

2. Rejoicing in God our Savior Jesus

June 24, 2007

There are a few requirements in rejoicing in God:
Expectation, Excitement and the most of all faith in God.

I am sure that y'all have noticed, none of these three requirements have anything to do with the current circumstance. We might be in a neck deep difficult situation, but still can rejoice in God. How can we do that? It depends on how we look at things – with the human perspective or the divine perspective. In other words, rejoicing can happen with our decision.

With that in mind, we find four individuals – Elizabeth, unborn baby John the Baptist, Virgin Mary and Zacharias – rejoicing in God from the second portion of Luke chapter 1. Let's learn how to rejoice in God our Savior Jesus from these people. Besides, it is good for you. Life is too short to be ugly to ourselves and to those who are around us.

A. THE JOY OF ELIZABETH

Luke 1:39-45 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Elizabeth knew that she herself carries the forerunner of the Messiah, but where is Christ the Messiah? The answer is made clear the moment she hears Mary's greetings. At the sound of Mary's voice, Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb, as if to say, "He is here!" Then, Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit and rejoiced.

The one word that filled her lips was "blessed." Note that she did not say that Mary was blessed above women but among women, and certainly this is true.

B. THE JOY OF THE UNBORN SON, JOHN

Luke 1:41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb;

This was probably the time when unborn baby John was filled with the Spirit as the angel had promised in v15. Even before his birth, John rejoiced in Jesus Christ, just as he did during his earthly ministry. As John the Baptist, he would have the great privilege of introducing the Messiah to the Jewish nation.

I must stop here and remind all of you that unborn babies are human babies. Democrats, liberals and Planned Parenthood people claim that it is not a baby, but a fetus. This shows ignorance in their parts. Fetus means 'baby' in Latin. In other words, they also claim that it is baby whom they are trying to kill. In the name of inconvenience, over two million unborn babies get killed in America every year. This must be stopped, not with bombing abortion clinics or murdering abortion doctors, but with diligent prayers to the Lord on behalf of those babies at risk. The most dangerous place in America is mother's womb.

C. THE JOY OF MARY

Luke 1:46-56 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever." 56 And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.

This song often called "the Magnificat", after the Latin translation of the first few words. It resembles Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, but it also has at least 12 other indirect references to the Old Testament. This means that Mary was a woman who studied God's Word deeply. It was on her heart, and came out through her song. It is no wonder why angel Gabriel declared that she was a highly favored one.

Mary's song shows the futility of trusting in ourselves, in political power, or in riches. Mary's trust has been in God, and it has been rewarded.

I asked you to underline v47 "my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior". This means Mary knew she also needed a Savior for herself.

Before we go any further, we must visit five points declared by Roman Catholic even though they contradict with the Scripture:

1) Mary as Mediatrix

This belief asserts that Mary mediates the salvation Christ won for us on the Cross and that one of God's graces come to us except through Mary. They believe that Christ's incarnation and the redemption of humanity depended on Mary's agreement with God's plan. In other words, without Mary agreeing to bear Jesus, we would have no Jesus, no salvation and no grace.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus

2) The Immaculate Conception

This is the belief that Mary herself was conceived without original sin. They insist that Mary had the perfect grace from the time she was conceived.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

3) Perpetual Virginity

This is the belief that Mary remained a virgin throughout all of her life. They claimed that she had taken a vow of lifelong celibacy and would never know a man.

Mark 6:3 Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him.

4) The Assumption

This is the belief that Mary was taken bodily from earth to heaven so she wouldn't have to endure the decay in the grave. However, this belief depends on traditional stories. There is no biblical basis for this assumption doctrine.

5) Mary as a Co-Redeemer with Jesus Christ

Some, not all Catholic people, make statues of Jesus Christ on the cross one side and put Mary on the other side of the same cross to make her to be a Co-Redeemer with Jesus Christ. Again, there is absolutely no biblical basis for this, either.

I am not saying that all the Roman Catholic doctrines or believers are wrong. There are many born-again believers in Catholic realm. In Catholic, they know better not to challenge the deity of Jesus Christ like some of the liberal protestant groups dare to do so.

However, Catholic idea of worshiping Virgin Mary or praying to her deifies Mary to the same level with Jesus. That is an idolatry and wrong.

Some Protestant denominations have tended to go to the opposite extreme and practically ignore her.

Let me put it in this way: Here is a plastic bowl. It is nothing special about it. But if I put something special in it, it becomes special. Mary was a godly young woman in Israel whom God chose to be the mother of Jesus to bring Him to the world, to nurture Him, and to raise Him. Her job stopped there.

Virgin Mary should not to be neither exalted nor discounted, but held in respect as a model of devotion, obedience and faith.

D. THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke 1:57-66 Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. 58 When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. 59 So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. 60 His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." 61 But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." 62 So they made signs to his father--what he would have him called. 63 And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. 65 Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

As I stated in last study, the nation Israel was in spiritual darkness because God kept silence for over four hundred years since the last prophet Malachi was ignored by the people of Israel.

Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

This prophet, like Elijah, would be stern, powerful, unintimidated by rulers and undaunted in purpose. He would lead the people to repentance before the Messiah to come.

We can not imagine how much the people around Zacharias and Elizabeth were excited about the new arrival of this child whose birth was pronounced by an angel. They probably thought he would be the one who set Israel free from the iron fists of Rome. But mom and dad knew better.

Traditionally, a baby boy would be named after his father or someone else in the family. So the relatives and neighbors were shocked when Elizabeth insisted on the name John and Zacharias confirmed it.

I think that it is rather humorous for God to include v62. Zacharias might be a mute because of his unbelief, but he was not a deaf. He could hear their conversation with Elizabeth very well, thank you. But they made signs to him to ask a question about the name of the child. When I came to the United States in 1981, some Americans talked to me real loud. Because I couldn't speak English fluently they thought I was a deaf too.

John the Baptist was "prophet of the Highest", introducing to Israel "the Son of the Highest" who was conceived in Mary's womb by "the power of the Highest".

E. THE JOY OF ZACHARIAS

Luke 1:67-80 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, 71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from 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 you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." 80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Zacharias had nine long months to think about God's power and his own lack of faith. When he finally got the chance to say something, he used the opportunity to praise the Lord as Elizabeth and Mary had done.

Any period of discipline, whether in a nation or an individual, can seem never-ending. Yet, as Zacharias models for us, when discipline ends, God's praise should fill our mouths.

Are you enduring God's discipline lately? Perhaps Zacharias' example can guide you.

1) Don't press God to end your discipline.

It is waste of time. He is not going to be pushed around by you or me.

2) Don't hold others responsible for the discipline you are receiving from the Lord.

Your repentance doesn't start until you take full responsibility of your action. Without that genuine repentance you will not be restored. The discipline continues.

3) When it is time to be restored, draw attention away from yourself and to the Lord and His plan.

We know this is truly Spirit-inspired prophecy because the focus of his prophecy is the unborn Jesus, not Zacharias' new son John. Zacharias doesn't even know Jesus yet, but he praises Him, he loves Him, and he is passionate about Jesus. We know so much more about Jesus than Zacharias does, so what can excuse the coldness of our hearts?

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We can truly rejoice in God our Savior in spite of any difficult circumstance, if we put our trust in him and be obedient to His Word.

2) There is only God who redeemed us from eternal damnation with His own sacrifice. That is Jesus, no one else. He alone deserves our worship and adoration.

3) Any period of discipline, whether in a nation or an individual, can seem never-ending. But when discipline ends, God's praise should fill our mouths.