

A Song of Deliverance (Luke 1:67-80)

1. The Praise of Deliverance (v.67-75):

Through the Davidic Covenant (v.68-71):

- Zechariah (v.68) blesses “Lord God of Israel.” This is virtually identical to King David’s benediction when he installed Solomon as king. The first son of David and the ultimate Son of David are celebrated with similar praises to God.
- The “horn” of salvation alludes to the horn of an ox that can defeat opponents (Deut. 33:17) and also represent war (1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:3). The “horn” is where all the power of an animal is focused. The visitation, redemption, and power will be through the Davidic house (2 Sam. 7). This horn has been promised to “sprout out for David” (Ps. 132:17).
- Jesus of Nazareth will legally descend from David through marriage between Joseph and Mary.

Through the Abrahamic Covenant (v.73-74):

- Zechariah begins his song of praise by alluding to God’s visitation and redemption (v.68), beginning with Abraham. God had visited Abram and Sarai, promising a child through whom all the world will be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6; 17: 4-7). He also visited Isaac (Gen. 26:4-5) and Jacob (Gen. 35:9-12), uttering the same promise. Before Joseph’s death he informed his brothers that “God will revisit them” (Gen. 50:24-25). This was fulfilled through the Exodus. Redemption (v.68-75) celebrates the Exodus (Ex. 4:31; Ps. 106:4). There has been a paradigmatic act of redemption where God brought His people out of bondage and slavery in Egypt, creating a new community.
- Every verb from v.68-75 (except for one) is in the aorist tense in Greek. The aorist refers to a past event having a present or future reality. What is meant by “deliverance from the hands of our enemies” (v.74)? Certainly, Zechariah reflects on God’s physical deliverance from Israel’s past enemies (Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, and Babylonians). Who or what are Israel’s enemies?
 - Romans: The presence of Rome in Palestine was grossly militaristic, economic, and religious.
 - Spiritual darkness: bondage to the world, sin, and the devil (complete freedom from slavery to sin, guilt, punishment, the curse, Satan, and destruction).

*Zechariah is rebuking the nation of Israel for their strict “materialistic” view of redemption. They had no concept of their spiritual need (v.74-75, 77-79).

Much of the confusion during Jesus’ public ministry over the “Messiah” radiated from two Jewish rabbinical positions:

- Ben-Joseph (Zech. 9:9-10): the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem and ride on a donkey, not a chariot. He will make peace through peace.
- Ben-David (Zech. 14:2-4, 8-9): the Messiah is coming to fight for His people and, through war, will be victorious, defeating Israel’s enemies, enthroning Himself as King, and restoring the land to His people.

2. The Product of Deliverance (v.74-75)

- The result of this “deliverance from their enemies” (v. 74) will produce service “without fear in holiness and righteousness all of their days.”
- Zechariah’s word choice of “serve” alludes to priests (Ex. 3:12). Priests who offered sacrifices were by law to be free from any defect: both the animal and the one who is sacrificing the animal must have no blemish (Lev. 21:21).
- Peter will elaborate on this truth after the resurrection of Christ, reminding his readers of the “priesthood of believers” (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10).
- The product of deliverance from sin unto life is recognized in the believers:
 - *Position* (vertical): he has a Godward orientation
 - *Posture* (horizontal): he lives out that Godward orientation towards others
 - *Perseverance* (breadth): he has a growing fortitude in faith towards God and resilience to the temptations of sin, the flesh, and the devil
- The goal of this rescue, redemption, reconciliation, and reorientation is to create a new people. The purpose of the Exodus was to “let My people go, so that they may worship Me” (Ex. 7:16; Josh. 24:14). In the same way, there is a “new Exodus.”
- This new community of believers will be wrought through the divine intervention of John and Jesus of Nazareth.

3. The Prophetic Preacher of Deliverance (v.76-79)

- John the Baptist will be the prophetic bridge between many of the Old Testament’s types, symbols, and metaphors with the substance of the New Testament.
- Zechariah identifies John as “you” (v.76) and will speak of his son’s future ministry. He focuses on John’s public ministry, perhaps around 20 years of age (v.80). Both John’s public ministry and Jesus’ arrival are still yet to occur.
- The knowledge of salvation that John will give is not intellectual comprehension but the actual spiritual experience of God’s deliverance (salvation) through the forgiveness of sins (v.77). There is also borrowed language related to the New Covenant with its promise of forgiveness (Jer. 31:31-34).
- This forgiveness of sin is rooted in God’s “tender mercy” (v.78). This is mercy “intensified” as it refers to the bowels. It is an idiom for affections that run more profound than the heart: the intestines or liver. This is special mercy that the world has never experienced before.
- This mercy is experienced because the “sunrise is visiting from on high” (v.78):
 - The Greek word means to “spring up,” translated in the Old Testament as a branch (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8; 6:12).
 - It can also connote a light or star rising and shining (Num. 24:17; Isa. 9:2; 60:2-3; Mal. 4:2). Light is used in Scripture as a metaphor for God’s presence (Ex. 13:21; Ps. 27:1; 36:9).
- John is a witness to the light (John 1:7-8), as darkness in Scripture is a metaphor for judgment, trials, and estrangement from God (Ex. 10:21-23; Ps. 23:4; Matt. 27:45; John 1:5; Rom. 13:11-13; Eph. 5:8-16).
- The deliverance from Israel’s enemies (v.74) is interpreted primarily through the lens of v.77: the salvation that Zechariah is speaking of is predominantly spiritual.
- A branch and a sun are metaphors for this Messiah. The mission of the Messiah is two-fold: he will shine on those who are in darkness and will guide the feet of those who respond (v.79).