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## The Birth of John and the Benedictus of God - *Luke 1:57-80*

**Introduction** – This passage could be rightly titled, The Song of Zacharias. But it is truly the song of God, for the Holy Spirit gave this inspired song to Zacharias. John is coming as the great preparer, but all of this is pointing to something greater than John – and the Lord (through Luke and this song) wants us to know, to understand, and to join in the song of the *Horn of Salvation*, the *Dayspring from On High*.

**The Birth of John** (vv57-66) – The birth of John, like the announcement of his birth, is a very public event, filled with awe and celebration. Friends and neighbors see this as evidence of God’s mercy to Elizabeth and Zacharias (vv57-58). As people who live blamelessly before the Lord, they have their son circumcised on the eighth day, another day of wonder and surprise. The parents want to name the child “John.” In fact, “*his name is John*,” Zacharias writes, as though it had already been determined – and it had. At this, his tongue is loosed, the chastisement is gone, and this righteous man breaks forth in praise. The people leave in great fear, discussing among themselves with wonder – they are all “*pondering*” (v66) as Mary will later (2:19).

But the point seems to be that while this event was a “*great mercy*” to Elizabeth and Zacharias, the Lord was even more so revealing His “*tender mercies*” to all His people. The Song of Zacharias is all about this greater blessing, this glorious *benedictus* of God.

**The Benedictus** (vv67-80) – At the time of the birth of John, God sees fit to bring forth a prophecy, a song, and through Zacharias and now recorded by Luke, for all to reflect on the meaning of this event – the purpose and heart of God. Again, saturated in Old Testament imagery and promises, we learn that the songs of the OT are the songs of and about our Savior. Fulfilled in the advent of Christ, we find ourselves breaking into a new song with these old words.

**God’s Purpose in Sending the Horn of Salvation** (vv68-75) – God’s purpose in freeing us from all of our enemies and those who hate us is so that we “*might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*” This is why God *visited* and *redeemed* us. The Exodus of Moses is happening all over again, but this time it is not in shadows. This time it is for real. Why did Moses tell Pharaoh to “*Let my son go!*” “*...that he may serve me*” (Ex 4:23, also 7:16).

The “*horn of salvation*” is the instrument of deliverance; the animal’s horn is what it used to scatter its enemies, and this is what Jesus has done for His people (Psalm 18:2-3). This Horn has come “*in the house of His servant David*” (see Ezek 29:21). This had been spoken of over and over again through the prophets “*since the world began*” (see Heb 1:1-4). God had sworn by His own name that He would come, that He would deliver, and that we would be a people who would worship Him (v73, Heb 6:13-20).

**God’s Heart in Sending the Morning Star** (vv76-79) – God sent His Son that the world might serve Him, that is the first point. The second point is that He did this because He loves us, that is, because of His tender mercy (v78). John will come and prepare His way in the preaching of the gospel (*giving knowledge of salvation to His people, a salvation by the remission of their sins*). It is because of His tender mercy, His great love for us, that God sends Jesus to redeem us from our sins (Psalm 130:8).

It is not difficult to see Mal 4:2 as well – “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings...” This visit of the Morning Star gets us out of darkness and death’s shadow (v79). We are brought out of the darkness of blindness (2 Cor 4:4, 6, Eph 4:17-19), depravity (Acts 26:16-18), and despondency (Is 9:1-2, 60:1-3).

In addition, He comes to *guide our feet into the way of peace* (v79). This peace is both objective (in our reconciliation to God in Christ) as well as subjective (the quiet and comforting assurance of forgiveness and adoption – Rom 8:16).

**The Kingdom of God** – The kingdom of God grows as God puts down His enemies, first by turning His enemies into His friends, redeeming them (Rom 5:8), and delivering them from exile (Rom 6:18). Jews and Gentiles alike, in fact, the nations of the world, have been called to obey this King in His kingdom in everything (Matt 28:18-20, Phil 2:6-11). The “Horn of Salvation” has every intention of scattering all of His enemies, all of those who hate Him, and through the preaching of the gospel, to bring the glory of God to the ends of the earth. As the Morning Star rises, there is no room for darkness.

**The Tender Mercies of God** – At the same time, the coming of the Messiah is as personal as Zacharias’ experience. God’s tender mercy is upon you, beloved in Christ. His forgiveness is real, and His gospel is the smile of God reflected in the reconciled sinner’s heart, the shelter from the storm, the hiding-place in the shadow of His wings, the stream that issues from

the fountain of grace.

**Both/And, not Either/Or** - There is no dichotomy between God's dominion power and His ability to love His creatures to the utmost. There is no contradiction between a powerful, sword-wielding Savior who scatters His enemies, demanding complete loyalty to Him in everything, and a suffering Servant who dies on the cross for the sins of His own. God's kingship is expressed as service for His people. Dominion and service are not at odds in this kingdom. And that is why we pray and sing as optimistically as Zacharias, and Luke, and Paul.

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