

“The LORD has visited His people!”

The song of Zechariah named “Benedictus” from its opening word in the Latin which is “Praise be” is recorded in Luke 1:67-80. We need a brief summary of this man, Zechariah in the Gospel of Luke to have a better picture of Zechariah’s song called “Benedictus.” The angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and informed him that his aged wife Elizabeth was going to give a birth to a baby boy. When the birth of his son, John the Baptist was announced to him by the angel, Zechariah could not believe what the angel said to him. On account of his disbelief upon the news of the angel, Zechariah lost his ability to speak and came to experience nine months of silence in order to think, pray and meditate on God’s Word.

We trust that the Word of God is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. These nine months of silence may have been a divine rebuke for his unbelief, but God turns his discipline into amazing grace for those who repent their sins and come back to Him. What a wonderful grace and mercy the Lord showed to Zechariah! Not only merciful God restored his

ability to speak, but He enabled him to prophesy by and through the power and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

As we deeply ponder on the song of Zechariah, we'll see that he does not speak so much about his own son, but focuses on the One promised, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour who would be sent to rescue and bless those who turn to him. This indicates that Zechariah's heart and life is fixed upon spiritual and heavenly blessings, and not upon his own earthly blessings of the comfort and the honor of the world. As a righteous man, Zechariah has learned from his mistake. Through the pain of the discipline, he becomes a stronger man of God. Now Zechariah trusts that God can use tired, old and worn out instruments like himself.

When his son, John the Baptist is born and is named John, immediately his tongue is freed, and he speaks in praise to God. With his lips freed to speak, Zechariah can't help but sing! The last word that he has spoken before losing his speech has been an expression of doubt, but on this, the first occasion that he can speak again, he praises God. Zechariah filled with the Holy Spirit from

deep down his heart starts to pour out joy with a melody about the purpose and meaning of God in the flesh, dwelling among His People. He praises for what God is doing for His people. Basically every line of the song of Zechariah is derived from the Old Testament. Each line is written with deep truth about one overwhelming reality. At long last God has come in the person of Jesus Christ!

I'd like to bring your attention to the gospel of Luke 1:68. The main point of the song is summarized in the verse. "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed His people." God's gracious visitation to redeem His people in this verse is the main thrust of the song. I want you to see the term 'redeem,' and the words "He has come" or "He has visited." The meaning of redeem is 'to set free by paying a price.' It indicates the releasing of a prisoner or the liberating of a slave. And the words for "has come" is often translated "has visited." This expression is a common Old Testament way of speaking. We can find that the Bible uses these phrases of His visitation with reference to God's intention to deliver His people from their discouragement or bondage. Exodus 4:31 states, "And the people believed; and when they heard

that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshiped." The LORD had visited the people of Israel to deliver, to redeem them from Egypt. Let me show you the same kind of the phrase in Ruth 1:6, "Then she started with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had visited his people and given them food." As The LORD has visited His people, the discouraged Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem. As you can see that whenever God visits His people, He always encourages them and redeems them from their afflictions.

Now, Zechariah declares, "God has visited and has redeemed His people." God is visiting His people in the person of Jesus in order to deliver them from their discouragement and bondage of sin and death. This is the glory of Christmas. God has come from the Heaven in the flesh of Jesus Christ in order to save us from our sins and death. This is Immanuel, God with us. This is the whole point of Zechariah's song. In fact, that's what Christmas is all about. The song of Zechariah provides us three beautiful pictures of what God's gracious visitation does for His people.

Firstly, God has visited His people to raise up a horn of salvation.

The horn in verse 69 is a symbol of power and victory, so that a horn of salvation means 'a mighty salvation,' 'a strong saviour or 'a victory over the enemy.' Almighty God says to Jerusalem in Micah 4:13, "Rise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion, for I will give you horns of iron; I will give you hoofs of bronze and you will break to pieces many nations." As you know the horn of an animal is the symbol of its strength, its sheer brute power. With its horn an animal destroys its enemies. Our Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the devil and his works. Indeed, Jesus Christ our Lord destroys His enemies in order that He may save his people therefore Jesus is called "a horn of salvation," "a strong Saviour" of the house of David. Don't you think that Jesus as the horn of salvation is an exciting image for Christmas?

The horn Zechariah refers to is not a musical instrument but the deadly dangerous weapon of the wild ox. Interestingly, this is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus is called "a horn of salvation." The picture here is that of an army about to be taken captive, but then help arrives and the enemy is defeated. Because of this, the enemy cannot capture more prisoners, which

means total victory for the people of God. To say that God has raised up a horn of salvation for us means that we have a mighty and strong Savior who not only has the power to defeat our enemy but also comes and helps us gain a victory over our enemies. The reference to "the house of his servant David" indicates that Zechariah is singing about the Messiah. And the appeal to David's house makes it clear that God is doing what the prophets promised long ago. It goes without saying that, Jesus Christ is our horn of salvation and the One promised mighty Savior. And He is the One who has all power to defeat our enemies and sets ourselves free from the bondage of sin and death, and gives us a victory over our enemies.

Jesus, our Horn of salvation comes into the world to liberate us from the sin by the paying of a ransom. Jesus, our Horn of salvation comes and shows us the mercy that we are not punished because of the sins we committed. Jesus, our Horn of salvation died on the cross as a perfect unblemished sacrifice for us. By the substitutionary blood of Christ, we are released from the payment our sins. The ransom is paid for our redemption by God through the blood of His Son Jesus. Now we can serve our Redeemer in holiness because we Christians have

been cleansed from the darkness of sin. We serve our Horn of salvation in righteousness because we people of God are covered with the righteousness of Christ.

Secondly, God has visited His people to fulfil His holy covenant.

Zechariah continues to sing praises to God who sincerely keeps His promise in verses 72-75. He refers back to the promises made to Abraham. God had promised salvation from their enemies in His covenant with Abraham and His descendants. All that the Almighty God promised He would do. He has surely begun to accomplish. Zechariah points out that what God was doing fulfilled what "He said through His holy prophets of long ago" in verse 70, that God was remembering "His holy covenant" in verse 72, and that He swore to our father Abraham in verse 73. In our text, Zechariah has a specific promise in mind. He speaks of the holy covenant which he specifies as the oath which He swore to our father Abraham. God's Covenant with Abraham shows us that Abraham will be a blessing to others. It means that ultimately all the families of the earth will be blessed by and through Abraham. Thus, it is not just blessings for Abraham and his descendants, but for the whole world who put their trust

in Jesus Christ.

The covenant of God will never fail us. The promise of God's Word is never broken. Numbers 23:19 gives us the assurance of God's promise, "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" Our Father God in heaven who made the covenant with us through His Son Jesus will surely keep His promise. On this Christmas day let us do remember that God will do what He promised through His Son Jesus Christ. God does what He said in our Saviour for His glory and purpose in His time and in His way.

Thirdly, God has visited His people to give the dawning of a new day.

God sent us His one and only Son as "the rising sun" or "the Dawn of Heavenly Sunlight." Jesus as a bright morning light came from heaven and shone on those in darkness and death, guiding them into the path of peace. Indeed, Jesus Christ our Lord is the light in our darkness and guides us into the path of peace. Before God's visitation in the person of Jesus, people were sitting in darkness and death, and distress gripped them, but our Saviour Christ Jesus, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace

brought light, life, and peace to us.

It is the dawn of a new day because God has visited His people. Yes, the new day has come when the baby Jesus Christ who is the rising Sun was born two thousand years ago in Bethlehem. The rising Sun has broken the horizon on a dark world. The Dawn from on high has visited us in the person of Jesus Christ. God has visited His people to give light to those living in darkness and in the shadow of death. When we are lost in darkness and the shadows of death, God shines brightly from heaven and gives us guidance so that our feet will be directed in paths of peace.

When the Light of the world comes into our life, the power of darkness flees away. When the true Light comes in, we are released from the bondage of our sins. When the rising Sun comes in, our feet walk the path of peace with God. On this Christmas day that same divine Visitor, our Horn of salvation comes and knocks at the door of our heart to fulfil His holy covenant. Today, Can you hear the sound His presence? He stands patiently at the door to give us the dawning of a new day. Amen.