

## “Songs of Christmas – *BENEDICTUS*”

Luke 1:67-80

If you were unable to talk for a year, what would you say when you could speak? There are times when people cannot speak – when they have laryngitis, when they have a tube in their throats at the hospital. Sometimes a stroke takes away the ability to talk and it has to be learned again. Throat cancer can cause the larynx to be removed, That person has to hold an electromechanical device to their neck or jaw to produce speech. If you were rendered speechless for one year, what would be the first thing you would say?

Zechariah was serving in the Temple when the angel of the Lord told him that his wife would bear a son. Since both he and his wife Elizabeth were old and had been childless until then, Zechariah did not believe the angel’s message. To chastise him, the angel made him unable to speak. In due time, his wife did become pregnant. She did bear him a son. Eight days after the baby’s birth, the priest and families came to circumcise and name the baby boy.

Elizabeth said that the baby was to be named John. When the families objected, Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately, he regained his ability to speak.

The song, *Benedictus*, which is the subject of our sermon, was the first words spoken by Zechariah after being speechless for one year. These first words came from the Holy Spirit.

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God...Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: (Luke 1:64,67 NKJV)

The song is a prophecy whose words came from the Holy Spirit.

1.) Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us," (Luke 1:67-71 NKJV)

This song which is a prophecy begins with reference to God's past dealings with Israel. God's revelation is organic. Each new revelation grows out of what preceded it. Unless you know the Old Testament, you cannot really understand the New Testament. Every time you read the Old Testament, you will find teachings that will lead you to a greater understanding of the New Testament.

Prophecy not only foretells the future, it is full of exhortations for the present. Zechariah begins by praising God for the help and hope He has given His people in the past. Then he points out to us that the basis of our hope in the present time is the promises that God made to Abraham and David. Out of David's line, God would raise up a horn of salvation. Horn is a figurative way of describing strength and military power. Through Nathan the prophet, God spoke to King David:

"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever..."And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-13,16 NKJV)

The prophet Zechariah wrote "Fear not, Daughter of Zion; Behold your King coming, seated on a donkey's colt." Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. The people by their shouts acclaimed Him the coming King, promised by God. "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD, even the King of Israel." "Hosanna to the Son of David." "Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the LORD. Hosanna in the highest."

2.) To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. (Luke 1:72-75 NKJV)

The promise of salvation from their enemies and the triumph of David's kingdom over all the kingdoms on earth was uppermost in the minds of the people who were occupied by Roman soldiers and forced to pay tribute to the Roman government. Their hope was fixed on a Messiah who would drive the Romans out of their land.

Throughout the Old Testament there are two threads of prophecy concerning the coming Messiah. One of these streams was of a warrior who would subdue the nations and establish peace and justice. The other thread originates in the promise God made to Abraham.

I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3 NKJV)

We not only need to be saved from our enemies, but we need to be saved from our sin that makes us an enemy of God. This other thread of prophecies about the Messiah is that He would bring repentance and salvation from sin to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. He would perform the mercy promised to the fathers. Being delivered from the hand of our enemies (this was the promise to David) Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. (This was the promise made to Abraham,)

Because of these two threads of prophecy, the Jews in Jesus' time believed there would be two Messiahs – one a warrior king like David, the other a priest. The warrior king like David to subdues all nations. The priest to bring salvation from sin and peace with God.

“And in you all the families of the earth of the earth shall be blessed.”

3.) "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, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:76-79 NKJV)

The final section is about the role this baby son of Zechariah and Elizabeth will play in the fulfillment of these promises of God. The Jews of Jesus' day wanted the promise to David to be fulfilled. The disciples of Jesus asked Him about this as He was about to ascend to heaven:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:6-8 NKJV)

In God's plan all the nations must hear the Gospel and be invited to be reconciled to God. At the end of the age, those who remain in rebellion against God will be defeated in war. Jesus answers the disciples' question with a command to witness about Him to all the ends of the earth.

John the Baptist's role would be to preach repentance of sins and to announce the coming of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He preached repentance of sins first, because people don't know they need a Savior until they realize how awful are their sins and that they cannot do anything themselves to take away their sins.

Jesus came as our Savior and died on the cross. One day He will return as warrior king, establish His kingdom, and sit on David's throne.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war... Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. (Revelation 19:11,15,16 NKJV)