

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR DEC. 19, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

As kids we can't wait for Christmas to arrive. As adults, it rushes up on us. God planned Christmas a long time ago, and for a very special reason. When Zechariah finally found his tongue, he sang a song of praise that reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Last week we looked at Mary's song, called "The Magnificat," which she sang after her elder cousin Elizabeth acknowledged the Savior in her womb. Today, we will look at Zechariah's song, called, "The Benedictus," which is Latin for "praise be." Zechariah was Elizabeth's husband. God would give the two of them in their golden years a miracle baby, John the Baptist.

I can't imagine how proud and how excited John the Baptist's parents were. I would think that the moment that Zechariah was able to talk that he would want to brag on his own son. But the reality is that he actually brags on God first. All of those nine months of silence, pondering the mercy of God, erupted in an overflow of praise to God. And Zechariah's song of praise highlights some of the most massive truths about God's mercy and love.

ZECHARIAH'S SONG

SERMON PASSAGE: LUKE 1:57-80 (Versus 67-80 printed here)

⁶⁷ His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸ "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn^[a] of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

⁷¹ salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

⁷² to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.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,

⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness

and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace."

⁸⁰ And the child grew and became strong in spirit^[b]; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Make a list of the things for which Zechariah praises God.
2. How does this song compare and contrast with Mary's song?
3. According to this song, what is the purpose of salvation?
4. How does Zechariah's song show God's unfolding plan from OT days to the coming of the Messiah?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

5. What, according to this song, is the purpose of salvation?
6. What does it mean that Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit?
7. Is that the same experience that believers experience today?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

8. How has God unfolded His plan of salvation in your life?
9. Who helped prepare the way?
10. What were some of your key events that led you to your commitment to Jesus?

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to give you confidence that He loves you and He will never leave you. Give thanks to God for answering your prayers.