

Zacharias' Hymn of Praise

I will not yet be returning to my series of Christ in the book of Isaiah because as I was preparing the messages for the Advent Season, I read both the song of Mary and the prophetic words of Zacharias and felt I wanted to share some important teaching from these two passages. So this morning I have taken my text from Luke chapter 1 and will be looking at the prophetic teaching from the words of Zacharias. And may God bless this short series to our hearts and minds, and may we find ourselves much encouraged in our faith.

To set the context for our message we need to go back in time, just a little over nine months prior when a priest, by the name of Zacharias, was burning incense in the Temple and when he was approaching the altar of incense he was suddenly surprised by an angel of God standing at the right side of the altar who said to him, "Do not be afraid for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John." Now Zacharias found this hard to believe and questioned the angel in a doubtful manner as to how this could be possible since both he and his wife were well advanced in years. And I'm sure you remember the story how the angel told him that because he doubted he would be struck dumb and not be able to speak until the son, whom he was to call John, would be born. Now to speed ahead in time to a little over nine months later, Elizabeth had indeed conceived and has given birth to a son.

And, as could be expected, a number of neighbors and relatives knowing how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, had gathered to rejoice with her. And thus it was, on the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child; they all, no doubt in great excitement suggested that the baby be called by the name of his father, Zacharias. But much to their surprise Elizabeth said, "No; he shall be called John." Now the common custom amongst Jews is to always name a child after a family member so they turned to Zacharias and signed to him as to what the baby should be called and he motioned for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John" and having written those words immediately his ability to speak returned to him and he began to praise God and soon throughout the hill country people were filled with fear and wonderment and began to question as to what kind of child this baby would be. And then we read that his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied saying, *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, 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 that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* (Luke 1:67-80)

You will see this prophecy can be divided into two parts; the first part dealing with the soon coming of the Messiah and the second part with the purpose and work of the child John. This morning let us consider the first part of the prophetic proclamation concerning the soon coming Messiah.

- A. First we see a proclamation that God has come and visited His people. *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people."*
 1. This is a prophetic word from God for we read that Zacharias being filled with the Holy Spirit begins to speak in a prophetic manner.
 - a. Old Testament Scripture was given to us by Holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

- b. The words of King David, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me". Ps. 51:11
 - c. Nor could we know the Scriptures that speak of Christ as our Redeemer without first being quickened by the Holy Spirit.
 - d. Let us understand then that Zacharias is speaking as one anointed by the Holy Spirit therefore what he says here is a message from God to His church.
2. Immediately we are made aware that this coming Messiah is God Himself. - *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited His people.*
- a. Kurios ho Theos has visited His people
 - b. As it was said by the angel to Joseph the husband of Mary That He would be called "Emmanuel - God with us"
 - c. For this would be the messenger of the Lord who would suddenly come to His temple.

Mal 3:1 "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple.

3. Another thing to note is that he speaks in what is called the prophetic present. - *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for **He has visited and redeemed** His people.*
- a. This has not taken place in time yet
 - b. Yet Zacharias says He has visited and redeemed His people
4. What do we learn from this language that Zacharias uses?
- a. God is not limited by time.
 - b. This is the "Lamb slain from before the beginning of the world" (Rev. 13:8)
 - c. Peter explains it this way when he says that we have been redeemed *"with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.* (1 Pet. 1:19-20)
- (1) This is why Job could say, *"I know that my Redeemer lives and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."* (Job 19:25)
 - (2) This is why Jesus could say of Abraham, "He saw my day and rejoiced". (Jn. 8:56)
 - (3) This is why David could speak of his sin being covered. (Ps. 32:1)
 - (4) Why Simeon in the temple seeing the infant Jesus could say, I have seen Your salvation. (Luke 2:25-32)
- d. This is why the Church in the New Testament is not a separate body from the Old Testament people of God.
5. Hear carefully this glorious truth; what God purposed to do is as good as already finished.

*Isa 46:9-10 I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, **'My counsel shall stand,** and **I will do all My pleasure.'***

Conclusion: I trust then that in the next few messages from this prophesy of Zacharias is;

Who Jesus is
 Why He came
 And what He has provided for His people