

6. Zacharias Spoke of the Promises of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the things that happened when John was circumcised and named. We saw that the neighbors and relatives wanted to name the son after the father. However, both Elizabeth and later Zacharias said that the name of the child was to be John. The way that the events happened at the naming of John caused the people of the hill country to keep those thoughts in their hearts as they wondered what God was going to do through John. Today, we are going to see what Zacharias said that day as he spoke about the promises of God.

Luke 1:67-71 says, “Now 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.’” Here, we see that on the day John was named, that Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave praise to the Lord for His promises.

Luke gives us some very important lessons about the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Each time Luke mentioned that a person was filled with the Holy Spirit in the book of Luke, the person gave praise and worship to God. The book of Acts was also written by Luke. We see that in addition to worship, those who are filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts also spoke the Word of God with boldness to those who were not Christians. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” As a result, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will worship God, we will serve one another as Christians in love and we will share the Gospel with those who are not Christians. Put another way, when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we will love God with our whole heart, we will love one another as Christ loved us and we will love our neighbor as we love ourselves which will lead us to speak the Word of God boldly.

In his worship of God, Zacharias said that the Lord God of Israel is blessed. He also said that God had visited and redeemed His people. Then, Zacharias spoke about the way that the Lord would visit and redeem His people. Psalm 18:1-2 says, “I will love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.” Here, we see that Zacharias was not talking about John but the One for whom John would prepare the way. Zacharias also said that One would come from the house of David. Zacharias and his son John were Levites but Jesus was from the family of David.

Zacharias said that the fact that God would redeem His people had been promised by the mouth of His holy prophets. The prophets promised that Christ would save His people from all enemies from the time the world began. The first promise about Christ who would come from the seed of woman was given when God told about the future judgment that would come on Satan in Genesis 3:15. That verse says, “‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your

seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” In this verse, we see that the Seed of woman, a particular person, would crush the head of Satan. This early promise about Christ pointed to the fact that He would save us from all of our enemies. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57 says, “So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” We can rejoice because we no longer need to fear any enemies, including Satan or death.

Luke 1:72-75 says, “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.” We see that Christ would also fulfill the promises that God had made to Abraham and his descendants. By His death for sin, Christ made it possible for God to show mercy to Abraham and all of his descendants that placed their faith in the promises of God.

God had promised that He would show that mercy when He first gave that covenant to Abraham. Genesis 12:1-3 says, “Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” This covenant with Abraham promised personal blessing to Abraham. It promised blessing to the nation that would come from Abraham. It also promised a land to that nation. In addition, Abraham was promised that all families of the earth would be blessed from the One that would come through Abraham which is actually a promise about the fact that Christ would come.

God also gave a promise to the nation that would come from Abraham that they would be able to serve Him without fear because God would deliver them when they were serving Him. Zacharias realized that promise was a great promise. Israel could know that as long as they walked in holiness and righteousness, they could serve God without fear because of the deliverance that the Lord would provide them. Moses had reminded Israel of that promise when he said in Deuteronomy 28:1, “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.” If the people would obey the Lord and keep His commandments, God promised they would not have fear because they would experience the blessing of the Lord.

After speaking about Christ, Zacharias went on to speak about his son that would go before Christ. Luke 1:76-80 says, “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.’ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the

deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.” Zacharias said that John would be the prophet of the Highest.

The word translated “Highest” is the word that was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to translate the Hebrew word for “The Most High God”. This word is used three times in this chapter. In verse 32, Mary was promised that Her Son would be the Son of the Highest. Then, in verse 35, Mary was told, “And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.’” Now, in this verse, Zacharias said that his son would be the prophet of the Highest. Here, we see that the name is used for Christ.

Zacharias said that John would prepare the way for Christ. Later, John was asked who he was by priests and Levites that had been sent from the religious leaders in Jerusalem. John answered their questions by saying in John 1:23, “He said: ‘I am “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” In addition to preparing the way for Christ, Zacharias said that John would give knowledge of salvation to the people of the nation of Israel. This message of salvation would tell them how to have remission of sins. The word translated “remission” means *forgiveness or pardon of sins*. Hebrews 9:22 uses this word when it says, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” That is why John introduced Christ to his disciples by saying in John 1:29, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” Our forgiveness and pardon was made possible through the blood of Christ.

Zacharias said that it was through the mercy of the Father that the Dayspring from on high would visit them. The word translated “Dayspring” meant *the east or the place of the sunrise*. In Malachi 4:2, we read, “‘But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves.’” Here, we see that Malachi prophesied the Messiah would be the Sun of Righteousness. Zacharias also referred to Isaiah 9:2, which is another prophecy about the Messiah that says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” In this way, Zacharias said that Christ would fulfill the Old Testament prophecies.

We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the way that John grew. We read that he became strong in spirit. A person becomes strong in spirit as he or she learns to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit. We want to provide an example for our children to follow by our own example. In addition, we want to help them learn how to help others become strong in spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit.