

Sunday, January 1, 2017

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

(LUKE 1:57-80)

EXCERPTS FROM THE EARLY FATHERS

During the fourth week of *Kiahk*, the church readings pertain to the birth of John the Baptist. For this reason, I have selected some excerpts from the early church fathers to celebrate the life of this great saint.

1- THE PARALLELS BETWEEN JOHN AND JESUS.

ST. EPHREM THE SYRIAN (FOURTH CENTURY):

The elderly Elizabeth gave birth to the last of the prophets, and Mary, a young girl, to the Lord of the angels.

The daughter of Aaron gave birth to the voice in the desert (Is. 63:9), but the daughter of David to the strong God of the earth.

The barren one gave birth to him who remits sins, but the Virgin gave birth to Him who takes them away (Jn. 1:29).

Elizabeth gave birth to him who reconciled people through repentance, but Mary gave birth to Him who purified the lands of uncleanness.

The elder one lit a lamp in the house of Jacob, his father, for this lamp itself was John (Jn. 5:35), while the younger one lit the Sun of Justice (Mal. 4:2) for all the nations.

The angel announced to Zechariah, so that the slain one would proclaim the crucified One and that the hated one would proclaim the envied One.

He who was to baptize with water would proclaim Him who would baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:11).

The light, which was not obscure, would proclaim the Sun of Justice.

The one filled with the Spirit would proclaim concerning Him who gives the Spirit.

The priest calling with the trumpet would proclaim concerning the One who is to come at the sound of the trumpet at the end.

The voice would proclaim concerning the Word, and the one who saw the dove would proclaim concerning Him upon Whom the dove rested, like the lightning before the thunder.

COMMENTARY ON TATIAN'S DIATESSARON 1.31 *ECTD* 58-59.

2- THE HOLY SPIRIT OPENS JOHN'S EARS.

ST. AMBROSE (BISHOP OF MILAN - FOURTH CENTURY):

Some might consider it ridiculous that [Zechariah] spoke to an eight-day-old infant. But if we hold the truth, we will understand that the child who heard the salutation of Mary before his birth could hear the voice of his father.

The prophet knew that a prophet has other ears that are opened by the Spirit of God despite bodily age. He who had the disposition to rejoice had the perception of understanding.

EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 2.34 *EHG* 49; *CSEL* 32 4:59.

3- DELIVERANCE IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH.

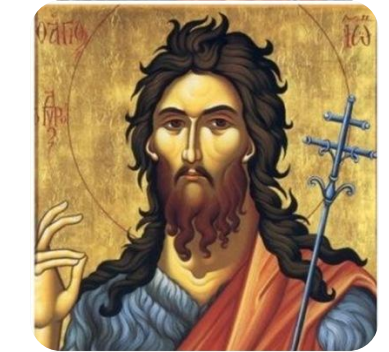
The following excerpt is a commentary on the prophecy of Zechariah the priest (Luke 1: 68-79)

ORIGEN (THIRD CENTURY):

"Deliverance from our enemies" (Luke 1:74). We should not think that this means corporeal enemies, but rather spiritual ones. For the Lord Jesus came, **"mighty in battle,"** (Ps. 24:8) to destroy all our enemies and free us from their snares, namely, from the hand of all our enemies **"and from the hand of all who hate us."** **"To bring about mercy for our fathers."** I believe that, when our Lord came, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were blessed with God's mercy. Previously they had seen His day and rejoiced (Jn. 8:56). It is not believable that they did not profit from the later, when He came and was born of a virgin. And why do I speak of the patriarchs? I will boldly follow the authority of the Scriptures to higher planes, for the presence of the Lord Jesus and His work benefited not only what is earthly but also what is heavenly. Therefore the apostle too says, **"Making peace by the blood of His cross, whether on earth or in heaven"** (Col. 1:20).

But if the Lord's presence was beneficial in heaven and on earth, why do you hesitate to say that His coming also benefited our ancestors? What Scripture said is fulfilled, **"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us deliverance without fear from the hand of our enemies."**

HOMILIES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE 10.3. *FC* 84:41.



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