picture or type, therefore, of a Christian for whom the Lord Jesus Christ is pre-eminent, as John himself testified in John 3:30.

***“He must increase, but I must decrease.”***

That should be a life verse for every Christian.

12. What can we learn by comparing Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6 with Luke 1:13-17?

The cross references are as follows:

***“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”*** Isaiah 40:3.

***“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts”*** Malachi 3:1.

***“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse”*** Malachi 4:5-6.

The main passage for comparison is Luke 1:16-17.

***“And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. 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.”***

John’s ministry was one of heart preparation. His ministry ***“in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children”*** pictures turning ***“many of the children of Israel...to the Lord their God”*** because ***“Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my first-born:”*** Exodus 4:22 and the Lord says in Hosea 11:1 ***“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.”***

That is still God’s calling for Israel and it will become apparent at the Second Advent ***“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance”*** Romans 11:29.

### ***Application***

***“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves”*** James 1:22.

The most notable part of the study has been *Question 6* with respect to the burning of incense in the temple, Luke 1:8, 9. It is a reminder with respect to some specific issues where prayer is as yet unanswered to be ***“continuing instant in prayer”*** Romans 12:12, according to Luke 18:1.

***“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;”***

Alan O’Reilly  
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***“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” Luke 1:17***



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