

Luke 1:68-79

Who was **Zechariah**, and what **part** did he play in the overall story of the **Bible**? Both he and his wife, **Elizabeth**, are only mentioned **once** in the Scriptures - right **here** in Luke, chapter 1. And yet, the song which bears his **name** is one of the most **beautiful** found in the entire Bible. This morning we're going to consider **The Song Of Zechariah** in two parts. The **first** part is a hymn of **praise**, while the **second** part is a hymn of **prophecy**.

Where did Zechariah get the **idea** for this hymn? Was it that he was such an excellent **song writer**? Was this just **one** out of the **many** songs which he had written? The circumstances **surrounding** this song definitely point **away** from those suggestions. Zechariah was merely a humble **priest**. For the past 9 months, he had been unable to **speak** because he hadn't believed the Angel **Gabriel** when he told him that **Elizabeth**, his **wife**, would have a **son**. This period of **speechlessness** gave Zechariah some time to **think** about the **promise** which Gabriel had made. But it **also** gave him time to think about **another** promise - a promise which the LORD had made **hundreds** of years earlier. No doubt Zechariah spent countless hours **reading** and **re-reading** the Old Testament **prophecies** concerning the coming of the Messiah, and it was through this **study** of the Word of God that the Holy Spirit worked saving **faith** in the heart of Zechariah. All of his **doubts** had been **removed**, and Zechariah now saw all of the prophecies about the Messiah as if they had already been **fulfilled**. Not only was the Messiah **coming**, but His advent was **complete**. The long-awaited Savior of the world had **come!**

It was at this time that the **Holy Spirit** chose to speak **through** Zechariah. He had filled the **heart** of Zechariah with **faith** and **joy**, and now that **same** Holy Spirit was using Zechariah as a **mouthpiece**, to spread that faith and joy to **others**.

The same thing still happens **today**. Whenever a Christian pastor steps into a pulpit to deliver a **sermon**, he prays that the Holy Spirit will be **with** him, and that He will give him the **words** to speak, just as He had promised to do for **Moses** when the LORD said, "*Who **made** a mouth for people? Or who makes someone **mute** or **deaf**, able to **see** or **blind**? Is it not **I**, the **LORD**? Now **go**, and I will be **with** your mouth, and I will **teach** you what you will speak.*" Without the guidance of the LORD, we would be unable to **understand** the prophecies concerning the Savior, which He has set before us in His Word. But, the LORD has not only laid these clear prophecies before us, He has **also** shown us the fact that these

prophecies have all been **fulfilled**. They were **fulfilled** by **Jesus Christ**, His **Son**, whose **birth** we have just **celebrated**. Yes, Zechariah had written a **beautiful** hymn of **praise**, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

But, **for whom** was this hymn written? Verse 68 reads, *“Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited us and prepared redemption for **his people**.”* Zechariah was praising, *“The LORD, the LORD, the **compassionate and gracious** God, slow to **anger**, and overflowing with **mercy and truth**, maintaining mercy for **thousands**, forgiving **guilt and rebellion and sin**.”* God has revealed **all** of His **goodness** and **mercy** to us, through the **horn** of salvation which He raised up out of the house of **David**. This **horn** goes by many **other** names too. He’s called **Wonderful Counselor**, **Mighty God**, **Everlasting Father**, and **Prince of Peace**. He is the **King of kings**, and the **Lord of lords**. He is **Jesus Christ**, our **Lord** and **Savior**. With so many **powerful** and **glorious** names to **draw** from, why did Zechariah refer to Him simply as the **horn** of salvation?

In the Old Testament, the horns of the **altar** were a place of **refuge**. People who were in **trouble** could **go** there, and find **safety** from their enemies. However, as soon as they **let go** of those horns, they would again be **exposed** to the **same dangers** which had confronted them before.

We have a place of refuge **too**, in our **horn of salvation**, **Jesus**. As long as we cling to **Him**, we’re **safe** from the **devil**, and any of the evil forces he is able to raise up **against** us. But if we **let go** of Jesus, and **desert** Him, then we become **easy prey** for the devil and his evil angels.

Jesus is our horn of salvation in **another** way too. The horn was used as a symbol of **power**. It was a **strong, firm**, and **unwavering** source of help. That description fits **Jesus** to a **tee**. He tells us, *“**Whatever** you ask the Father in **my name**, he will **give** you.”* Nothing could be **more comforting** than knowing that Jesus is ever-**present** with His **almighty** power to keep **all** harm and danger **away** from us. Of course, that **doesn’t** mean that we’ll never be faced with **pain** or **suffering**, or **peril**. But it **does** mean that Jesus will make those hardships work for our **good**.

We are extremely **blessed** to have a Savior who will **never** fail us. But, what was it that **prompted** God to **send** this **horn** of salvation to us? It was His own **promise**. God had made a promise to **Abraham** many years earlier. He had established a solemn **covenant** with Abraham, and when God **makes** such a

covenant, He also sees to it that the covenant remains **unbroken**. Abraham had waited for the arrival of the promised **horn of salvation**, as did **all** of the Old Testament prophets. But the LORD simply told them, “He’s still **coming**.” That had to be **sufficient** for them - and it **was**. They were saved by the **grace** of God, through faith in the **promised Savior**.

We are **also** saved by **faith**, but the **difference** is that God has now **fulfilled** His promise to **send** the Savior, and so **we** believe in the Savior who **has come**. That makes our salvation even **more certain**, and the **certainty** of our salvation should prompt us to **serve** the LORD with **holiness** and **righteousness** all the days of our life. We don’t have to **wait** for our salvation to be **completed** at some time in the **future**. It was **finished** when Jesus died on the **cross**. All **we** have to wait for is the **second** coming of Jesus. Jesus Himself commanded us to **watch** and **pray**, because we don’t know the **day** or the **hour** when He will return. But up **until** that day, we have the **assurance** that He will **deliver** us **out** of the hand of our **enemies**. Therefore, we **never** need to be **afraid** of what might happen to us in the **future**, because the **future** belongs to the LORD. And on **that** note, Zechariah’s song of praise ends.

But, Zechariah’s song wouldn’t be **complete** without its **second** part - a song of **prophecy**. This song, which concerns the birth of his son, **John**, is just as important as his song of **praise**, because it prepares us for receiving the LORD. Whenever we know that a **guest** is coming to our home, we want to make sure that everything in the house is **in order**. And so, we **prepare**. We **cook**, and we **clean**, and we get the guest room **ready**, so when our guest **arrives** there’s nothing **else** to do. That was the work of **John the Baptist** - to do a **housecleaning** job on our **hearts**.

John’s message was, “*Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is **near!***” Repentance was **necessary** before the LORD would come into the hearts of the people, so John preached the **Law** to them. He gave them sermon after sermon filled with **fire** and **brimstone**, so the people would first become **aware** of their **sinful** lives, and then with God’s help, would go about **changing** them. After all, who takes a **bath** if he never gets **dirty**? Who goes to see a **doctor** if he never gets **sick**? And who needs a **Savior** if we can save **ourselves**?

John’s message was to make **sure** that **everyone** knew that they **needed** a Savior, and that includes **us** too. Sin is a **disease** which continues to **eat away** at us. It’s like **leprosy** - which **begins** in a **small** way at the body’s **extremities**, but

which eventually destroys the **whole body**. We have to be **aware** that this is what **sin** does to **each** of us, and we need to **realize** that on our **own**, we can't do a single thing to **stop** it. That was John's message to the **world**, and **through** that message he prepared a path for the **Savior** straight into the **hearts** of people everywhere. As soon as they felt their **need** for a **Savior**, they would be **receptive** to Jesus. John had preached them into the valley of the shadow of **death** - a death which was **eternal** - because they hadn't **repented** of their sins. But at the same time, he had brought them **back** into the **light** again - the light of **eternal life** - which can only come through our **Savior**, Jesus.

During this Christmas Season, let's remember people like **Zechariah** and the **other** Old Testament believers. Let's model **our** faith after **theirs**, because they believed even **before** the events had taken place. Then we too will be able to sing to our God **The Song Of Zechariah** - a song of **praise** and **prophecy** - because our God has shown us great **mercy** through the Gift of His **Son**. Amen.