

From Silence To A Song!

The people of God had drifted . . . especially in the 400 years of silence:

Malachi 3:7-12 *Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” Says the LORD of hosts. “But you said, ‘In what way shall we return?’ “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field,” Says the LORD of hosts; And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land,” Says the LORD of hosts.*

God needed to send a special person with a special message, and John the Baptizer was that special person:

John The Preacher!

Matthew 3:1-2 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

John's message was a bold and straightforward one:

Repent = metanoew *metanoeo* ('met-an-o-eh'-o) = *To change ones mind and therefore there conduct!*

Why? **THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND!**

The word repent is used 68 times and it's theme is common. Stop acting in the flesh and serve God!

Luke 13:5 *"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

Acts 3:19 *"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*

Acts 8:22 *"Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.*

Acts 17:30 *"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,*

Acts 26:20 *"but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.*

John On The Platform!

Matthew 3:3 *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

Our path is straight . . . Either straight to heaven or straight to hell . . .

Joshua 24:15 *"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

John On The Catwalk!

Matthew 3:4 *And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.*

Wow! What a fashion statement! (actually this is where the reference to Elijah comes in because this is exactly how Elijah dressed and talked):

Messengers return from King Ahaziah and here's their report:

2 Kings 1:5-8 *And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, "Why have you come back?"*

So they said to him, "A man came up to meet us, and said to us, "Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebul, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " " "

Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?"

So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist."

And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."

John On His Mission!

Matthew 3:5-6 *Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.*

John was someone who had an impact. But he also had a beginning!

All of us have had a past, then we have a new beginning, in which the Holy Spirit indwells us, then we can go an impact those around us . . . Just like JOHN!

Now that we have the background, let's take a look at his beginning:

John It Is!

Luke 1:57-66 *Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.*

So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John."

But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called.

And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him.

God's blessing was abundantly upon Zacharias and Elizabeth.

- He sent them a baby boy, just as He promised, and
- They named him "John" just as God had instructed.

We must be obedient to the Word that God has given us!

Children were seen as a gift from God:

Psalms 127:3-5 *Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.*

Psalms 128:1-4 *Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you eat the labor of your hands, You shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed Who fears the LORD.*

When we consider that an average of 1.5 million babies are aborted each year in the United States alone, we can see how far we have drifted from the laws of God.

WE NEED TO REPENT!

"The greatest forces in the world are not the earthquakes and the thunderbolts . . . The greatest forces in the world are babies." Dr. E. T. Sullivan

Traditionally, a baby boy would be named after his father or someone else in the family. (ex: Frank Jr.) Therefore, Zacharias' and Elizabeth's relatives and neighbors were shocked when Elizabeth insisted on the name *John*, and even challenged it. But when Zacharias wrote "His name is John" on a tablet, and that settled it!

Immediately God opened the old priest's mouth, and what did he do? Like Mary, he sang a hymn that gives us four beautiful pictures of what the coming of Jesus Christ to earth really means.

The Doors Are Opened!

Luke 1:67-68 *Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,*

Redeemed = **λύτρωσις** *lytrōsis* = *A price has been paid for the ransom.*

This can refer to the releasing of a prisoner or the liberating of a slave. Jesus was going to do BOTH!

We were slaves to sin and prisoners under the bondage of the devil . . . AND HE SET US FREE!

Mark 10:42-45 But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. **Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

1 Timothy 2:5-6 For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

Ephesians 1:7-8 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

1 Peter 1:17-21 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; **knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.**

John 8:31-36 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.** And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘**You will be made free**’?”

Jesus answered them, “**Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**

Once again, the Jews were in bondage and enslaved and they didn’t even know it. **This is why John was sent to them so that they could prepare the way for their REDEEMER!**

The Battle Is Won!

Luke 1:69-75 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Horn = κέρας *keras* = That which protrudes from the head.

Salvation = σωτηρία *sōtēria* = To rescue, save, or deliver.

In Scripture, a horn often symbolizes power and victory:

Psalms 89:17-24 For You are the glory of their strength, And in Your favor our horn is exalted. For our shield belongs to the LORD, And our king to the Holy One of Israel. Then You spoke in a vision to Your holy one, And said: “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found My servant David; With My holy oil I have anointed him, With whom My hand shall be established; Also My arm shall strengthen him. **The enemy shall not outwit him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. I will beat down his foes before his face, And plague those who hate him. “But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted.**

The picture here is that of an army about to be taken captive, but then help arrives and the enemy is defeated.

When we combine these two pictures, we see that not only are the captives set free, but then the enemy who took them captive is defeated, thus rendering him powerless to take them captive again.

Revelation 20:10 *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

This means means total victory for the people of God!

No matter what the condition of the captives, the Redeemer brings spiritual soundness and victory. It's not up to our strength, but His! When we trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, we are delivered from Satan's power, moved into God's kingdom, redeemed, and forgiven . . . FOREVER!

Colossians 1:9-14 *For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; **that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;** strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; **giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.***

Keep in mind that the reason Jesus sets us free, not to do our own will, because that would be bondage, **but to do His will and enjoy His freedom.**

The Debt Paid!

Luke 1:76-77 *“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,*

Remission = ἄφεσις *aphesis* = Deliverance due to a complete pardon. To be set at liberty.

All of us are in debt to God because we have broken His law and failed to live up to His standards:

Luke 7:40-50 *And Jesus answered and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” So he said, “Teacher, say it.”*

“There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?”

Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.”

And He said to him, “You have rightly judged.” Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss,

but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Then He said to her, **"Your sins are forgiven."**

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, **"Who is this who even forgives sins?"**

Then He said to the woman, **"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."**

Furthermore, all of us are spiritually bankrupt, unable to pay our debt. But Jesus came and paid the debt for us:

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

The dawning of a new day (vv. 78–79).

Luke 1:78-79 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

Dayspring = ἀνατολή *anatolē* = The dawn. The sun rising from the east.

This is exactly what was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah when Jesus walked into Zebulun and Naphtali:

Matthew 4:15-16 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned."

The people were sitting in darkness and death, and distress gripped them when Jesus came; but He brought light, life, and peace. It was the dawn of a new day because of the tender mercies of God!

Zacharias had not said anything for nine months, but he certainly compensated for his silence when he sang this song of praise to God! And how joyful he was that his son was chosen by God to prepare the way for the Messiah!

What song are we singing forth . . . One of captivity or one of deliverance?!

How happy are we that we can proclaim the Good News of Jesus?!

Let's pray . . .