

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 1- Luke 1:67-79

18- The Song of Zacharias- Part 2

February 15, 2009

Luke 1:67-79

Now we are going over the Song of Zacharias that Luke records for us here in these 13 verses. This song has historically been called "The Benedictus", and last time- we were going over just *why* Zacharias was rejoicing like he does here. Many would say that Zacharias was simply elated at the fact that he now had a son- because he had prayed for a son for many years and the Lord was gracious to him and now he was happy about that.

And there is no doubt that Zacharias was very thrilled over the fact that he now had the son of his prayers- but as you read these 13 verses- you hear in this Song many things that have nothing to do with simply having a son- but Zacharias was thrilled about something far more important and far more eternal than simply having a son. Zacharias was rejoicing that God's Promise to Abraham and David were being fulfilled- and as I told you last time- the fact that this is what caused this old priest to rejoice should cause us great concern because there is no doubt in my mind at all that most of us would not rejoice about the fact that God was fulfilling His Promise to Abraham and David for two reasons:

- ✓ Most of us don't even know what God promised to Abraham and David
- ✓ Most of us would rather get a new car or a raise on our jobs or a new house, and we would surely rejoice over that- but there are very few people who would rejoice over God's faithfulness to somebody who lived 600- 1000 years before we were born. That really just would not rock our world- but it should- and the fact

that we don't know and the fact that it really doesn't cause us to rejoice only shows us how far away from Scripture we have gotten.

Now please read again **Luke 1:76-79:**

76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;

77 To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

So we can see here that Zacharias was indeed rejoicing over the birth of his son- but also that through his son- and through the Messiah that was soon to come after his son- God was fulfilling his 1500 year old Promise to Abraham, and His nearly 1,000 year old Promise to King David.

And even greater than God fulfilling his Promises to both Abraham and David- God was ushering in the New Covenant that Jeremiah had prophesied about hundreds of years earlier. Please turn with me to read **Jeremiah 31:31-34:**

31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

And we need to really come to grips with why this passage is so important and how what Jeremiah says here ties with what Zacharias is rejoicing about.. And the key phrase in Zacharias' Song is found in **Luke 1:77** where the old priest says:

To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

And the key phrase in Jeremiah prophecy comes in the last part of verse 34 when the prophet says:

... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

And I think that part of us understanding the importance of these two passages lies in how successful we are in knowing the vast difference between Law and Gospel.

It has been said many times in our day that the Law of God is those harsh rules that God required under the Old Covenant while the Gospel is much easier rules based in Love. And that is simply not true.

When asked to name which of the 10 Laws was the greatest- Jesus summarize the entire essence of the Law of God into only two, as we can read in **Mark 12:29-31**:

29 Jesus answered, **“The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;**

30 **AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’**

31 **The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

So we can see here that Jesus said that the *essence* of the Law of God is Love- and the *fulfillment* of the Law of God is in loving God perfectly and loving one another the same as we love ourselves. And so all the commands and all the ordinances and all the statues that God had Moses write down in the first five Books of the Bible are simply the way in which human beings can manifest this kind of perfect love to God and to each other.

And, of course, as soon as people hear this- they say, "Oh." And they then run off and put forth human effort to try to love God and human effort to try to love one another as though any human besides Jesus has ever or will ever do this.

Now keep in mind, dear friends, Jesus didn't say, "*Try to love God and try to love each other and put forth effort to love like this, and get up early and stay up late and work real hard and I will give you credit for trying.*" No, Jesus didn't say that, did He? Jesus simply said, "Love."

Therefore, any effort which results in a lesser love for God or a lesser love for each other is nothing else but failure, and failure to love God perfectly and failure to love one another as you love yourself is nothing else but transgression, or sin.

So the Law of God is Love, and our failure to love is sin. So because we fail to love God perfectly and because we fail to love our neighbors to the very same extent that we love ourselves- we are all sinners and no amount of effort can erase that fact.

So the Law was not given to save anyone because no human being outside of Jesus has ever or will ever keep the Law perfectly in thought, word, and deed. And that makes all of us transgressors of the Law because we fail to love each and every day.

But if the Law is Love- then what is the Gospel? Is the Gospel just another set of rules that we can try to keep but fail to keep every day like we do the Law? Is that the Gospel? Is the Gospel a gentler form of the Law- sort of like – Law-lite? And if the Gospel is nothing more than another set of regulations- would we all not fail in keeping those rules too? And if we fail to keep the requirements of the Gospel- how is that Good News?

No, dear friends, while the Law is us loving God and each other- the Gospel is God loving us. And while the Law is our behavior towards God- the Gospel is God's behavior towards us. The Law is what we do for God and the Gospel is what God does for us in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Law is God's requirement for us to become righteous- the Gospel is God's Provision in Jesus Christ in imputing His spotless Righteousness to us. The Law is us working real hard so that we do not sin- but the Gospel is God forgiving us because we do sin. The Law produces damnation because nobody can measure up to its Holy and Just Standards, and the Gospel produces Salvation because Jesus alone did measure up to the holy and Just Standards of the Law.

The Law is what God expects out of us and The Gospel is what God has done for us in the Person and Finished Work of Jesus Christ.

So while it is true that we try to “do” the Law- we can never “do” the Gospel. The Law is something that Man should try to do- but the Gospel is something that people should receive and believe and trust in.

And here is the main difference between the Law of God and the Gospel of God. The prophet Jeremiah gives it to us in the last part of **Jeremiah 31:34:**

... for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

And Zacharias sings about this in **Luke 1:77**, when he says,

To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

So here Zacharias is rejoicing that God is going to bring in that New Covenant that Jeremiah prophesied about through the Messiah that his son is going to identify. And this New Covenant does not speak about more rules that we will fail to keep- but this New Covenant speaks about Mercy and Forgiveness for our sins in that we have already sinned against a Holy and Just God.

And as we talked about last time- indwelling sin is a power and a force, and a law working inside us that loves to transgress the Law of God. It entices us. It pushes us. It manipulates us. It bends us. It dominates us and controls us. And the law of sin doesn't work from the outside like other laws- no the law of sin works from the inside of us.

And we also saw last time how that there is no Promise from God and no threat from God that can overpower the law of sin. No Promise of God- however good they are- no Promise from God however often they are repeated and quoted- no Promise from God- no matter how attractive they are- no Promise from God- no matter how clearly understood- no Promise from God can ever overpower the law of sin.

And it is also true that no threat from God can overpower the law of sin at work in us either. No matter how powerful, no matter how formidable, no matter how frightening, no matter how fearful, no matter how permanent, no matter how deadly, and no matter how

eternal- no threat from God can overpower our disposition to do evil. If that were true then nobody would sin.

So, because that is true- we can take the whole Law of God, the whole Mosaic Law, the whole righteous Standard that God laid out in the Old Testament- and we can list everything there that God requires, put it in front of our face, and read it, and memorize it, and it will have absolutely no effect on us at all because nothing from the outside can overpower the force on the inside. And we went over that in great detail last week, and we studied several Old Testament passages where great Promises and great Threats were given and no matter how great the Promises, and no matter how frightening the threats- external Promises- even from God- and external threats- even from God- cannot overpower the natural bent of the fallen human heart to sin.

And the Mosaic Law just made it crystal clear that no human could do what God wanted them to do. No matter how severe the threats, or how glorious the promises, threats and promises- even from God- cannot break the power of the more compelling law of sin at work inside of us. That is the great impact that Fall had on all of mankind.

Now how all of this ties in with Zacharias here is that because this is true about the power of sin at work within us- it would *seem* that this would mean that nobody ever receive those great Promises from God- right? I mean if nobody fully obeys and everybody sins- then nobody would ever receive those Promises, and all that anybody would ever do is receive those threats- right?

But here Zacharias sings about receiving Forgiveness and Remission of sins. Yet there could never be any forgiveness under the Abrahamic or Davidic or Mosaic Covenants- only Judgment. So what Zacharias is really singing about here is not that everybody is going to suddenly start obeying- but that God is going to forgive us and send us a Savior so that we will not all be judged for our disobedience.

In other words- The Davidic Covenant gave them great Promises and the Abrahamic Covenant gave them great Promises while the Mosaic Covenant just damned them because of their inability to perfectly obey.

So if anyone was ever going to inherit what was promised to David and Abraham- then either they were going to have to perfectly obey the Mosaic Law- which nobody could do, or else two things were going to have to happen:

1. The sins, the violations, and the transgressions of the Mosaic Covenant were going to have to be forgiven.
2. They were going to have to be changed on the inside so that they possessed another force that was greater than the force of sin and which could overpower the force of sin.

So the bottom line is that since it is obvious that nobody can perfectly obey- they were looking for another Covenant that could do two things- forgive their sin- and change their heart.

And how is it going to happen? Turn with me to read **Deuteronomy 30:1-14:**

1 “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you,

2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

4 If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.

5 The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

6 “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

7 The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

8 And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

9 Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers;

10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

11 “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach.

12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’

13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’

14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

So we find the answer in **Deuteronomy 30:6** where God promises:

“Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

So no longer is God going to use Abraham or Moses or David or Prophets, but now God is going to use Himself- not to give us more Promises and more Threats but to change our hearts so that He will cause us to love Him and that love will cause us to obey.

So what God is saying here is that blessing depends on turning to the Lord with all your heart and soul and turning to the Lord with all your heart and soul depends on God giving you a new heart. So goes way beyond simple Promises and Threats- this goes into New Covenant Truth- that God Himself will circumcise your heart and cleanse your heart and forgive your sins and give you a new heart or a new nature.

Now Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Zephaniah, Zechariah, Malachi, in the New Testament certainly the apostle Paul all speak of this ultimate Salvation for the nation of Israel. Remember now, this is a national promise. The Davidic Covenant was an Israeli national promise with universal implications. The Abrahamic promise was a national promise that also had wide implications. The New Covenant is a personal promise that has national implications because salvation being personal- that someday the persons who are saved will constitute the nation Israel.

So the prophets anticipated the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Promises and the Davidic Promises and this New Covenant Promise when God would circumcise their heart. That's the New Covenant.

You see, there wouldn't be any way for anyone to keep the Law of God unless you had a different heart. There wouldn't be any way to keep the law of God and to avoid the threats and accept the blessings if there wasn't a way to overcome the power of sin, the force, the law of sin that operates inside us – and this is what Zacharias was rejoicing over- God is going to now give us that new heart. And that brings us right back to **Jeremiah 31:31-34**:

31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Now when anybody talks about the New Covenant- they always go to **Jeremiah 31** because this is its most explicit rendering. This gets us right in touch with where Zacharias was. Here, the prophet Jeremiah quotes the Lord in verse 31 and says:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,

Now look at verse 32.

Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

This New Covenant is not like the covenant I which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt- which was the Mosaic Covenant. That was made at Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb. And Jeremiah says that the New Covenant is not like that Covenant.

It's not like the Covenant that I made with Moses. It's not a Covenant of Law and Judgment- that Old Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt- the Covenant that they broke- even though I was a husband to them. Now look at verse 33:

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

I will put My Law- where? Now let's take that word "law" again. What did I tell you the word means? What does law mean? Give me a synonym to the word "law". Force...that's right. I will put My force within them. I will put My power within them. And that Power that I will Sovereignly put in them- even though they are sinful and don't deserve it- that inward Power will cause them to naturally and normally bend in My direction.

So when God says I'm going to put My law within them, He's talking about a righteous force inside the life of His people. The Apostle Peter called that Power or that Force- a New Divine Nature. Please turn to **2 Peter 1:1-4:**

**1. Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,
To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the
righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:**

**2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus
our Lord;**

**3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life
and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own
glory and excellence.**

**4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so
that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped
the corruption that is in the world by lust.**

The Apostle John called this Power or this law or this Divine Nature- the Seed of Christ- please read **1John 3:1-10**:

1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

So the prophet Jeremiah tells us that God is going to write His Law on our hearts- which both Peter and John explain in great detail.

So now what did we say that we desperately need if we're going to receive those Promises and avoid those Threats? We need to have two things...forgiveness for our violations and a new heart- so we can obey-right? Now look again at what God says at the end of **Jeremiah 31:33**:

... I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Now watch this. God says, *"I am going to Sovereignly put My law or My Force or my Power or my Nature or my Seed within them, and the result of Me doing this to unworthy sinful Man is that they will obey Me from the heart and that will make them to be My people and that will allow Me to be their God."*

"And they're not going to have to teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother throughout Israel...you won't have to go around teaching each other saying know the Lord, know the Lord." Why? "Because they are all going to know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord." And listen to this one, *"For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more."*

Isn't that what we said we needed? The only hope for Israel to receive Davidic hope, Davidic promise and Abrahamic promise is that they would have a new heart that could obey. The only hope for Israel to avoid the judgment- the just and righteous judgment for their violation for the Mosaic Covenant- the only hope is if they were forgiven.

And so whatever this New Covenant is- it needs to do two things- it needs to empower us to obedience by putting a force in us that is far greater than the force that is already there- namely sin- and it needs to be able to deal with all the violations that we have committed against the law of God already by the forgiveness of sin and that's exactly what the New Covenant does.

And this New Covenant is an unconditional, unilateral, eternal, irrevocable Sovereign Covenant from God- as are the other ones. And this is what is necessary. God promised a future to Israel in the land with blessing and prosperity and through them to bless the world. God promised a kingdom to Israel and a King, Messiah reigning in Jerusalem over Israel and over the entire earth, ruling with a rod of iron in a Kingdom that will never end.

But they can't receive any of those things because they can't ever get to the point of obedience so as to receive the blessings. And on their own- through their own power and will- this is absolutely hopeless.

Israel has a great future, beloved, a great future. There's a King coming to rule over Israel. There will be a King, Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will set up His throne in Jerusalem. He will rule over the land of Israel. And they will have peace and safety. And they will have Abrahamic prosperity and blessing, and they will possess their

land to the max, to its fullest, sweeping far into the Middle East, as we call it. And they will also be blessed by God to be a blessing to the entire world. They will all know God. They will all have new hearts, able to serve God and overpower the force of sin that is in them. They will all have their sins forgiven. That is to come.

But, folks, it hasn't come yet because Israel is still trying to avoid the Divine Threats and receive the Divine Promises by their own efforts to keep the Law, or they've given up all together and become pagan. And they are not going to receive any of this until they receive the new heart that comes only with the New Covenant. And Zacharias understands this and sees that this New Covenant is going to come through the Messiah that his son is going to point to, and that is why he is rejoicing here.

Now the prophet Ezekiel also spoke of this in **Ezekiel 36**, and I would really be remiss if I didn't point you to that passage because it's another critical passage in linking all this together. Please turn to **Ezekiel 36:22**:

22 Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, ‘It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went.

23 I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.

24 For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

29 Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.

30 I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations.

Verse 24 says the Lord is going to bring all these Jews from the nations, gather them from all the lands where they have been driven because they rebelled against God, and He will bring them into their own land- which is the fulfillment of the Davidic and the Abrahamic Promise.

And then verse 25, here's the New Covenant Salvation,

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

So God promises to do both of those two things that need to be done if anyone is going to receive the Promises. God is going to forgive all our sins and He is going to give us a new force, a new law, a new power, a new nature, and a new seed within us that will cause us to obey Him- namely the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit working with a regenerated spirit. Zacharias understands that this is finally going to happen through the Man Who is going to be identified by his son!

Now, let me close this whole discussion by having you turn to **Luke 22**. Now, when I read to you about the New Covenant in **Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 31, and Ezekiel 36**, it didn't say anything about the *means* by which the New Covenant is activated. It doesn't say anything about that- it just says there will be a New Covenant. It just says that New Covenant will involve the forgiveness of sins, remembering your sins no more, and that it will involve a new heart, a new force in you. But it doesn't say how that's going to happen.

Now we know how it's going to happen by coming to the New Testament, **Luke 22:20**. Now let me set the scene for you. It's the

Passover that night- the Last Supper. Jesus is with His disciples and He takes the cup of wine after they had eaten and He says,

This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

So what is it that produces the new heart? What is it that produces the Spirit coming to dwell on the believer? What is it that circumcises the heart? What is it that enables God to write His law on the heart? In a word, it is the New Covenant made real through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ.

Simply stated- when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Sacrifice for sin, and the only Sacrifice for sin, and the only Way of Salvation, when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as the One Who bore in His Body your sins on the Cross, when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as the One Who knew no sin but was made sin for you, when you acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Lamb, the Sacrificial Substitute provided by God Who died in your place to bear your sins, when you acknowledge Him as your Savior and your Lord- at that moment- you have met the New Covenant conditions and God, in His great Grace, will circumcise your heart, He will give you that new heart, He will write on that sinful heart His law, and He will plant His Spirit within you.

And I'll tell you something, dear friends, until Israel does that, they will not and they cannot receive the Abrahamic or Davidic blessing.

Now it's been a long time since Zacharias got excited that day- two thousand years ago. And Zacharias probably figured...well, Messiah will be here in a few months, He's just a few months behind the birth of John, probably they won't engage in ministry until they're in their late teens or early twenties they might begin their ministry. And so it's probably about 20 years from now and then all the Davidic Promises and all the Abrahamic Promises will come to pass.

But we're two thousand years from then and it still hasn't happened. And it won't happen until Israel, in the words of **Zechariah, 12:10,**

... they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

In other words, until the Jew sees Jesus as their crucified Messiah, until they see Him as the Lamb of God slain from before the foundation of the world, until they see Him as the One sacrificed forever taking away sin- the One Who by the offering of Himself perfected forever those that are sanctified- until the Jew sees Him as the spotless, unblemished Lamb Who died in their place- there will not be a new heart in the Jew, and there will not be the Spirit planted in them, and there will not be the fulfillment of all Old Testament Promises.

But in the meantime- the New Covenant Truth is applied to everyone who believes- Jew or Gentile. In fact, this is just a footnote, we'll say more about this next time- that everybody who has ever been saved has been saved by the very same substitutionary Death of Jesus Christ.

Even people way back in the patriarchal times- even Abraham was counted righteous before God because He believed God- and although he didn't know about Christ- he believed God, and even though Christ had not yet died- God forgave Abraham's sin and imputed Abraham's sins to Christ- Who would one day die for them and imputed Christ's righteousness to Abraham- even though Christ had not yet even lived that righteous life.

But there's no such thing as time in God's economy, and that's why He speaks of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. So in the Purposes of God- the Lamb was slain before anybody was ever created and the application of His death made the first time anybody believed God.

So all of us have come to the place of having a new heart and the Spirit planted in us and having the law of God written in us, all of us are able to obey the law of God, we're able to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and strength.

Now it's not perfect, obviously, because we still have our unredeemed humanness. And our new heart and the Spirit within us and the law of God which we love is still incarcerated in unredeemed humanness, and until we get out of that unredeemed humanness, entering into the Presence of the Lord forever, and receiving a glorified body in perfect new body- we'll always have the battle- but the joy of it is that we can win that battle, and we can obey the law of God, and we can therefore enjoy the Promise of blessing.

But the New Covenant had unique application to the people of Israel. Now it is true that we're all New Covenant believers. And everybody who has ever believed has been saved by the terms of the New Covenant- that is by the sacrificial Blood Atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross. And everybody who has ever been saved through all of history has been saved by the death of Jesus Christ.

But the New Covenant- as a special pledge to the people of Israel- has not been fulfilled because Israel as a nation has not believed. But they will.

God made a promise to David, didn't He? That someday he would have a Kingdom, and he will. And that is an irrevocable promise. God made a promise to Abraham that Israel would have a land and blessing, and they will. That, too, is an irrevocable promise. And God made a promise in **Deuteronomy** to the nation, and reiterated again in **Jeremiah 31** through the prophet Jeremiah, that someday, some day a fountain of blessing would be open to Israel, and some day they would be cleansed on the inside, and some day they would have a new inside, their hearts would be circumcised or on their hearts would be written the law of God, or they would receive a new heart, they would be changed on the inside, and then it wouldn't be a matter of going around telling other Jews that you know the Lord because everybody would know Him. And that, too, is an irrevocable promise.

So the Salvation of Israel and the blessing of Israel and the Kingdom of Messiah in Israel are all irrevocable Promises made by God. But in the meantime- they have spiritual implications. The earthly element of the Davidic kingdom hasn't come, but listen to this- Christ is your King and mine, isn't He? So, since that is true- we have inherited the spiritual essence of the Davidic Promise. He is your Lord and your King.

And the Abrahamic Blessing hasn't come in its earthly features, but we are literally flooded with spiritual Blessings right now. **Ephesians 1** says we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, and we don't have an earthly promised land, but we have a heavenly promised land, don't we? A city whose builder and maker is God. And Israel has not yet come to New Covenant Salvation as a nation yet- but we have entered into that and we have been given by God's Grace- a brand new heart.

So, all that old Zacharias could see was the historical fulfillment of all of this. And he thought it would come right away. He was right- it was absolutely irrevocable, and it would come- just not then because of unbelief.

And every time we have communion, every time we lift up the cup we're doing what **1Corinthians 11:25** says,

In the same way *He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*

So every time we take communion- we remember that God made a New Covenant, and God will keep that Covenant.

So there's no question about the future of Israel. The future of Israel is that every single Jew who is chosen by God for Salvation from before the foundation of the world will be saved- and they're going to receive a new heart. The Spirit is going to be planted in them and they're going to know God. And when they know God they're going to enter into the fullness of all the Promises of God made to both David and Abraham.

So the New Covenant is unconditional in the sense that it will happen. It is unilateral in the sense that it depends only on God. And, thank God, it is irrevocable in the sense that it is eternal.

You say, *“Well what about all these years of breaking the law, breaking the Mosaic Covenant, violating the Mosaic Covenant?”* That's why essential to the New Covenant, essential to planting the Spirit, and essential to getting a new heart is the matter of the forgiveness of all those sins. The New Covenant would be pointless if God couldn't forgive sin.

So, old Zacharias had it right. He knew what the New Covenant was all about. Going back to **Luke 1**, it was all about the knowledge of a Salvation that does not come through human effort but that comes by the forgiveness of sins as **Luke 1:78** says:

Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

So it's all because of God's Mercy. And so, you see, the reason I've taken so long to get through this song of praise is because all the Old

Testament Covenant threads just come and weave together here. To understand what's going on here is to understand the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, as well as the flow of all of redemptive history.

So, Lord willing, next time we're going to talk about what the **“Sunrise from on high”** means.

Let's come and pray

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.