Zachariah's Song of Salvation: Introduction
Scripture: Luke 1:67-80
Code: 42-16

There's nothing more thrilling to me and more exciting and more surprising, in some ways, then doing week-by-week exposition of Scripture. It is thrilling because you're dealing with the Word of God. It is intellectually and spiritually challenging because you're coming to grips with profound truth. It is surprising because from week to week you never know what you're going to run into. Sometimes you come into the pulpit as a storyteller, dealing with a narrative passage, and that's primarily what we've been doing as we began the first chapter of Luke. It's been the wonderful, unfolding story of the birth of John and the birth of Jesus that we've been looking at. Sometimes when you come into the pulpit you sort of feel like a judge on the bench and you're indicting somebody and pronouncing them guilty and bringing about the judgment of God upon them. Sometimes you feel like you're bringing comfort to the grieving and the wounded. The preacher takes on the form of the text he preaches, and that's always challenging, and always wonderful.

I...I confess to you that this morning as we come to the text of Luke chapter 1, I'm going to have to put on my theologian's hat because we're going to be dealing with some very important theology, some sweeping biblical themes that need to be understood. Luke, I told you at the very beginning, is a wonderful historian. He's a great storyteller. But he is no less a theologian. He not only has a warm and wonderful and straightforward way of telling the story, but he has a grasp, a deep grasp and a great understanding of its theological weight and implications. And he has ordered the flow of his narrative under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in such a way that, though we are wondrously carried along by the magnificence of his narrative, at the same time at certain moments we are intercepted in the flow of the story by some very remarkable theological themes.

Such is the case in our text today: Luke 1 verses 67 to 80. It's the final portion of the first chapter. It is known as the Benedictus of Zachariah because the Latin word for "blessed" is *benedictus*. And it's just gotten to bear that name through the years. It is Zachariah's praise to God.

As we look at Zachariah's praise to God, we are struck by a couple of notes in this song of praise. There is a reference in verse 69 to David, and there's a reference further down in verse 73 to Abraham. And there's a reference down in verse 77 to the forgiveness of sins.

Now you might just read those and pass them by without really stopping to contemplate what's going on here, but I'm not going to let you do that. In fact, it's going to take us a couple of weeks to get through this because we're going to stop more than we go.

Zachariah, in his song of praise here, is linking what is unfolding before his very eyes. He is linking it to very specific covenants given in the Old Testament, a covenant to David, a covenant to Abraham, and a covenant about the forgiveness of sins, known as the New Covenant, presented in Jeremiah 31. We can divide Zachariah's praise then into those three parts. Part of it deals with the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, part of it deals with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, and part of it deals with the fulfillment of the New Covenant.

Now all three of those covenants are what we would call "salvific" or salvation covenants, saving covenants. That is, they have to do with blessings that come by salvation. No one will experience the fullness of the Davidic Covenant apart from salvation. And everyone who is saved will participate to one degree or another in the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. No one will enter in to the full blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant apart from salvation and all who believe will to some degree enter into the fullness of the promises and blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. And no one will either experience the Davidic Covenant or the Abrahamic Covenant if they don't experience the forgiveness of sin provided in the New Covenant.

So these are covenants which have to do with salvation. The Davidic Covenant is universal, insofar as it relates to the universal and eternal rule of Jesus Christ. The Abrahamic Covenant is national, insofar as it deals primarily with promises made by God to Israel for blessing. And the New Covenant is personal, in that it deals with how God works for the forgiveness of sin in the life of an individual. The Davidic Covenant, universal; the Abrahamic Covenant, national; the New Covenant, personal. They're not exclusively that but that's the main feature of those covenants and we'll watch them unfold when we get into the text.

So this is a very critical text. And for Luke it's essential that he have this here, that it be included for the purposes that the Spirit of God is directing Luke, because the flow that he begins is the flow of the story of salvation. But Luke wants to be sure that no one assumes that this is something new, that this is something that just sort of dropped out of heaven. Not at all, this is something that fulfills something very old. Luke wants us to understand that the coming of the forerunner, John the Baptist, the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, inaugurating the fulfillment of God's promised redemption is the fulfillment of Davidic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant and New Covenant features.

So, Luke is putting this here at a very appropriate place, including this great Benedictus by Zachariah so that we understand that Christianity is not an aberration, it is not a Judaistic heresy, as it was thought to be, it is not some new religion but rather Christianity, the coming of Messiah and His work is the fulfillment of Davidic promise, Abrahamic promise and the promise of a New Covenant.

Now, in the Old Testament there basically are six covenants. You hear a lot of talk about covenant theology, and there's much discussion about what are the covenants. To put it simply, I choose to believe that the covenants are those covenants which the Bible calls covenants. It's fairly safe ground, don't you think? I'm not real anxious to invent a covenant that the Bible doesn't identify as such. As you begin to read the Scriptures, God continually refers to Himself as a covenant-keeping God. Repeatedly God's faithfulness to His covenant is reiterated. We remember the wonderful words of Jeremiah, "Great is Thy faithfulness." And over and over again Scripture talks about God being faithful, being faithful, being faithful. Faithful to what? Well, faithful to His covenant, to His irrevocable promises which He made.

And He made several. There are six specific covenants in the Old Testament. The first one that you run into in the Old Testament would be the covenant that God made with Noah. He made an irrevocable pledge to Noah that He would never again destroy the world by water. Remember that? And He set a rainbow in the sky as a symbol of that irrevocable promise. In the end when the world is destroyed, it will be destroyed not by water but by fire.

Then the next covenant that I would mention to you is a covenant that God made with Moses in Exodus. He gave the Law and that's what's called the Mosaic... The first is the Noahic Covenant, the promise of God to Noah, irrevocable promise that He would never destroy the world by water. Then comes the Mosaic promise in which God gives His Law and promises obedience will bring blessing and disobedience will bring punishment or cursing. That is God's irrevocable promise and it is still true. You obey God's law, you will be blessed. You disobey God's law and you will be judged.

There's a third covenant that I would mention. It's a priestly covenant. It's given in Numbers chapter 25 and in that God pledges irrevocably to grant to His people Israel a priesthood. That is irrevocable. There will be a priesthood given to the people Israel and in the end, of course, even in the Millennium there will be a priesthood as the prophets indicate.

So you have the irrevocable promise that God gave to Noah, He won't destroy the world; an irrevocable promise that God gave to Moses, obey His law you're blessed, disobey, you're cursed; an irrevocable promise given in Numbers 25 to the people that there would be a perpetual priesthood right on into the final and glorious kingdom of the Messiah.

Now those three promises are not salvation promises. They are not... Means of salvation are not inherent in them. Salvation is not an issue with Noah. It's not an issue with Moses because you can't be saved by the law. It's not an issue in the priestly covenant as well.

The other three covenants, which would be the Mosa...Abrahamic Covenant, Davidic Covenant and New Covenant, are what we call salvific. They have components that are connected to salvation. The Davidic Covenant can't come to pass until there is salvation. The Abrahamic Covenant can't come to pass until there is salvation. And the New Covenant is a covenant of salvation, which affects all the rest because until you come to the salvation provided in the New Covenant, you can't receive the benefits of the Abrahamic or the Davidic covenants. Now that's a summary and we'll kind of look into the pieces of that as we work through this tremendous passage of Scripture.

I'm saying all of that because I want you to understand that this is not just a song of praise sort of pulled out of the air. This is a major connecting point to the Old Testament to demonstrate that the...what is unfolding as Luke begins his gospel, as God steps into history, as Gabriel announces the birth of the forerunner of the Messiah and to Mary the birth of Messiah, as miracles occur, miracles of conception in Elizabeth, miracle of a virgin conception in Mary, as God speaks and God sends angels and God does miracles and...and the great plan of redemption as to its fulfillment is being launched, it is very important that we understand that this is not new, but this is the fulfillment of something very old, the fulfillment of the Davidic promise, the Abrahamic promise and the new promise of Jeremiah 31.

So there's tremendous theological content in this passage and we're going to see how that the praise of Zachariah falls into those three parts. The first part deals with Davidic fulfillment, the second part deals with Abrahamic fulfillment and the third part deals with the fulfillment of the New Covenant. And I'll go to each of those covenants, explain them to you and show how this connects. It's very important because it shows that Christianity, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He did was the fulfillment of everything promised in the Old Testament.

Now, let's go back to the narrative for a moment. The story is pretty simple up to here. A simple couple really by the name of Zachariah and Elizabeth; he was a priest and, of course, they were

unable to have children, barren all their life, somewhere maybe in their 70s. The angel Gabriel appears and says that they're going to have a son and this son is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah. A little while after that Elizabeth becomes pregnant. And, of course, she's bearing this great son who is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah. And the angel Gabriel comes back and comes to a virgin, Mary, in the city of Nazareth, a simple little village in Galilee and he tells her without the aid of a man but by the work of God a child will be created in her womb who will, in fact, be the Messiah Himself, the Redeemer, the Savior of the world.

And...and all of this narrative has been going on. We've followed the story. Now at the last passage we looked at, verses 57 to 66, John the Baptist was born. So you have the fulfillment of the first promise of Gabriel that Elizabeth and Zachariah would have a son and it's fulfilled. When we get to chapter 2, of course, the promise to Mary will be fulfilled and we'll look at the birth of Jesus.

It's after the birth of John then that we find ourselves in verse 67. For all the nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy, her husband Zachariah has been deaf and mute. He's been unable to hear and speak and that because God judged him. God literally, miraculously silenced the man and made him deaf for nine months because of his unbelief. It was a chastening. All that time, we saw last time, he was communicating by writing things on a wax board. But at the birth of his son the chastening ended, and verse 64 says, when John was born his mouth was at once opened, his tongue loosed and he began to speak in praise of God. Nine months of pent-up praise and finally God miraculously opened his mouth and the praise gushed out of his mouth. We don't have to wonder what the praise was because it's given in verse 67 and following. And he may have said other things. This may not be all of it, this may well be the first thing he said, it may be something he said later. But this is the praise of God and it is a...it is unmixed praise. There is nothing in here about judgment. There's nothing in here that's negative. It is just unmixed praise.

Now this is a... This is a reasonable response to what's going on. It's practically the only reasonable response to what's going on. After all this isn't just a...a baby born to a...a barren old couple, they... they couldn't have children ever and they certainly couldn't have children at that age unless God intervened miraculously. So this is an incredible thing just from the human side because they're no longer without a child, and not only a child but a son and heir and all of that. So it's a marvelous thing because a son is born. It's a more marvelous thing because it's miraculous to this old couple. But there's something even more marvelous than that, and that is that the son being born signals the coming of Messiah, which signals the coming of redemption to Israel, salvation, the Redeemer, and therefore the fulfillment of Davidic, Abrahamic and New Covenant promise. Consequently this is a time for praise, This is a time for praise. And the praise of Zachariah isn't about a barren father and about a barren mother having a baby. It's not about an old man and an old woman having a baby. It's

not about removing the stigma of barrenness. It's not about adding joy to the family. It's all about covenant fulfillment and that because it’s redemption that is coming. The forerunner will announce the coming of the Savior who will deliver and rescue Israel and fulfill God's covenants.

Such songs of deliverance occur in the Old Testament. Moses, of course, was involved as the leader of Israel in the greatest historical deliverance that God ever did. The children of Israel probably numbered two million. They had been in Egypt for 430 years, functioning as slaves. You read about this, of course, in the book of Exodus. There they are down in Egypt as slaves, or about to lose their identity to be literally subsumed or absorbed in Egyptian culture. And God after 430 years decides it's time now to let them out of Egypt and let them go, but this is no small situation. How do you get them out of Egypt? Well, God in the most unbelievable display of power, rescue power, deliverance power, God shows how He can save His people, rescue His people by getting those two million people out of Egypt, if you will, without a shot being fired. And He does so by introducing into the life of the Egyptians ten devastating, deadly plagues. He takes the normal elements of nature and turns them into fierce and monstrous powers of death. And by the end of it, the last plague, God sends an angel of death to in one night execute every firstborn in Egypt.

By the time that bloodbath is over, Pharaoh is glad to see the Jews go and the two million of them leave Egypt unscathed, only to run into the Red Sea, and then Pharaoh changes his mind, takes his army and decides to pursue them. By the time he reaches them God has parted the Red Sea and they walk across dry land to the other side. Pharaoh, who thinks he can follow, marches his army to the middle of the sea and the whole army is drowned and thus does God deliver Israel from Egypt. They knew God had the power to deliver, the power to save, the power to rescue His people. And they were waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue them. I suppose they were thinking of another sort of political rescue, that the Messiah would come and He would create some fatal blow in the heart of Rome and He would rescue His people from Roman bondage and from the oppression that came to them by the hatred that existed among many peoples all around them, for they were greatly hated. They were longing for the Messiah to bring rescue and redemption.

When Moses was on the other side of the Red Sea in Exodus chapter 15 it says the Song of Moses was basically lifted up by the people of Israel who had been delivered from Egypt, "I will sing to the Lord for He has triumphed gloriously, the horse and the rider He has thrown into the sea." That was the song of Moses and they were singing about the greatness of God's redeeming His people from Egypt. If you go in to Judges, chapter 5, there's another wonderful act of redemption, a song of redemption. It follows that God redeems His people Israel from ravaging pagans and two people, Deborah who was a judge in Israel, and Barak, who was a great military leader, sing a duet. It is a duet between Deborah and Barak about God's delivering power in Judges, chapter 5.

If you go to 1 Samuel chapter 2, you come to Hannah, and Hannah sings about God's salvation. She says, "I will rejoice in Your salvation." In 1 Samuel 2:1 to 9 is her song of salvation for God delivered her from barrenness and God delivered her from a stigma.

And then there's the wonderful story of Solomon in 2 Chronicles chapter 5. The temple is built and God has delivered Israel from...from the difficulty of not having a temple and not having a place to worship, and so Solomon calls on the great choir of Israel and all the great trumpeters, the whole group come together and they offer God thanksgiving for all that He has done for Israel, for all of His deliverances, 2 Chronicles chapter 5.

And if you go in to the book of Psalms, 150 psalms, that's the songbook of Israel. There's just one after another celebrating the delivering, rescuing, saving, redeeming power of God for His people. You sing all through Psalms the new song, new song, new song and the new song is a song of redemption. It's the song that you sing after the old condition is changed. You've been under bondage, you've been redeemed. In the the newness of your redemption and salvation you sing a new song.

So I'm not surprised, nor should we be, that Zachariah as a Jewish man, as a priest, understanding that, launches into a song of salvation. Mary did back in chapter 1 verse 46. When the angel told Mary that she was going to have the One who would be the Messiah and the Redeemer, the Savior, she said, "My soul exalts the Lord. My spirit is rejoiced in God my Savior." She too sang the new song of salvation. Elizabeth even burst forth in a prophecy, glorifying God for what He was going to do in Mary, and that we see in verse 42. The angels burst into song praising God, as it were, in Luke chapter 2 verses 13 and 14. Simeon offers God a hymn of praise later on in chapter 2 verses 25 to 32. So you have five hymns of praise: One by Mary, one by Elizabeth, one by the angels, one by Simeon, and we'll see those and here is the one in the middle by Zachariah.

We shouldn't be surprised about songs of salvation. We're going to be singing them forever. Go to Revelation 5 and take a glimpse of heaven. John was given a picture of heaven. He was allowed to see heaven firsthand in a vision. And what did he hear? He heard them singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." And it says they were singing a new song, Revelation 5:9. It was the song of salvation.

So, God's people through all of redemptive history and throughout all of eternity are going to sing the wonders of God's saving power. We're not surprised then that Zachariah, knowing that the birth of this little boy John, whom he may have been holding in his arms when he offered this praise, certainly it indicates that he speaks in the first person to him in verse 26, "And you, child," so it very...very likely that he had the little baby in his arms as he spoke these things, he realizes that this little baby, John, is the forerunner of the Messiah, that Mary who's been living with them for three months is to be the mother of the Messiah, therefore redemption is near. He speaks of it in verse 68 as if it already happened. He has visited us and accomplished redemption. So Zachariah knows what's going on here. He knows his son is the forerunner. He knows Mary is pregnant with the Messiah. He knows that it's only a matter of time till the child, the Messiah, will be born, just a few months, and then some years until He grows and maybe, just maybe Zachariah is even young enough, though in his 60s, 70s, or maybe even 80s, he might be around to see the Messiah establish His kingdom. This is all great stuff. And he also knows that this is the fulfillment of Old Testament promise. As I said, this is a Jewish man, not just a Jewish man, but this is a man who is expert in the Old Testament. This is a teacher, he's a priest. What do you think priests did? Well, they made sacrifices when they went to Jerusalem. Four weeks a year they were in Jerusalem doing that. The rest of the time they were in the hill country around Judea in his little village and he was the spiritual counselor and the teacher of the Old Testament. He was the one who explained the...the issues of the Scripture to the people and who helped them understand their problems in the light of God's revelation. And so he knew his Old Testament, he understood Davidic promise, he understood Abrahamic promise and he understood the New Covenant. And so he breaks forth in a form of praise that links up with those great promises of God. This then is a very, very important portion of Scripture.

If you look for a moment over to chapter 2 verse 36 you get a little more insight into the character of Zachariah's praise. Verse 36 says there was a prophetess... This was at the time when Jesus was taken to the temple. There's a prophetess there whose name was Anna, and she's identified there as the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was an older lady, advanced in years. She had lived with a husband seven years after her marriage and like most girls probably was married around 13 or 14 so when she was just 20 or so her husband died and she is a...she's a widow to the age of 84. So she's been a widow for 60-plus years. She never left the temple. All during the time of her widowhood she stayed in the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers. She gave herself to the religious service of Israel there, did whatever she could and fasted and prayed for all those years.

And what was on her heart all those years? What was she waiting for? What was she praying for? Verse 38, "That very moment she came up, began giving thanks to God." That's when she saw the Messiah, the child who had been brought to the temple, the same one, of course, that Simeon had seen earlier in that same passage. "When she saw the baby and she realized this was the Messiah,

she gave thanks to God first of all. Secondly she became a witness to what she had seen. She continued to speak of Him to all those, look at this, “who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." Believe me, there were a lot of Messianic Jews at that time. They were looking for Jerusalem to be rescued. They were looking for Jerusalem to be delivered. They were waiting for the Messiah to come. Four hundred years they have been waiting, since the Old Testament closed. You know how the Old Testament closed? Last book, Malachi, last chapter, here's the promise, "The Sun of righteousness,” the Messiah, “will arise with healing in His beams." That's how the Old Testament closes. The Messiah is coming. And He's going to come like the sun comes up in the dawn and sheds the warmth of its light across the earth. So the Messiah will arise and send His healing beams across the earth. And so the Old Testament closed with the promise of the...of the dawning of the Messianic day, that the Messiah would come like the sun rises in the morning and cast His healing beams across the earth.

Four hundred years though and no dawn of Messiah, 400 years and no Savior, 400 years and no Redeemer, 400 years and terrible bondage under the Greeks, terrible bondage under the Romans, terrible oppression. Four hundred years of being hated, 400 years of being oppressed, 400 years and no deliverance, no salvation. But Luke is telling us 400 years is over and salvation is coming; and it's coming, first of all, with the forerunner, John, who will point to the Messiah, Jesus, who is in fact the Redeemer. The salvation of God was about to come. The dawn was about to break. The Sun of Righteousness was about to rise with healing in His beams. The light was almost ready to come to end the long night of darkness.

And Zachariah knew it. He knew it because the angel had told him. And he had told Mary, and Zachariah was now aware of the whole plan. And so this is what he says, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, His servant, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to show mercy toward our fathers, to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham, our father, 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 our days. And you, child," looks right at the little baby, John, "will be called the prophet of the Most High for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God with which the sunrise from on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Boy, what a hymn of praise that is. And it's all about salvation, isn't it? It's all about the salvation of God fulfilling the promise to David, the promise to Abraham, and the promise of New Covenant

forgiveness. The story of Jesus is a story of salvation. The Magnificat of Mary looked at individual salvation, "My soul exalts the Lord, “My spirit rejoiced in my Savior." The Magnificat of Mary looked at individual salvation. The great praise, the Benedictus of Zachariah, looks at collective salvation. He sees the fulfillment of Davidic promise, which is universal, the fulfillment of Abrahamic promise, which is national, both being fulfilled through the personal promise of the New Covenant.

So his whole song is a song of redemption. It's a song of salvation. That's the only way to understand it, and he sees it in his Jewish perspective with his Jewish eyes in the framework of Jewish theology as the fulfillment of Davidic, Abrahamic and New Covenant promise.

Well, we didn't get too far but let's look a little bit at the opening of this praise. Verse 67, his father, Zacharias, the father of the newborn little baby, John, was filled with the Holy Spirit. Just a note here, we've seen that now. This is the third time. First of all back in chapter 1 verse 15 it said that John the Baptist would be filled with the Holy Spirit while he was still in his mother's womb. Now why did he need to be fulfilled...filled with the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb? Because later on he made a silent prophecy, or a silent declaration, verse 41, the babe leaped in her womb when Mary came. There was John the Baptist inspired by the Holy Spirit to make a prophetic kick, if you will, a prophetic jump, affirming from the womb that indeed the child of Mary was the Messiah.

Then we saw that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit in verse 41, "And immediately she cried with a loud voice” and also spoke the Word of God, a blessing on Mary and on her child. Now here Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying...

So in each case the Spirit of God came...came in a unique way, filling the little infant in the womb, and using the infant to make a physical confirmation of the fact that Mary's child was indeed the Messiah. The Spirit filled Elizabeth and out of her mouth came the Word of God blessing Mary and the child. Here He fills Zachariah and out of his mouth comes the very Word of God. It said he prophesied. Please notice that being...prophesy doesn't mean to predict the future. It simply means to speak before. It's the Greek word that means "to speak before." I'm doing it right now in the simplest sense. I'm standing and speaking before you. He spoke before those who were around him.

His words were influenced by the Holy Spirit. That's why he was filled with the Holy Spirit so that what he spoke was the Word of God. And this is what he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." He's... He's talking about the God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament, Jehovah. And he blesses the God of Israel. That's a very common way to introduce thanksgiving in praise. You find that all through the Old Testament. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; Psalm 41:13, Psalm 72:18, Psalm 106:48, 1 Kings

1:48; blessed be the Lord God of Israel. He is blessing the God of Israel. Again I say, this is not something foreign to Israel, this is not something foreign to Old Testament truth, this is something connected to it, indivisible from it. He rightly viewed the plan of God as unfolding out of Old Testament promise to the nation Israel. God is the God of Israel, and salvation... Jesus said in John 4:22, “Salvation is of the Jews. The whole of salvation has come through Israel. Romans 9, Paul says, "Of Israel is the covenants and the promises and the law and the Messiah." All of it came through Israel, the adoption, everything God funneled through Israel. It wasn't that Israel was the end; it was that Israel was the means to the end. Through Israel came the Messiah. Through Israel came God's law, God's promises, God's covenants, all of it. It was the God of Israel who uniquely used Israel as a witness nation to reach the world.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.” Why is he blessing God? Why this Benedictus, the Latin word for blessed? Why is he blessing God? "For He has visited us." Now he knew what was going on. God had visited him, sending His angel, sending His Word, working miracles, two miracles of conception and a miracle of silence and then a miracle of speech on his case...in his case. By the way, that little phrase, "He has visited us," that again shows how Jewish Zacharias was. That is an Old Testament phrase. The Old Testament makes much about divine visitation, about a divine visit, a visit from God. Sometimes for judgment as in Exodus 32:34, you have God visiting for judgment. On the other hand, in Exodus 4:31, Ruth 1:6 and other places you have God visiting with grace. But he is simply saying, "God has visited us." This is heaven come down. The supernatural has invaded the natural. God is at work. This is a common Old Testament expression. In the New Testament it's used only by Luke and once in Hebrews. We're not surprised by that, Hebrews 2:6, because Hebrews is a book written to Jews and has many familiar Jewish expressions. God has visited us and this time it's not for judgment. This time — look what he says — "He has visited us and has accomplished redemption for His people." Boy! Is he excited!

Now he hasn't seen this redemption yet. Not yet, I mean, just the baby is just newly born in his hands here and this baby is the forerunner of the Messiah who is not even born yet, let alone having achieved His deliverance. But it's so sure, he's so certain of it because the miraculous has confirmed that God is at work, the angelic has spoken on behalf of God. He knows that redemption is nigh. It's all about redemption. Luke's gospel is all about redemption. In Luke 21:28 Jesus says, "Your redemption draws near." We already saw in 2:38 how they were looking for redemption. In the very last chapter of Luke, verse 21 of chapter 24, the disciples were saying, "We were hoping that the Messiah was going to redeem Israel." The whole of believing Israelites, in fact the whole of the nation of Israel were waiting for the...the Sun to rise with healing, they were waiting for the Messiah, the Deliverer, the Redeemer, the Savior. They were looking at it politically. They were looking at the Messiah to come and destroy the Roman power the way God had destroyed the Egyptian power and released the people from bondage, set them free to prosperity and the fulfillment of all promise. They

were looking for the kingdom in which the Son of David would rule the whole world and rule it forever. They were looking for the fulfillment of Abrahamic promise, blessing and blessing and blessing and blessing. They were looking at it externally. And they really weren't aware of the fact that they weren't going to be able to have — even though the Messiah came — they weren't going to be able to have the fulfillment of the Davidic, or the Abrahamic covenant unless they came through the New Covenant, unless their sins were forgiven.

So, that's why John preached repentance. He preached the necessary personal salvation provided in the New Covenant as preliminary to experiencing the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. Sadly, they didn't accept that, they beheaded John and executed the Messiah and still therefore, not having come by the New Covenant, have not received the blessings of the Abrahamic and the Davidic promises. But at this time Zachariah has no way of knowing what's going to unfold and so he is ecstatic. He is alive at the time of redemption. He is alive at the time the day dawns, the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness rises with healing in His wings, or His beams. He is there at that moment alive, and get this, he’s the father of the forerunner, pretty exciting day. He's visited us and He's accomplished redemption for His people. He knows God well enough to know that what God starts He finishes and he speaks as though it's already taken place.

The birth of John then signals the visitation of God to rescue His people, to buy them back, to pay the purchase price to deliver His people.

By the way, take some time this afternoon and read Psalm 106. It's a Psalm in celebration of God's redemption of Israel from Egypt. And it's really what they saw as to be repeated in the future. It's a great Psalm of how God redeemed Israel from Egypt and it was sort of...that Psalm was sort of the background of the way they thought it was going to happen when it happened again. When Messiah came they were expecting maybe that God this time would part the Mediterranean, if He had to, to rescue His people.

Now how is God going to do this? Well, Zachariah knows how He's going to do it because he knows what the angel told him, he knows what the angel told Gabriel, what the angel told Mary, I should say, because he's talked to Mary. Mary's been living in their house for three months. He knows what's happening. He knows what Gabriel told him, what Gabriel told Mary and he knows that God is going to bring redemption, verse 69, "Because he has raised up a horn of salvation for us." He knows that. This is the Messiah, the horn of salvation.

In Psalm 18:2 it says, "The Lord is the horn of my salvation." The Lord is the horn of my salvation. Now what is he talking about here? What’s this horn thing? Is this a trumpet? No, it's an animal horn. It was a common Old Testament expression, very common, you find it many places. Taken from the animal kingdom, a horn spoke of power, power to conquer and power to kill. When large animals go to battle, they go to battle using their horns. The large, powerful beasts conquer and kill with their horns. So the horn became the symbol of conquering, killing power. And that's the way they viewed the Messiah. The Messiah is going to come and conquer and destroy the enemy and set His people free. He's going to be the great deliverer, the great rescuer. And you see that...that horn concept, as I said, in many places in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 33:17, Joseph is being spoken of here and he speaks of Joseph as a firstborn of his ox. “Majesty is his and his horns are the horns of the wild ox. With them he shall push the peoples all at once to the ends of the earth.” So they saw like this great ox, lowering its horns and just driving people out. And that's how they viewed the coming of Messiah. He would come, and with great power like a massive formidable animal, literally drive the enemies out and destroy them and rescue God's people. This is what thrilled him, their impending deliverance.

In Hannah's great song of salvation, 1 Samuel 2:10, "Those who contend with the Lord will be shattered, against them He will thunder in the heavens. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth and He will give strength to His king. He will exalt the horn of His anointed." And again the power or the prowess to conquer and destroy was like a great beast's horn. And that's how they viewed the great, conquering power of the anointed of God, the Messiah who would come and push His enemies to the end of the earth with destruction.

Jeremiah 50 verse 34 says, "Their Redeemer is strong." And it takes a strong redeemer to let Israel out of Egypt, it takes tremendous power in the future, they knew, to destroy their yoke of Rome and to break the bondage of oppressive nations.

So he's excited. The horn has come. The great, strong, anointed of God, the Messiah, the great Savior, the great Deliverer, the great Conqueror, the great rescuer has been raised up. Boy, this is the greatest moment in the history of Israel. This is the greatest moment, the culmination of all of redemptive hope and anticipation. And there is Zachariah, this non-descript, plain, vanilla, run-of-the-mill, common village priest at the center of this unfolding, miraculous saga.

Luke, by the way, is particularly concerned that we understand Jesus as the Savior, Rescuer, Redeemer. He speaks of Jesus as Savior, or saving some thirty times, many more than all the other gospels. Sums it up in Luke 19:10: "The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost."

The theme of Savior, Rescuer, Deliverer, Redeemer looms large in Luke's wonderful gospel.

So, I want you to understand the Jewish perspective here as we approach it. Now just briefly we'll look at the first of the three covenants, and I'll just barely introduce it to you because there's so much thrilling truth in it. The first covenant that Zachariah saw being fulfilled is the Davidic Covenant. the Davidic Covenant, because immediately in the middle of verse 69 he links the horn of salvation. The Messiah, he says, "God has raised up to accomplish redemption, He's visited us, He's accomplished redemption, He's done it by raising up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant as he spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old."

Now he knew that the Old Testament promised that the Messiah would be in the line of David, that the Old Testament writers had clearly laid out that the Messiah would come from the Davidic line, that He would bear the royal blood of David's family. So as Zachariah launches his praise for the redemption and salvation of God through Messiah, he goes back to the fact that this is a fulfillment of the great covenant God made with David. How does he know that? Because he knows the Messiah is going to be born in the house of David. He knows that He's going to be born as a seed of David. How does he know that? There's only one way he could know that. How does he know that? First of all, he knows it because it's the promise of God from way back, from the prophets of old. It’s always been the promise of God that the Messiah would be David's greater Son. He knows it that way. But secondly, this is indication to me, positive indication. that he knew Mary was also a descendant of David. He would have had to have known that. And how would he have known that? Well, Mary had been living there for three months, she must have told him. Her genealogy isn't given until the third chapter. Joseph's genealogy is given in Matthew chapter 1 and Joseph descended from David. Joseph, who later became Mary's husband, was in the line of David and even though he wasn't the physical father of Jesus because Jesus was created by God in Mary's womb apart from a man, Joseph still as the physical...not the physical father of Jesus, but the legal father of Jesus passed his royal right to Jesus because an adopted son would bear that right.

More importantly, Mary passed the actual royal blood to Jesus because she was also in the line of David. That must be true. Zachariah says that this horn of salvation which he knows is the Messiah, which he knows is in Mary's womb because the same angel told her that told him about John, he believes that she is carrying the Messiah and when he says that this is the horn of salvation in the house of David, His servant, he is affirming that this mother is in the line of David. He didn't have any knowledge that she would ever really marry Joseph. She wasn't married to him yet even though they were betrothed. He couldn't have known whether Joseph would marry her or not. And he did know that the child was already there and planted there by God and whatever blood that child had was the blood of Mary which he sees as the lineage of David. This affirms then that Mary was of David's royal

seed as well. Psalm 132:17, Messiah is called the horn of David, the horn of David, the horn of David.

And we know the Messiah would come from David's line, back to verse 32 chapter 1. The angel Gabriel says to Mary, you're going to have a son, His name is Jesus, which means “Jehovah saves,” the Savior. He will come as Savior, Redeemer. “He will be great, He will be called the Son of the Most High and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.” So again we know that this Messiah would be born in the line of David.

Now what is the Davidic Covenant? Let me take you just briefly, I'll introduce it. I'll say more about it next time. Go back to 2 Samuel, chapter 7. Just a quick comment and we'll do more next time to kind of fill it in, but I want to leave you with this thought. This is a great, great covenant. Second Samuel 7, David wanted to build a temple for God and God didn't let him do it, so God really created a huge disappointment in David's mind. But God is very gracious to David. He took away one thing, didn't let him build Him a temple. But He gave him something else. He gave him something quite wonderful, verse 12, "When your days are complete, you lie down with your fathers, I'll raise up your descendant after you who will come forth from you and I'll establish His kingdom. He'll build a house for me for My name and I'll establish the throne of His kingdom forever." Whew! Now I think there was a near fulfillment in Solomon, but Solomon's kingdom wasn't forever. It talks about Solomon in verse 14 and verse 15, but down in verse 16, again it reiterates, "Your house, Your kingdom shall endure before Me forever, your throne shall be established forever."

In this wonderful prophecy here, God promises to David a son, Solomon, who will establish a kingdom and God will be a Father to him, verse 14, and if he sins God will correct him and all of that. But God not only promises Solomon and a kingdom, but a greater Son who will have an eternal kingdom. This is the Davidic Covenant. You won't find the word "covenant" here, but you will find the word "covenant" in 2 Samuel 23:5. That's why we know it to be an actual covenant. Here are the last words of David, the last words of David, 2 Samuel 23 and in verse 5 he says, "Truly is not my house so with God, for He has made an everlasting covenant with me." That's the Davidic Covenant. And what did it promise? It promised an irrevocable pledge that God would raise up a Son out of David's loins who would have an eternal kingdom, an eternal kingdom.

That has to be the Messiah. Over forty Old Testament passages are directly related to 2 Samuel 7, over forty of them. Look back at that promise that the Messiah will have a kingdom that is everlasting and universal; universal and everlasting. That was the Davidic promise. In the future, one of David's sons would come and He would establish a kingdom that is universal and everlasting, that's the Messiah.

As I said, forty passages refer back to that. Perhaps the most familiar one, you'll recognize it immediately, Isaiah 9:6 and 7. Isaiah 9, the promise of Messiah: "A child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us and the government will rest on His shoulders." The government of what? The government of everything. "And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end of the increase of His government or of peace." In other words, He will rule everywhere, universal, "On the throne of David and over His kingdom to establish it with justice and righteousness from then on and forever more. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this." There's Isaiah referring to the fact that Messiah will be born, He will be born a man, a child, a Son, but He will be the universal ruler, He will also be the Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, whose kingdom will know no end and no bounds. That's the Davidic promise.

The point? The promise was this: Someday a Son of David will come as Messiah and He will deliver you and establish a kingdom over the entire world that will last forever. The Jews had waited and waited and waited, been oppressed and oppressed and oppressed and oppressed and oppressed. Long after 2 Samuel they had felt the oppression of hateful nations, hostility. They're still feeling it, still feeling it, going through the horrors of the Holocaust, they still feel, even today, hostility and the hatred of nations around them breathing fire down their necks at all times, waiting, waiting, waiting for the kingdom in which their Messiah will rule universally and forever.

Well Zachariah says it's about to dawn. The forerunner's here, the Rescuer, the Messiah is coming. It's about to happen, it's about to unfold. And as I said, he probably hoped that he would be alive to see the Messiah establish the kingdom. But as I said earlier, they couldn't receive the benefits of the Davidic kingdom and they couldn't receive the benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant unless they accepted the terms of the New Covenant, which was personal repentance and the forgiveness of sins. And they didn't accept that. In fact, they beheaded John and executed Jesus. And so they've yet to receive the Davidic promise or the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise and can't till they meet the terms of the New Covenant. But Zachariah didn't know that. All he saw was this was the launch point of all that David was promised. Now there's much more to say about the Davidic Covenant, but that's for next time.

Father, we are so thrilled as we see the opening of the Scripture as it unfolds to us the incredible, marvelous plan that You have established. We thank You that You are a covenant-keeping God, that You are a faithful God, that You will fulfill Your promise. We understand the joy of Zachariah as he saw signs that the Savior was coming. And we know that all that is contained in the Davidic Covenant

hasn't come to pass, or the Abrahamic Covenant, but we do know that we are experiencing the fullness of spiritual blessing. There is not yet the universal rule of Christ in the world, there's not yet the national blessing of Israel, but, oh Lord, we thank You that the New Covenant is in full operation and that sinners can come to You and repent of their sins and fall under Your gracious and powerful and faithful rule even now. Our hearts are bated with excitement as we anticipate the unfolding of the rest of the story as You continue the saga of redemption. Thank You, most of all, that we're a part of it, that it is our story because we are Yours. No matter what Israel may or may not do, You have opened up the stream of salvation to thirsty Gentiles all over the world and You've called us all to drink. Oh everyone that thirsts, come and drink and we have come to drink the fountain of salvation, the forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and we bless Your name and we thank You. And we too wait for the day as Zachariah did when the full terms of the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled and Jesus will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords and all the blessing of Abrahamic promise will come to pass in the salvation of Israel and the extension of that salvation to the world till we are all blessed in the glories of Your kingdom. Until then we thank You that the New Covenant is in place, that for those who repent and cry out for salvation there is forgiveness of sins. We rejoice in that and hope for the day when all is fulfilled to the glories of that kingdom to come. Until then, keep us faithful and grateful in our Savior's name. Amen.

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