

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** 17- The Song of Zacharias- Part 1

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Luke 1:67-79

600 years before Jesus was born, the prophet Jeremiah said this in **Jeremiah 9:23&24:**

**23 Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches;
24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.**

Do not boast in your wisdom, do not boast in your strength, do not boast in your wealth- but let him who boasts- boast in this:

That we know the one true living God, that we understand and know God, and that we understand that God exercises lovingkindness and judgment and righteousness in the earth because God delights in those things.

And so what we are trying to accomplish here in this Church by studying the Bible and by praying and by godly times of fellowship- we are seeking to know God, we are seeking to understand God, so that our boast is *not* in our human wisdom, and so that our boast is *not* in human strength or human accomplishments; so that our boast is not in financial wealth but so that we can honestly and sincerely delight ourselves in God and delight ourselves in knowing God- in all of His Characteristics- not just His Love- but also in His Judgment and His Righteousness, and the reason that we want to delight in these things and not in the other things is because God Himself delights in those

things and does not delight in the other things, and we want to please Him. So that is why we do what we do here.

Now in the last section of the first chapter of Luke we find Zacharias' Song of Salvation when he was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy.

Now let's get reacquainted with this moment. Zacharias- the old faithful priest was married to Elizabeth. The two of them had never been able to have children, but in their old age- in their sixties, seventies, or even in their eighties- God honored his prayer and allowed a miracle of conception and barren Elizabeth- in her old age- became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

Now the boy born to this barren couple in their old age was none other than John- who became known as John the Baptist- and that title means- John who baptized- not John who was a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian- but John who baptized- John the prophet who was the forerunner of the Messiah. John was the one who would announce the Messiah's arrival. And he was the one who would identify the Messiah- point to the Messiah- he was the one who would prepare the people for the Messiah's coming.

And we may tend to forget as Zacharias is singing and prophesying here all that the Lord had to do with him and through him to get Zacharias to this point of being able to sing aloud and prophesy.

For you may remember that Zacharias did not believe what the angel told him and the Lord had to chasten this old priest and strike him both deaf and dumb for nine months until John as born.

And during that time of rebuke and correction- God was good and faithful to deal with Zacharias so that this old priest would come to this point this morning of being able to truly know God and to be able to delight in what God was doing and to be able to truly praise God for doing what pleased God and not necessarily what pleased Zacharias.

We could say that God changed Zacharias, that God violated his will, that God invaded Zacharias' life- uninvited and unannounced- to do a work in Zacharias whereby this old priest could begin to delight and sing aloud in those things that please the Lord.

And really and truly, dear friends, that is what God is doing with us. By and through all of the things that God is Sovereignly bringing into our lives- both the good and the bad, both the pleasant and the unpleasant- God is good to work all things together so that you and I

can join in with Zacharias here and honestly delight ourselves in what God delights in and value those things that God values and to savor and relish and enjoy and rejoice over that which pleases God and not that which pleases Man- so that we too can sing aloud and we too can rejoice over those strange and those odd things that boasts only in God.

So when Zacharias gives this song of praise- he's holding this little baby John in his arms who is perhaps eight-days old because it was on the eighth day that they all got together for the circumcision of that child according to the Mosaic Law.

Zacharias, holding in his arms the little baby, his own son, knowing that this is the prophet of God, the first prophet in over 400 years, this is the last Old Testament prophet, the forerunner of the Messiah, this is the one who will announce the Messiah, point to the Messiah, prepare the people for the Messiah. He knows also that the Messiah is not far behind. In fact, Zacharias has already met the mother of the Messiah, the virgin Mary- the very young girl who was given a child planted in her womb by the Holy Spirit without a man- that is a virgin conception, that young Mary has just spent three months in the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. So he knows full well that she is pregnant, the Messiah is already being formed in her womb.

So now the forerunner is born and the Messiah is only a few months behind. And Zacharias also knows that it will be a few years after that for those two to develop- perhaps 20 years- and the prophet John will begin to announce the Messiah, and the Messiah will begin His great and glorious Work of Redemption.

Now we need to remember that all Israel had been waiting for the Messiah because they tied all the fulfillment of all the OT blessings to the Messiah. All the hopes of all the Promises that God made to father Abraham would be fulfilled in Messiah. All the hopes of all the Promises that God made to David would be fulfilled in Messiah. All the Promises of the New Covenant Salvation to the nation of Israel would be fulfilled in the Messiah.

And so Zacharias knew this because he knew the Old Testament. Upon the arrival of his own son miraculously conceived- Zacharias realizes that God is doing miracles. He realizes a prophet for the first time in 400 years is on the scene. He realizes that angels are active among men again for the first time in over 400 years, and he realizes that miracles are happening again after a silence of 500 years

So this is a monumental moment in the life of Zacharias and he pours out this unique hymn of praise here which pulls together the Old Testament Covenants...the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant and combines them with the Promises of the New Covenant.

Luke 1:68-71

68 “Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

71 Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

Here- Zacharias realizes that Redemption has come. Salvation has come, and that God has raised up what he calls- a “Horn of Salvation”. Now that phrase, a “Horn of Salvation”, simply means power, strength, and refers to the Messiah. So Zacharias- knowing now that with the birth of his son- John- that the Messiah is now not far behind- he begins to sing about the fact that the long awaited Messiah is coming- and when He finally comes- the Messiah will be the great Power of Salvation Who will bring Eternal Redemption. And Zacharias further identifies the Messiah in verse 69- as coming “in” or “from” the House of David and fulfilling the great Davidic Promise that Israel would be delivered from their enemies and the hand of all who hated them. That is they would have their own kingdom. They would have their own ruler- who would proceed out of the loins of David- who would reign over Israel and the whole world. So Zacharias understands the arrival of the Messiah as the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

Now Zacharias also sees the coming of Messiah as the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Luke 1:72-75

72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

Now, here in this section of his song- Zacharias refers to the Holy Covenant, the oath which God swore to Abraham that He would grant us that we might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. You see, the Abrahamic Covenant was a Covenant of blessing- a Covenant of peace and prosperity- a Covenant of righteousness- and a Covenant of reigning and ruling in the Promised Land.

God had made the Promise of a Kingdom to David, but God made this Promise of a land and an inheritance and a peace and a prosperity and a blessing to Father Abraham, and the Jews knew that it was all tied to the coming of the Messiah. And so here with the Messiah now on the horizon- Zacharias- along with all of those who looked for redemption in Israel- could finally anticipate the fulfillment of both the Davidic and Abrahamic Covenant Promises in their lifetime.

But as I've been saying to you all along- there's a *third* Covenant that Zacharias refers to here, and it begins to be identified right here in verse 76:

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.”

Here, Zacharias, holding in his arms perhaps the little child John, and he looks into his little face and says,

"You, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways."

And that's exactly what John was to do. And when the Messiah comes, what's He going to do? Well, He's going to bring the fulfillment of the New Covenant, first of all, that in verse 77 is to give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. The main

feature of the New Covenant, which is not included in either the Abrahamic or Davidic Covenants- and which is certainly not included in the Mosaic Covenant- is the forgiveness of their sins- because as **Hebrews 10:4** says:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

We have to remember that not one single sin was ever forgiven under the Old Covenant. The only thing that the collective millions of animal sacrifices actually accomplished- was to hold back God's Wrath against the sins of the people just long enough until the next animal could be killed. The forgiveness of sin will come only because of the tender Mercy of our God with which the Sunrise on high shall visit us to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death to guide our feet in the way of Peace.

The New Covenant is the Covenant that brings the forgiveness of sin to Man who desperately needs it. The New Covenant is the Covenant that brings the personal experience or personal knowledge of Salvation. The New Covenant is the Covenant that extends God's tender Mercy or Grace to us. The New Covenant brings the Sunrise that shines on our darkness and delivers us from the shadow of death and leads us in the Way of Peace. This is all New Covenant language. And so we've come, then, in our study of these three covenants to the New Covenant.

Now let me help you to understand the New Covenant. There would be a number of ways to approach it, and I've thought about it a lot for the last few weeks and I've landed on a way that I hope will be most helpful to you. Stay with the flow of this as I play the role of the theologian a little more here.

Let's start at a point we can all understand. One truth that the Bible makes abundantly clear, one truth the Bible makes unmistakably clear is that all men are sinners. Every single person who breathes air is a sinner who transgresses against a holy God every single day. Nobody stops sinning. Nobody is sinlessly perfect; nobody keeps the law of God; nobody obeys God fully. Saved or lost- all men are sinners and their sin is not just a behavioral problem. It is not just an attitudinal problem. No, sin is a deep-seated flaw in their human

nature. It's not a matter of just how they act, or how they speak- it's a matter of what they are.

And just as we have five senses physically, we have some non-physical components about us- our emotions, our thoughts, our will, and sin. It's endemic, it's systemic, it's inherent; it's in the fabric of mankind by virtue of the Fall. We are not sinners because we do bad things- no, we do bad things because we are already sinners in our nature.

In Adam who sinned, the entire human race was plunged into sin because Adam was cursed and passed on that curse to all who came from him.

So, man is sinful and it's not just a minor problem. **Jeremiah 17** says that the human heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. That tells you the *depth* of Man's wickedness. **Genesis 6:5** says that the only imagination of the human heart after the Fall is "**only evil continually**"- that is the breadth of Man's wickedness. **Romans 3:10-18** gives a very vivid analysis of the human condition when it says:

**10 as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."
13 "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
14 "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";
15 "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."
18 "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."**

I mean, that's just a very comprehensive description of the endemic, systemic sinfulness of man.

Now listen up- because this is very important- in **Romans 7**- Paul calls this presence of sin a phrase- Paul calls it- "the law of sin". He says there is a law in us called the law of sin and it's in me...he says...it's in my flesh. Now let me use that metaphor "law" to help you to explain the issue here.

Paul does use the term "law" metaphorically because it expresses something with power, something with authority, something that controls so that the law of sin, or the word "law", is used not so much as we normally might use it when we talk about a law written on a book, but more the way we talk about it when we talk about an operative principle such as the law of gravity. When we say the law of gravity, we're not talking about something that is a standard to be lived up to, we're talking about a force, and that's the way the apostle Paul uses the term "law." Sin is a force that is in us. It is a law that is in us. And I think it's important to understand that. It's an operative principle. It's not just a moral rule that's sort of out there, it's not just a moral rule that is established externally. We're not talking about that. It's not just the idea that somehow we fall short of that standard. It is that there is in us a force, there is in us a power like the law of gravity, it bends us, it draws us, it pulls us toward itself.

So in that sense- hunger is a law because it has the power to drive us and to compel us. Thirst is a law- it, too, has the power to drive us and compel us. Sexual desire is a law because it has the power to drive us and compel us. Fear is such a law. Anger is such a law. Sorrow is such a law. Because they impel us; they bring a force to bear upon us that ends in a certain kind of behavior.

Well, indwelling sin is that same kind of force. It entices us. It pushes us. It manipulates us. It bends us. It dominates us. It 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. We have a lot of laws on the outside- and they're all around us- all kinds of laws. Laws in the Bible that God has established, laws in society, standards and rules in our careers and our business and our work place and schools or wherever else we live out our daily lives, standards that we adhere to in our home, we have a lot of external demands, commands, laws, rules, standards, and so forth. We're not talking about that. We're talking about a principle that is a force that is in us. In **Romans 7** Paul says, "The law of sin is in me...it is in me...it is living in me...in other words- sin is the fabric of our humanity."

And listen to this- no Promise from God 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.

Did you get that, beloved? You need to get that- because that is very important for us to understand. The Promises of God cannot overpower the law of sin that is at work within us. But let's turn that around and look at it- it is true that no Promise of God can overpower the law of sin- but it is also true that no threat from God can overpower the law of sin 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, no matter how eternal, no threat from God can overpower our disposition to do evil. If that were true then nobody would sin, right?

So, you can take the whole Law of God, the whole Mosaic Law, the whole righteous Standard that God laid out in the Old Testament, take the book of Exodus, take the book of Deuteronomy, list everything there that God requires, put it in front of your face, read it, memorize it, and it will have no effect on you at all because it cannot from the outside overpower the force on the inside. Or take the Ten Commandments, just reduce it like Dr. Laura does on the radio and hold it up in front of society- here it is, folks, here's the ten, you may agree with them, you may think they're good, you may think they're helpful, you may really desire to keep them...forget it, you can't, because even though it is the Law of God, even though it is written by God Himself, even though it comes with Divine Authority, Divine Clarity, and Divine Precision, you cannot fully keep it.

Or maybe you'd like to just reduce it to the simplest point and that's the first and second commandment, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength...and your neighbor as yourself,"* which in effect is the fulfilling of the whole law...hang that in front of your face, memorize that, believe that and try to apply that...can't be done. *Nobody* loves God to that extent- not one single human on earth.

So when God gave the Promise to Abraham and said, *"I'm going to bless you, I'm going to give you the land, I'm going to bless you, I'm going to make you prosperous, I'm going to bless you and through you bless the whole world, I'm going to make your life rich beyond any other nation,"* when God made that Promise to Abraham- that Promise in itself had no ability to make those people obey so that they could receive that Promised Blessing.

And when God made the Promise to David and through David to the nation Israel that some time Messiah would come and He would be of the line of David, the Royal Seed, and He would take up the throne in Jerusalem, and He would establish His rule in Jerusalem, and He would bring peace to Israel, and He would destroy all their enemies, and He would rule over Israel and they would have the Kingdom- not only would they be ruled by the Messiah, but the Messiah ruling over Israel and through Israel would rule the entire world, and that His Kingdom would be everlasting- when God hung that glorious Promise out in front of them and asked them to obey- not one single human did obey, and it was impossible for them to do that no matter how wonderful that Promise was, no matter how glorious it would have been to receive all of the Promises of Davidic blessing and Abrahamic blessing. There wasn't anything in the Davidic Covenant and there wasn't anything in the Abrahamic Covenant that could overpower the force that was in them.

There was nothing that could cause them to live their lives in a way that would bring them into the place where they would be able to receive those blessings.

You say, *"But what about the Mosaic Covenant?"* No, the Mosaic Covenant was even worse because the Mosaic Covenant just heightened their sinfulness. God laid out all of the laws. The law told them to obey. The law says if you will obey I will bless you, if you don't I'll curse you. And not one human on earth did obey because they had a force within them. They had the law of sin operating within them. And all the Law did was serve to demonstrate their inability to obey and draw attention to their wickedness. All it did was show the depth and hopelessness and pervasiveness of their sinful hearts. And it showed that what they really needed was not more rules, not more duties, not more acts, not more deeds- but what they really need as sinful human beings was Mercy and Grace and Forgiveness, which, by the way, was not provided through the Mosaic Law.

So, when God made Promises to David that there would come the great King in the line of David, from David's royal line, that the great King, Messiah, would come some day and set up the glorious throne of royalty in Jerusalem, and He would set aside all the enemies of Israel, He would bring Israel freedom from all its enemies, a Kingdom like no kingdom had ever been, a Kingdom from which Messiah would rule the

entire world and He would never relinquish that rule again, He would rule for a thousand years on the earth and then establish the eternal Kingdom from which He would rule, over which He would rule forever and ever, when God promised that- the Jews were thrilled to death about that and they wanted to see that happen- they longed for that to happen.

The problem is, though, that they didn't have the ability in their own hearts to meet the conditions to bring it about. And when God promised to Abraham a great nation and a land and a people and prosperity and peace and blessing to them and through them to the world, they wanted that, too, and they longed for that, too. And they associated that with Messiah, and that's why Zacharias gets so excited here because he sees the Messiah coming and with the Messiah is going to come Davidic fulfillment and Abrahamic fulfillment. But, you see, before they could ever receive the promises made to David, or the Promises made to Abraham, they still had to deal with this one huge issue- they were on God's bad side because they kept violating the Mosaic Covenant- they kept sinning.

They couldn't keep His Law. 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 human heart to sin. And the Mosaic Law just made it clear that they couldn't 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.

So does that mean that they never receive those promises? Would they only receive those threats? Were they doomed to curses and never blessings? Is that how it was going to be? Was there any hope at all? How were they ever going to receive the Promises of God? Was there a hope that somewhere along the line two things could happen:

1. That they would be forgiven for their violations; that they would be forgiven for their inability to keep the standards of God; that they would be forgiven for breaking the law of God; that they would be forgiven for not being able to meet the conditions for Abrahamic and Davidic fulfillment? Would there ever be a time and a way to be forgiven?

2. Would there ever be a means by which they could obey? Would there ever be a means by which they would obey?

So, what they really needed was another covenant.

In other words- The Davidic Covenant gave them great Promises. The Abrahamic Covenant gave them great Promises. The Mosaic Covenant at Sinai, or Horeb, both the same place, the Mosaic Covenant just damned them.

So if they were ever going to inherit what was promised to David and Abraham, then 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 they were looking for a covenant that could do two things- forgive their sin- and change their heart. Do you see that? If you understand this, dear friends- you understand the ground work for the New Covenant.

Now go with me back to **Deuteronomy 26**. And if you think I'm going to finish this today, you're not thinking clearly. But I'm going to finish what I want to say to you today...but I'm going to leave a few verses for next time, at the end of this chapter. Seventeen messages on chapter 1 and there are twenty-four chapters in Luke. This has to change somewhere down the line.

All right, **Deuteronomy 26, 27 and 28**. But, what can I do? I mean, what can an expositor do but exposit, huh? Deuteronomy 26. Now the title **Deuteronomy** is a word really from the Greek- *deutero nomos*, *deutero* means: "second," and *nomos* means: "law." So **Deuteronomy** is the second giving of the Law of God. So what you have in the **Book of Deuteronomy** is a very, very careful summary or re-giving of God's Law, the Mosaic Law. And all through the first part of Deuteronomy- God's Law is re-laid for us.

Now look at **Deuteronomy 26:16&17**:

16 “This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

17 You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice.

Now you can go back to **Exodus 24** where they did the very same thing. In fact, they had a big slaughter- they slaughtered all kinds of animals and they said, *“God, we promise to keep Your law, we promise to keep Your law, we'll walk in Your ways and just to show you how serious we are, we've sacrificed all these animals.”*

And they collected all the blood in great big flat basins and then they decided that they would sort of act out their covenant, as was often done, as I told you before. And so they took some of the blood and they dumped it, sloshed it all over the altar- that symbolizing God's side of the covenant- and the rest was the people's side, and they took these big sort of flat pans full of blood and they sloshed the crowd with them- they just sloshed the people with blood.

And that was their affirmation of the fact that they were going to keep the Law of God. And you have the same thing here in **Deuteronomy 26**. You've said that you're going to do it. You're going to walk in His ways, you're going to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, you're going to listen to His voice. You're going to do that. Now look at **Deuteronomy 26:18&19**:

18 The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments;

19 and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.”

Now the word “avouched” (the term used in the King James Version) means “declared”- so the Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession as He promised you and you shall keep all His commandments, and He'll set you on high above all nations which He has made for praise and fame and honor.” In other words, you'll get the Davidic promise and you'll get the Abrahamic promise, all

of that is going to come to pass if you're obedient. And you said you'd be obedient.

But we have a small problem. They can't do it. They can't keep the Law of God. But now look at **Deuteronomy 27:1-6**:

1 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today.

2 So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime

3 and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

4 So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime.

5 Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron *tool* on them.

6 You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God;

7 and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God.

8 You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly."

Well, we can certainly see that they were certainly well-intentioned- can't we? Moses tells them- *"Keep all the commandments which I command you today- keep them all."* And then he says, "And when you get over there in the promised land- make sure you hang on to this Law and set up some large stones and coat them with lime and write on them all the Words of this Law. And when you cross over the river- put those stones in a permanent place so that after you enter the land which the Lord gave you and you want to remember the Law- build an altar to the Lord your God and write on the stones all the Words of this Law very distinctly."

In other words- you set the Law right there in the land when you get there and you keep that Law.

Then down in **Deuteronomy 27:9&10**- there's an interesting thing:

9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, “Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the LORD your God.

10 You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

So I think they're getting the point, don't you? I mean, he just keeps saying it over and over- obedience, obedience, obedience, obedience.

So obedience to what God has said is the real issue and has always been the real issue- hasn't it? Obedience to the Law of God is the only thing that matters. And here's the illustration. Moses charges the people down in verse 11 and says:

11 Moses also charged the people on that day, saying,

12 “When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.

13 For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14 The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

15 ‘Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets *it* up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’

16 ‘Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

17 ‘Cursed is he who moves his neighbor’s boundary mark.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

18 ‘Cursed is he who misleads a blind *person* on the road.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

19 ‘Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

20 ‘Cursed is he who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s skirt.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

21 ‘Cursed is he who lies with any animal.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

22 ‘Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

23 ‘Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

24 ‘Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

25 ‘Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

26 ‘Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

So Moses charges the people here and says, *“I want some of you to go to Mount Gerizim- six of the twelve tribes go to Mount Gerizim and six of the twelve go down to Mount Ebal.”* Now those were two mountains separated by a valley in which Shechem existed and it might have been that the priests were in the valley and the Ark of the Covenant was in the valley as well. Put six of you on one mountain, six of you on the other side. Ebal was the mountain that expressed the curses and Gerizim was the mountain that would express the blessings. And so they were to dramatize the situation.

And here were the Promises and the Threats- blessing and cursing. *“Keep My Law,”* God says, *“and I’ll bless you; I’ll bless you; and I’ll bless you.”* And the blessings were recited from Mount Gerizim. Now, none of the blessings were recorded in this chapter and some theologians surmise that the blessings are not recorded here because the people never kept them- so they weren’t recorded for that reason. We don’t exactly know for sure why none of the blessings were recorded here- but the curses are given here as they were recited from Mount Ebal.

So in a dramatic fashion- six tribes on one mountain and six tribes on another mountain with the Ark of the Covenant in the middle- representing the Presence of God. And they all start shouting blessings from one place and curses from the other. And the idea is that God is pouring out Promises on one hand and threats on the other. And as you go down through chapter 27 you see starting in verse 15- it says, cursed, cursed, cursed...all the curses if you disobey. And then beginning in Chapter 28 it begins to talk about “if you obey, if you

obey." Verse 3, "Blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed." And the rest of chapter 28 deals with blessings and cursings.

The bottom line to all of this is that if you obey- God will bless you, and if you rebel God will curse you.

So God has given the Law. And God has already laid out the Abrahamic Promise to them and the Davidic Promises will come later. But in order for them to receive the blessings that God has included in the Abrahamic Promise and in order for them to receive the blessings that God will include in the Davidic Promises- they have to be obedient.

And so God recites again and again how important it is for them to obey. And they make a very overt and public expression as a nation that they're going to obey the Law of God. God seals the importance of this by Promises to incite them to obedience and threats to warn them against disobedience, that's the scenario here.

And when that's all said and done- they still have a serious problem because no matter how hard they tried- nobody fully obeys God's Law. Nobody.

And the point that I am trying to make here is that even when there are the promises of blessings and the threat of cursings, and even when there is a huge public ceremony and a dramatized ceremony- even with all of that- none of that has the ability or the power to break the power and the force of sin that is inherent in the human being.

They still needed something else that was better than the promises and better than the threats and better than the ceremonies.

They needed another Covenant- a New Covenant that incorporated two things:

1. Forgiveness
2. A new heart

And that New Covenant would open the door to Davidic fulfillment and that would open the door to Abrahamic fulfillment. And that's where we come to the New Covenant. You understand now how it all fits together and how important it is to understand all this?

Now keep your finger in **Deuteronomy** and turn back to **Luke 1**, and notice that in **Luke 1:76**- how Zacharias shifts gears and comes out of the Abrahamic Covenant and says,

**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 that here Zacharias has now gone way beyond the Abrahamic and the Davidic and the Mosaic Covenants, and he is now talking about the New Covenant- because it is only in the New Covenant that provides the actual forgiveness or remission of sin. It's only the New Covenant that actually sheds light on darkness and liberates us from darkness and the shadow of death. It's only the New Covenant that takes us out of the way of death and takes us into the way of peace. Everything Zacharias said here pertains only to the New Covenant.

And this is why the New Testament makes such a monumental point over and over again about the fact that nobody can be saved by works. The people back in Deuteronomy proved that because even though God Almighty threatened them with those curses- they all failed to obey.

And this is why every false religious system in the world can be clearly identified as false because without exception- every single false religion and human philosophy in the world and every perversion of true Biblical Christianity all teach the very same false thing- that we can make ourselves acceptable to God by what we do- and that is just patently false.

Now please look at **Deuteronomy 30:1:**

**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,
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.**

Now Moses says here in verse 1- that "it shall be when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you and you bring them to mind while you are sitting in other countries because I drove you out."

In other words- you're not going to obey God and God is going to curse you and drive you out. That's right. So obviously they're not going to receive the Promise of the Abrahamic Covenant if they're banished because the Promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was the land. So history is going to indicate just exactly what is stated right here that they're banished and they were banished because they did not obey.

But now look at verse 2:

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,

Now I know Israel has reconstituted a nation back in 1949, and I know that the Jews have gone back to that land- and everybody gets all worked up about it- but we must understand, dear friends, that what has happened so far is not the fulfillment of this prophecy because for the most part- the Jew has not returned to the Lord their God or obeyed Him with all their heart and soul, have they?

If there's a secular state in the world- it is the nation of Israel. Purely secular- couldn't care less about God. Most of the people who run the Government of Israel are all atheists- who don't even believe that God exists.

But the time is going to come when the Lord will re-gather them and they will worship Him and the Lord says in verse 3:

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.

You see what he's saying to them? He's saying... *"Look, I've given you all this instruction, and I've threatened you if you don't obey, and I've promised you blessing if you do obey. But frankly, you're not going to be able to do it and I know that, and you're going to wind up banished and you're going to wind up scattered."*

And that is the entire history of Israel, is it not? But then God says, *"There is coming a day when I'm going to bring you back and I'm going to bring you into the land and I'm going to give you all the fulfillment of the Mosaic Promises."*

How is it going to happen? Look at verse 6:

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.

"I'm going to give you heart surgery that is going to cleanse the inside so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul in order that you may live." Now look at **Deuteronomy 30:7&8:**

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.

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 Sovereignly giving you a new heart. And that is the message of the New Covenant. And **Deuteronomy 30:6** is the key to everything:

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.

God is going to Sovereignly circumcise your heart so that you will love God and so that you will obey God. Obedience flows out of love and love flows out of a heart that has been circumcised by God.

And that is what Zacharias is prophesying here over his own son- John the Baptist. And I'm not going to be able to finish this today- but I ask you this morning- has God Sovereignly circumcised your heart? Do you obey God out of love? Are the commandments of God grievous to you or do they represent what you love? Are you trying to earn a place in Heaven by your works or are you trusting in the finished Work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Let's pray

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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.