

Christmas Series 2017

Zechariah's Song

INTRODUCTION

This week _____ put a video on Facebook that asked the question, “Do you remember how it felt to hold your new baby?” For many of us, that remembrance is printed indelibly on our minds (Of course some are fresher than others – e.g., the _____’s). Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote a song we like to sing, the 2nd stanza goes:

*How sweet to hold a newborn baby,
And feel the pride and joy he gives;
But greater still the calm assurance:
This child can face uncertain days because He Lives!*

The priest Zechariah was related to Jesus through his wife, Elizabeth. They had passed child-bearing years, but God promised them a son. He would become the man we know as John the Baptist. At the birth of John, Zechariah held his baby boy and what he saw could only be explained as a miracle of God. What the Holy Spirit revealed to him is found in Luke’s Gospel, chapter 1, beginning at verse 67.

TEXT: Luke 1:67–79 (ESV)

⁶⁷ And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ⁶⁹ and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, ⁷¹ that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; ⁷² to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being delivered 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 before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high ⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

EXPOSITION

Structure

As does all Hebrew poetry and song, this Spirit-inspired expression of Zechariah has form and structure. It is basically divided in two halves: the 1st half (vv67-71) tell the story of Jesus; and the 2nd half (vv74-79) tell John’s story. The structure forms a chiasm that blends both men into one. So, when Zechariah looks at his baby boy he sees through the child and sees the joint ministry of John and Jesus. The chiastic structure reveals to us that the main point is found in vv72-73.

Main Point

Zechariah uses the term “mercy” just as Mary did in her song. Both want us to know that in loyal, loving faithfulness, God keeps his promises; and in this case, Zechariah is telling us in steadfast love, God has fulfilled His promise to Abraham through the birth of Jesus. All the prophets through the Old Testament have been pointing us to the coming of this Messiah King and Redeemer. Zechariah’s son, John, will stand in that long line as the last and final prophet. The Savior – the promised Seed has come.

The Message

So, you ask, “Pastor Jim, what is this song telling us?” Here it is in one paragraph:

The baby Zechariah is holding will be God’s prophet who fulfills the prophetic promise of a Deliverer through Abraham (and David’s) family, who will bring the totality of salvation to God’s people, to fulfill the purpose of God’s people of holy, eternal worship of the Lord, God.

I want to bring a message on two of these points: One, the Totality of Salvation; and Two, the Purpose of Salvation.

1. THE TOTALITY OF SALVATION

Listen to Zechariah’s hope through the ministry of Jesus:

- God has “visited” (or “helped”) His people.
- God has redeemed His people – He has bought us back and made us His own.
- He has saved us/delivered us from our enemies and all who hate us.
- He has brought forgiveness of sin
- He has brought light to darkness and death
- He has guided us in peace – harmony, reconciliation, and restoration of order and justice.

Is that what we think of when we think of salvation? Often, we think (and rightly so) of forgiveness of sin. But Zechariah has a biblical view of salvation. When we think of the comprehensive totality of salvation in the Bible we are talking about:

- Total physical and spiritual well-being.
- Total body and soul.
- Starting at conversion and culminating in the New Heaven and New Earth.
- It is viewed in the Bible in terms of past, present and future. It is totally complete now. It is being worked out through time; and it will be accomplished
- It is for all the redeemed, from all the nations, from all time, for ever and ever.

And all that is summed up in one word: ***Immanuel***, God with us! Salvation can be described by two words: ***Eternal Life***. Salvation is one sentence is ***the reversal of every consequence of the curse of sin.***

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV) tells us, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” And 1 Thessalonians 5:23–24 (ESV) says, “²³ Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” And Philippians 1:6 (ESV) says, “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

I’m wondering if your concept of salvation is “super-sized”? This “so great salvation” comes with a purpose. Notice Zechariah’s reminder to us of this purpose:

2. THE PURPOSE OF SALVATION

When Moses went to Pharaoh and demanded that he let the people of Israel go free, he said these words: “... *The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you, saying, ‘Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness’*” (Exodus 7:16b, ESV). God saves; He delivers; He redeems; He forgives; He justifies; He heals; He restores; He reconciles; etc. etc. for one purpose: ***that His people might worship Him***. John Piper is right when he writes, “Missions exist because worship doesn’t.” Notice what Zechariah says,

“that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” (Luke 1:74–75, ESV)

God saves so that His people might serve Him without fear (with holy fear but not condemning/judgmental fear). God saves that we might serve him in holiness and righteousness. God saves us that we might serve him all our days – and into eternity. Salvation sets us free from Satan. Salvation sets us free from our sinful selves. Salvation sets us free from sin and sin’s curse. Salvation sets us free from damnation and Hell. But more than all that – much more, salvation sets us free to worship and serve God.

God’s redeems with intention – with purpose. Stephen Curtis Chapman penned these words in a song:

*And how can I kneel here
And think of the cross
The thorns and the whip and the nails and the spear
The infinite cost
To purchase my pardon
And bear all my shame
To think I have anything worth boasting in
Except for Your name*

CONCLUSION

Zechariah, under the power of the Holy Spirit gives us an amazing message:

The baby Zechariah is holding will be God's prophet who fulfills the prophetic promise of a Deliverer through Abraham (and David's) family, who will bring the totality of salvation to God's people, to fulfill the purpose of God's people of holy, eternal worship of the Lord, God.

APPLICATION

You might be here, and you noticed something that others didn't. You saw that this prophetic promise was from "the Lord God of Israel."¹ You might be here, and you say, "I'm not an Israelite. I'm not a Jew. What hope do I have? What promise is there for me?" Let me share with you two passages of Scripture:

1. Romans 2:29 (ESV): "But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God." If you have been born again by the Spirit of God, you are by definition a real Jew. In fact Paul also wrote:

2. Galatians 3:28–29 (ESV): "²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." If you are born of the Spirit and faith in Christ, this passage applies to you.

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Lk 1:68). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.