

After Darkness, Light

Luke 1:67-80

1. Introduction.

a. The role of the pulpit is to equip the saints for the work of the service (Eph. 4:11-12).

i. Two-fold purpose:

1. Personal sanctification.

2. Making disciples.

ii. We spend a lot of time teaching so that you can go out and make disciples—be a light in the darkness.

iii. When you do this, people typically respond one of two ways—accept or reject (Jn. 3:20).

iv. Regardless of the response, we've been called to function as lights.

1. This is how God has always worked throughout redemptive history.

2. God could go to people directly, but He always uses messengers (e.g., Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, et. al prophets).

b. Quick Review.

i. Zacharias was disciplined for unbelief at the announcement of God's Word.

ii. After an act of great obedience, his discipline was removed. His immediate response is the passage before us— to sing a Hymn which reflects upon the faithful salvation of God (“Zacharias’ Benedictus”).

2. A word about biblical covenants.

a. There is a lot of theological freight behind the term “covenant.” It's become an incredibly complex issue. However, it's a major theme throughout the Bible.

- b. The essence of a covenant is a promise. However, it's a promise forged within the structure of a formalized relationship.
 - i. A biblical covenant is only what the Bible explicitly identifies to be a covenant—no matter how big a promise might be.
 - ii. Not every promise God makes in the Bible qualifies as a covenant.
 - 1. Certain attributes must be present for a promise to be a formal covenant.
 - 2. Almost all promises exist within one of the biblical covenants, but that does not mean every promise should be considered a covenant itself.
- c. The Bible contains six major covenants.
 - i. Noahic.
 - ii. Abrahamic.
 - iii. Priestly.
 - iv. Mosaic.
 - v. Davidic.
 - vi. New.
- d. This passage mentions three—Abrahamic, Davidic, and New.
 - i. All three are unique in that they deal with promises involving salvation/deliverance.
 - ii. As such, Zacharias is reflecting on the coming promise of salvation in the New Covenant, and it causes him to reflect on God's past covenants of salvation.
 - iii. He knows the New Covenant is coming because it will be typified by the Messiah, and he's holding the Messiah's Forerunner in his very own arms (John).

3. Reflection on God's past faithfulness (67-75).

- a. This is a prophetic hymn. Note the language of “prophesy” and “filled with the Holy Spirit” (67).
 - i. Whether he wrote it in his nine months of silence, or it came out as spontaneous praise, that is not the point.
 - ii. What’s important to understand is the hymn is a product of the Holy Spirit.
 - iii. It’s a prophetic hymn of God’s future faithfulness via the New Covenant.
- b. A major theme in this section is “divine visitation” (Note the inclusion of 68, 78).
 - i. God visits His people for the purpose of redemption.
 - 1. Those who accept Christ (and therefore His message via His disciples) are said to be hospitable to the visitation of God.
 - a. Example of hospitality to God’s visitation (7:16).
 - b. Example of inhospitality to God’s visitation (19:43).
 - c. Example of God’s judgment in light of inhospitality (9:3-5).
 - 2. The point to understand, however, is that when God visits, it’s for the purpose of showing grace and bringing redemption.
 - ii. This idea of visitation is pure grace.
 - 1. Many throughout the history of the world were not visited by God, so they perished.
 - 2. Yet each week we’re visited by God in a tremendous way as His Word is declared over us. How many throughout the history of the world will have died having never even heard the name Jesus uttered? Many.
 - 3. All of us here, this morning, have been visited by God. We have access to the Gospel, and therefore redemption.
 - iii. This visitation comes from the God “of Israel” (68).

1. This is amazing, if you let your mind think on it.
 - a. Israel was the only nation having redemptive access. All other nations would perish without hope.
 - b. Yet here we are (a bunch of Gentiles), and now we have saving access through this one God of Israel. And why? Because God has chosen to visit us.
 - i. This is pure grace.
 - ii. This is why Christ is so significant—He has given Gentiles access to the God of Israel.
 - c. “Horn of salvation” (69).
 - i. Common OT reference to salvation by the horn of an animal (C.f., Deut. 33:17).
 - ii. David picks up on this in Psalm 18. He describes God as that very weapon of salvation—He is the horn.
 - iii. In the same way, the Messiah of Israel is regarded as that very horn.
 - d. All of this deliverance is the fulfillment of OT prophetic tradition (70-71).
 - i. Again, this fulfillment is the result of God’s faithfulness to His own covenantal promise to deliver His people.
 - ii. He promised to fight for His people— a staple of the Davidic Covenant.
 - e. God’s motivation for these covenants is the result of His own mercy (72-73).
 - i. Abraham is the greatest of the Fathers (C.f., Gen. 15).
 - ii. Built into the Abrahamic Covenant was the necessity of the New Covenant—a covenant in which God would include all the nations.
 - iii. But notice why he saves—to demonstrate the kind of God He truly is—a merciful God!
 - f. The purpose of God’s mercy—to gather holy and righteous worshipers (74).

- i. God's in the business of seeking out worship. He is jealous for praise and glory. He desires that which is rightfully His.
 - ii. Yet, He desires worship for a specific reason—because He's merciful.
- g. Built into this hymn is the hope of geopolitical salvation.
 - i. God gave many promises of old that He still intends to make good on.
 - ii. Salvation for Zacharias (who was a Jew) involves much more than salvation from sin. There is also national salvation built into his language.

4. The role of John in Redemptive History (76-80).

- a. John was to be God's human messenger. "God Most High" is a reference to the fact that God is lofty and exalted (c.f., 1:32).
 - i. As such, He uses human messengers to deliver His prophetic message of deliverance—this would be the function of John.
 - ii. John would bring an otherwise unknowable message from God Most High.
- b. Notice the purpose of prophetic messengers—to bring knowledge—and specifically, "knowledge of salvation" (77).
 - i. Notice what this salvation looks like—it involves the forgiveness of sin.
 - ii. The ultimate issue between man and God is sin.
- c. This deliverance of sin is the result of God's own character (78).
 - i. As lofty as God is, He is still a tender, merciful God.
 - ii. He's not merely a cold judge on high, but a merciful redeemer on high.
 - iii. This mercy comes in the midst of no hope. The Messiah breaks into the darkness and functions as a great light—"The Sunrise on from on High will visit us" (78).
- d. God's habit is to break into the darkness with light. He does this through prophets, who bring God's merciful message of redemption (79).

- e. John would be the declarer of this Light. He himself was not the Light, but a prophet of the Light. He points to the path of peace found only Jesus Christ—the coming Messiah.

5. Conclusion.

- a. Within the context, John is the Forerunner of Christ in redemptive history. He had a very unique role as the prophet of the Most High.
- b. Yet, this is the very essence, role, and identity of anyone who would claim to be a disciple of Christ.
 - i. We declare the coming Messiah.
 - ii. We speak forth light into darkness.

Small Group Question

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Why does Zacharias reflect on the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants alongside the New Covenant? In other words, what was the main feature of those covenants that we also see in the New Covenant?
3. Why does God save people? What is the reason He wants to be praised?
4. Do you see yourself as a modern day prophet? What needs to change so you start seeing your main identity as one crying out in the wilderness of a broken world?
5. When is the last time you shared the Gospel with someone? When is the last time you brought the news of light to someone who doesn't even recognize they're living in darkness, and therefore needs to find the path of peace?
6. Share the name(s) of specific people to your group who you plan to bring the message of the Gospel to within the next week or two. At the next group, share how this went.