Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Connecting the Covenantal Dots, Part 2
Scripture: Luke 1:67-75
Code: 90-434

Open your Bible, then, if you will, to the first chapter of Luke, the first chapter of Luke…no, we're not going back through Luke. Ten years was enough, I won't make you do that again. However, we are going back to a point in Luke and that is in verse 67 down through verse 79, we have the Song of Zachariah…the Song of Zachariah or Zacharias, either will do. And this is a song of salvation. You will remember that Zacharias is a priest. He has been a priest all his life. He's an old man, he and his wife Elizabeth have been barren, they never could have any children. However, an angel came to Zacharias, told him that he would be the father and Elizabeth the mother of a boy and he would be John the Baptist, the great prophet who identifies the arrival of Messiah.

Zacharias then is the point at which the silence of God is broken after 400 years. The Old Testament ended in the book of Malachi with God promising that the Messiah would come. He's identified in Malachi as the son of righteousness who will arise with healing or salvation in his beams. The Old Testament closes then with a promise of Messiah coming with salvation. Also that final very brief chapter at the end of the Old Testament says that a prophet will come before Him, before the Lord, to announce His arrival. Four hundred years have gone by and heaven has been silent and God has been silent and there has been no prophet. And now the silence is broken, an angel comes first to Zacharias and tells him he will have a son who will be the promised prophet who will identify the Messiah. Then the angel Gabriel comes to Mary and announces to her that she will, in fact, be the mother of the Messiah who will be conceived in her by the Holy Spirit Himself.

So, after 400 years of silence since the end of the Old Testament, the silence is broken, angelic announcements occur. The prophet has been announced and by the time you get to chapter 1 verse 67, already born, and it is my conviction that very likely as Zacharias sings this song, if you will, he has in his arms the newborn baby John the Baptist, the prophet. The Messiah also will soon be born in a matter of months and all Old Testament messianic promise and covenant will begin to be fulfilled.

Now this is important to us as we conclude a five-part series on finding the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. We have been discovering Him in the New Testament for over 40 years together, and now it is time for us to shift gears and to find him in the Old Testament. That won't be hard for us because we're very familiar with Him. We have seen Him in the gospels historically, in the epistles theologically, and even in the book of Revelation eschatologically. We have a full picture of Christ and therefore we are most able to recognize Him when He appears in the Old Testament. That is not difficult for us. And I'm trying to show you that from the vantage point of Zachariah. This is a man who

had no New Testament, saw not the Lord Jesus Christ, didn't see any of the fulfillment but still knew that the coming of Messiah was a fulfillment of prophecies and promises and covenants that had been laid out in the Old Testament. You could say it this way, we understand Christ to be the theme of the New Testament. Zacharias understood Christ to be the theme of the Old Testament.

This is a priest. If you were a priest, you were in the line of Aaron. Even his wife was in the line of Aaron so they had lived in a family which had generations of priests which meant they spent their lives generationally handling the Old Testament. As a priest in the hill country of Judea, one of thousands of priests, he would have served like a local pastor in disseminating the truth of Scripture to the people in his care. He was a true believer. He was not a part of apostate Judaism. He was not a part of the Pharisaic party. He was not a legalist. He was not someone pursuing self-righteousness. He was a true believer. And that becomes clear as his song is laid out because his theology is so sound. And obviously, as God chose a very pure and true vessel, a true believer in Mary to be the mother of the Messiah, He also chose true believers of another generation, Zacharias and Elizabeth to be the mother and father of the great prophet John the Baptist. They would fit into the category of Simeon and Anna. They would be those true believers waiting for the arrival of Messiah. And when the child, John the Baptist, is born, Zacharias now knows that the Messiah is about to arrive. And he bursts out in song and his song from verse 67 down to 79 is a song of salvation because he connects the Messiah's arrival with the salvation of His people.

But he also views the promises of salvation with covenant vision—with covenant eyes. Now that the Messiah is coming, the covenants will be fulfilled. He is, in the purest and truest sense, a covenant believer, a covenant theologian. He understands the arrival of Messiah to be that which was prophesied numerable ways in the Old Testament. There are Psalms that speak of the Messiah, many, many Psalms that speak of the Messiah. There are many elements of the prophecies that speak of Messiah. Messiah can be seen in the sacrificial system. There are all kinds of prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament, directed at the Messiah.

But in particular, Zacharias understands that the coming of Messiah means the fulfillment of three great covenants—three great covenants: the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, and the New Covenant. And what I mean by that is covenants, or promises that God made with David and then He had previously made with Abraham, and then the New Covenant. Zacharias knows that with the arrival of Messiah comes the fulfillment of these covenants which they had longed to see realized since they were given. In the case of Abraham, several thousand years earlier. David's a little later and the New Covenant is even later in the prophets. There had been no fulfillment. There was a kind of languishing, a kind of dissipating joy and anticipation as century after century went by and the promises to Abraham and David and the New Covenant had not come to pass. But now that the prophet has come and the Messiah will soon come, these covenants are about to be fulfilled.

So, Zacharias helps us build our bridge back to the Old Testament because he shows us that a true understanding of the Old Testament covenants will connect to Christ. Now that we know Christ from the New, we can go back and see Him in all His beauty in those covenants.

It's a salvation song, let me read it to you. "Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, '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 and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham, our father, to grant us that we being rescued from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High for you will go on before the Lord,'" meaning before the Messiah, " ' 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 will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'" That is the salvation song of Zacharias.

The word "redemption" appears. The word "salvation" appears several times. There is evidence there of holiness and righteousness, the knowledge of salvation, the forgiveness of their sins, tender mercy, light shining into darkness and death and feet being guided into the way of peace. This is all salvation language, Old Testament salvation language, but also New Testament salvation language as well.

Now all of this is in the mind, the Old Testament saturated mind of Zacharias, all these statements that he makes are drawn out of Old Testament passages. Some of them are precise quotes, some of them are only general references. Some of it is explicit, some of it is somewhat implicit. But just to get the purpose of this, we go back to verse 68, this is a benediction. This is a song of praise to God, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel." Why? "For He has visited us." For 400 years, no visit from God, no word from God, no prophet, no Scripture. And the covenants hang suspended and with the silence, the fading of Jewish hopes and desires for the fulfillment of all that God has promised. But finally, after 400 years, He has visited us. Actually, sending His angels, an angel to Zacharias and the angel Gabriel to Mary and the silence is broken and God visits. And what is His purpose in visiting? "And accomplished redemption for His people." He has come to rescue us, to redeem us. To redeem means to buy at high cost, to buy back, to pay a price, to purchase. This is salvation language, to rescue us. Most Jews thought from earthly enemies, that was part of the promise to Abraham and to David. But even more importantly, Zacharias knew what we all know, that He came to rescue His people not just from their earthly enemies, but from the spiritual enemies that held their soul captive, the world, the flesh and the devil.

So the birth of John the Baptist signals the visit of God in a rescue operation to purchase, to buy back, which means that there's going to be a high price paid. That's why the language of redemption

is used. And the salvation that God is going to provide is going to be costly, but with that salvation, Zacharias knows that the beginning of the fulfillment of Old Testament covenants takes place.

Now by what means will God redeem His people? By what means can God buy them back from their bondage? Buy them back from the occupation with the Romans, if you will? Buy them back from earthly enemies? Buy them back more importantly from soul enemies, spiritual enemies, their own wretchedness, their own sin, their own ignorance? By what means can God do this cause Israel is rebellious, and disobedient, and has been for hundreds and hundreds, even thousands of years a rebel nation fallen off into idolatry, and even after captivity when no longer drawn to idols, still rebellious against the truth of God, still rebellious against salvation by grace, still trying to earn their salvation through their own works. By what means will God be able to redeem this sinful people?

The answer, “He has raised up—verse 69—a horn of salvation for us.” Horn is the symbol or the picture of power, connected to the animal kingdom, dominating power is symbolized in the horn of an animal. And so, in the Jewish mind, the horn of salvation is an all-powerful Savior. In order for God to deliver His people, there will have to be a powerful, mighty Savior. And he knows, does Zacharias, that this is the role of Messiah, the anointed One, the King, the One who is to come, God’s great King. He understands then that when He comes, the essence of salvation for the nation involves the fulfillment of all the promises to David, all the promises to Abraham and including the personal promises of salvation and forgiveness in the New Covenant. So, just to reiterate what we said last time, he sees the arrival of Messiah from the vantage point of these three covenants and refers to all three of them in this text. Just for the sake of information, there are three other covenants in the Old Testament, stated to be covenants. Sometimes you hear people talk about covenants, but the Bible doesn’t call them covenants. I like to think that if the Bible doesn’t call them covenants, we probably shouldn’t call them covenants either.

But there are three other covenants we could refer to in the Scripture, one is the covenant God made with Noah that He wouldn’t drown the world again in water. That has no salvation aspect, no spiritual salvation aspect. But that was nonetheless a unilateral guarantee from God. And then in Numbers 25 there’s a priestly covenant by which God pledges Himself to a priesthood. That has no saving aspect either. And then there is the Mosaic covenant, or sometimes called the Sinaitic Covenant because Moses got the Law on Mount Sinai and that also has no salvation feature. The purpose of the Law is not to save anybody but to condemn everybody.

So there are those covenants, the Mosaic, the Priestly, and the Noahic Covenant. But they don’t really come into play because there’s no salvation component and being a good Old Testament student, Zacharias knows that and doesn’t refer to them but rather refers to the three that are the essence of God’s salvation at the individual level and sweeping to the very global level.

Now remember that he starts out by referring to the Davidic Covenant, back in 2 Samuel 7, God makes a promise to David that out of his loins in the future will come a great King. And that great King will rule Israel and beyond and His rule will be forever. That's 2 Samuel 7. You can read a restatement of it in 2 Samuel 23 and then you can go beyond that and find at least 40 passages in the Old Testament that refer to the Davidic promise of a Messiah who will rule over Israel and that rule will extend across the world.

If you want a really good insight into the essence of that Davidic Covenant, read Psalm 89, the first 35, or 36, or 37 verses define the nature of that promise of the King and the Kingdom and subduing of the enemies of Israel, and extending the reign of the Messiah forever and across the globe. But the Psalm—Psalm 89—ends with a kind of downer. It's kind of a dirge. It's a sad song because that promise isn't realized. The first part of the Psalm, the promise is declared, but it's never realized and so it's sort of, "Where are You, God? And why hasn't this happened?" And they were still waiting until the Messiah arrived and little did they know, did Zacharias or anybody else know that even after the arrival of the Messiah, they would reject Him and the fulfillment of that Davidic promise would still be postponed yet again, even beyond our day. But the promise to David, if you read all those passages and pull it all together, is this, a universal and eternal Kingdom, the subduing of the enemies of Israel, a Kingdom in which Messiah would reign in perfect righteousness and justice, triumph over all the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people. Of course it will be fulfilled in the Millennial period when Christ comes back to Jerusalem, sits on the throne of David and reigns as that Messiah over that earthly Kingdom for a thousand years. That's followed by His eternal reign and His power extended throughout the endless universe forever and ever in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

But, of course, Zachariah would think it's going to come immediately. "Is it now? Is it now?" Even in Acts 1 the disciples said, "Is this the time? Is this the time that You're going to bring the Kingdom? Isn't it going to happen now?" Well it was postponed because they had rejected the Messiah for a future time when they would embrace the Messiah. That will come in the future because the Davidic Covenant is unilateral and unconditional. What that means is it can't be cancelled, it can't be voided, it can't be dismissed, it can't be replaced. There will come the salvation of Israel and there will come the reign of Messiah in Israel, over Israel and that reign will extend over the whole earth and it will last forever. That will happen. It's an unconditional promise as to its reality. As to its timing, there is a condition, "The faith and repentance of Israel." That's why Zachariah 12 says "When they look on Him whom they've pierced and mourn for Him as an only Son," Zachariah 12:10, "then—chapter 13 verse 1—a fountain of cleansing shall be opened to them." Then, chapter 14 says, "The Kingdom will come." So there is an unconditional promise, the fulfillment of which has the condition of the repentance of the nation Israel which hasn't happened and is yet to happen in the future, I believe in a time the Bible calls The Great Tribulation. At that time they will believe, they will be cleansed, destroy their enemies, set up His Kingdom, take them in. They're the sheep that go into His Kingdom in the parable Jesus told in Matthew 24, and they will have the fulfillment of all the promises to David.

Zachariah understands that. So, as he talks about the horn of salvation, verse 69, he knows that the Messiah is in the house of David, his servant, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old because many of the prophets, as I told you, spoke about the coming of the Messiah, many of them with reference to the Davidic promise. And with that promise comes salvation rom our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us. So he gets it. The Messiah's arriving and all the promises to David are about to be fulfilled.

But he also understood this would be a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Long before David lived Abraham. And for the Abrahamic Covenant, you go back into Genesis 12, Genesis 15, 17, 22 and you have the promises of God to Abraham. And what were those promises? There were no Jews then, there was no nation, there was just Abraham. Out of his loins would come many people, like the sand of the sea, the stars of the heaven descendants and He gave them a land and defined the land and promised deliverance from enemies, protection, blessing to Israel and blessing to the nations through Israel. To Abraham was promised, if you take all the passages in Genesis and add them up, divine mercy, righteousness, holiness, the seed who would be the Redeemer and the redemption. All of that is promised to Abraham and he knows that, Zacharias does, verse 72, he knows that the arrival of the Messiah means that God is going to show mercy again as He showed mercy toward our fathers and gave to Abraham His holy covenant which He swore to our father Abraham. He connects the coming of Messiah then with the promise of God, the covenant of God that He gave to Abraham. God mercifully promised to our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. He reiterated that covenant to all of them an oath which He originally swore to Abraham and what was it? Verse 74, "That we would be rescued from the hand of our enemies." That's the Kingdom aspect that's parallel to the Davidic Kingdom.

But there's more. We would then serve Him without fear. In other words, we'd serve Him in obedience so we wouldn't have to fear His wrath and His curse. We would serve Him in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. There would be permanent salvation.

There is salvation in the Davidic Covenant because it talks about righteousness and holiness. There is salvation here because again it talks about righteousness and holiness. So coming of Messiah, what does that mean? It means that we're about to see the fulfillment of all these marvelous promises of God contained in these two great covenants—one to Abraham, and one to David. And they have overlapping elements, as we saw in our last study.

Now that leads to the most important covenant of all which is the New Covenant. And he's very familiar with it. And this, dear friends, is the key to understanding his theology of salvation and the indicator that he is a true believer. He looks down into the face of his own baby, probably in his own arms because he speaks to him directly in verse 76 and he says, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go on before the Lord, before the Messiah to prepare His ways."

That's from Isaiah 40 where the prophet would come to prepare the way of the Lord. That's from Malachi 3 verse 1 where the prophet will come to prepare the way of the Lord.

Later in the Malachi, chapter 4 where the prophet will come to restore the hearts of the people to get ready for His arrival. So Zacharias knows that this child is the forerunner to the Messiah. And he is excited beyond comprehension because he knows now the fulfillment of everything is about to break. Israel had long-awaited the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the King. When God promised Abraham a great nation and great land and great prosperity, and great blessing to Israel and through Israel to the world, and when promised to David a Kingdom and the subduing of all the enemies of Israel, all the enemies of God in a Kingdom that would extend across the globe and last forever, that was glorious stuff. However, reality was Israel was a small fragile, suffering beaten-up, battered, abused group of people who had seen nothing of this, nothing of it. The only time they saw any glory in their Kingdom was before David when they saw what Solomon had accomplished. Here they were longing for the fulfillment of these promises but there was a barrier. There was a barrier to the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenant and the barrier was the same, disobedience. They are rebellious. They are sinful. They're idolatrous. And even though the captivity had broken the idolatry, they were still idolatrous in the sense they worshiped themselves and their system of self-righteousness, thought they could earn their salvation.

They picked up the Mosaic Covenant and said, "Okay, the key to receiving the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and David is for us to keep the Law." And what did the Law do? Did the Law save them? The law cursed them. The Law excited their sin. The Law slew them, except for a faithful remnant and there were faithful Jews in every era of the Old Testament history who believed in the true God, who knew they were sinners, who knew they couldn't be saved by keeping the Law, who knew what the Old Testament said, "The just shall live by faith," who knew that by believing God and repenting of their sins God would impute righteousness to their account. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. They knew salvation by faith, repentance would bring about the imputation of righteousness from God to them, they knew they couldn't earn it. There was always a faithful remnant, always.

Zacharias knew that the promises to David and Abraham wouldn't come true through the Mosaic Covenant, couldn't come to pass because they kept the Law. He doesn't even talk about the Law. He jumps immediately to the New Covenant because he knows that's the only entrance into these blessings. Everything God said to Moses is a threat, it's a threat, because in the Mosaic Law, in the demands and the commands of God, there's no power to break sin. There is no way to produce a new heart. There's no way to change the inner man. The Law has no power to regenerate, no power to transform, no power to forgive, no power over sin. In fact, the Law excites sin. It multiplies sin because the more commands there are, the more the evil heart is excited to violating them. So there has to be another covenant, he goes immediately to that covenant, it's the New Covenant.

What's the nature of this covenant? It's the covenant, verse 77, that gives His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. It's the covenant of forgiveness. Is there forgiveness in the law? Do this and live—the Law says. Don't do this and…what?...you'll be forgiven? No. The Law says do this and you live, don't do this and you…what?...you die. He has nothing to do with the Law, He goes right to the covenant that provides the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. He's looking at the covenant of forgiveness. That is the promise of God that He will forgive the sins of His people.

All the way back in Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6, the essence of this covenant is laid out. Verse 6, "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, so that you may live." Keep the Law, try to keep the Law, you die. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, you live. How do you do that? How can anybody love God that way? The answer comes in the fuller expression of the New Covenant. But here's the nature of it. Jeremiah 31:31, "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

Here's the New Covenant. "Not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. Not like the Law, not like the Mosaic Covenant. My covenant which they broke, not like that one, but this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, in the future, says the Lord. I will put My Law within them and on their heart I will write it and I will be their God and they shall be My people. They will not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother saying know the Lord, they will all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more."

That's the covenant that forgives. The only hope then to receive the promises to David and Abraham is to be forgiven and to have a new heart and a new spirit and to have the Law of God written on the heart. It's an internal transformation. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of it in equally magnificent terms in Ezekiel 36 and verse 25. And I know you're somewhat familiar with this familiar…with this portion of Ezekiel because it's so…it's so magnificent. But just listen to verse 25 of Ezekiel 36. "I will sprinkle clean water on you," and he's talking to Israel again. "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you'll be clean. I'll cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. I'll give you a new heart, put a new spirit within you, remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

I'm going to transform you. I'm going to change you. I'm going to regenerate you. I'm going to change you from the inside, you will obey Me because you'll be totally different. And that covenant was ratified by the death of Jesus. That's why in Luke 22:20 He picks up the cup at Passover and says, "This is the cup that represents the New Covenant in My blood." And Paul repeats that in 1

Corinthians 11, “This is the cup that speaks of the New Covenant in My blood.”

What is the New Covenant then? It is the unilateral, irrevocable, unchangeable, eternal promise by God that He will save sinners by forgiving their transgressions and regenerating them from the inside to love Him and obey Him, that’s the New Covenant. And He’s been doing it throughout all of redemptive history and here in Jeremiah and Ezekiel He promises to do it for Israel…to do it for Israel someday…someday.

The New Covenant embodies grace and peace and the Holy Spirit and regeneration and the knowledge of God and the forgiveness of sin and a new heart and pure fellowship with God and love for God. This covenant was personal and individual…and you are part of that covenant. He’s done that for you and for me. That is what Zacharias understood was the only hope of salvation. That’s why I say he’s a true believer. He’s not looking to the Law, he’s looking to God. And he knows why God would do that. Why would God do that? Why would God do that to somebody? Because he kept the Law? No, no, he gets it because of the tender mercy of our God.

Mercy is God being kind to us in our desperation, in our unworthiness. You’re never going to receive this kind of transformation and salvation by merit, by earning it. Only when sinners, Jew or Gentile, repent, acknowledging their sin, cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness by grace will they receive the salvation that God gives.

Why would God do this? Because of the tender mercy of our God. The language here in the Greek is so powerful, *eleeos* is the word for mercy. We use it in English, eleemosynary means a non-profit organization, an organization that operates on a merciful basis.

But the more important word is splanchna which refers to the inner organs, the bowels. The tender mercy of God down deep embedded in the very nature of God is mercy. It’s not a superficial attitude of God, it’s not a concession of God, it is a deep-seeded desire for doing good and showing favor and kindness and mercy to undeserving sinners. It is a glorious attribute of God. When Moses in Exodus 33 said, “Show me Your glory.” He said, “Let My mercy pass before you.” We have to have mercy. Read Psalm 107, that’s your assignment today, read Psalm 107. God loves mercy. He loves to give mercy to hopeless, helpless sinners in the misery of their fallen condition. And Zacharias knew that. What a privilege for that little village where he served to get the right message from the throne of God through this man. He knew that the blessed promise of God could only come when the hearts were changed, and sin was forgiven. Now he knows the Messiah is coming and he knows that the coming of Messiah is going to activate New Covenant reality for Israel because He will give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. He’s setting aside their anticipated means of obtaining righteousness through the Law and doing it by the forgiveness of sins, the only way it could happen and he does it because of His tender mercy.

And that's why Messiah is coming, to deliver mercy. Go back to verse 78, tender mercy with which the sunrise from on high will visit us. Messiah comes with mercy. He comes with mercy, comes yes, ultimately, to judge His enemies but with mercy toward those who love Him, mercy. He is the bearer of mercy. The throne of God is a throne of mercy. Christ is a mercy bearer. The language here again in verse 79 is borrowed from Isaiah. He comes as the sunrise from on high to visit us, to shine upon those who sit upon darkness and the shadow of death.

The word "sunrise" is actually in Greek the rising. The arrival of Messiah, listen, is like the first blaze of sun in the morning that breaks the darkness of night. The heavenly sun is arriving. The sun of the Most High, the Savior who is the divine light will shatter the darkness of the soul's night. He remembers, that's from Malachi. When Malachi says the Son of righteousness will arise with salvation in His beams. He borrows that language. Messiah is the sun that banishes spiritual darkness. Jesus said, "I'm the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness. They will have the light of life."

So the light of salvation in the Messiah, son of David, son of Abraham, shall visit us with a saving visit. His salvation is defined as shining on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. That's salvation language taken right out of the book of Isaiah. Jesus comes as the Messiah, to shatter the darkness. Darkness in the Scripture is used to describe ignorance, blindness, what is hidden, error. It's also used to describe things in a moral category, sin, wickedness, the presence of Satan. It's used to describe the absence of God. Darkness is used to describe hell. But God is always seen as light. God is light and in Him there's no darkness at all, 1 John 1:5 says. And Christ is always the light, the son of righteousness. He is so described by Peter in 2 Peter. He is so described in Revelation 22:16 as the son of righteousness. Zacharias says, "When Messiah comes, the Savior King comes, the light of salvation will break and dispel the darkness."

This is what Isaiah said, Isaiah 9:2. "The people who walk in darkness will see great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." And who is that light? Same chapter, Isaiah 9, "A child will be born for us, a Son will be given." He will be that light. Zacharias understood that the arrival of the Messiah was the arrival of salvation's light to shatter the darkness of ignorance and sin.

This is beautiful Old Testament language. Just a couple of thoughts as our time ends. Isaiah 42 and it's important that you hear this because it's so rich, but in Isaiah 42, the servant Messiah is introduced as the one in whom God delights, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," "I have put My Spirit upon Him," verse 1, "I will through Him bring forth justice to the nations." And he goes on to make this wonderful description of Him, "He will not cry out or raise His voice or make His voice heard in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break. A dimly burning wick He will not extinguish. He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until He's established justice in the earth and the coastlands will wait expectedly for His Law." That's the full

extension of the Abraham promise and Davidic Kingdom. “Thus says the God who created the heavens and stretched them out, spread out the earth and its offspring gives breath to people on it and the spirit to those who walk in it.” In other words, you can trust it can be so. “I am the Lord, I’ve called you in righteousness. I will also hold you by the hand, watch over you. I will appoint you the Messiah…he’s talking to now, “as a covenant to the people as a light to the nations, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison. I am the Lord, that is My name. I will not give My glory to another. I’m going to do what I promised to do.”

The Messiah comes to bring the light of salvation. I can’t resist having you turn to chapter 59, let me just wrap it up with this portion of Isaiah, chapter 59. Verse 2 says that Israel is sinful, your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God. Your sins have hidden His face from you.” That is their condition even today. Zacharias didn’t know it would be two thousand years and they still would not have repented.

But, verse 1 says, “Behold the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save, in spite of this reality God has a saving plan and God has no restraint or limitation on that saving plan.” Go down to verse 16 of chapter 59. There’s no man to intercede. There’s no man to help. There’s no man to save.

So God with His own arm brought salvation. God will bring that salvation. It goes on to describe, God girding Himself like a warrior, putting on a breastplate of righteousness, a helmet of salvation, wrapping Himself in garments of vengeance and zeal and going out to destroy His enemies. But not just that, verse 20, a Redeemer will come to Zion and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob, declares the Lord.” Why? Verse 21, “As for Me, this is My covenant with them.” What covenant? Davidic Covenant? No. There’s no saving means in that. Abrahamic Covenant? No. There’s no saving means in that. This is the New Covenant. “My Spirit which is upon you, My words which I put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth or the mouth of your offspring, nor the mouth of your offspring’s offspring from now and forever.” That’s the New Covenant, when He changes the hearts, when He changes the inside.

When is that going to happen? When Messiah arrives. Look at chapter 60, “Arise and shine for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nation will come to your light and Kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about and see they all gather together, they come to you,” here he’s speaking of and to the Messiah. “Your sons will come from afar, your daughters will be carried in the arms then you will see and be radiant. Your heart will thrill and rejoice because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you. The wealth of the nations will come to you.” Now that rather is Israel. “A multitude of camels will cover you,” and on and on he goes with the blessing that’s going to come to Israel as promised by the work of the Messiah. That’s directed toward Israel, rather than the Messiah.” I’m hurrying…I’m hurrying, as you can tell.

Okay, you've got to jump down to 61, how is it going to happen? How can it happen? Verse 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God," here's how He does it. "He has clothed me with garments of salvation," that's imputation of righteousness. "Wrap me with a robe of righteousness as a bridegroom decks himself with the garland, as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." That's the great doctrine of justification. We're literally covered in the righteousness of God through the work of Christ. And it's such a covering that chapter 62 says, verse 12, "We can be called the holy people the redeemed of the Lord."

Zacharias knew all of that. And so back, for a closing word, to chapter 1 of Luke. He says, "This is a saving moment in Israel's history as the Messiah has come to shine light unto the darkness." And then finally, "To guide our feet into the way of peace, peace with God, and the peace of God."

All that was in the New Covenant, forgiveness, a new heart, a new spirit, the Holy Spirit, the knowledge of God, the love of God implanted in the heart, righteousness, holiness, light shattering the darkness and peace in the place of turmoil and trouble, all of that Zacharias says is here with the arrival of the Messiah."

Sadly those hopes for Israel were only partially realized. They were just a few in Israel who actually believed and were saved. The nation rejected the Messiah, had the Romans kill Him. They still reject Him, but there's a future day when they will look on the one they've pierced and they will be cleansed and saved and receive the promises. In the meantime, the Lord is calling out Jew and Gentile in His church through the same New Covenant and bringing them to salvation by the forgiveness of their sins through repentance and faith in the Messiah who died and rose for them.

Father we are so grateful for the clarity with which Your Word speaks and even though we've been sweeping across vast meadows, if you will, of truth, of food for our souls, and perhaps it seemed more than we could even consume. I pray that You will drive into our hearts those needful things, those substantial realities that will anchor us in the confidence of Your saving purpose and the truthfulness of Your holy Word.

Now, Lord, do Your work, we're only here to serve Your work. Salvation and sanctification is Your work, do that in every heart, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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