

*67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit,
and prophesied, saying:*

68 “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

*For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His
people,*

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of David His servant—

*70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of
old—*

71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES,

And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

72 To show mercy toward our fathers,

And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

*74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our
enemies,*

Might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

*76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most
High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS
WAYS;*

77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation

By the forgiveness of their sins,

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

*79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND
THE SHADOW OF DEATH,*

To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

*80 And the child continued to grow and to become strong in -
spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public
appearance to Israel*

This morning will not be quite the same as other mornings. No I'm not going to talk longer, but the content of this particular passage

of scripture is massive.

So the first thing I'll say is I may be in over my head a little bit. Not so much in my understanding as in my being competent to convey to you the importance of the message contained within Zacharias words.

Zacharias audience was jewish people who were steeped in the knowledge and traditions of God's dealings with His chosen people Israel.

We are not only seperated from that, we're guilty in our own tradition of being sort of shallow in our knowledge. Sort of light on our feet. We are ignorant of our own tradition, and ours is based in theirs.

It's a little like the problem I had years ago when I went to take a class in classical greek so that I would be better equipped to study this book in the original languages.

I got a few weeks in and found out it was going to be impossible to learn the intricacies of the greek language when I was ignorant of the intricacies of my own. It turns out I'm a poor student of English. So how could I learn to parse the greek.

Luckily there are excellent helps and it's still possible to auger down into the greek a bit by reading what other brilliant people have done for us.

That idea crosses over here. If we don't know where Zacharias is coming from, the depths of his prophecy will escape us. So, bear with me as we try to regain a footing in hebrew cultures and traditions of their book to understand just exactly what Zacharias is proclaiming here.

If we're poor students of the New Testament, the Old Testament is going to be even more difficult.

I've told you that Luke, a greek man, does a better job than any of the jewish writers of beginning the story about Jesus, solidly in the old testament. The old economy. The religion of the jews.

He does that for us. The jewish writers who have grown up steeped in judaism write to their homies. They don't lay 20 centuries of background, because they assume the people they're writing to have the same background traditions as they do.

But Luke writes in a way that to the jewish audience might seem like an Israel for dummies book. He was writing to greeks and he doesn't expect them to understand all of the jewish traditions handed down generation after generation.

So Luke crosses over the bridge to old testament Israel and begins the story of Jesus, and indeed the story of christianity, solidly in the Israeli judaism that was present at the time of Jesus and John the baptist's birth.

And what we find is that judaism at that time had devolved into a works righteousness religion completely seperated from promises and covenants of the old testament.

The old testament story is about a people chosen by God who are given unconditional promises of a future and a redemption and a belonging to God.

All of the old testament in one way or another looks forward to redemption. Bound up in the promises is redemption from the seperation that sin caused in Adam and all of his progeny.

Little by little God reveals Himself to the hebrew people He has chosen for this purpose. Sin is defined by the Law that He gives to Moses. There is no redemption possible in law keeping. The law is a mirror that shows us how far removed we are from the law giver.

The law was designed to apply pressure to move us in the direction of the promises. We look at ourselves in the mirror of God's righteous law and we appeal to God's mercy. Lord, save us! And His promise is, I will.

By the time of Zacharias, only a remnant of jews understood what I've just described. Instead they had built a religion of self righteousness based on Moses laws.

And since humans are hopelessly evil, even David, a man after God's own heart said, In sin did my mother conceive me. We're born into it and if we look at the mirror of God's laws, we're helpless to do much about what goes on inside our heads, our souls.

But the jews had devised a system of outward righteousness while the inner cancer of sin was doing it's work of death. That's why Jesus called them whitewashed sepulchres. He said outside you've got this white veneer, painted on, but inside is the corruption of death and decay. They were full of dead men's bones

However, as it is now, it was then, and God had His remnant. There were a few jews who understood God's true plan of redemption and cast themselves in faith on His mercy. A future forgiveness.

One of those was Zacharias, and he is going to give us a history

lesson on God's covenantal plan of salvation to His people Israel. A plan that relies on God's grace and promises, and not on the keeping of Moses law, which is impossible. So fasten your seat belts.

We'll see as Jesus walks in this world, people like Zacharias that were righteous because they had faith in God's promised redemption instead of faith in their own religiosity and good works were a rare breed indeed.

Notice as we go through this how often Zacharias refers to Moses law. Not once. However he refers to mercy and redemption and forgiveness of sin all the way through, none of which we would have known we needed if it were not for Moses law.

The law is a mirror that shows us we're broken, defiled, soiled, helpless next to a Holy God. Salvation is what we need. And that's what Zacharias is so excited about! After 2000 years since Abraham, and 4000 years since Adam, the day had come. Redemption was rising like the sun coming up over the horizon.

The theme of Zacharias' song is redemption from sin and salvation, and the method is the covenant promises of God that are being realized, after 2000 years of waiting, in the promised Messiah that his son is forerunner to.

So then, let's dig in a little and see how far we can get this morning.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

The first thing we will recognize is that we have no capacity in

ourselves, in our fallen nature, to give acceptable glory to God; unless, unless He fills us with His Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit we open our mouths and cursings come out. With the Holy Spirit we open our mouths and blessings come out.

Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and not just praise, but praise with such depth we have to stop and spend time and savor and even work to enjoy all of the depth of meaning that pours out of Zacharias.

I would add; This is what we were created for. This is what we are created to do. To bring glory to God. And there is nothing else on earth that brings more joy and peace and inner wellness than when we ask God to fill us up with the Holy Spirit and then we open our mouths in praise to God.

In all my experience in my long life, there's nothing else that comes even close to being as satisfying as being filled with God's Spirit and lifting my voice in praise to Him. That is the pinnacle of existence.

strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it; said Jesus. We were designed for worship, designed by God for glory, and we in our broken state are looking down every dead end street for this "life" that Jesus speaks of that few find.

When God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell and fill us, and when we worship and praise our God, we find this rare thing that Jesus referred to as LIFE. A connection with God, doing what He designed us for. There is nothing greater to experience.

And that's why there are books written about people being forced to choose between that "life" and physical death, and they will take death over giving up a life connection with God.

That's where Zacharias is at. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and he opened up his mouth, and remarkable praise and glory came forth.

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

Blessed be the Lord God of who? The universes? No. The earth? No. Blessing came to a select group that God chose for the purpose of revealing Himself, ultimately to the whole world, but for this moment, Israel is the direct recipient of blessing.

God's purpose was to bless the whole earth. Ultimately. We'll see that He promised that to Abraham. All the nations would be blessed. But it pleased God to funnel that blessing by way of revelation to a people He chose out of the nations. Israel.

The nations had their gods that they had dreamed up in the fantasies of their own minds. Demented and helped by Satan the world had bizarre gods that would demand human sacrifice. Death appeased their gods. Cast your babies into the fires to appease the worlds gods.

One nation, Israel, was chosen for God to progressively reveal Himself to and to be the conduit that the covenant of redemption would come through.

Paul delineates the lofty position of Israel among the nations as he laments their self inflicted blindness: Romans 9

Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen

Israel was uniquely set apart for blessing. But they missed it. But that's a story for another day, for now we want to re-state their lofty position of being chosen by God for every blessing.

They were to be a conduit of blessing, for the nations. But their own sinfulness and rejection of God's messiah caused them to be set aside, for a time.

Zacharias says *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. Why?*

*For He **has** visited us **and accomplished** redemption for His people,*

Zachariaus speaks in the present tense. Why? Had redemption been accomplished? Jesus is still 6 months out from being born.

We need to review the visits. Both of them. And what the Angel Gabriel announced to Zacharias and to Mary. Because Zacharias is here making a direct reference to those visits. The first by the way, in over 500 years.

Just the visits would be huge, period. But God not only sent Gabriel to visit these 2 people, He also sent a message with Gabriel.

Here is the message to Zacharias; 16 *“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. 17 “It is he who will go*

as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

The Lord your God is coming, and this son of promise of yours, Zacharias, will be the forerunner. The announcer that God has come to redeem Israel.

And here is the message of Gabriel from God to Mary; *“Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”*

Zacharias says *“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people*

The Lord God of Israel had visited them by his angel Gabriel and the announcement of that angel was that God was coming, his name would be Jesus, and He will redeem His people.

When God says it, it's in the bank. Zacharias speaks in the present tense because it's as good as done. In fact as revelation progressed we would learn by the mouth of both Jesus and Paul that our names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world.

Zacharias could speak of redemption in the present tense because God had already redeemed us before the world began. It was over 30 years to the cross of Christ, a cross Zacharias probably never envisioned, yet he says redemption is accomplished by the Messiah of Israel. It's already done.

*69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant—*

Zacharias is going to tie the redemption of Israel, and ultimately the nations, to 3 covenant promises that God gave His people Israel. And the first one he'll mention is the covenant of God given to David.

We'll look at that, but first, I want to consider his language as he approaches the Davidic covenant. *69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us*

What is a horn of salvation? This is a symbolic picture used often in the ancient times. A horn was a symbol of power in sheep and goats. In the animal kingdom the most alpha ram was the one with the most powerful horns. It was a weapon of defense and offense.

In the bible it's always a symbol of dominant power. In this case, *69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us* the dominance is against Satan and the sin that threatens us.

But to be fair, Zacharias is thinking, just as the disciples later also would, that the first thing messiah will do is push back against our enemies. Crush Rome. Make Israel dominant in the world instead of submissive to foreign rulers. Defeat our enemies.

That was Israels fatal error. Their pre-conceived ideas of Messiah were all outward. And to be fair, when we read through the Davidic covenant, you can understand their error.

*69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of David His servant—*

So God is raising up Messiah, who is a horn of salvation, in the

house of David, God's servant.

Earlier this week I was listening to a piece by Al Mohler and he was saying and I'll quote him; *"It has often been remarked that if one wants to understand what a renaissance court would have looked like, just look to the Vatican. The Vatican is still, today, very much in its operations like a medieval or renaissance royal court. But if you want to know what an ancient court looked like, don't look to the Vatican, look to the House of Saud. Look to Saudi Arabia, because there you had the example of a monarchy operating in the 21st century, pretty much like autocratic totalitarian monarchs in centuries past. Not just going back to the renaissance or the to medieval period, but going back all the way to ancient history."*

We speak of the house of Saud and it helps our mindframe when we study Luke's gospel and Zacharias says; *69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—*

He's referencing a prophetic covenant that God gave David through the prophet Nathan. It's worth going back and looking at that. You can turn if you like to 2 Samuel 7, or just listen as I read.

1 After the king had settled into his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."

3 So Nathan told the king, "Go and do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you."

4 But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 5 "Go and tell My servant David that this is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build for Me a house to dwell in? 6 For I have

not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until this day, but I have moved about with a tent as My dwelling. 7 In all My journeys with all the Israelites, have I ever asked any of the leaders, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'

8 Now then, you are to tell My servant David that this is what the LORD of Hosts says: I took you from the pasture, from following the flock, to be the ruler over My people Israel. 9 I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make for you a name like the greatest in the land.

10 And I will provide a place for My people Israel and will plant them so that they may dwell in a place of their own and be disturbed no more. No longer will the sons of wickedness oppress them as they did at the beginning 11 and have done since the day I appointed judges over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.

The LORD declares to you that He Himself will establish a house for you. 12 And when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his Father, and he will be My son. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.

15 But My loving devotion will never depart from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I moved out of your way. 16 Your house and kingdom will endure forever before Me, and your throne will be established forever."

David says he's going to build God a house. And Nathan says, great idea David. And God says, maybe you should have checked with me first Nathan. Go back and tell David he's not going to build me a house, but in fact, I'm going to build him a house.

The messiah will come from David's house and He will reign on David's throne forever.

That is the Davidic covenant and it appears over and over in the old testament. Messiah will rule on David's throne. He'll be descended from David.

The prophecy that God gives thru Nathan is a telescoping prophecy. The first part is about Solomon. He'll err and God will punish him, etc.

But then He shifts gears and looks all the way into the future. The final part about the authority to reign forever is not about Solomon, it's about Jesus Christ.

And it goes all the way past us to the yet future time when Jesus will come charging out of heaven on a white horse with 10 thousands of His saints and He will return to this world, crush evil and Satan, and reign in Jerusalem forever on David's throne.

That's what's in Zacharias mind. Messiah will crush evil and reign forever. In Jerusalem.

He didn't understand yet or see that first the Messiah must die in our place, must take our sin upon Himself and give us His righteousness so that we can be purchased away from sin and death that holds us.

Zacharias and indeed, the disciples of Jesus never saw a 2000 year

long parenthesis between redemption accomplished, and authority to reign on Davids throne forever without sin or Satan to any longer cause destruction.

The jews of Zacharias time, the priests and the rulers were hung up on Moses law. The religion they spun was a superficial outward religion of law keeping.

Words like redemption and salvation and forgiveness, all used by Zacharias here, were foreign to them. They didn't need forgiveness, so they thought. Redemption from what? Salvation? It wasn't in their vocabulary.

Yet, the angel Gabriel comes with two distinctly different messages for Zacharias and Mary. Gabriel tells Zacharias that his son John will have a ministry of calling Israel to repentance from sin.

And his message to Mary is one of Messiah's reign forever on David's throne.

But Israel's heart was not turned back from their sin to God. Israel had a message for God. It's in Luke 19:14 *But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.*

Repentance from sin didn't come. The reign of messiah was rejected. But it was all in the plan of God for our redemption.

Everything GAbriel told Zacharias and Mary is true. All of it will come to pass. But God's time is not our time. With 20-20 hindsight we now see the bigger picture.

Israel murders their messiah. His death pays the price for every

soul to be cleansed once and for all of the sin that would otherwise have separated them from God forever.

The redemption and salvation and forgiveness of sin that Zacharias prophesied has indeed come, but by a circuitous route that Zacharias didn't yet see.

Salvation wasn't just from outward national enemies, it was inward. We can be saved because our sin was paid for. We can be redeemed, individually because sin is vanquished in Jesus at the cross. Forgiveness wasn't just temporal, looking to the future, it is accomplished, just as Zacharias says.

There is much here in Zacharias prophecy that is still yet future. The covenant promises of God are only partially accomplished.

Next week we'll take another swing at this prophecy.

I want to leave you with this one thought. There is some depth here, so put your thinking caps back on for just another minute.

All of the covenants with Israel look to a future reign, a future time when Messiah reigns on earth on David's throne, forever.

Think about what we lost at the fall in the garden of Eden. Sin entered. Man was banished from God's presence. And we learn from Jesus and also Paul one other truth. Satan is the ruler of this world.

The future reign of Messiah on David's throne in Jerusalem reverses the curse of sin. Jesus will depose Satan and lock him up in a prison for a thousand years. Evil will be vanquished. Judged. Removed.

Righteousness will reign and the earth will flourish like never before.

So the prophecy has a dual fulfillment. While Zacharias in his mind may have envisioned temporal enemies like Rome or Greece being removed, God is saying the enemy that has caused all of the enemies will be removed.

Satan's reign on this earth will be over. The root of every enemy of God and God's creation will be removed. Sin and rebellion in the hearts of men will be gone.

And we pray; *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, like it is in heaven.* The ultimate fulfillment of that prayer is when Jesus, the Messiah of Israel returns to this earth and vanquishes Satan, the arch enemy that has caused all of the temporal enemies.

How do we know that yet future prayer will be ultimately answered? Because the final words in that same prayer tell us;

Thine IS the kingdom, the authority to reign already belongs to Jesus

And the power, He has the power to accomplish all that He says
And the glory, is for how long; *forever.* Amen.