

December 5, 2024

“A Father’s Prophecy”
Lesson 3

Luke 1:67-80

Intro

Luke’s gospel was written by one who did not see Jesus’s life firsthand. But he was meticulous in his research, writing so that readers could be convinced of the certainty of what he had written. One of the people he must have interviewed was Mary, Jesus’ mother, who would have had personal knowledge of the events of both the birth of Jesus and his cousin, John the Baptist, who was the child of Mary’s cousin, Elizabeth.

Luke begins his gospel by introducing Elizabeth and her husband, a priest named Zechariah. This couple was called “righteous in the sight of God” and blameless regarding obedience to God’s commands. They were childless due to their age and Elizabeth’s barrenness.

During Zechariah’s service in the temple, the angel Gabriel visited him and told him he would have a son. When Zechariah responded with doubt, Gabriel proclaimed that his doubt was the cause Zechariah to be unable to speak until the prophecies regarding his son’s birth were fulfilled, which indeed happened. The verses of today’s text are Zechariah’s praise to God following John’s birth, and Zechariah’s recovery of his lost voice.

Read Luke 1:67-80

1. vs. 67: Zechariah’s doubt is replaced by the filling of the Holy Spirit
 - Luke’s gospel mentions the Holy Spirit as many times as the other 3 gospels combined!
 - In Acts, Luke’s other book, the Holy Spirit is mentioned another 40 times
 - The presence of God’s Spirit has always been a necessary step before service
 - Serving God can only be done properly with the help / filling of the Spirit
2. vs. 68: Zechariah begins his praise by praising God for what He has done for His people
 - “He has come to His people and redeemed them”
 - This was the reason God came—so that His people might be redeemed from sin
 - The gospels describe *who Jesus is* and *what He did*
 - This verse describes God by telling what He did for His people—he redeemed them
3. vs. 69: In the OT, animal horns are symbols of power
 - The “horn of salvation” shows that God’s power is at work to accomplish salvation
 - Zechariah’s words here show a knowledge that the Messiah would come from David’s line
 - This was also prophesied in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 by Samuel, and in Is. 9:6-7
4. vs. 70: This verse reminds readers (and Zechariah’s listeners) that this plan is not a new plan
 - God had His prophets speak of this “long ago”—centuries before Zechariah

5. vs. 71: This theme of salvation by God's Messiah is repeated often in the Gospels
Indeed, this is the primary message of the Gospels
However, who the "main enemies" were didn't match Jewish expectations
The led both the Jewish leaders and even the apostles to be confused at time
The "enemies" were not the Romans to Jesus, but Satan and his works
6. vs. 72: God promise was to show mercy "to our ancestors"
He did this multiple times in caring for them and in defending them from enemies
A specific connection to this promise is addressed in the next verse
7. vs. 73: God promised by the "oath he swore to our father Abraham"
This is the oath in Genesis 22:16-18
Because of Abraham's faithfulness, "all the nations of the earth will be blessed"
Zechariah was looking 2000 years in the past to what God had promised Abraham
Abraham is the "father" of the nation of Israel, who believed God by faith
Centuries have not dimmed Zechariah's hopes in God fulfilling this promise
8. vs. 74: God's promise was also to multiply Abraham's descendants
God renewed this promise to Isaac and to Jacob, Abraham's son and grandson
This shows God wanted the blessing to continue to all future generations
Zechariah was a priest, therefore interested in serving the Lord
The word translated "serve" is translated "worship" in Acts 7:42 and 24:14
To serve God is to worship Him, and to worship Him is to serve Him
The deliverance from sin by the Messiah allows God's people to serve Him "without fear"
Israel at the this time lived in fear of Roman overlords and perhaps the Jewish leadership
The greater fear God will eliminate, however, is the fear of death (see Heb. 2:15)
9. vs. 75: Zechariah, the devoted priest, was known for being "righteous in the sight of God"
He knows what is means to serve God
God desires this same thing for all who will follow Him and thus serve Him
"Holiness" means to be set apart from sin
"Righteousness" means that the people always do the right things in the sight of God
This is what we are called to accomplish with our lives while on earth
The ultimate fulfillment will occur when we serve Christ in full holiness in heaven
10. vs. 76: Zechariah now speaks directly to his own child, John
He speaks of the role God has for John, to prepare people for the coming Messiah
He is quoting from Is. 40:3—"prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him"
A part of this role is to be a prophet, a role Israel has known for much of its history
John is compared to being a new Elijah in Matt. 11:14
This comparison was part of the angel's announcement of John in Luke 1:17
11. vs. 77: Another part (a big part) of John's ministry is calling people to repentance (Matt. 3:2)
Once they repent, then "forgiveness of their sins" is possible
This salvation goes beyond political oppression, which is what many expected to see
This is a spiritual, eternal salvation coming from God's redemption through Christ

12. vs. 78a: This verse uses the phrase “our God”

This shows that God is not far off or an abstract concept

He is close to His people, and shows care and concern for them personally

He shows them “tender mercy”, something the pagan “gods” did not do

13. vs. 78b-79: God’s “tender mercy” in vs. 78a leads to the result shown in this section

The “rising sun will come to us from heaven”

This is Christ and the hope He brings for healing and redemption

Those living in “darkness” are those opposed to God

This status leads to death, in which shadow people are without God

But God promises to shine light on those who are in that state of darkness

Jesus has come to shine light into the darkness (see John 8:12)

14. vs. 80: In this verse, Luke summarized John’s life in growing up

He “became strong in spirit”, which has two possible meanings

He showed determined willingness to conform to God’s will and plan for him

He had the Holy Spirit in his live

Whichever may be the intention, both show John was walking with God

We leave John here living in the wilderness until he begins his ministry

Application: We are the beneficiaries of all the promises God has made; we live in a time when almost all the OT prophecies have been fulfilled, and we can see how they came to be fulfilled. We have the Scriptures so we can know the factual certainty of it all, which was one of Luke’s reasons for writing his gospel. As we experience God’s salvation, mercy, and enlightenment, our expressions of joy and thanks should be similar to those we see in Zechariah’s words from today’s passage.

Prayer: Father God, thank You that by Your mercy we have received the fulfillment of Your eternal promises in Jesus. Help us to live in full, complete confidence in Your continuing faithfulness to us, and to rejoice and celebrate in that faithfulness daily. In Jesus’ name, Amen.