

Bible e-Study Women of the New Testament #1

The First Lady of the New Testament

"As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." Luke 1:44

NUGGET - This week begins a new series on Women of the New Testament. And though you might think that the first lady of the New Testament would be Jesus' mother, Mary, it really is Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist *and* Mary's cousin.

Just as advent is preparation for Christmas, so Elizabeth is preparation for Mary's story. Preparation is important; preparation is a big thing with God. God always prepares His people for what He is doing. And so, we don't get to *Mary's* story without being prepared for it. Elizabeth provided God's people in that day with a story that was something of a known quantity. She was preparation for Mary because, as the angel Gabriel told Mary in 1:36 "... ***and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.***" That was "familiar" stuff to Hebrews. After all Sarah, Abraham's wife had had an experience like this also and that was very well known.

- Sarah was well past child-bearing years when she had Isaac
- Elizabeth now was also past the age of bearing children and she is six months pregnant with John.

This takes place months before a virgin is to conceive and bear the holy one of God. Elizabeth and son John are just one way that God prepares His people for the fulfillment of His promises in Jesus. Only when God can be credited with what happens, do people awaken to His presence in their lives. Only God could make a barren woman conceive and bear a child; and only God can make it possible for a *virgin* to conceive and bear a child.

God prepares us for His work in this world and in our lives. How often do we prepare people for what we do for them? We have become so intent on the *doing* or the *getting* and *giving*, that we forget the benefit of preparation. When God prepared this world for the coming of His Son, He did so with a forerunner, Elizabeth's son John who leaped in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice. John then went ahead and prepared the world for the Christ.

In that way, when God's promised One came, there were those whose hearts were open to what God wanted for them: so too with those in our lives that we love. The preparing of hearts for what you will do makes an opening possible that wasn't there before. Oh surprises can be fun, but preparation can bring a joy that is deep and abiding as experienced by Elizabeth. That is what God does through preparation, opens our hearts to the deep and rich joy He wants us to know in His Son.

APPLICATION - Advent is preparation.

1. Advent is a long way off and with the amount of commercialization that surrounds Christmas people just don't want to think about it too soon. (Besides it seems too hot to be thinking about Christmas right now!) However, given what God, through Elizabeth has taught us, consider ways to actually prepare. You can plan for what impact you want to have on the lives of your friends and family. Consider new ways to prepare for Advent that may lead to some new traditions or happenings this year.

PRAY - Give some time to prepare your own heart for Advent. Pray and give thanks for what God has done to prepare you to receive His Son into your life.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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GOING DEEPER

Elizabeth is spoken of as an upright godly woman, and as such is worthy of being followed as an example. She and her priest-husband Zechariah are referred to as blameless. (Read [Luke 1:5-7](#)) She can also be considered, as we said above, the first woman of the New Testament. But she, along with Anna the prophetess ([Luke 2:36-38](#)) are also among the last of the Old Testament women. What does that say about her role for the people of Israel as well as her role for us living when and where we do?

As we talked of in the nugget, God prepares His people for what He does. One of the things that happened surrounding Elizabeth and Mary was quite a bit of celebrating. A celebration requires preparation. You don't just "*have a party*" without getting ready for it. But what God did with these women, especially Elizabeth, took a lot of preparation. ([Luke 1:7-25](#)) When you read the account of how she came to be pregnant, what stands out for you as extraordinary preparation for an extraordinary celebration? What would be the cause of such of joy for her?

([Luke 1:39-45](#)) When Elizabeth is visited by her relative Mary Elizabeth gives a wonderful message of trust in God. She also knows what her son's job will be in preparing the way for Jesus and His work on earth. That also means she has believed what Zechariah learned from the angel Gabriel. Therefore, she speaks plainly of the Baby that Mary is carrying as her Lord. Elizabeth is a woman of transition. She bridges the Old Testament and New Testaments with her "loud" testimony.

Read about the birth of John the Baptist in verses [57- 79](#). We read there Elizabeth's last recorded words, "He is to be called John." She had been prepared for this moment by many events and encounters. It was said that this was a moment of joy in verse 58. It was certainly a moment she had been waiting for her entire, long, life. And when the moment comes, God has given her all the preparation she needed to carry faithfully through with God's plan. What might it mean for us and for the people of that day to recognize that this old woman was having a child

What might God be showing us by having had her wait nearly her whole life before having the joy of having a child?

What is God taking you through right now that can be seen as preparation? Sometimes God tells us in advance of what He will do with us, as He did through the prophets foretelling of the coming of Christ. So you *may* know what God is preparing you for. And sometimes, as with Abraham following God's invitation to leave his father's home ([Gen 12:1-5](#)) and follow God's promise into a new place, He may *not* let you know in advance. But He will always prepare you. (See [Gen 11:31](#) to see how God prepared Abraham)

Just as He did with Elizabeth and Zechariah, with Abraham and Sarah, God prepares you for what He will bring you through as well. Elizabeth has taught us that a lifetime of faithful preparation can result in great joy. She has prepared us for what is to come through her relative Mary, who we take up next week. Peace in Christ Pastor Rhodes.