

[His Name Is John] / Gospel of Luke 1:36 – 80

~ **God broke through** to His people once again after four hundred long years of deafening silence in our previous report from our Spiritual Safari; and He did it through a one-man prayer meeting. Zacharias was holding a prayer meeting and his prayer was for a son. Zacharias did not believe he would ever have a son; and he had a very good reason for his unbelief. It seemed impossible; and, frankly, it probably was. Many of us pray in total unbelief today. I hear people say that all we have to do is just believe; well, that's true – but – sometimes God hears and answers our prayers even in a time of unbelief and doubt. That has been my experience and I am sure it has been your experience, too. That simply complex paradox is the wonder of the Word of God, friends!

See, I believe, friends - but I also have to ask that the Lord will help my unbelief - because my unbelief is so much bigger than my belief. I don't believe those who say they do not feel that way, too. In this report, we will follow down the line from the announcement of the birth of Jesus to the birth of John the Baptist. We saw in our last report that it was Mary who first questioned the virgin birth as she asked the angel how it could possibly be. The angel answered her very specifically. Well, our capable doctor Luke writes more medical terms than Hippocrates wrote! Here, we find all the proper details from a trusted source. Luke states it as plain as day in verse thirty-five, which we saw in our last report. You may want to go back and read this whole chapter at this time....

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.

~ The birth of John the Baptist was miraculous, too, but it wasn't a virgin birth, of course. This answer by the angel is something we need to hold onto tightly today. Nothing is impossible with God, my beloved. If you do not believe that, then you are absolutely wasting your time with the Bible. Our Spiritual Safari emphasizes this point dramatically because there are a group of people that have taken this verse and have distorted it beyond

recognition from the way it's given Biblically. Nothing is impossible with God when He says He is going to do it. But this is not a blanket license to invoke the things we desire in our lives. We really need to understand this clearly.

Most people who say the Lord told them to do such and such or this or that are simply not credible. My critical statements against them make many people feel as if I must be a rank unbeliever. Well, I happen to know that people only use this little cliché to cover up their own selfish desires. I know the Lord has not appeared to very many of these claimants to tell them what to do; but they are absolutely convinced in their own minds. Well, they always fail. Nothing is impossible with God - but there sure is a WHOLE LOT that's impossible with YOU! There's a whole lot that's impossible with me, too; and all I see from these people who grab this verse is failure.

Well, that failure causes the unbeliever to ridicule Christ. So, these people have hurt themselves by causing their own disbelief; and they have hurt the cause of Christ because Christ didn't speak to them in the first place. What a total Christian Tragedy they become. We are right back at Lot's doorstep, and we cannot get out of Gomorrah this way! God does what He determines to do, yes; but that does not mean He is going to do everything you and I demand Him to do! God may not want to do what we want to do OR it may not be His way to do something that we want done. We need to be so very careful about this. If most Christians would put this all in the proper, correct and complete perspective - instead of just talking loudly - then their relationship with Christ would improve significantly. Unfortunately, those verse grabbers only seem intent on hurting the cause of Christ! They hinder the furtherance of the Gospel rather than help, and they get even FURTHER and further away from the Lord and from Him ever moving in their lives. It's a compound problem that mushrooms out of control with one little seven-word verse....

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

~ Mary's submission to the will and Word of God is one of the loveliest pictures we have in the entire Bible. You must remember that at this very

moment, a cloud blew over her life and that cloud remained there until the Lord Jesus came back from the dead! My opinion is that many of His followers even wore a question mark on their foreheads; but Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of Holiness by His resurrection for our justification! It is a declaration - not a making of something - and it is the resurrection that proves His virgin birth. You can't have one without the other. They go together like pencil and lead. They stand together and FALL separately, too, by the way....

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.

~ Now, we're dealing with the miraculous so let's point out a little geographical miracle that you can hang onto all the way through the Spiritual Safari. This is a good time to note it as we're passing through the hill country with Mary, beloved amongst women. Mary is going UP into the hill country; although on the map it would be down, as in south. See, any time anyone ever goes to Jerusalem in the Bible they are going UP! Take notice of that as we travel from here. There's no use trying to offer an explanation; neither for the geography nor for the physics of a baby leaping in the womb. You either believe this or you don't believe it, friends; I get so weary of so many people attempting to appear intellectual as they tone down or explain away completely the miracles in the Bible. Either accept them or just stop reading because there is nothing here for those who reject that the Word of God is what we are handling. Here, we happen to have a miracle. The Holy Spirit was indwelling, and the baby leaped in the womb! Moving on, verse forty-three constitutes the second song we have so far in our safari. The first was the song the children of Israel sang in the

wilderness after the Red Sea incident. Well, Luke is a poet, and he gives us just about all the Christmas songs starting right here....

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.

~ Elisabeth is one person in Scripture about whom very little is said. She sings the first song in the New Testament; and we should pay a little attention to her! She is simply remarkable. She had faith when Zacharias did not! We know that because Zacharias was struck dumb due to unbelief; but his wife, Elisabeth, was not. She just believed God. That belief enabled her to encourage Mary at this time, too. Mary is a very young woman and Elisabeth is quite a bit older. Elisabeth had walked with God for many years by this time. If anyone is deified in the Bible on a womanly plane, it would be Elisabeth - not Mary! These two women were completely human, and Mary needed encouragement. Well, Elisabeth was just the one to give that comfort....

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

~ It seems as if we are having a top ten Christmas song countdown now - and this is what is known as the "Magnificat." The Magnificat, which runs through verse fifty-six, is a tremendous Literary jewel. Mary was a wonderful woman, to be sure; and it's no accident she was chosen to serve God this way. We aren't dealing in chance or luck. We are seeing the definite and deliberate decision of the True and Living God. I don't think God made a mistake choosing Mary; however, some people aren't sure that Mary needed a Savior - so - let's hear from her....

47 And Mary said, my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

~ Mary said she needs a Savior, friends. So, what about it? Let's call her blessed, but let's not make a goddess in the Bible, my Protestant friends. We don't need an altar and we sure should not be kneeling down to Mary! It was a glorious gift from God to be the mother of His Son, for sure; but it was also an awful burden to bear! Wait until she stands at the cross if you don't believe that statement. None of this makes her any different from any other mother standing perpendicular to the earth today in the realm of redemption and salvation. Let's not play Mary down - but let's not overemphasize her. Worshiping her is blaspheming. You can just write that down....

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.

~ We're singing more Christmas carols through this entire section of Scripture with another hymn. Remember, Isaiah asked, "... to whom is the strong arm of the Lord revealed?" Well, Isaiah answers his own question immediately as he speaks of the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. Here, Luke is saying God scatters the proud in the imagination of their hearts. So many people today think they are going to pull through this life in their own power. Then, when their lives inevitably become scattered, and they continue to deny the Word of God is true, then their end is bitter and angry. Sometimes that bitterness and anger happens long before their end! It is in our salvation that the Lord reveals His power and His strong arm - and He reveals His love there, too - and nowhere else....

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.

~ There are more references to Abraham and more human information about Abraham is given in the Word of God than of anyone else, besides the Lord Jesus, of course. The remainder of this chapter gives the account of the birth of John the Baptist. Since dad can't speak, they seemed to have named the child for him. I guess John should have been junior. Of course, that's not the name to be given to him, so, immediately Elisabeth says they're going to call him John. Well, you can read for yourself here that the family was not too happy with that name. I imagine they wanted to pick a nice Jewish family name. No one else had ever been named "John" in this family before. Remember, Zacharias is in a bad way right now, and he can't say anything, so the family is going to sign him. I think it would be nice if a lot more Christians were unable to talk or only communicated by using their "sign gifts" to study to be quiet....

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.

~ We don't have it spelled out for us, but it would appear that old man Zacharias was not only dumb, but deaf. He couldn't hear his wife say his name was to be John - but maybe he didn't listen much to her anyways? Well, the whole thing was amazing, and the name that God wanted him named is the name John received. Zacharias is going to be able to sing praises to God now because his faith has come to a reality. Zacharias was NOT a great man of faith – but now this gift of a son from God has made him full of faith and able to rejoice! I'm not sure about you, but I need something to rejoice over! Only when our faith is very strong can we rejoice in the silence of God - or worse - in His denial of our requests. Our faith must be SUPER strong to rejoice in the face of adversity! I cannot do that. Maybe you can. I can't. The wonder of it all is: God knows and understands us. If you trust Christ - He is going to bring you through. I hope this message is a true blessing to your heart, my beloved readers....

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.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, 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.

~ Everything about John the Baptist is unusual. Zacharias was dumb for about nine months, but now he is joining in and belting out a solo song of his own! Zacharias prophecy is also a song in verses sixty-eight through

seventy-nine. Zacharias wasn't in the line of David, but he recognized him as the forerunner that Malachi and Isaiah had spoken of. John is recognized from birth as the one who is to announce the coming of the Messiah. Of course, the forerunner on the scene means the Messiah isn't very far behind. I don't think they knew much more than that at this time. All they really had was the promise from Abraham - but they still believed God after all these years of silence.

Now, if you believe John chapter three verse sixteen but you do not believe the promises God made to Abraham then you have a real problem in your faith! If God will make John three sixteen good to us, then He is going to make good in His promises that were made to Abraham long before. Well, these people just happen to believe in the promises God made to Abraham. They knew the Messiah was soon to be in their midst. God made these promises regarding the 'way of peace' through the prophet Malachi and through the prophet Isaiah.

It has taken us three reports to cover these eighty verses; and we probably rushed it. In the next leg of our expedition, we have the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to have Christmas all over again; and I think we are right on time, because I don't think Jesus was born on December twenty-fifth. Of course, the only important thing is that He was born! We can talk about His birth anytime of the year as long as we DO talk about Him! Read chapter two right now and these reports will become much more meaningful to you. Reading the Word of God is the objective here. Our safari just points out a few sights along the way ~

II