

Luke

The Visit
Luke 1:67-80

With Study Questions

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Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸ "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, ⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, ⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who *have been* since the world began, ⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, ⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, ⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, ⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. ⁷⁶ "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, ⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, ⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; ⁷⁹ To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." ⁸⁰ So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel (Luke 1:67-80).

Introduction

There is a very real sense in which God is ever with us. The Psalmist took great comfort in this, as should we.

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me (Psalm 139:7-10).

Yet there are times when God seems quite absent. Habakkuk complained, **“How long shall I cry for help and you will not hear” (Habakkuk 1:2)?** Or, as David wrote,

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me (Psalm 13:1)?

Of course, this apparent absence of God may be His patience. There is a common request among atheists for God to make an appearance. This desire does not often take into account that such a showing may not bode well. I was recently sent a link to a military man giving the opening prayer at the Army/Navy football game. It was quite a prayer! Within the prayer he uttered, “There is no better friend or worse enemy than a United States warrior.” How much more the living God!

We don’t always think in those terms-that the presence of God could be severe. His apparent (and I say apparent because He is never truly absent) absence is according to His own wisdom, His own timing. What we are seeing in this prophecy of Zacharias (this Benedictus as it’s called-the first word in the Latin version) is the ultimate visitation of God. He will not come by way of a burning bush or pillar of smoke or fire. He will enter human history as a man. A man who is truly man yet truly God.

And with this incarnation (being made flesh), as it is called, everything will change. It is the turning point in human history. B.C. becomes A.D. As much as communities seek to reduce the significance of Christ by calling it B.C.E (before the common era) and C.E. (the common era) the mere question one might ask the tour guide is, what happened that made it the common era? It almost feels as if they’re instructed not to speak of it.

As you recall, Zacharias was struck mute because of his disbelief regarding the miraculous birth of his son. But it was a temporary chastisement, and at the circumcision of John his speech is returned. God would grant him more than the mere ability to speak.

Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying (Luke 1:67):

He was not only forgiven, but his loosed tongue became, as it were, an organ of the Holy Spirit. This was no fallible sermon. It was God's inerrant and infallible word. And even though the event was the birth and circumcision of his son, his son plays a very small part in the prophecy. He begins to explain the visit from God.

Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people (Luke 1:68).

Here, after four hundred years of silence, the visit of God is glorious. He mentions Israel because it would be through Israel that the Redeemer would come. Where He would be born, when He would be born, the events surrounding His birth, life and death are recorded in great detail.

It is not as if the Savior of the world would randomly appear. He would be born in a certain place and the message of redemption would move out from there. You'll often hear go on about how where you're born determining your religion as if it's a significant point. But the gospel would begin at a certain place and move out from there. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David (Luke 1:69).

We learned a bit about Christ the king from David the king. But, unlike David's kingdom, the increase of Christ's kingdom would have no end (Isaiah 9:7). Peter would preach of this in an early sermon at Pentecost.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ (Acts 2:29-31).

Christ currently reigns.

As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who *have been* since the world began (Luke 1:70).

I recall being questioned about how I could believe in a religion that began a mere two thousand years ago. I don't. The gospel was first proclaimed at the dawn of man. Directly after the fall, the promise was made that the enemy would be defeated through the Christ (Genesis 3:15).

Over and over throughout the Old Testament, we read of Christ. Jesus goes so far as to say the entire Old Testament is about Him (John 5:39). Zacharias, you will notice, uses the singular when he says "**mouth**" *stomatos*. Although there many prophets, they had a singular message and it can be said they spoke with one mouth. Peter writes that these prophets searched diligently after that which has been full revealed to us (1 Peter 1:10, 11).

That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us (Luke 1:71).

Just who are these enemies from whom we need salvation? Who are those who hate us? In the broadest sense, especially when this was written, it was Rome. Israel was in captivity (along with the rest of the world) and those who were faithful in Israel, felt the hot hand of the Roman leaders.

But there were some who mistakenly thought Rome was the real problem, the real enemy. Such is not the case. Let us never forget that it is a spiritual battle.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

Calvin explains,

Though the Church is also attacked by outward foes, and is delivered from them by Christ, yet, as the kingdom of Christ

is spiritual, it is chiefly to Satan, the prince of this world, and all his legions, that the present discourse relates. ¹

To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant (Luke 1:72).

The prophecy of Zacharias is not plan b. It is not an afterthought. It was God's plan from eternity past and proclaimed by way of promise/covenant, that Christ would come to rescue a fallen world.

The oath which He swore to our father Abraham (Luke 1:73).

Some of us make promises we fail to keep. Sometimes we fail to keep them due to weakness of our moral nature or the weakness of our basic human make-up. If you make a vow to be faithful to your spouse and fail, it is due to the weakness of your morality. If you make a promise to provide then have a stroke that keeps you from working, that is part of the weakness in humanity.

But God is subject to neither. He is not incapable morally or powerfully. It is not to secure is His own doubt in Himself but for our own security that He makes an oath.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "Surely I will bless you and multiply you" (Hebrews 6:13, 14).

I do hope we appreciate that magnificent condescension exhibited here that God would go beyond a bare promise and confirm it with an oath. As if to say *I really mean it!* It's not as if the promise was first given to Abraham, but it is more fully presented.

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed (Galatians 3:8).

¹ Calvin, J., & Pringle, W. (2010). [*Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 71). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

**To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear (Luke 1:74).**

Let us understand that this great deliverance does not have, as its design, a freedom to live in rebellion.

**For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness (1
Thessalonians 4:7).**

I have often seen the Christian faith presented and lived out as if grace means we need not obey. I have too many shipwrecked lives on account of this perverse thinking. Let us rather heed the words of Paul.

**For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use
your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through
love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one
word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Galatians
5:13, 14).**

In what respect fear of God is good and in another it is not. We are here told that we may serve Him without fear. I think Matthew Henry addresses this nicely.

**God must be served with a *filial* (that which is due from a
child) *fear*, a reverent obedient fear, an awakening
quickenning fear, but not with a *slavish fear*, like that of the
slothful servant, who represented him to himself as a *hard
master*, and unreasonable; not with that fear that has *torment
and amazement* in it; not with the fear of a legal spirit; a *spirit
of bondage*, but with the boldness of an evangelical spirit, a
spirit of adoption.²**

**In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life (Luke
1:75).**

² Henry, M. (1994). [*Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume*](#) (p. 1826). Peabody: Hendrickson.

In His compassionate wisdom, God knows that it is within, even believers, to grow weary in our walk of faith.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9).

As I've grown older, I've come to more appreciate the spirit of Caleb (one of the two spies with the courage to enter Canaan). Many years later, anticipating yet another battle, we read:

And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the Lord spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. ¹¹ I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming (Joshua 14:10, 11).

We need to finish the race.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways (Luke 1:76).

It was not unclear to Zacharias, nor John, what his post was, and he would operate obediently within its boundaries. A study of the moral and religious environment during the birth of Jesus reveals that He came into this world during very dark times. John's sermons would reflect that. The King had come, and John's job was to trumpet/herald that message.

To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins (Luke 1:77).

Persuasive arguments are made that Israel, at that time, was primarily viewing the Messiah/Deliverer as a mere political figure. Though the person and work of Christ would dramatically affect every aspect of this fallen race, the heart of His deliverance would be release us

from the bondage of sin. He who knew no sin would become sin that **“in Him we might become the righteousness of God”** (2 Corinthians 5:21). The heart of the faith is not unclear.

Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us (Luke 1:78).

I do think we underestimate the condition of our world apart from Christ. John tells us the whole world lay under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19). Jesus said He came the **“the ruler of this world be cast out”** (John 12:31).

This passage is telling us that the sun is rising. John is a sort of rooster who will crow prior to the dawn. He seems to be appealing here to Malachi 4:2.

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall (Malachi 4:2).

To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:79).

It's been said that the world sat as condemned prisoners in a dark dungeon and the light has come. Jesus taught that it is no in our natures to love the light. We prefer darkness (John 3:19). It does take a special act of God's grace for us to enjoy and prefer the light. In explaining his conversion, Paul recounts his marching orders given by Jesus.

...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:18).

I do pray this includes us all.

So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel (Luke 1:80).

John would be sanctified by God until his ministry would begin many years later. In the next chapter, Luke will take us to the heart of the matter.

Questions for Study

1. Is God always with us? Does it seem that way? Explain why God may appear absent (pages 2, 3)?
2. What time of “visit” do we read of in Zacharias’ prophecy (pages 3, 4)?
3. Compare and contrast the kingdom of David with Christ’s kingdom (page 4).
4. How old is the Christian faith (pages 4, 5)?
5. Who are the enemies Zacharias speaks of (page 5)?
6. Why do you suppose God makes an oath (page 6)?
7. Why are we delivered from the hand of our enemies (pages 6, 7)?
8. Explain the ministry/call of John the Baptist (pages 8, 9).
9. What was the world like before Christ (page 9)?

