

Luke 1:67-80 – Zechariah's Prophecy

These are the words of the father of John the Baptist – the one who went before Christ to prepare the way for him. Zechariah had been humbled by God (v20), but now had been restored (v63-64). Now he was used by God, to speak words from the Holy Spirit (v67). He spoke about salvation, and what God does in the gospel.

1. God visits his people

Verse 68 says “he has come and has redeemed his people” (NIV). The word “come” here is much stronger in the original language. It means to come and inspect, to see and to bring relief – to come to see and then act. Read Exodus 2:23-25 and you can see God doing this at the Exodus. He sees the condition of his people, and he pities them, and he acts to deliver them from their enemies. This is all according to God's plan. He made a promise long ago to Abraham (v73), which we can read in Genesis 12:1-3. He promised to bless the whole world through him. Jesus came to fulfil this plan. The true nation of God are those who believe in Jesus. The true blessing and true inheritance are in Christ. That is why Zechariah rejoiced, because at last Christ was coming into the world. Has he visited you?

2. God redeems his people

Salvation means that God saves his people and delivers his enemies. Verse 68 says that God “redeems” his people. This word means that he pays a ransom to set them free. We were the slaves of sin, and could not serve God properly (v74). Jesus died on the cross to pay the price due because of sin, and to bring his people into freedom to serve him. Who are the enemies that Zechariah speaks about? V77 tells us that our sins must be forgiven; v79 speaks about the danger of death. A Christian's real enemies are Satan, sin and death (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus defeated these enemies when he died for sin on the cross. He then brings us into light (understanding), v79, and forgiveness, v77. His people are now waiting for him to return. When he comes, he will bring the final salvation to those waiting for him – and eternal destruction for those who have not obeyed him (Matthew 25:31-46).

3. God is served by his people

Why does Jesus set his people free? So that they can serve him, without fear (v74). Only those who are at peace (v79) with God can serve him truly. We need a “heart set free” before we can be genuine followers, following out of love. God gives his people a work to do, to advance his kingdom and to worship him with their whole lives. We are not set free from sin so that we can please ourselves – but so that we can please him. This service must be in “holiness and righteousness” that continues “all our days” (v75). The Christian has been freed from sin's rule – now he must fight sin in himself and in the world all his life. All this can happen by the power of Christ in us. Zechariah sang of Christ. John the Baptist, Zechariah's son, was only important in relationship to Christ. Zechariah, by the Holy Spirit, saw the work of Christ, and this led him to praise God (v67-68). Has that same Spirit worked in you? Do you see, by faith, the glory of Christ, and rejoice in him and desire to serve him? Praise to God from the heart because of Christ is the true test of our Christianity, whether it is real or not.