

# Zechariah's Song

## Preparing for Christ's Second Advent

### Luke 1:67-79

Intro. Christmas is a time when people are driving or flying to see family. When I was a kid, I would irritate my dad immensely by asking over and over again, "Are we almost there?" Been there, done that? Phones, iPads, and video screens, for all the negatives, might have saved a few families from all-out war on road trips.

Two weeks ago, we launched the Christmas season with our musical "Almost There". Last week, Pastor Cedric expounded on the meaning of Mary's song about the Lord being magnified in us. Today, we're going to pick up on the theme, but look at it prophetically.

Much of the bible focuses on the First Advent of the Messiah.

- **Genesis** – He is our Creator and the Seed of woman who will crush the enemy
- **Exodus** – He is the Passover lamb symbolized in the blood over the doorposts
- **Joshua** – He is the Commander of the Lord's Army
- **Ruth** – He is our Kinsman Redeemer
- **1 and 2 Samuel** – He is the Seed of David
- **Psalms** – He is our Shepherd
- **Proverbs** – He is eternal wisdom
- **Isaiah** – He is the Suffering Servant
- **Daniel** – He is the fourth man walking in the fire
- The Messiah was longed for, promised and prophesied as the Redeemer, Deliverer and Light of the World!

**Background:** When Luke's opens his gospel, there has been 400 years of silence. Right away, we are introduced to a priest named Zechariah.

Zechariah, a priest and married to Elizabeth, who's dad was also a priest. Their reputation was blameless, righteous and faithful, even though they had no children (which could be perceived as an inconsistency in their faithfulness because barrenness was considered a sign of God's judgment on their sin). Zechariah had prayed for a child for years, but now, in his older age, his attention had turned to his duty and the people of Israel. God, however, had not forgotten his prayers but intertwined it into a greater plan! (Priests divided into 24 divisions – Burning incense involved being in the Holy of Holies area, quick duty, pronounce blessing – once in a lifetime opportunity). Chosen, almost through a lottery system.

**Zechariah was on the precipice of the First Advent of Jesus Christ!** He heard Mary's Magnificat, her pronouncement of the Coming Messiah. He had spent 3 months hearing about the angel, Gabriel, announcing the Messiah's arrival through the Incarnation, and the fulfillment of **Isaiah 7:14** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Then in **Isaiah 9:2** "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone." **9:6** "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and you shall call his name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Zechariah's prophecy clearly spoke of the **first advent** of Jesus Christ as humanity's Redeemer, Salvation, and Deliverer. He also expressed his son's role in preparing the way. Once Jesus came on the scene, the OT prophecies and Jesus' own teaching began laying the groundwork for His Second Advent.

**For example**, 225 prophecies point to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! There are over 1,500 Scriptures that refer to the Second Coming, one out of every twenty-five verses in the Bible. For every 1 time the bible mentions the first coming of Jesus, it mentions 8 times about His Second Coming. Over 50 times, the bible tells Christians to "Be alert! Or Be ready!"

We don't have time to go through all of them, so let me give you two:

- 1) **Isaiah 9:6** "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore."
- 2) **Acts 1:10-11** Two angels, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

**Zechariah's prophecy at John's circumcision and dedication gave us the template for how the Church is to live in anticipation of Christ's Second Coming.** He says in verse 76 "And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord **to prepare his way**". Just as Zechariah points to the Messiah's coming and John's role to prepare the way, **God calls every believer to prepare the way for Jesus' Second Coming!** **What preparations are needed in you for Christ's return? Let's look at Zech's story**

### **#1 Prepare Your Soul (Luke 1:5-23, 57-63)**

Exp. As Zechariah is in the temple lighting the incense around the Holy of Holies, a once in a lifetime opportunity, the angel Gabriel announces to him that his son will be the one who prepares the way for the Messiah to deliver (1:13-17). Zechariah doubts and Gabriel hits the mute button on Zechariah's mouth for 9 months. God takes the 9 months to work on Zechariah's heart and soul. It was time for Zechariah to get alone with God and reflect

Kent Hughes writes, "Spiritual reflection, a wise and spiritually healthy state, is rare in our unthinking age of sound bites, cell phones, social media and limited attention spans. The flashing stoplights, the elevator music, the shifting images, the ads, the vacuous conversation about where we are going and what we are buying keeps our minds too busy to reflect on more important matters."

@ C.S. Lewis, in The Screwtape Letters, one of Screwtapes targets (young man) was sitting in the British Museum and began reflecting on spiritual questions. Before he could ponder too long, Screwtape moved him out, back onto the streets of buses, busyness and "real life" in the real world.

- A. **God deals with our doubts and fears!** – God wants you to live in courageous confidence

- 1) When Joshua feared taking over for Moses and leading God's people forward, the Lord reminded Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not fear, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)
- 2) When Timothy feared being a pastor, Paul reminds Timothy that he and his family "have always had strong faith, but 'I remind you' Paul says, 'to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord'...But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and **I am convinced** that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me." – Preparing your soul takes a deeper reflection that most of allow into our schedules. It's why we continue to spin in cycles of spiritual defeat, apathy, discouragement and doubt.

B. **God aligns our will to his will!** - By aligning your will to God's will, you have mental, emotional and spiritual clarity and conviction **(1:57-63)** "His name **IS** John!"

- Align your Attention – Focus on God above all else!
- Align your Affection – Love God above all else!
- Align your Activities – Serve God above all else!

## **#2 Prepare Your Life (Luke 1:64-75)**

Exp. Zechariah had spent 9 months reflecting and being renewed. The first thing that he did was **bless the Lord (1:64)** through his **obedience!!** He began to **praise the Lord (67-73)** and from his praise came his **purpose (74-75)!** **Zechariah's time alone with God taught him how to live his life. It taught him what was important in life, and when God opened his mouth, his first response: Worship that leads to Service!**

- a. **Prepare your life to worship (67-73)** – everyday, we need to wake up and ask God to fill us with His Spirit. **Paul tells the Ephesians that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and when we are filled with the Spirit, we will encourage "one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with our heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."**

**Prepare your life to worship God,**

1. **By thanking God for coming to us! (68)**
2. **By thanking God for saving us by his power (69-70)**
3. **By thanking God for delivering us from our enemy (71)**
4. **By thanking God for keeping His covenant promises (72-73)**

**b. Prepare your life to serve (74-75)**

1. **Live holy before God** – that is, we live to please the Lord with our character and conduct
2. **Live holy before others** – that is, we live to show the love of Christ to others!

**When you prepare your life to worship God and serve Him without fear, God will have your heart to do with you whatever He needs!**

While Dietrich Bonhoeffer was in prison, before his execution, he wrote a letter to his fiancée: "I used to be very fond of thinking up and buying presents, but now that we have nothing to give, the gift God gave us in the birth of Christ will seem all the more glorious; the emptier our hands, the better we understand what Luther meant by his dying words: "We're beggars; it's true." The poorer our quarters, the more clearly, we perceive that **our hearts** should be Christ's home on earth."

### **#3 Prepare Your Witness (Luke 1:76-79)**

Exp. Filled with worship, Zechariah, perhaps, reaches down and picks up his son. He calls John a prophet (not a priest, in his line) who will go before the Lord to prepare the way: to give knowledge of salvation, God's forgiveness of their sins. John will also give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death so their feet will walk in the way of peace! What a pronouncement!! It was a proud moment for this dad! Zechariah knew God was going to do something special with his son. Every parent hopes and prays for God to use their child!

Ill. Dave Spurdle, missionary to Japan, visited me when I pastored a church in Raleigh, NC. Dave was a prayer warrior and wanted everyone to be on mission to the darkest places with the Gospel. One day he showed up in my office. I was headed out to visit a family in the hospital who had recently had their first baby. He took the baby and prayed over it with anointing oil: "O God, bless this child and make her a mighty voice for God. Send her to the toughest, most unreached places in the world to share your message of hope!" As he continued to pray fervently, I glanced over at the mom laying helplessly in the bed. She had her gaze fixed on her husband and mouthing the words: "Get my girl away from this crazy man!"

App. Listen, just as John's ministry was to prepare for the first advent of Jesus Christ, if you are a Christian, you know that God has called you to prepare for the second advent of Jesus Christ.

- 1. We are to give knowledge of salvation (1:77-78)**
- 2. By shining light to those who sit in darkness (1:79)** – "people sit in darkness" - **Isaiah 60:2** says, "**For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples...** (when you have lived in spiritual darkness, you know the joy of living in the light of Christ; the peace and purpose that it brings...BUT, for many in our world, they live in spiritual darkness every day and most do not even know it! **Prov. 4:19** "The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble."

To live in spiritual darkness is to constantly be filled with uncertainty, rebellion against God and His Law; to be susceptible to the deceptions of Satan and groping the dark for authentic purpose, sacrificial love and truth! To live in spiritual darkness is to be tossed around from every side stealing your joy and infusing fear into your life. You are blind to God's love and plan for your life. You are unable to appreciate His love or have lasting peace of mind. **2 Cor. 4:4** says, "**The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God.**" Everywhere you go, people live in darkness, blinded by the

god of this world, by the deceptive philosophies and pleasures of this world, but YOU who know Christ Jesus are to shine brightly!

**Isaiah 60:1** "Arise, shine! For your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. The Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you...And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." When you look at Zechariah's Song, he says to his son John, "You will give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

**This is the PURPOSE of every Christian AND, it is the PURPOSE of CHRISTMAS!  
To Shine the light of Jesus!**

**How Can We Shine Brightly the Light of Jesus in Us?** (People are on stage with signs. A spotlight will focus on them):

- 1. PRAY PASSIONATELY** (Pray for one lost person who you believe needs Christ; Pray for an unreached people group; www.; Pray for God to make you more compassionate and intentional)
- 2. LISTEN CAREFULLY** (to listen to people's concerns so you know how to show them that Christ is enough)
- 3. SERVE INTENTIONALLY** (Read Max Lucado's book, *Out Live Your Life*; Ask God to develop your heart to serve others - @ Story of Jenny, Moriah and I having family devotions one night when the action plan was to empty your pantry of non-perishable goods and take them to a family in need – the country was going through a recession and people were losing their jobs. We dropped off several bags on the porch, rang the doorbell and watched from a distance. What a FUN and memorable night!) – Serve as a volunteer; Serve on a mission team; Serve with your family
- 4. LIVE CONSISTENTLY** (nothing will shine brighter for Jesus than a life lived in holiness and righteousness; "You are the light of the world!" When Jesus shines in you, the light of Jesus will give light to those who sit in darkness and will guide their feet into the way of peace.")

Sigmund Freud tells the story of a three-year-old boy crying in a dark room of a home he was visiting one evening. "Auntie," the boy cried, "talk to me! I'm frightened because it is so dark." His aunt answered him from another room: "What good would that do? You can't see me." "That doesn't matter," replied the child. "When you talk, it gets light."