

• *Zacharias' song*

There are three songs given by the Holy Spirit in the early chapters of Luke. We have had one from Mary ^{☞1}. There will be another one from Simon ^{☞2}. At this point we have one from Zacharias. Zacharias was suddenly given a special enabling by the Holy Spirit ^{☞3}, leading him to 'prophesy', that is, to speak with words being given to him by God. Verses 68 to 75 are one long sentence.

☞1 1:46–55
☞2 2:29–32
☞3 1:46

1. The day of salvation has begun

1. **First, Zacharias praised God for the realisation that the day of salvation had begun.** It will be noticed that the song does not begin by saying much about Zacharias' new baby son! It is more about God and what He is doing. Zacharias knows that Mary's child is even more important than his own child. 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people' ^{☞1}.

☞1 1:68

• *As good as done!*

God has come to save His people! Zacharias uses the past tense. Actually what God was doing through Jesus was only beginning but in Zacharias' mind it is as good as done! He uses a past tense; it is a well-known Hebrew way of speaking about something that is so certain it is as good as done! '*... and He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant...*' ^{☞1}.

☞1 1:69

• *Powerful salvation*

The 'horn' of an animal was famous for its strength and power. A 'horn of salvation' means 'a powerful salvation'. God is fulfilling His promises. He had promised a Saviour in the line of David, and now Zacharias knows God's promise is being fulfilled. God is acting '*... as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago...*' ^{☞1}. For many centuries, godly people have been living on what God had predicted. Now it is about to take place.

☞1 1:70

2. Salvation described

2. **Next, Zacharias describes what he expects this salvation to be.** It will involve rescue from enemies: '*...that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us...*' ^{☞1}.

☞1 1:71

• *Salvation from enemies*

Men and women have many enemies. Israel was oppressed by the Romans at the time when Jesus was born, and so there was not much possibility of that society fulfilling the will of God in its national life. But it was not just a political problem. Men and women face a mass of adversaries and adversities, spiritual and not-so-spiritual. Sin is an enemy; Satan is an enemy. The ill-will and cruelty of people around us can be fierce. But Zacharias knew God's salvation would change all this. It puts us right with God and then we are in a position to cope with everything else. Eventually it even transforms society.

• *Mercy*

God's intervention was sheer mercy. Jesus and His forerunner John come because God is showing mercy. '*... to bring about the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant...*' ^{☞1}.

☞1 1:72

Long before God had promised mercy to Israel, and through Israel to the world. It had all begun with Abraham. '*... the oath which He swore to our father Abraham...*' ^{☞1}. It is notable that Zacharias refers specially to God's oath in Genesis 22:16–18. God's 'oath' is a promise that cannot be lost.

☞1 1:73

• *Deliverance from oppression and fear*

Another aspect of this salvation is rescue, deliverance from any kind of oppression. '*... to grant us to be delivered from the hand of our enemies*' ^{☞1}. And God promises fearlessness, '*... so that we might serve Him without fear...*' ^{☞2}.

☞1 1:74

Everything leads to godly living before God, 'in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life' ^{□3}.

□2 1:75a

□3 1:75a

3. John's part in introducing God's salvation

• *Preparing a way for Jesus*

3. Next, **Zacharias rejoices in the part that his own son would have in introducing God's salvation.** Like John himself, Zacharias knows that John's only task is to introduce Jesus:

'And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways.' ^{□1}

□1 1:76

This is what every prophet and preacher does. He 'prepares' the way for God. The person is not called upon to prepare himself. The sinner's task is not to prepare himself, but to believe! Yet the preacher or prophet often clears things out of the way. He gives the preliminary knowledge that is needed for anyone to believe in Jesus. God wanted someone to make it clear that Jesus was not a politician or soldier, but a Saviour from sin. John would start to make the message clear even before Jesus came.

• *Forgiveness of sins*

'In the Holy Spirit' Zacharias sees all of this. He knows Jesus comes: *'to give knowledge of salvation to His people, through the forgiveness of their sins...'* ^{□1}.

□1 1:77

Salvation is first of all forgiveness. Everything starts with being reconciled to God. Then we are ready to have our prayers answered, and to serve God. Then we shall have an influence on others around us.

• *The tender mercy of God*

Forgiveness is first, *'through the tender mercy of our God when the dawn from on high shall rise upon us...'* ^{□1}.

□1 1:78

• *Salvation is a person*

Salvation is not simply religious routine. It is a person. Salvation comes when Jesus comes. He was like the sun rising in a dark place. When He comes all is light and brightness. He comes like the sun, *'... to shine upon those who sit in darkness and upon those in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace'* ^{□1}.

□1 1:79

• *The coming Jesus*

Zacharias has a clear grasp of what the coming of Jesus will mean. He will bring forgiveness, illumination, guidance, peace.



• *John isolated until the time came*

John the Baptist grew physically and spiritually. He lived in an isolated region, until the time came in his life, when his public ministry began and all Israel got to know about him ^{□1}.

□1 1:80

• *The Spirit gives clear knowledge*

The Spirit can give marvellously clear knowledge. It is very early days in the events of the gospel, yet by the Spirit Zacharias sees it all.

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