**JESUS, THE RISING SUN**

 **(The Song of Zechariah)**

**Luke 1:57-80**

**Key Verses: 1:78,79**

**"...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shad­ow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."**

**Study Questions:**

1. What did it mean to Zechariah and Elizabeth to have a son? What did this old cou­ple reveal about their faith when they named him John? How is obe­dience tied to faith?

2. Read verses 67-80. Who is the main subject of this song? How has God re­vealed his faithfulness? (68,70,72) What does it mean that he "has come"? How did he redeem his people?

3. What does he mean by calling Jesus "the horn of salvation"? For the meaning of "horn" see: Dt 33:17a; Ps 148:14; 1Sa 2:1,10; 2Sa 22:3; Rev 5:6. What is the other kind of horn? (Da 7:21; Rev 12:3,9; 13:1) How does it dam­age peo­ple? (Ro 1:29-31)

4. Who is our enemy? For what purpose does God rescue us from the horn of Satan? (74,75) What does this mean? (2Pe 1:3,4)

5. How would Zechariah's son serve God's history? (76,77) Why does he call Jesus the rising sun? (See Jn 8:12b) What can we learn from this song about how to be truly happy?

**Today's passage is about Zechariah's song. Most old people sigh habitually with an old man's fatality. But Zech­ariah, though he was old, sings a song of praise like a young man. As the angel had said, John was born; and now he was eight days old. It was the day of his son's circumci­sion. So Zechariah had to sing a song of praise to God for giving him a son in his old age. To our surprise, his song was mainly about Jesus the Mes­siah. His song of praise teaches us about the tender mercy of God and several things about who Jesus really is.**

**First, Zechariah named his son John, not Zechariah Jr. (57-66).**

**As we stud­ied, Zechariah had a childless prob­lem which made him very fatal­is­tic. Nev­erthe­less, he kept the life of faith to the end in that unbeliev­ing generation. Then God blessed his family. Elizabeth gave birth to a son, as the angel had said (57). Her neigh­bors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mer­cy, and they shared her joy (58). The Bible says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Ro 12:15). It is beautiful to see that Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives shared her joy, rejoicing. May God restore the joy of communi­ty in this beautiful land, as was in the past.**

**According to Jewish custom, on the eighth day, they came to circum­cise the baby. Circumcision was a ceremony held to consecrate and dedicate a boy's life to God. During the ceremony, they also named the baby before God. Their rela­tives were sure to name the baby after his fa­ther Zechariah: "Zechariah Jr., the blessed one" (59). But his moth­er spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John" (60). They won­dered and said, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name" (61). Then, they turned to Zechariah to ask his opinion on this. Since Zechariah was made dumb because he had not believed the angel's words (20), they spoke to him in sign language in order to figure out his opinion (62). Zecha­riah asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John" (63). Their neighbors were surprised by the old couple. It was not easy for the couple to obey God's word through the angel. In order to obey God's instruction, Zechariah had to ignore Jewish tradi­tions and had to become an object of criticism. At that time, Jew­ish traditions were the backbone of the Jewish peo­ple. Zechariah also had to over­come his human desire to call his son "Little Zack." How could Zechari­ah and Elizabeth obey the angel's instruc­tions in such detail? It was because God's words were in their hearts. Be­lieving seems to be an easy thing to do; so, many people say, "I believe in God," not knowing that believing definitely involves obedience. We must know that faith and obedience are one body.**

**When Zechariah had dedicated his son to God, his mouth was open­ed and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God (64). The neigh­bors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things (65). They were surprised that an old woman who had been barren bore a son and was feeding him at her own breast, and that Zechariah, who had become dumb for the last nine months, now, suddenly, was sing­ing a song of praise. They were even more sur­prised to see that the child was not an ordinary one. So they ask­ed, "What then is this child going to be?" The author Luke comments: "For the Lord's hand was with him" (66). When two old people kept the life of faith and obeyed God's word in detail, God's mighty hand was with their family.**

**Second, Zechariah's song (67-80).**

**Zechariah's song was not about his son John. In verses 67-79, Zech­ariah praises God who sent his one and only Son as he had prom­ised. In his song of praise, Zechariah praises God's faithful­ness in keeping his promises, and he introduces Jesus in several ways.**

**Firstly, "he has come and has redeemed his people" (67,68). Look at verses 67,68. "His fa­ther Zech­ariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophe­sied: 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.'" For the past 300 years, the people of Israel had not heard any word of God through the prophets. They could not be­lieve any more what God had promised. In addition, their situa­tion in that time was hard to bear. They were groaning un­der the oppression of the Roman yoke. Peo­ple de­spaired without any hope. But Zechariah had faith in the coming of the Mes­siah, as God had promised. Now, the promised Messiah was about to be born--the one whom Zechariah and devout men had weari­ly looked for. Zech­ariah was captured by surprise and rapture at last, when he real­ized that God's promises concerning the Messiah were about to be ful­filled. Zech­ariah began to praise God, moved by the great faithfulness of God in keeping his promises**

**Look at verse 68. "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, be­cause he has come and has redeemed his people." The verb "has come" literally means "has visited." God chose the people of Israel to be his own people out of all peo­ples. God also gave them a mission to be a king­dom of priests and a holy na­tion (Ex 19:6a). Yet, his people did not thank God for all the privileg­es he had given them. Instead they dis­obeyed his words. Fi­nal­ly, they aban­doned God. So God did not have to visit these rebellious peo­ple. But in his great mercy, God visited them first. No one wants to apolo­gize first. But God visit­ed his people first. We call this "God's initiative." In order to visit his people, Al­mighty God humbled him­self, lowering him­self to the position of a servant. In order to visit his peo­ple, Almighty God came to this world as a helpless baby in a man­ger.**

**Secondly, Jesus is the horn of salvation (69-73). Let's read verse 69. "He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his ser­vant Da­vid." In the Bible, there are two kinds of horns: one is the horn of salvation, and the other, the horn of Satan. The horn of salva­tion is the emblem of the glo­ry and power of God Almighty (Dt 33:17; Ps 148:14; 1Sa 2:1,10; 2Sa 22:3; Rev 5:6). The horn of Satan is the pow­er of sin and death (Da 7:21; Rev 12:3; 13:1). Je­sus came to this world as the horn of salvation to de­stroy the horn of Satan.**

**What the people of Israel needed was salvation from their ene­mies. They had suffered as a slave people for 400 years under the yoke of Egypt, where only ungodly people lived. The ungodly people were the bitter ene­mies of the people of Israel. After the Exodus, they lived in the promised land flowing with milk and honey. But they were un­der the constant threats and fear of their enemies in the promised land. God gave them David as their shepherd and king. David des­troyed all their enemies. While King David ruled, his people enjoyed love and peace. But it ended too soon. In the past, the enemies of Israel were neighboring countries who had ha­rassed them. But the real enemy of Israel was not the neighboring coun­tries, but Satan in their hearts. The cleverness of Satan is most deceptive, for he has seven heads while man has only one head (Rev 17:3). The pow­er of Satan is also most destructive, for he has ten horns while man has no horn at all. Many peo­ple think they suffer be­cause of their fu­ture security problem. But actually people suffer because of Satan's pranks. This ap­plies to all mankind.**

**The horn of Satan has been the most fearsome one to mankind; when it im­pales a man, it leaves him in a critical condition through­out his life­time. There was a movie entitled "Matador." The angry bull saw a very pop­ular matador. Then the bull pawed the ground several times with his hoof to be ready to charge. He rushed out of the pen toward the mata­dor and impaled the man before he was ready. The matador was wounded fatally. Likewise, who­ever is impaled by the horn of Satan becomes a living dead. Satan miss­es no chance. One young girl want­ed to experi­ence a boy just one time and forget about it. As soon as she finished enjoying the boy, she tried to forget the boy as if noth­ing had happened. But the horn of Satan impaled her through her guilty conscience. Since then she has been a mentally crip­pled woman. The horn of Satan is the power of sin. Those who are impaled by the horn of Satan be­come fatally wounded. One young man studied hard and read many classics in order to know the good side of hu­manity. In fact, he did every­thing to please his parents. But one day, he heard that his father had run away from home. He became blank. Next, his heart was bro­ken. Then the horn of Satan impaled him and he became use­less from that time on. He be­came a vegetable man.**

**We must know that Satan is very deceptive. Satan does not al­ways ap­pear to us as a horrible figure, as T.V. often depicts. For exam­ple, Satan came to Eve in the form of a colorful and silky serpent (Ge 3:1). Satan made use of Eve's aesthetic sense and induced her to take the forbid­den fruit. As a result, she disobeyed God's word. She also caused her hus­band to dis­obey the holy command of God. Eve did not see the horn of Satan behind his make-up. In Romans 1:29-31, we can see many kinds of ug­ly peo­ple: the wicked, the evil, mur­derers, inventors of evil­doing, and senseless, heartless, ruthless peo­ple. These are pictures of people impaled by the horn of Satan. But praise God, for he has raised up a horn of sal­vation to crush the horn of Sa­tan. Praise God that he rescues us from the horn of Satan.**

**Thirdly, God enables us through his Son to serve God without fear all our days (74-75). There is a clear reason why God saves us from the horn of Satan. Look at verses 74,75. "...to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righ­teousness be­fore him all our days." God saves us from the horn of Satan so that we might serve God without fear in holiness and righ­teousness all our days. God made us to be happy when we serve God without fear in holiness and righ­­t­eousness. Every­one has a deep desire to be holy, as God is holy (1Pe 1:16). When we do some­thing for the holy God, we are happy in­deed. On the other hand, those who do evil, intentionally or uninten­tionally, experience un­ut­terable misery and tragedies in their souls. These days many people say, "Have fun." This is Satan's appeal to our sinful nature. Man is happy when he partic­ipates in the divine nature (2Pe 1:3,4), be­cause God made us so.**

**Fourthly, Jesus is the giver of the knowledge of salva­tion (76,77). Look at verse 76. "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him..." Zech­ariah's son would be used as the forerunner of the Mes­siah. In ancient times, a forerun­ner went before a king, shouting, "The king is coming! Bow down!" Zechariah knew that his son's life would not be easy like those of kings' forerunners. However, he was happy that his son would be called "a prophet of the Most High." After making a brief mention of his son, Zecha­riah keeps on praising Jesus. Look at verse 77. "...to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the for­giveness of their sins..." Man cannot be happy without the true knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. For example, a physically sick person is not happy. A mentally sick person is also not hap­py, because he thinks of everything in eccentricity. A spiritu­ally sick person is very unhappy be­cause he is very sick with sin. Physi­cally sick people can be healed by medicine. But spiritu­ally sick peo­ple are incurable because there are no medicines for those who are sick with sin. In histo­ry, no one has ever men­tioned the knowl­edge of sal­vation for man's sin. Uniquely, Jesus gives us the true knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins.**

**Fifthly, Jesus is the rising sun (78,79a). Look at vers­es 78, 79a. "...be­cause of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in dark­ness and in the shadow of death..." Until Je­sus came, men were sitting in the dark­ness of sin. But Jesus came to this dark world as the rising sun. John 8:12b says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." One young girl was pretty, but her father once said, "You are not pretty like your older sister. You look ugly." From that time on, she began to doubt her father's love for her. Soon, she said to her­self, "I am an ugly duck­ling to my father." She sorrowed day and night for near­ly 20 years be­fore meeting Jesus. But through John's Gospel study, hea­venly sun­light began to shine in her heart. She began to see herself as a beauti­ful woman. After marriage she could believe that her husband is the best man in the whole world, even though no one else says so. Jesus, the rising sun, drives out the shadow of death from our hearts. Jesus, the rising sun, heals us and helps us grow, just as the sunlight nourishes green plants. Jesus also enlightens us to see God and his glorious kingdom, for he is the rising sun.**

**These days many people take psychedelic drugs. Why? They want love and peace. But there is no love and peace for them, because they are badly wounded by the horn of Satan. There is no love and peace for them be­cause they are under the shadow of death. But Je­sus, the horn of salva­tion, rescues us from the hand of Sa­tan. And Je­sus, the rising sun, shines upon us to heal us and save us and make us smile.**