



"The Song Of Zechariah: Hope For The Sinful"

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

Icebreaker:

What songs are near the top of your Christmas carol play list?

The Study:

Luke's version of the Christmas story in chapters 1 & 2, built around four stories and four songs, gives us an inspirational way to prepare our hearts for Christmas during the Advent season.



1. Luke begins his version of the Christmas story not with the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, but with the miraculous birth of his forerunner, John the Baptist. Luke especially concentrates on what happens to John's father Zechariah, and a song/prophecy Zechariah proclaims upon the birth of his son, all which call attention to great themes found in the Old Testament (Luke 1:67-79).

Before we examine Zechariah's song, it's important to understand why Luke does this. Luke tells us that he writes his book that his readers might have "*certainty concerning*" the story of Jesus (Luke 1:4). How does beginning his book this way add to our certainty?

Now let's focus on 3 of the great Old Testament themes which are found in Zechariah's song:

Theme #1: Jesus Christ fulfills all the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament.

"Blessed be the Lord God, for he has visited...his people...as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." – vss.68, 70

Here's just a sampling of those prophecies:

- Centuries before Jesus was born, his birthplace was prophesied. Micah 5:2 – "But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."
- His journey to Egypt as a child was prophesied. Hosea 11:1 – "Out of Egypt I have called my son."
- The Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Genesis 49:10 – "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his."
- The Messiah would be a descendant of King David, the son of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1 – "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him."
- The Messiah would be born miraculously to a virgin. Isaiah 7:14 – "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."
- The Messiah would come as a healer and perform amazing miracles. The prophets even tell us which miracles to look for. Isaiah 35:5 – "Your God...will come to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."
- The Messiah would be rejected by those he came to save. Isaiah 53:3 – "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering."
- The Messiah would enter Jerusalem on a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 – "Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you...humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey."
- The Messiah would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. Zechariah 11:12 – "I told them, 'If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.' So they paid me thirty pieces of silver."
- The Messiah's enemies would gamble for his clothing. Psalm 22:18 – "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

- The Messiah would be crucified. Psalm 22:16 – “They have pierced my hands and my feet.”
- The Messiah would be executed alongside common criminals, and buried in the tomb of a wealthy man. Isaiah 53:9 – “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.”

When confronted with actual, demonstrable prophecy, how does God expect me to respond? Read Isaiah 48:3-5, then talk about it.

Theme #2: Jesus Christ fulfills the picture of salvation God painted through Israel in the Old Testament.

“...to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham...” (vss.72-73)

Here are some examples of what we mean:

Jesus fulfilled each of Israel’s primary leadership roles – prophet, priest and king.

Jesus fulfilled each of Israel’s rituals and feasts.

- He is the Perfect Sacrifice fulfilling every sacrifice ever offered. (see Hebrews 7:23-25; 10:11-14).
- Through his blood, he inaugurated the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. (see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 9:15)
- Each of Israel’s feasts and festivals when lined up chronologically reveal God’s plan of salvation for the earth.

The Passover – Jesus is the Passover lamb whose blood causes God’s judgment against sin to “pass over” us. (Exodus 12)

The Feast Of Unleavened Bread – Jesus is our sinless sacrifice

Pentecost – the Feast of Firstfruits – when the Church was born and 3,000 souls were added to God’s kingdom (Acts 2)

The Feast Of The Trumpets – when the fall harvest is completed; rest and celebration begin; Christ’s return is described as being accompanied by the ‘sound of the trumpet’ (1 Thess.4:16)
The Day Of Atonement – the reminder of why we are saved
The Feast Of Tabernacles – to celebrate God dwelling (‘tabernacling’) with his people (Revelation 21:3)

There’s a saying about the Bible – *“The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.”* Discuss what this means to you, in light of this second theme we’ve looked at.

Theme #3: Jesus Christ fulfills the longing of every human who has ever lived...to be delivered from the darkness and death of sin.

“...to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” (vss.77, 79)

When you think about your extended family – all its wrinkles, pain and dysfunction – all of that hurt can be traced back to sin.

Why is sin our greatest enemy, and not (fill-in-the-blank)? It really matters that we understand this, so don’t just give a “Sunday School” answer here. Think this through.

What makes Christianity so unique and powerful is that it provides two things we desperately need – forgiveness from sin and freedom to live a new life. Reflect on how Jesus Christ provides both of these.

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