

Luke 1:56-75 Commentary

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Luke 1:56

In Luke we find an interesting combination of the story of the birth of Jesus with the birth of John. They are interestingly interrelated starting in the beginning of the book at verse 5. As Luke said in verse 4 he was after the exact truth of what occurred. The reason the two stories overlap is that their special births also overlap. Elizabeth is first miraculously expecting and then even far more astonishing a virgin is with child. But it isn't just because they are relatives that the stories are intertwined, but that their lives are purposed and connected. Later we find that John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus. God the author of miracles interrelated their lives.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months, the last three months of Elizabeth's pregnancy and then returned home. I suppose she could hide that she was expecting at that stage but her absence from her home would later probably be used of hiding the issue of her pregnancy. We can imagine how much Mary enjoyed the time with Elizabeth as they waited for their babies to be born. I don't know how secretive these things were kept, but we are more able to assume that Elizabeth's pregnancy was well known for Zacharias tried to communicate these things to the crowd. he was mute and this might have interfered for a short time, but we can assume his story was told in written form at the first.

Application

Lord, let me see how your hand works behind the scenes. Times of common pregnancies as well as sicknesses is all used to accomplish your glorious purposes.

The times are in your hand!

Luke 1:57-67

After Mary returned, Elizabeth soon brought for the son as predicted by the angel. Verse 28 speaks of the astonishment in the way had given a child to Elizabeth in her late years. The Lord "had displayed His great mercy toward her." We should notice that this crowd acclaiming God's great work included both her neighbors and family members.

They were so glad and were "rejoicing with her." After the baby was born, as the Law required he was going to be circumcised on the eighth day. Their relatives just assumed his name would be Zacharias after his father. Zacharias was told the name should be John for some reason (see Luke 1:13). Perhaps customs just preempted any discussion of the matter.

Elizabeth evidently knew the name was to be John and tried to convince her relatives that the name would be John instead of Zacharias. But she just stood firm even when they questioned her about not having anyone in the family with that name. In doubt of the mother's word, they asked the father to write down what the name should be on some tablet. "HIS NAME IS JOHN." They were astonished that he would so strongly go against tradition. It is almost that he was rejecting the family. But once he wrote it down, his mouth was opened and he could speak again.

There seems to be some inference that maybe he didn't really want the name to be John and once he confirmed it, the Lord freed his mouth. But we could also see this as the complete fulfillment to what the angel said and as a final rebuke to his doubt, his mouth was now freed.

Whatever he began to praise God. And those around him started to fear the Lord. They knew something special was with this son. They knew God was at work. All throughout the hill-

sides of Judah, people shared this story. They were excited to see what God would be doing in their midst. God had been quiet for so long and now God began speaking. If the Lord was working so clearly in his birth, then what would God do in his life? It was the lingering question that would take years to fulfill. But in time, there would be an answer.

Application

Man plans things one way, but God does things differently. May I be open to God's plans. As Mary received God's plans without doubt, may I receive your plans and will without doubt.

Luke 1:68-75

Zacharias, once his mouth was opened, was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, 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 our days. “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:68-79, NASB).

68 The Fact of Redemption

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people” (Luke 1:68, NASB).

Zacharias begins with praise and thanksgiving. The Lord God of Israel is the greatest. He again has spoken to His people. But more than spoken, He has “accomplished redemption for His people!” This is most marvelous and amazing. Our hearts always ought to ring forth with shouts of acclamation because the Lord has saved us. He has kept us from death's grasp; He has brought us into His presence. We are to be reminded that it is the Lord Himself that is to be praised. There are many gods but He is the Lord. We are to bow before Him.

“Accomplished redemption” reminds us of the Calvinist teaching of ‘limited atonement.’ The Lord did intend to limit it not from everyone but to make it sure and real for all He had predestined. Like here the sense of redemption is clear cut. It does not depend on the man who wills, but as John 1:13 says, they become children of God by God. The redemption was to be accomplished. This argument from this verse is not conclusive; one can reason it is merely the act that is straight forward. However, when one does think through the meaning of redemption (i.e. purchase, redeem) then it only makes sense that there was a price that was paid for some certain purchase. This meaning is much more natural that the one which entertains that when He redeemed, He only made His redemption available. If He redeemed, He redeemed us.

Application

Don't be silent. The Lord's salvation is here both in my life and spreading across the globe. If there is a time to rejoice, it is now. We must shout forth our thanks for such a God that would save us from our sins. There is no other hope and no other way.

Luke 1:69 The Means of Redemption

How has the Lord accomplished this redemption for His people? Starting in verse 69, this answer is given. It is first mentioned that He raised up a horn of salvation for us. In other words, the Lord would bring a deliverer. Joshua (literally means Jesus) is an excellent model for us to frame our minds around in understanding this redeemer. Horn is associated with battle and salvation as if something great was done to save us. And there is no mistake. From the house of David, as prophesied, God would raise up this redeemer. No doubt they knew that would be the one Mary was expecting with. Her lineage was clear as well as Joseph's. David himself stood for God's unashamed warrior. He fought and fought, expanding God's kingdom.

Application

Lord I thank you for this Redeemer Jesus Christ. The purchase was clear cut. My sins were paid for by His blood. Thank you for your mercy which sent Him into the world to die for a sinner like me.

Luke 1:70-71 Anticipation of the Messiah

Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary and the whole Jewish world were anticipating the Messiah. True, some were not particularly trying to understand the Messiah in terms as the Old Testament described Him, and yet many did. We see in this prophecy a clear affirmation of the authority of the Old Testament. The holy prophets from the Old Covenant spoke of the deliverance God would bring to Israel. Among these promises were deliverance from their enemies and the hand of all "who hate us."

One would wonder if these things came true from the Messiah. We do not as of yet find this true of Israel because they rejected the Messiah. Their beloved Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. Nothing seemed more false than this promise of deliverance. But this is not where we see the true meaning of what is promised. Our true problem and their true problem was of disobedience and the consequences of that sin. Jesus the Christ came to break the power of sin. He did this without reservation. Israel no longer had to go about in their sin but chose to sin. But if they would repent, if they would humble their heart then they would find a solace. It would be at that time that they would truly be delivered from their enemies. God would bless them and draw them back as a nation.

Application

Lord, please deliver me from all my enemies. Let your righteousness be seen in the way the evil one flees my family, my neighborhood and my city. For your sake save us.

Luke 1:72-73 The Promise of Redemption

We noticed that the redemption would come from a Savior raised in the House of David, but we were reminded starting in verse 70 that these promises of salvation were very clear being recorded in the Old Testament, i.e. the Old Covenant. It is not just deliverance from the enemies that is promised but great mercy in forming and binding Himself to the Old Covenant. The point is that the Lord would remember the Covenant and would come back to it again and again. In His great mercy He revealed Himself to them long ago and promised to never leave them or forsake them. Now by looking around at the Jewish people, one would almost be convinced God had forgotten them, but He hadn't. He remembered the promises He had made, and it is most evident in that He has finally raised up the Savior.

This is the oath He swore to Abraham, the father of the Jews and Arabs:

*I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.
And I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly.
And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,
As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,
And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.
No longer shall your name be called Abram,
but your name shall be Abraham;
For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.
And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings
shall come forth from you.
And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after
you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and
to your descendants after you. (Genesis 17:2, 7).*

This is a grand oath, a mighty promise that God made to Abraham. This was God's revelation and plan which in His great mercy revealed to us. Those who are not of Jewish descendant can be part of this covenant through faith (see Romans 4). God's mercy is great to all who believe!

Application

Thank you Lord for your great mercy. For in these verses I find that you brought a people close to you, not for any good but in your purpose to be good to them. Thank you Lord for bringing me. Bring my family, my friends and the world.

Luke 1:74-75 The Deliverer

Again he returns to the deliverance theme mentioned in almost every verse. If one did not know the reason had the name Jesus, it seems fairly obvious now. His mission and name were the same: deliverance. The narrow reference is that the Jews would be delivered from their enemies and might serve God without fear. This seems a bit irregular for most people would assume they would worship God anyway, but if you think through the reasons you do not do what the Lord wants, usually one of the reasons is fear. Your fear reprisal. You fear the steps the enemies of God might take against you. You don't evangelize at work because it is not politically correct, and you might lose your job. You don't evangelize in your neighborhood because you want to be accepted.

The Lord knows deliverance means that no longer does the enemies of God have any control over our lives, whether visible through control of our food or through invisible lines of fear of what they might do. True deliverance is serving the Lord without these cautions. This is what we all can hope of. The focus is not on just Israel being freed. In fact, it seems to go far beyond that. We are talking about freedom to worship and serve not political freedom, though sometimes these are related.

Not only does He want us to worship without fear, but also with holiness and righteousness all our days. There are no exceptions. Everyday is a worship day. No day is not valuable enough to fully dedicate to our God and serve Him. Each day should be one where we live in a holy and righteous lifestyle. We are sanctified people, set apart for His holy purpose. It is very

Application

God has plans and a mission that we need to pay attention to. Don't be satisfied with your own means and purposes on earth. Unless you are free from fear, then you are not delivered. If you still live in the slavery of sin or even one sin, then you need to be delivered. Pray and see the Savior deliver you.