

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
VI. God's Confirmations Of Messiah's Forerunner
(Luke 1:57-80)

I. Introduction

- A. Following the announcement of the conception and birth of the Messiah Jesus Christ in Luke 1:26-38, God gave multiple confirmations of Messiah's Forerunner in John at his birth in Luke 1:57-80.
- B. This was a very important series of confirmations, for Messiah's Forerunner needed to have divine credentials for his testimony about the Messiah to be authoritative and thus able to be believed by God's people.
- C. We thus view the passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. God's Confirmations Of Messiah's Forerunner, Luke 1:57-80.

- A. When Elisabeth, the wife of Zechariah, came to full term in her pregnancy, she gave birth to a son.
- B. God then provided seven confirmations that He certified this baby truly to be the Messiah's Forerunner:
 - 1. God miraculously caused the elderly Elisabeth to give birth to Messiah's Forerunner, Luke 1:57-58:
 - a. Elisabeth's neighbors and relatives who had known that she had been barren until old age learned that she had been shown mercy by God to give birth to a son, so they rejoiced with her, Luke 1:57-58.
 - b. "John's birth was" thus "recognized as supernatural – as the work of the Lord." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1981, p. 49)
 - 2. God miraculously signaled a great spiritual future for John at his circumcision and naming, Luke 1:59-66:
 - a. Hebrew infant boys were circumcised the eighth day and named at the same time, and the people present for the infant John's circumcision fully expected him to be named after his father, Luke 1:59; *Ibid.*, p. 50.
 - b. However, his mother Elisabeth claimed that his name would be "John," not "Zechariah," Luke 1:60-61.
 - c. This unusual remark by Elisabeth led the people present to ask her husband Zechariah about the name, so they made signs to him asking his name for the baby, and Zechariah wrote, "His name is John," v. 62-63.
 - d. Those present at the meeting marveled at Zechariah's claim, but when he then immediately opened his mouth and spoke, praising God, with his dumbness that had come upon him in the Holy Place of the temple suddenly being removed, the onlookers marveled. They wondered what kind of child John would be, the news of which spread throughout the whole hill country of Judaea, Luke 1:64-66a.
 - 3. The fact that two witnesses – John's mother and father – testified of the unusual name for their son, was God's signal to the onlookers that this was a true testimony in accord with the Law, Deuteronomy 19:15b.
 - 4. God miraculously signaled His blessing on John as "the hand of the Lord was with him" (Luke 1:66b), a phrase meaning that there was evidence in the early days of John's boyhood that signaled the work and blessing of the Lord was upon him for all to see!
 - 5. God miraculously caused Zechariah to prophecy of John's ministry as Messiah's Forerunner, Lk. 1:67-79:
 - a. As soon as Zechariah's speech impediment was miraculously removed, he was filled with the Holy Spirit and he miraculously prophesied, Luke 1:67.
 - b. Zechariah predicted that God was saving the people of Israel from their enemies in accord with His promises to Abraham regarding His raising up of the Messiah out of the house of David, Luke 1:68-75.
 - c. John's father Zechariah also predicted that John would be the prophet of the Most High God and "go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" by giving the remission of sins to the people of Israel toward providing blessing, Luke 1:76-79. This prophecy indicated John's prophetic ministry and work to be the Messiah's Forerunner in calling Israel to repent from her sins in preparation for Messiah's arrival.
 - 6. God then miraculously caused John to grow not only physically, but in the realm of "unusual spiritual development," Luke 1:80a; *Ibid.*, p. 52. John "was marked by spiritual strength," *Ibid.*
 - 7. God led John to shift from the usual role of learning his father's trade to follow in the occupation of Old Testament prophet Elijah in preparing to be the Messiah's Forerunner, Luke 1:80b:
 - a. Since John was born into a priest's family, it would have been expected that he would be a priest, *Ibid.*
 - b. However, "instead of being brought up in the environs of the temple of Jerusalem to be a priest, John was separated from the temple" and "brought up in the desert" like Elijah of old whom he was to imitate, Luke 1:80b with Luke 1:17 and Malachi 4:5-6 with Mark 1:2-8.

Lesson: God confirmed John to be the Messiah's Forerunner in seven significant, Biblical ways.

Application: May we believe John's testimony that Jesus Christ is Israel's Messiah and Son of God, John 1:29-34.