

# An Exegesis of Luke 1:68-75

By James A. Aderman

[Presented to the Metro-North and South Pastoral Conference, November 15, 1993]

## Introduction

A balmy spring morning in Jerusalem. A year before Messiah's birth. The time of the morning sacrifice. Worshippers fill the courtyard below the Holy Place. They had been standing, crowded row upon row, facing the Temple, their arms crossed on their chests, the way the ancient rabbis taught them, "as a servant before his master, with all reverence and fear." When the president of the priests gave the signal that the time of incensing had come, the worshippers in the inner court withdrew and fell down before the Lord, spreading their hands in silent prayer.<sup>1</sup> At that point, the chief officiating priest, alone in the Holy Place, was to lay his incense on the golden altar and clouds of odors would rise up before the Lord. Meanwhile, throughout the Temple grounds deep silence reigned.

On this day, the silence is broken by nervousness. The time of the burning of incense stretches on much longer than usual. Worshippers shift their weight nervously. Glances rise from the courtyard to the top of the Temple steps. The one who offered the incense must return to the front of the stairs and pronounce Aaron's benediction before the service can move on. They puzzle within themselves, "Where is he?"

The ministering priests standing on the stairs to the Holy Place appear uncomfortable. "What's taking so long?" their silent yet expressioned faces say to each other. "Something's wrong," their hearts tell them. "He shouldn't be in there this long." "Wouldn't it be ironic," some priests muse to themselves, "if old Zechariah<sup>2</sup> died in there? It took him this long to be chosen for this once in a lifetime task and now he might not have survived the job."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim sites the use of the "Eulogies" or the Eighteen Benedictions during the time of incensing. Prayers at this point in the morning sacrifice would have included the following requests, "True it is that thou art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers; our King and the King of our fathers; our Savior and the Savior of our fathers, our Maker and the Rock of our salvation; our Help and Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to thy name by the seashore; together did all praise and own thee as King and say, Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel.

Be graciously pleased, Jehovah our God, with thy people Israel, and with their prayer. Restore the service to the oracle of thy house; and the burnt-offerings of Israel and their prayer accept graciously and in love; and let the service of thy people Israel be ever well-pleasing unto thee.

We praise Thee, who art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of all flesh, our Creator and the Creator from the beginning. Blessing and praise be to thy great and holy name, that thou hast preserved us in life and kept us. So preserve us and keep us, and gather the scattered ones into thy holy courts, to keep thy statutes, and to do thy good pleasure, and to serve thee with our whole heart, as this day we confess unto thee. Blessed be the Lord, unto whom belongeth praise.

Appoint peace, goodness, and blessing's grace, mercy, and compassion for us, and for all Israel thy people, Bless us, O our Father, all of us as one, with the light of thy countenance. For in the light of thy countenance thou, Jehovah, our God, given us the law of life, and loving mercy, and righteousness, and blessing, and compassion, and life, and peace. And may it please thee to bless thy people Israel at all times, and at every hour with thy peace. Blessed be thou, Jehovah, who blessest thy people Israel with peace." *The Temple, It's Ministry and Services*, page 167-8.

<sup>2</sup> According to *The Dictionary of the Bible*, there are references to 29 different Zechariahs in the Bible.

<sup>3</sup> "The order of priests in the first century followed the OT order of twenty-four families (1 Chronicles 24:7-18). Even though only four of these families returned from the Exile (Ezra 2:36-39), Nehemiah implies that the twenty-four OT names and divisions were reinstated (Nehemiah 12:1-7). Hence Zechariah was of the right division (called "Abijah," Luke 1:5), which like the other divisions served the temple for one week every six months. (Jeremias estimates that there was a total of 18,000 priests and Levites in first-century Jerusalem.

Lots were cast among the priests to select who would burn the twice daily incense offering on the golden altar within the inner temple (confer Exodus 30:1-10; 37:25-29; 1 Maccabees 1:21; 4:49; Mishnah. Tamid iii 6, 9; vi.3). *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Then an old man appears at the top of the stairs. He looks flustered and confused, yet determined to complete his duties. Raising his hands to pronounce the blessing, God's people ready themselves to bask in the Lord's ancient benediction and then respond, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting." But no words come from the old man's mouth. Zechariah makes the motions but there are no sounds. He will speak no blessing, not today.<sup>4</sup>

A little more than nine months later. The same old man. Another morning worship service.<sup>5</sup> This one is far less formal than the daily Temple sacrifices. Family and friends have gathered in the old priest's home to celebrate the circumcision of his eight-day-old son.<sup>6</sup> He stands close by, silently watching the scene unfold.

A benediction by the local professional circumciser is offered as the ceremony begins. In short order the circumcision is performed and the rite ends with a prayer. "Our God, and the God of our fathers, raise up this child to his father and mother, and let his name be called in Israel...."<sup>7</sup> One imagines an uneasy silence at this point. What will the child's name be? Certainly he will be named for Zechariah; at his age he won't have another chance to name a son after himself. He could be named for Zechariah's father or grandfather—both were good, God-fearing men who served the Lord well in his Temple and in their lives. But everyone agrees that, given the circumstances, Zechariah is a better name.<sup>8</sup>

Eyes of neighbors and relatives turn to Elizabeth,<sup>9</sup> Zechariah's equally old wife. The guests in her home await the answer. The one who performed the circumcision prompts her, "Let his name be called in Israel...."

"Zechariah, of course," someone urges.

"No! He is to be called John!" is his mother's curt response.

"John? Who among your relatives is named John?" The grumbling about Elizabeth's choice ripples through the house. "At least name him after someone he can respect and be like. John? What kind of a name is that for the child of Zechariah?"

<sup>4</sup> Based on Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, pp. 133-143 and *The Temple*, pp. 156-173.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Talmud circumcisions were to take place earlier in the morning (Pesachim 4a).

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 17:12, "For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring." Leviticus 12:3, "On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised."

<sup>7</sup> The complete text of this prayer according to Edersheim is "Let his name be called in Israel ..., the son of .... Let his father rejoice in the issue of his loins, and his mother in the fruit of her womb, as it is written in Proverbs 23:25 ('May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!') and as it is said in Ezekiel 16:6 ('Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, Live!'), and again in Psalm 105:8 ('He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations') and Genesis 21:4 ('When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him')." The prayer closed with the hope that the child might grow up and successfully 'attain to the Torah, the marriage-baldachino, and good works (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

<sup>8</sup> There are at least three things that are unusual about the naming of John at his circumcision. The first is that he was named then. Best archeological evidence suggests that Israeli children were named at birth. Romans waited until the child was nine days old before naming it; Greeks waited until the seventh or tenth day. That custom, however, apparently had not seeped into Israel by this date. Some suggest that Luke was the first to report this custom's inroads into Jewish culture. An easier explanation is that sons were named at circumcision like children are named at baptism. The name was given shortly after birth, but during the rite the officiant would affirm that name by calling the child by it.

The second strange occurrence is the role the guests at the circumcision seemed to want to play in changing John's name to Zechariah. Luke doesn't explain why neighbors and relatives would presume such a right, but it was not the socially accepted norm for anyone but parents (or perhaps strong-willed grandparents) to name a newborn. Perhaps this tells us something about the meddling this family indulged in.

The third unusual happening is the family's insistence that the child be named for Zechariah. *The Interpreter's Bible* notes, "Jewish children were more frequently named after their grandfather than father."

<sup>9</sup> Lenski postulates that Elizabeth is "still unable to rise from her bed (after her delivery)." There is no textual evidence for such an assumption, although, given her advanced age, John's birth could well have physically taxed her beyond a normal pregnancy and delivery.

Even while the conversation with Elizabeth continues, several guests begin to make signs to Zechariah.<sup>10</sup> “What do you want to name your son? Elizabeth is insisting that his name is John. That can’t be your choice.”

Before they have carried on long,<sup>11</sup> Zechariah signals for a writing tablet, a board with wax poured over it. Pressing his stylus to the soft surface he does more than back up his wife. “John is his name.” It’s a settled fact. John has been this child’s name since his conception was announced to Zechariah in the Temple. There is no other choice. He will not be named for any family member because this child will not be like any family member. He is John (Jochanan), which means “God is merciful.”<sup>12</sup> The doubt that caused his silence is gone; Zechariah acts from faith.

Before his guests can grasp Zechariah’s mystifying answer, another event even more astonishing bursts upon them.<sup>13</sup> Zechariah “immediately”<sup>14</sup> begins to speak; no, not just speak, he begins to praise God. The words cascade over his tongue and pour out of his mouth like floodwater over a broken dam. “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,” he shouts, “because he has come and has redeemed his people!”<sup>15 16</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Zechariah’s sign that he would become the father of John was the loss of speech (1:20). It is strange, then, that his guests motion to him as though he is not only unable to speak but unable to hear. The Greek word *KOPHOS* is used to describe Zechariah’s ailment (1:22). It is also used to describe people who are both deaf and dumb. Either Zechariah’s sign from the Lord extended to his inability to hear or, in their eagerness to get Zechariah to respond, his guests emphasized their words with interpretive gestures.

<sup>11</sup> The imperfect tense of the verb indicates that they “began to make signs” to Zechariah, but their efforts were cut short when Zechariah wasted no time in responding.

<sup>12</sup> “In all Jewish thought and immemorial practice, the giving of a name meant much more than attaching a casual label. In a very intimate and vital way the name must be appropriate to the person. Name and facts should correspond.... Zechariah had received from the angel of his vision the new and commanding thought that his child should not be named after himself, He should be named John, and the giving of that new name was associated with a promise of the manner of man he should grow up to be and of the great new work that he should do” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*).

“We see what special value is attached by God to the names given to a person. We think, e.g., of the various names of God himself (e.g., ‘I am that I am’), which express so wonderfully his divine perfections and virtues. Abram’s name was changed by God to Abraham, Jacob’s name to Israel, and so on, because they had to have names with a meaning fitting in better with their circumstances.... Thus we have Zechariah--God remembers his covenant; Elizabeth--God is the absolutely faithful one; John--God is merciful, or the gift of mercy of God; and finally, Jesus--God saves, or the divine Savior” (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament*).

“(The child) bore an appropriate name, namely, John, which means ‘rich in grace.’ This name was given to him by the angel before his birth. He did not have to put up with a chance name as other people do, but he received a name that conferred what it signified, as all other names chosen and conferred by God do.... Thus John does not have this name because of his person; he has it because of his office and his testimony. For he was not to preach and testify of himself, of his food and raiment, but of Christ, who had now appeared, for the salvation and consolation not only of the Jews but of the entire world” (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Volume 22*, page 44).

<sup>13</sup> The effect of these occurrences is “awe,’ deep reverence; the indelible impression has been given that the Almighty God of Israel is at work in these events. They quickly relate their experiences to others and the story of John’s circumcision raced through the hill country of Judea (“the people were talking about all these things,” that is, they talked about these happenings again and again with whomever would listen).

But more than just talking about this special child, the hill-country inhabitants took the events to heart (*ETHENTO...EN TAY KARDIA AUTON*). Given such a conception, birth, and circumcision, they wondered what plans the Lord had for this child. What will he grow up to be and do?

<sup>14</sup> “‘Immediately’ (*PARACHRAYMA*)... occur(s) nineteen times in the New Testament, and seventeen of these (are) in Luke. Thirteen of the seventeen are in connection with miracles of healing, or the infliction of disease or death. (It is) used in a similar way by medical writers” (Vincent).

<sup>15</sup> “His last words had been those of unbelief, his first were those of praise; his last words had been a question of doubt, his first were a hymn of assurance” (Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).

<sup>16</sup> “Zechariah appears in the apocryphal Protoevangelium of James (chapters 23-24) in an interesting passage where he is slain in the Temple forecourt as a result of Herod’s wrath. But this story is a conflation of the Zechariah of Luke 1 with the Old Testament reference in 11:51 (‘...from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary’). (Christian tradition has sometimes identified Zechariah’s tomb in Jerusalem’s Kidron Valley, but this is a second-century BC tomb of the priestly family of Bene Hezir)” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Such is the origin of the Benedictus, Zechariah's psalm of praise on the occasion of his son's circumcision. Named for the initial word of this psalm in the Vulgate, these verses have been a favorite song of triumph for Christians.<sup>17</sup> And rightly so.

Zechariah's prophecy celebrates the fidelity of the 'Lord God of Israel,' who has not forgotten 'his people' nor 'his servant David;' he has made a 'promise' and fulfilled it, established a 'covenant' and maintained it, sworn an 'oath' and kept it. His people can rest secure in the hope that his 'tender mercy' will complete what is now begun; they shall be delivered from their enemies and be enabled to 'serve' their God 'without fear' in 'holiness' and 'righteousness.' For God is dealing not only with their enemies but with all that thwarted and corrupted his people's service to him in the past; he is dealing with their 'sins.' He brings 'salvation' and 'forgiveness;' his people shall see 'light' and life and shall worship their God in 'peace'.<sup>18</sup>

Zechariah used only two sentences when he composed his twelve-verse song. That's quite different than other Jewish poetry which tends toward short sentences. And that's what the Benedictus, is, Hebrew poetry wrapped in Greek words.<sup>19</sup> But that's to be expected from a faithful, Scripture-memorizing Levite. In fact, this psalm is largely a chain of Old Testament phrases.<sup>20</sup> Edersheim recognizes an additional source for Zechariah's psalm.

<sup>17</sup> Of historical curiosity is a paragraph under "Daily Worship in the Church" from *Luther's Works, Volume 40*, page 307. "At vespers it would be excellent to sing three evening hymns in Latin, not German, on account of the school youth, to accustom them to the Latin. Then follow the simple antiphons, hymns, and responses, and a lesson in German from Genesis, Judges, or Kings. After the lesson the Lord's Prayer should be said. Then one might sing the 'Magnificat' or 'Te Deum Laudamus' or 'Benedictus' or 'Quicumque vult salus esse' or simple preces (prayers in the form of versicles and responses) so that the youth remain close to the Scriptures. Thereupon the whole congregation may sing a German hymn and the priest conclude with a collect."

<sup>18</sup> Franzmann.

<sup>19</sup> "Like the Magnificat, the Benedictus is couched in the language of the Old Testament, the characteristic speech of the pious who were 'looking for the consolation of Israel' (2:25)" (Franzmann).

<sup>20</sup> Hendriksen offers a chart that lists the Old Testament references found in the Benedictus.

#### Zechariah's Benedictus

V. 68: "Blessed (be) the Lord, the God of Israel"

#### The Old Testament

Psalm 41:13; 72:18; 106:48 = the conclusion of the Books I, II, and IV of the Hebrew Psalter.

V.68b: "Because he has...brought about redemption for his people." Exodus 4:31; Psalm 111:9.

V.69: "And has raised up a horn," etc. Psalm 18:2; 132:17.

V.70: "As he spoke by the mouth of," etc. Ezra 1:1; Jeremiah 1:9; Zechariah 8:9.

V.71: "Salvation from our enemies," etc. Psalm 106:10.

V.72a: "To deal mercifully with our fathers" Psalm 25:6; 98:3; 136 (second part of each verse).

V.72b, 73: "And to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to Abraham," etc. Genesis 12:2; 17:7; 22:15-18; Exodus 2:24; 2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 105:6-10; Micah 7:20.

V. 74, 75: "To grant us that we...should serve him," etc. Exodus 19:6; Jeremiah 30:9, 10.

V. 76: "And you...will go before," etc. See also Luke 1:17. Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1.

V.77: "In order to impart to his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." Psalm 103:11, 12; Isaiah 1:18; 43:25; 53:5, 8, 10, 12; Jeremiah 31:34b; Micah 4:2.

V. 78, 79: "Because of the tender compassion of our God, whereby Psalm 107:10; Isaiah 9:1; 42:7; 60:1-3; Malachi 4:2.

It is remarkable—and yet almost natural that this hymn of the priest closely follows, and, if the expression be allowable, spiritualizes a great part of the most ancient Jewish prayer: the so-called Eighteen Benedictions;<sup>21</sup> rather perhaps, that it transforms the expectancy of that prayer into praise of its realization, And if we bear in mind, that a great portion of these prayers was said by the priest before the lot was cast for incensing, or by the people in the time of incensing, it almost seems as if, during the long period of his enforced solitude, the aged priest had meditated on, and learned to understand, what so often he had repeated.<sup>22</sup>

Zechariah's first sentence (verses 68-75) celebrates the impending fulfillment of the Lord's millennia-old promises to send Messiah. The second sentence describes the role John will play in Messiah's coming. The Benedictus is an effusive song of joy, but not so much a father's elation at a son's birth as a believer's delight in his God's mercy.

### Translation

Zechariah's song of praise was sung when he affirmed John's name. But before telling us what Zechariah said, Luke completes the story of John's circumcision (verses 65,66). Then he records for us what the old priest prophesied.

- 67 Καὶ Ζαχαρίας ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ ἐπροφήτευσεν λέγων,  
 68 Εὐλόγητος κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ,  
 69 καὶ ἤγειρεν κέρασ σωτηρίας ἡμῖν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ,  
 70 καθὼς ἐλάλησεν διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ' αἰῶνος προφητῶν αὐτοῦ,  
 71 σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς πάντων τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς,  
 72 ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ μνησθῆναι διαθήκης ἁγίας αὐτοῦ,  
 73 ὄρκον ὃν ὤμοσεν πρὸς Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν, τοῦ δοῦναι ἡμῖν  
 74 ἀφόβως ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ῥυσθέντας λατρεύειν αὐτῷ  
 75 ἐν ὀσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ πάσαις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν.

### Verb Study

<u>VERB</u>	<u>IDENTIFICATION</u>	<u>ROOT</u>
<b>Verse 67</b> ἐπλήσθη	3rd person singular, aorist passive	πλήθω

---

the Rising Sun will visit us...to shine on those who sit in darkness," etc.

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 1.

<sup>22</sup> *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

ἐπροφήτευσεν	3rd person singular, aorist indicative	προφητεύω
<b>Verse 68</b>		
ἐπεσκέψατο	3rd person singular, aorist indicative	ἐπισκέπτομαι
ἐποίησεν	3rd person singular, aorist active indicative	ποιέω
<b>Verse 69</b>		
ἤγειρεν	3rd person singular, aorist active indicative	ἐγείρω
<b>Verse 70</b>		
ἐλάλησεν	3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular, aorist indicative	λαλέω
<b>Verse 71</b>		
μισούντων	Genitive plural masculine, present active participle	μισέω
<b>Verse 72</b>		
ποιῆσαι	Aorist active infinitive	ποιέω
μνησθῆναι	Aorist passive infinitive	μιμνήσκω
<b>Verse 73</b>		
ᾤμοσεν	3rd person singular, aorist indicative	ᾔμνυμι
δοῦναι	Aorist infinitive	δίδωμι
ῥυσθέντας	Accusative plural masculine, aorist passive participle	ῥύομαι
<b>Verse 74</b>		
λατρεύειν	Present Infinitive	λατρεύω

We translate:

- 67** And Zechariah, his father, was filled with (the) Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,  
**68** “Blessed be (the) LORD, the God of Israel, because he came to our aid and worked redemption for his people;  
**69** He also raised a horn of salvation for us in (the) house of his servant David,  
**70** as he said through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
**71** salvation from our enemies and from (the) hand of all who hate us;  
**72** to show mercy to (to do mercy in the company of) our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,  
**73** (the) oath which he swore to Abraham, our father, to give to us  
**74** being delivered from the hand of our enemies without fear, to serve him  
**75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**Verse 67** *His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.*<sup>23</sup>

And Zechariah, his father, was filled with (the) Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying:

Luke consistently uses *PIMPLAYMI* (to be filled) to describe strong prompting by the Spirit. Gabriel predicted that John would be “filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” (1:15) and Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” when she exclaimed about Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!” (1:42). More than that, the Pentecost disciples (Acts 2:4), Peter before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8), the believers who were praying for Peter and John (Acts 4:31) and Paul (Acts 9:17, 13:9) are also described with this term.

The Spirit is described as “holy” to set him apart from any of the other spirits Luke writes about. But notice that there is no article, the Holy Spirit, The reason: *PNEUMA HAGION* is a proper name, not just a description.

*PROPHAYTEUO* can mean (1) to proclaim a divine revelation, (2) to prophetically reveal what is hidden, or (3) to foretell the future.<sup>24</sup> The type of prophecy the Spirit filled Zechariah to speak includes each of these meanings. Lenski adds: “Any man who is moved by the Spirit in the ordinary way may prophesy (1 Corinthians 14:1). But in the strict sense to prophesy is to speak as indicated, under the extraordinary influence of the Spirit who is granted for the time being as a special gift, so that what is uttered is spoken by inspiration and bears the mark of infallibility.”

**Verse 68** *Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.*

Blessed be (the) LORD, the God of Israel, because he came to our aid and worked redemption for his people;

Many of our grandparents spoke English that was heavily influenced by their German roots. Similarly, the Greek text of Zechariah’s psalm is dominated by Hebraisms. Blass/DeBrunner comment, “Frequent hearing and reading of the Old Testament in the Greek translation influenced the language of the Jews... The language of the LXX appeared to be very appropriate to a solemn and dignified style; the two hymns in Luke 1:46-55 and 68-79, both couched entirely in the style of the OT, afford the best examples of this.”<sup>25</sup>

From Zechariah’s initial words we hear strains of Hebrew psalms. “Praise” or “blessed be the Lord” is a common Old Testament way to introduce thanksgiving. It is also a quote from Psalm 41:13, 72:18, 106:48, 2 Chronicles 2:12, etc. The phrase means, “Let everyone speak well of God in the way which he deserves.” Since Zechariah is quoting the Old Testament here and throughout his psalm, we also note that Yahweh is translated with *KURIOS* (for that reason it is entirely capitalized in my rendering of this section).<sup>26</sup>

We’re given the reason for (*HOTI*) praising God in the next phrase, “He has come (aorist) and has redeemed (aorist) his people.”<sup>27</sup> *EPESKEPSATO* would allow us to translate “to go see (someone), to visit (as KJV), especially with an eye on helping one’s host” (confer James 1:28). It can also mean “to look at, to examine, to inspect.” But when used in reference to God’s visiting it includes the thought of his bringing salvation, as in Acts 15:14 (“God...showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself”), Hebrews 2:6 (“What is...the son of man that you care for him”) (compare Psalm 8:4), and Genesis 21:1 (“Lord was gracious to [KJV: visited] Sarah as he had said”).<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The New International Version is quoted in italics. My translation follows.

<sup>24</sup> Arndt/Gingrich.

<sup>25</sup> Paragraph 4.2.a.

<sup>26</sup> *KURIOS HO THEOS* also occurs in verses 16 and 32 and must be viewed as the Greek for *Yahweh Elohim*.

<sup>27</sup> Note that the verbs throughout the first sentence of the Benedictus are aorists, emphasizing the completeness of their action. His coming to our aid and his accomplishing our redemption, etc. is an accomplished fact.

<sup>28</sup> “The word here rendered visited means properly to look upon; then to look upon in order to know the state of anyone; then to visit for the purpose of aiding those who need aid, or alleviating misery.... In this (last) sense it is used here” (Barnes).

Lenski says that *EPESKEPSATO* means to “look upon...with active concern and eagerness to help.” Then he adds that when Zechariah says God has looked upon his people at this time, it “does not imply disregard and indifference during the preceding time.”

In coming to our aid, the Lord “brought about, worked, accomplished, did” redemption for his people (*EPOIAYSEN LUTROSIN*). The verb *LUTROO* would seem to have worked just as well here, but such a periphrasis (*POIEO* + a noun substituted for a simple verb of doing) is not unusual in the New Testament (1:72, Luke 18:7f, Hebrews 8:9, John 5:27, etc.) and seems to lay more emphasis on the “doing” of the action.

Our English word “redemption” doesn’t quite stretch to cover *LUTROSIS*. Barnes explains,

The literal translation of this passage is, “He hath made a ransom for his people.” A ransom was the price paid to deliver a captive taken in war. A is a prisoner taken in a war by B. B has a right to detain him as a prisoner by the laws of war, but C offers B a price if he will release A and suffer him to go at liberty. The price which he pays, and which must be satisfactory to B—that is, be a reason to B why he should release him—is called the price or the ransom....

The blood of Jesus—that is, his death in the place of sinners—constitutes such a ransom. It is in their stead. It is for them. It is equivalent to their punishment. It is not itself a punishment, for that always supposes personal crime, but it is what God is pleased to accept in the place of the eternal sufferings of the sinner.<sup>29</sup>

*EPOIAYSEN LUTROSIN*, of course, does not only include Christ’s death on the cross.

To reconcile man unto God, our High Priest had to do two things: He had to satisfy the demands of God’s holiness by His active obedience, and also the demands of God’s justice by his passive obedience.... Without a perfect fulfillment of the Law a reconciliation with God is impossible. To satisfy these demands of God’s Law, and to make good our delinquencies and shortcomings, the Son of God was made man, became our substitute, was made under the Law, that He might keep and fulfill it in our stead (Galatians 4:4,5; Matthew 5:17; 3:15).<sup>30</sup>

Some commentators interpret this “ransom” in a purely political sense. The assumption is that since the Jews commonly thought of Messiah as a political leader who, exactly like David, would provide them with an earthly kingdom, Zechariah could not have conceived of Messiah in any different terms. *The Interpreter’s Bible* maintains, “Salvation from sins is not mentioned until verse 77. The deliverance of the nation from its political enemies is all that is implied in this verse and in vs. 74.... The articulation of that hope in verses 68-75 does not betray any evidence of Christian reinterpretation.” If this is the case, Zechariah is saying much more than he realized.

However, there is every reason to believe that Zechariah was speaking of the Old Testament’s promise of a spiritual Messiah. After all, he was “filled with the Holy Spirit” when he prophesied. To that Lenski adds, “God never wrought (political) redemption, for in the year 70 the nation was wrecked. The political sense is not supported by the reference to ‘enemies’ in verse 71, for we have no reason to think of political enemies.... A mixing of the political into the spiritual is untenable.... Almost every concept presented in this psalm cries out against politics by emphasizing the spiritual. Most decisive is verse 77 where the *SOTAYRIA* which this *LUTROSIS* produces is described as occurring *EN APHESEI HAMARTION*.”

**Verse 69** *He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David....*

He also raised a horn of salvation for us in (the) house of his servant David....

<sup>29</sup> At this point Barnes offers the following illustration. “The king of the Locrians made a law that an adulterer should be punished with the loss of his eyes. His son was the first offender, and the father decreed that his son should lose one eye, and he himself one also. This was the ransom. He showed his love, his regard for the honor of the law, and the determination that the guilty should not escape. So God gave his Son a ransom to show his love, his regard to justice, and his willingness to save men; and his Son, in his death, was a ransom.”

<sup>30</sup> Koehler.



*AYGEIREN* (raised up) has the basic thought of waking or rousing sleepers. Jesus' disciples roused the Savior from sleep (*EGERO*) during a storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:25). It is also used to describe the act of helping someone get up from a sitting position (Acts 3:7), restoring someone to health (James 5:15) and resurrecting the dead (1 Corinthians 15:15f). Jesus used *EGERO* in a third sense, that is, to erect or restore buildings, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again..." John 2:19.

Throughout the Old Testament the figure of a horn depicts great strength. Psalm 18:2 links a number of pictures of power together, including that of a horn, to portray the Lord, "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (see also Psalm 89:17, 132:17<sup>31</sup>). In 1 Samuel 2:10 "horn" (*QeReN*) was translated "mighty" by Beck and "power" by RSV. For that reason Moffatt translates here, "a strong Savior," and Goodspeed, "a mighty Savior."

Barnes notes, "A horn is a symbol of strength. The figure is taken from the fact that in horned animals the strength lies in the horn.... It is possible that this whole figure ('horn of salvation') may be taken from the altar. On each of the four corners of the altar there was an eminence or small projection called a horn. To this persons might flee for safety when in danger and be safe (1 Kings 1:50; 2:28<sup>32</sup>). So the Redeemer may be called the 'horn of salvation' because those who flee to him are safe."

Lenski, however, steers us away from thinking about the security of the horns of the altar and emphasizes the offensive power of this horn. "Zechariah uses the image of the horn, the instrument of strength in many animals... and thus the symbol of power (1 Kings 22:11). When (*KERAS*) is used in the symbolic way it is always used in the singular and hence is drawn, not from two-horned beasts, but from the mythical unicorn."<sup>33</sup>

The qualitative genitive, *SOTAYRIAS*, focuses our attention on a person rather than an event or set of circumstances. This "horn of salvation" must be a person because it (he) comes out of "the house of his servant David." But we are further convinced of the horn's personhood by the New Testament's use of *SOTAYRIA*.<sup>34</sup> Arndt/Gingrich have discovered, "In our literature, this sense ('salvation') is found only in connection with Jesus Christ as Savior. This salvation makes itself known and felt in the present, but it will be completely disclosed in the future."<sup>35</sup>

*OIKOS* basically describes a house or dwelling. But it expands from there to include the people who live in it, therefore a household or family. It stretches even further to include an entire clan of people descended from a common ancestor. "House," then, becomes "descendants," and "descendants" becomes "nation."<sup>36</sup>

These words call to mind God's promise about Messiah's Davidic connection in Psalm 132:17, "Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one" (compare Psalm 89:4 and 2 Samuel 7:11f). Zechariah is obviously pointing not to his own son's lineage (the old priest was from the tribe of Levi)

<sup>31</sup> Psalm 89:17, "For you are their glory and strength, and by your favor you exalt our horn."

Psalm 132:17, "Here I will make a horn grow for David and set up a lamp for my anointed one."

<sup>32</sup> 1 Kings 1:50, "But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar."

1 Kings 2:28, "When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the Lord and took hold of the horns of the altar."

<sup>33</sup> On this point Lenski refers the reader to Psalm 92[:10], 103, and Isaiah 34:7.

<sup>34</sup> The epistles list several opposites of *SOTAYRIA*. They are *APOLEIA*, destruction (Philippians 1:28); *THANATOS*, death (2 Corinthians 7:10); and *ORGAY*, wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

<sup>35</sup> *The New Dictionary of Theology* notes, "The word-group associated with the verb 'save' has an extensive secular usage which is not sharply differentiated from its theological usage. It can be used of any kind of situation in which a person is delivered from some danger, real or potential.... The noun 'salvation' can refer positively to the resulting state of well-being and is not confined to the negative idea of escape from danger.... The word becomes a technical term in NT theology to describe God's action in rescuing people from their sins and their consequence as in bringing them into a situation where they experience his blessings. Salvation is then understood comprehensively as the sum-total of the benefits bestowed on believers by God (Luke 19:9; Romans 1:16)."

<sup>36</sup> Other occurrences of *OIKOS* used as "nation" include Matthew 10:6 and Acts 2:36.

but to the unborn Savior's connection with David's household through Mary (a line of descendants Luke documents in 3:23f).<sup>37</sup>

*PAIS* is utilized in an interesting sense in this verse. At its heart, *PAIS* refers to the relationship between one human being and another from the viewpoint of age ("child, youth"), from the viewpoint of descent ("son"), from the viewpoint of social position ("servant, slave"). For that reason it is translated "servant" here but "child" in verse 76.

**Verse 70** ... (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago)....

... as he said through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

That Messiah would be a direct descendant of David was not news. Nor was it a new teaching that Messiah would be a "horn of salvation" to "redeem his people." The prophets (plural to emphasize how they all spoke with the same voice) have been predicting this for centuries. This group of prophets did not start with Isaiah and run through Malachi. Shortly after Pentecost Peter points all the way back to Samuel as one of the Lord's spokesmen who "have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24). In fact, Peter stretches back another half millennia to Moses in verse 22. In his second epistle (2:5, as well as in Jude 4), even Noah and Enoch are listed among the prophets. Calov maintains that the prophecies about Messiah were broadcast "already through the mouth of Adam."<sup>38</sup> Consequently, *APH AIONOS* does not stretch (at least in this context) "from eternity" but "from of old" or even "since the world began."

Plainly, Zechariah believed that the Scriptures were inspired. First of all he points to the Lord as the author of the prophets'<sup>39</sup> messianic message.<sup>40 41</sup> He also calls the prophets *HAGION*, "holy." With that adjective he reminds us that these men were "set apart" for service to the Lord, but more, that these men possessed a quality that only God has, a quality that he gave them, a quality that insures that their message is equally "holy, set apart, consecrated to God" and hence, totally trustworthy and true.

**Verse 71** ... *salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us--*

... salvation from our enemies and from (the) hand of all who hate us;

Given our contemporary desire for short sentences, at about this point, Zechariah's extended statement begins to challenge our ability to see the logic of his first stanza. All of our translations break the sentence into more bite-sized pieces. That makes understanding the major thrust of the Benedictus easier, but it also blurs some of the thoughts Zechariah wove through these eight verses.

Let's reweave those thoughts. I'd suggest that this encouragement to praise God rests upon the fact that he has redeemed us (verse 68). The way he has redeemed us is by raising up a "horn of salvation" (verse 69). Our redemption (verse 68) is further defined in verse 71 as "salvation, etc.," making this verse in apposition to verse 68 and not a continuation of verse 70. Verse 71, then, is not an indirect quote of what God promised "through his holy prophets" as KJV, RSV and TEV would have it.

<sup>37</sup> Since at this point Zechariah could not have known whether Joseph would marry Mary or not, he could not be thinking of Jesus' "adopted" tie to David through his stepfather.

<sup>38</sup> Lenski.

<sup>39</sup> i.e., every one of them.

<sup>40</sup> The preposition *DIA* (with the genitive of means) portrays the way God has brought his word to earth. He has used prophets as his conduit (his medium); through them he funneled his Scripture's water of life to sin-parched souls.

<sup>41</sup> In a section on "The Relationship of the Holy Ghost to the Holy Writers," Pieper comments. "The Scriptures define the relation of the Holy Spirit to the human writers of Scripture very exactly when, for example, they say that 'the Lord' or 'the Holy Ghost' spoke 'by the Prophets,' 'by the mouth of David,' 'by the mouth of His holy Prophets' (Matthew 1:22; 2:15; Acts 1:16; 4:25; Luke 1:70), with the result that the Word spoken by them was not their word, but entirely God's Word, or the Word of the Holy Ghost, *TA LOGIA TOU THEOU*, Romans 3:2 (I, 229).

Verses 72 and 73 describe the purpose God had in mind when he redeemed his people: “to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant....” Zechariah continues by defining the terms of that covenant: “to rescue us... and to enable us to serve him...” (verses 74, 75).

“Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,” then, further defines the redemption the LORD God of Israel has worked for us (verse 68). *EXTHROS* refers to a personal enemy and is accompanied by the genitive of the person who is the object of the enmity.<sup>42</sup> *MISEO* describes extremely harsh emotions and means “to persecute with hatred, to detest, to abhor.”<sup>43</sup>

We mentioned above that some commentators view “salvation from our enemies” as evidence that John’s father, like many of his countrymen, believed Messiah would provide political salvation for Israel. But noting how Zechariah defines salvation in verse 77 as connected with “the forgiveness of sins,” the thought of deliverance from the dominance of other nations does not fit this psalm. The “enemies” referred to are greater and more fearsome than any army Rome could ever mount. They are the forces which “prevent us from keeping God’s name holy and letting his kingdom come.”<sup>44</sup> Messiah has come to save us from the Husseinic attacks of Satan, the pressure of the world’s mob-mentality, and the fifth column sabotage, not to mention subversion, of our sinful flesh.

Messiah has saved us from the clutches of each of those enemies. He has “disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Colossians 2:15). By our spiritual rebirth, he has set us free from the world. “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:4-5). Finally, he has saved us from ourselves, our sin natures. “We know that our old self was crucified with (Christ) so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (Romans 6:6). The redemption price he paid won our salvation.

**Verse 72** ... to show mercy to<sup>45</sup> our fathers and to remember his holy covenant....

... to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant....

The purpose of God’s redeeming his people (verse 68) is twofold: “to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.” *ELEOS*, mercy, is different than *XARIS*. “Grace is love toward those who do not deserve it because of their guilt; mercy is love toward those who are in misery as a result of their sin and guilt.... Mercy always presupposes grace and rests upon it.”<sup>46</sup> Vincent adds, “(*ELEOS*) emphasizes the misery with which grace deals; hence, peculiarly the sense of human wretchedness coupled with the impulse to relieve it, which issues in gracious ministry. Bengel remarks, ‘Grace takes away the fault, mercy the misery.’”

Since the coming of redemption had always been certain, Zechariah speaks of God’s mercy as already effectively dispensed (aorist). God’s desire to show mercy extends back to “our fathers.” Since God’s first promise to show mercy to the sin-distressed was given to Adam and Eve, we can include everyone who had lived up until the day Zechariah spoke these words as part of the “fathers” to whom the Lord had been merciful. However, because of the reference to God’s “holy covenant” in this verse and to Abraham in the next, it’s apparent that Zechariah undoubtedly was more sharply focused on “the fathers of the Jewish race” as he spoke these words than the fathers of the human race.

One may wonder how the *ELEOS* God exhibited to the world in Christ’s coming could do long dead “fathers” any good. In Romans 3:22-26 Paul explains,

Righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his

<sup>42</sup> Arndt/Gingrich.

<sup>43</sup> Arndt/Gingrich.

<sup>44</sup> From Luther’s definition to the Third Petition.

<sup>45</sup> Usually *POIYSAI ELEOS* is followed by *EN* or *EIS*. Here *META*, the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *EIM* (BD 206,3), follows.

<sup>46</sup> Lenski on Luke 1:50.

grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood, He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

*MNAYSTHAYNAI*<sup>47</sup> is an anthropomorphism. When God acts after what appears to human beings as a long delay, it is said that “he remembers.”

The thing that God remembered is “his holy covenant.” *DIATHAYKAYS* is fundamentally a last will and testament. It is also consistently used in the Septuagint as a translation of *BeRiTH*. In that sense *DIATHAYKAYS* loses part of its normal meaning. A will requires the death of the testator before it can be, put into effect. The word does retain another important shading, however. A testament is the declaration of one person’s will, not the result of an agreement between two or more parties (that would be a compact or contract).

This is without doubt one of the main reasons why the LXX rendered *BeRiTH* by *DIATHAYKAYS*. In the covenants of God, it was God alone who set the conditions; hence “covenant” can be used to translate *DIATHAYKAYS* only when this is kept in mind. So *DIATHAYKAYS* acquires a meaning in the LXX which cannot be paralleled with certainty in extra-biblical sources, namely ‘decree,’ ‘declaration of purpose,’ ‘set of regulations.’ etc.<sup>48</sup>

It’s because this covenant was unilateral that it’s called “his,” that is God’s covenant, rather than Abraham’s. For the same reason that God’s prophets were described as “holy” in verse 70, his covenant is also to be considered “holy.”

**Verse 73** ... *the oath he swore to our father Abraham*:...

... (the) oath which he swore to Abraham, our father....

God’s *DIATHAYKAYS* is now defined as an oath, *HORKON*. Because this phrase modifies “covenant,” one expects a genitive (*HORKOU*) rather than an accusative. Blass-DeBrunner calls this accusative a case of “inverse attraction.” They explain inverse attraction this way:

Even though the antecedent is not incorporated into the relative clause, but precedes, it is still occasionally assimilated to the case of the relative. (Then focusing on Luke 1:73. they note:) *HORKON HON OMOSEN* instead of *TOU HORKOU OU* is peculiar (here the phrase does not precede the main clause, but follows as an appositive; the whole passage is strongly colored by Hebraism. There is a strong connection of the antecedent with the relative also in Hebrew *MAKOS ASHER* and the like.<sup>49</sup>

The guarantee that God’s *DIATHAYKAYS* would be honored rests entirely on the reliability of the one instituting the covenant. “Solemn covenant pacts usually bore some special seal of assurance, and in this case, since it was a covenant of the highest importance, it bore as its seal of inviolability the strongest possible assurance, the oath of God himself.”<sup>50</sup> So the writer to the Hebrews explains, “When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself.... Because God wanted to

<sup>47</sup> Arndt/Gingrich: “To remind oneself, recall to mind,” or better here “to remember, think of, care for, be concerned about.”

<sup>48</sup> Arndt/Gingrich.

<sup>49</sup> Lenski agrees and explains, “In *HORKON* we have a case of inverse attraction, the antecedent being attracted from the genitive to the accusative relative *HON*. Thus *HORKON* is in apposition with *DIATHAYKAYS* and the attracted *HORKON* with its relative is a cognate accusative, ‘to swear an oath’ (Robertson 718, 474).”

<sup>50</sup> Lenski.

make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath” (Hebrews 6:13,17).

The oath with which God confirmed his covenant to Abraham was sworn immediately after he came within a ram’s bellow of sacrificing Isaac, “‘I swear by myself,’ declares the Lord, ‘that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed. because you have obeyed me” (Genesis 22:16-18).<sup>51</sup>

Because the ultimate God made this promise and backed it up with his own oath, Abraham’s descendants had every assurance that the LORD would keep his covenant. Consequently,

... it was because of (the Lord’s) covenant that this nation had indestructible significance.... Ordinarily a people would estimate the favor of God in immediate and material terms. If they were to believe in a divine redemption, they would want to see it evidenced in the here and now. But to Zechariah’s perception God had already visited and redeemed his people. He had done so because he had planted in their life a spiritual quality and had given to them a spiritual commission which no outward happenings could destroy.... Whatever might be the events of the moment, this nation could still have the heroic confidence of those to whom it was granted that they could serve God without fear.<sup>52</sup>

The final clause of the first part of the Benedictus has some interpretation challenges. The first is the antecedent of *TOU DOUNAI*. The article is attached to that infinitive in order to express the case of the infinitive.<sup>53</sup> Robertson believes this genitive modifies *HORKON*.<sup>54</sup> If that is the case, verses 73b-74 state the contents of God’s oath. All of our English translations (mostly because they have broken this extended Greek sentence into small English sentences) render these verses in this way. However, although one could argue that Zechariah has captured the thrust of God’s promise to Abraham (Genesis 22:16f), he obviously is not quoting the Lord’s promise.

It seems more sensible to link *TOU DOUNAI... LATREUEIN* with *DIATHAYKAYS* and view it as a purpose clause. “The infinitive with *TOU* is often equal to a purpose clause and is quite generally so regarded in this instance; the simple infinitive would have the same meaning.”<sup>55</sup> <sup>56</sup> Consequently, these verses would mean that God “show(ed) mercy... and... remember(ed) his holy covenant” for the purpose of “giv(ing) us... to serve him....”

**Verse 74** ... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear...  
...to give us to, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, without fear, to serve him....

<sup>51</sup> *The New Dictionary of Theology* when defining “covenant,” points to another promise of God as the basic covenant God made with his people, that is, Genesis 17:7, “I will establish my covenant... to be your God and the God of your descendents after you.” Zechariah’s description of the terms of God’s covenant, however, would direct us to a covenantal promise of freedom and blessing, rather than security through God’s claim of ownership.

<sup>52</sup> *The Interpreter’s Bible*.

<sup>53</sup> Blass/DeBrunner, paragraph 398, “The article with an infinitive, strictly speaking, has the same (anaphoric) significance as it has with nouns. The infinitive, however, has no case endings so that wherever it is necessary to express the case of the infinitive, especially in the genitive and dative and after prepositions, the article is used with no other significance than to make the case and substantivization clear.”

<sup>54</sup> Paragraph 1076.

<sup>55</sup> Lenski.

<sup>56</sup> Compare Blass/DeBrunner, paragraph 400, “The genitive of the articular infinitive (not dependent on a preposition) has a wide range of usage in Paul and especially in Luke. (7) *TOU* is pleonastically prefixed to any sort of infinitive after the patten of the LXX, at least by Luke.... (8) Often very little of the consecutive sense is left with *TOU* and the infinitive, and its relationship to other elements in the sentence is very loose (for example, Luke 1:73).”

*DOUNAI* is the main verb of this clause. What he gives to us is the ability “to serve him....” But Zechariah wants to make sure we understand that our service to the LORD is unhindered. For that reason, before he describes our service as “holy and righteous,” he explains that “without fear” we have been “delivered (saved, rescued<sup>57</sup>) from the hand of enemies.”<sup>58</sup>

*APHOBOS* packs the punch of several phrases. That makes it difficult to limit it as a modifier of a single word in this clause. It is best understood as a clause on par with *EK XEIROS EXTHRON RUSTHENTAS*. Because Christ’s victory over sin, death, and Satan (our enemies) was total, there is no longer any reason for the Christian to fear. God’s “perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18). Through Jesus we are now “enable(d) to serve him without fear.” There’s more. Through Jesus, because we have been “rescued from the hand of our enemies,” we can live without fear. There’s more. “The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 118:6). “Surely the LORD is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation” (Isaiah 12:2). “Do not fear,” the LORD commands, “for I am with you.... All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced” (Isaiah 41:10,11). This and more belongs with *APHOBOS*.<sup>59</sup>

The thing that God gives us is “to serve him....”<sup>60</sup> “The Greek word (*LATREUEIN*) implies religious service, a life lived as worship to God. It was for such service that God had called Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 4:23).”<sup>61</sup> It is the opposite of *DOULEUEIN*, the unpaid, required service a slave offers to his master or the service a believer owes to God as the Lord’s dearly-loved creature. Consequently, it was God’s purpose to take us from offering a slave’s service to him and putting us in the position of offering a priest’s willing, grateful service. Here is a reference to the status God has given every believer to be a minister in his kingdom.

**Verse 75** ... in holiness and righteousness before him all our days....  
...in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Now that God has shown us mercy and remembered his covenant, we are empowered to serve him, unhindered by any fear, “in holiness and righteousness.” *HOSIOTAYS* describes devoutness, piety, and holiness.<sup>62</sup> It is that quality that comes with being set apart from sin and dedicated to God. *DIKAIOSUNAY* is righteousness and uprightness.<sup>63</sup> It is the characteristic required of men by God “as the compelling motive for the conduct of one’s whole life.”<sup>64</sup> It is a spiritual quality for which God’s people “hunger and thirst” (Matthew 5:6).<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The New Testament links *RUSTHENTAS* with a variety of forces from which Christ has rescued us. Among them are death (2 Corinthians 1:10a), the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13), the wrath to come (1 Thessalonians 1:10), blood-guiltiness (Psalm 51:14), all afflictions (Psalm 34:17), temptation (2 Peter 2:9), and “this body of death” (Romans 7:24).

<sup>58</sup> For the meaning of this word see the discussion under verse 71.

<sup>59</sup> Examples of this kind of “fearlessness” would include Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13) and the Christians in Rome during Paul’s imprisonment who were “encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly” (Philippians 1:14).

<sup>60</sup> Blass/DeBrunner comments on *LATREUO*, “In our literature only of the carrying out of religious duties, especially of a cultic nature, by human beings.” This same word is used in Matthew 4:10, “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.” Vincent adds, “Originally to serve for hire, from *LATRON*, hire. Plato uses it of the service of God.”

<sup>61</sup> Franzmann.

<sup>62</sup> Blass/DeBrunner.

<sup>63</sup> *DIKAIOSUNAY* is the word used in the LXX to translate *SEDEQ*.

<sup>64</sup> Blass/DeBrunner.

<sup>65</sup> Vincent comments, “The adjective *HOSIOS*, holy, is properly what is confirmed by ancient sanction and precept. *HOSIA* is used in classical Greek to denote the everlasting principles of right, not constituted by the laws or customs of men, but antedating them. Hence *HOSIOTAYS* is concerned primarily with the eternal laws of God. It is the divine consecration and inner truth of righteousness

*The New Dictionary of Theology* sees in the Scriptures' use of "righteousness" a lawcourt and a covenantal setting.

The lawcourt setting gives 'righteousness' the idea of the standing of a person in relation to the court's decision.... The covenantal setting merges with that of the lawcourt.... God is seen as Israel's adversary at law.... God's righteousness is then invoked as the reason why he can be expected to deliver his people: he is committed by covenant to do so.... According to the New Testament, the people of God do indeed have 'righteousness'... that which is proper to the person in whose favor the court has found; within the covenant context, it is the right standing of a member of the people of God. 'Righteousness' thus comes to mean, more or less, 'covenant membership,' with all the overtones of appropriate behavior (e.g., Philippians 1:11).<sup>66</sup>

Holiness and righteousness share a "velcro" relationship; where one leads, the other follows. "Whatever is holy is also righteous, and vice versa; and for this reason the terms are joined in one phrase with *EV*, which denotes sphere: our entire service to God is confined to this sphere which is filled with holiness and righteousness."<sup>67</sup> They are used in conjunction to describe our new man who is "created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians 4:24).

In this state of God-given "holiness and righteousness" the believer is able to serve *ENOPION AUTOU*. *ENOPION* may be translated "before" in the sense of place ("He stood before, in front of, the house"). It may also refer to standing in the sight of someone ("The child misbehaved before his parents.") In this case, it carries the additional idea of "in the opinion or judgment of" a person. Romans 3:20 uses *ENOPION* in this way, "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight (before him) by observing the law."<sup>68</sup> Such a sense fits with *LATREUEIN*; the ministry priests offered the Lord in the Temple was not only in front of him or in his presence, but, through faith, deemed appropriate service by him,

The length of our fear-free, holy and righteous service to our Redeemer is *PASAIS TAIS HAYMERAIS HAYMON*, that is, as long as we live on earth.<sup>69</sup> Arndt/Gingrich call this a "temporal dative in answer to the question 'how long?' (It) is used instead of the accusative, contrary to classical usage.... The rationale for the dative seems to be that the accusative case was felt to be primarily the object, and hence there was some reluctance to put a second accusative alongside the direct object."<sup>70</sup>

What a lofty state we enjoy in Christ! "In view of God's mercy, (we strive) to offer (our) bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1). In view of the redemption price Messiah has paid and the salvation he has won, our king considers that service to be "holy and righteous." Gone are the fear, the worry, the guilt, and the shame that we haven't provided sufficient sacrifice to please him. In their place is the assurance that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1), that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21), and, consequently, that "(we) are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19-20).

C.F.W. Walther in *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* emphasizes repeatedly the importance of understanding that we Christians are constantly viewed by God as "holy and righteous." His eighteenth thesis states, "The Word of God is not rightly divided when the universal corruption of mankind is

---

(Meyer). Throughout the New Testament its look is godward. In no case is it used of moral excellence as related to men, though it is to be carefully noted that *DIKAIOSUNAY*, righteousness, is not restricted to rightness toward men."

<sup>66</sup> Pages 590-592.

<sup>67</sup> Lenski.

<sup>68</sup> Barnes adds that *ENOPION* conveys the sense that the believer's service is "performed as in his presence, and with the full consciousness that he sees the heart."

<sup>69</sup> Confer the Hebrew equivalent of this term in Genesis 3:14, 17; Deuteronomy 16:3; Psalm 23:6; 90:9; 90:14; Isaiah 38:20, etc.

<sup>70</sup> Arndt/Gingrich, paragraph 201. Interestingly, Lenski calls this an accusative of extent of time.

described in such a manner as to create the impression that even true believers are still under the spell of ruling sins and are sinning purposely.”<sup>71</sup> He then explains,

When addressing a Christian congregation, you will have to be very careful not to speak as if also all Christians were living in shame and vice.... There are only two classes of men in the present life; those of the one class are headed directly for hell, those of the other, straight for heaven. To confound the two classes of men that are concerned in these two ways is an abominable mingling of Law and Gospel. The Law produces reprobate sinners, the Gospel free and blessed men.... When you speak of ‘abominable’ sinners, you must not refer to Christians, in whom we find, on the one hand, weaknesses, which are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and, on the other hand, good deeds, which God does through them and which are pleasing to him.<sup>72</sup>

### Verses 76-79

The second sentence of Zechariah’s psalm “passes from praise to prediction.”<sup>73</sup> John is mentioned for the first time. But even here, it’s striking that this old priest, a man who waited (and prayed) decades for a child, should sing a hymn that has so little to do with his newborn son.<sup>74</sup> Zechariah’s hymn continues to focus on the God who “has come and has redeemed his people.”

*And you, my child, will be called<sup>75</sup> a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come<sup>76</sup> to us from heaven.*

These verses go beyond the exegetical scope of this paper; nonetheless we feel obliged to see this psalm through at least isagogically. Luke had earlier noted that the family and friends who witnessed Zechariah’s remarkable recovery from *KOPHOS*, were struck with awe of God not just because of his miraculous healing but because of his miraculous message. Since there had not been a prophet among God’s people for centuries,<sup>77</sup> the old man’s prediction that his son would be “called a prophet of the Most High”<sup>78</sup> could not have been received with unruffled tranquility. The stir his words caused would have been heightened by the prediction that John was not only to be a prophet, but was to prepare the way for the long-promised Messiah.

<sup>71</sup> Page 318.

<sup>72</sup> Pages 319-320.

<sup>73</sup> *The Interpreter’s Bible*.

<sup>74</sup> Note that, in spite of the NIV translation, Zechariah does not address his son as “my son,” rather, merely as “child.” Though overjoyed at God’s extraordinary gift to him, not even his fatherly jubilation can supplant to his religious elation. Most important is not that he now has a son who is the Lord’s prophet, but that, after centuries of waiting, Messiah will soon appear.

<sup>75</sup> Very often the emphasis (when *KALEO* is used) is to be placed less on the fact that the name is such and such, than on the fact that the bearer of the name actually is what the name says about him. The passive ‘be named’ thus approaches closely the meaning ‘to be,’ and it must be left to the feeling of the interpreter whether this translation is to be attempted in any individual case (cf. Matthew 2:23, ‘He will be called a Nazarene’ or ‘He will be a Nazarene.’ Luke 1:32 ‘He will be called the Son of the Most High’). Arndt/Gingrich.

<sup>76</sup> There is some textual discrepancy regarding *EPISKEPSETAI*, an aorist, and *EPISKEPTOMAI*, a future tense. Textual evidence in support of one or the other is divided, as is the context. Beginning in verse 76, Zechariah has consistently used the future tense; but in the rest of the song the verbs are aorists. Either tense fits the sense. Notice that the verb also appears in verse 68.

<sup>77</sup> The last prophet we know about was Malachi at about 400 BC.

<sup>78</sup> *HUPSISTOU* is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *ELYON* (Psalm 50:14, 91:1,9, etc.), Note how Jesus is referred to in Luke as the “son of the Most High” (1:32, 8:28). Zechariah’s psalm introduces us to the Most High God and his Son. It’s fitting that we should also meet the Most High’s prophet,



Zechariah describes John's role as "go(ing) on before the LORD."<sup>79</sup> Don't miss the picture of a herald for an Oriental king who is touring his kingdom. The herald's task is to alert the towns of the ruler's impending arrival so everything is put in order and his passage is unimpeded. Jesus testifies John accomplished this mission.

"This is the one about whom it is written, 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you'" (Matthew 11:10).

But more than preparing the way for the approaching king of kings, John will also "give<sup>80</sup> his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." Note that John's audience is the Lord's "people," the same group "he... has redeemed" (verse 68). The knowledge of salvation John gives comes only in one way, that is "in connection with" (*EN*) the forgiveness of our sins, Without the full pardon, the complete cancellation of our obligation (*APHESIS*<sup>81</sup>) that Jesus has won for the world, there can be no salvation. So the "knowledge of salvation" John is to share is much more than filling the minds of God's people with religious philosophy. It is sharing the Spirit-empowered gospel which change hearts, resurrects dead souls, and transforms shattered lives.<sup>82</sup>

The reason or grounds for such forgiveness (*DIA*) is "the tender mercy<sup>83</sup> of our God." "According to Scripture, the incarnation of the Son of God was not a natural development, not the result of a necessary evolution of the divine or the human essence, but it was due to the free compassion of God upon fallen and condemned mankind. The Dayspring from on High has visited us 'through the tender mercy of our God,' to save 'them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.'"<sup>84</sup> Luther comments: "This merciful forgiveness did not take place without having been merited; a Mediator appeared who earned it for us and in our stead. He is Christ, our Lord. For all his mercy (*gleichwohl*), God wanted to have satisfaction made for sin and to have his honor and justice satisfied. This we were unable to do. But Christ did it. Because of the unfathomable mercy of the Father he was sent and came to us in order to carry out this work."<sup>85</sup>

Out of "the tender mercy of God" which has granted us forgiveness comes the means for producing that forgiveness: "the rising sun<sup>86</sup> will shine..." (verses 78b-79). The reference, of course, is to the pre-born Jesus

<sup>79</sup> Based on an equivalent passage in Isaiah 40:3, we are not wrong to translate *KURIOS* as *YAHWEH*. "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD....'" Consequently, this is also a passage which describes Jesus not only as divine, but as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

<sup>80</sup> On *TOU DOUNAI*, Blass/DeBrunner say, "The genitive of the articular infinitive (6) The simple infinitive itself has the same final meaning. There is a tendency to prefix the *TOU* to the second of the two infinitives for the sake of clarity" (paragraph 400). This makes *TOU DOUNAI* appositional to the final *HETOIMASAI*.

<sup>81</sup> *APHIAYMI* means the sending away of our sins—as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), into the depth of the sea (Micah 7:19), blotting them out and never remembering them (Isaiah 43:25). The forgiveness that John is to proclaim is complete. Speaking about this "forgiveness," the *Concordia Triglotta* (919:9) says, "Poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned for us righteousness."

<sup>82</sup> Pieper refers to this verse as an example of "knowledge" (*notitia*) "not merely in the sense of *notitia historica*, but (as an example that) describes the knowledge of Christ which is worked by the Holy Ghost.... 'Knowledge' means the entire saving faith in passages like John 17:3: 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' The 'knowledge' of Philippians 3:8 means, according to verse 9, Paul's entire justifying faith (cp. also Galatians 4:9, Luke 1:77, where 'knowledge' is used in a similar way).

At that point, Pieper also quotes Quenstedt (II, p. 1356) on John 17:3. "A knowledge is meant that is not merely theoretical, but practical and living, an efficacious and live cognition, inasmuch as it includes the true trust (*fiduciam*) of the heart, or trusting apprehension and reception" (Pieper II, 429,430).

<sup>83</sup> *SPLAGXNA ELEOS* literally means, "bowels of mercy." In the Greek mind, the emotion of mercy flowed from the "inward parts." We relate the seat of emotions and the source of love to the heart.

<sup>84</sup> Pieper, II, 98, 99.

<sup>85</sup> *What Luther Says*, 1551, 4585 as quoted from the St. Louis edition of *Luther's Works*, 11, 295.

<sup>86</sup> There is some debate regarding the meaning of *ANATOLAY*. Literally it means "the rising" (often of the sun or stars). But the word also refers to "east" or "the Orient" as in Revelation 7:2, "I saw another angel coming up from the east...." Barnes writes, "The word

who is about to burst into the course of history.<sup>87</sup> Along with the coming of the one who is the light of the world will be the shattering of sin's darkness<sup>88</sup> and its power eternally to imprison souls (Isaiah 9:2). In addition, this Light will dawn on us hopelessly lost travelers, who are unable to find our way<sup>89</sup> through sin's night, and will "guide our feet into the path of peace (Hebrew, *SHALOM*)."<sup>90</sup>

The Benedictus is a messianic psalm that transitions between the old and new covenants. The Old Testament's psalms only provided tantalizing glimpsing of the promised Savior, usually sandwiching allusions to the Messiah between references to more immediate happenings. This psalm has no other focus than the Savior who is about to dawn.

The Benedictus paints a vivid and powerful picture of the awesome character of Messiah. He is identified as the LORD. He is the redemption price which rescues us from our most fearsome enemies. He is the powerful "horn of salvation"—and, subsequently, the guarantee of our protection, our hope, and eternity. He is the fulfillment of God's "house-building" promise to David and God's promise of blessing to Abraham—and, therefore, the affirmation that every other promise about him will also be honored. He is our salvation because he forgave our sins. He is our rescuer from the jaws of defeat. He is our enabler so we are now empowered to live God's way in God's world. He is the Most High; there is no one greater than he. He is the Light of the world, whose loving presence dispels sin's darkness and beacons the way to life with God. He is worthy of our praise!

How appropriate for us who know Jesus as this awesome Messiah to celebrate his greatness and extol him for his grace through a life patterned after John's:

- To speak the words God has given us in his Scriptures, to speak them courageously and clearly.
- To "go on before the Lord," heralding his gracious presence in our world and, by the Spirit, calling people to "prepare the way for him" to enter their hearts.

dayspring means the morning light, the aurora, the rising of the sun. It is called the dayspring from on high because the light of the gospel shines forth from heaven, God is its author, and through his mercy it shines on men (Isaiah 40:1,2, Revelation 22:16)." Tyndale's opinion is, "It is possible to understand the Greek as the 'dayspring' and see an unusual name for the Messiah.... But it seems more natural to take it as 'day', or better 'sun' (Isaiah 9:1-7; Matthew 4:12-22)." Vincent notes, "The word appears in the Septuagint as a rendering of branch, as something rising or springing up, by which the Messiah is denoted (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 6:12). Also of the rising of a heavenly body (Isaiah 40:19). Compare the kindred verb arise (*ANATELLO*) in Isaiah 40:1; Malachi 4:2. This latter is the sense here. (Matthew 2:2, 'We saw his star in the east [literally, when it rose] and have come to worship him.')

<sup>87</sup> Luther in a sermon on John 1:5 speaks on the implications of the expression "Christ is the Light of the world. These words deal blows that are really crushing to the light of reason, freewill, human powers, etc. He says in effect: All people who are without Christ lack life before God, are dead, and doomed. How in deed can they be expected to have life when they not only walk in darkness but are darkness itself? Therefore (the apostle) John excludes and dismisses all other creatures, speaks only of human beings, all of whom are in darkness, and says that the light came to men in order to illuminate them. Therefore Isaiah calls Christ a Light of the Gentiles (chapters 42, 49, 60); and Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, joyfully sings in his cantico (the Benedictus): he appeared 'to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death' (Luke 1:79); and Christ calls himself 'the Light of the world,' (John 8:12 and 12:35)." *What Luther Says*, 542 as quoted from the St. Louis edition of *Luther's Works*, 7,1569.

<sup>88</sup> *SKOTEI* is "darkness" or "gloom." Of its use here Arndt/Gingrich say it describes "religious and moral darkness, of darkening by sin, of the state of unbelievers and the godless. (It is) the opposite of *PHOS*."

<sup>89</sup> According to Arndt/Gingrich, *HODOS* is "often used in an ethical sense with reference to principles and conduct; (it is) equivalent to Hebrew *DeReK*."

<sup>90</sup> Lenski points out that "'peace' is far more than the feeling of calmness, security, and rest, which as such would be deceptive; it is the condition of real harmony and friendship between God and us, which was established by Christ and made ours through him." Tyndale defines "peace" in this way: "The concluding note is that of 'peace,' that peace of God that calms men's hearts and makes them strong to live for God. It 'does not mean merely freedom from trouble; it means all that makes for a man's highest good' (Barclay)." Franzmann believes, "'Peace' has a more comprehensive meaning in Biblical speech than in ordinary English usage, denoting total soundness, health, wholeness (cf. 2:14), The coming of the Messiah will create a world in which all is as God wills it, divinely normal."

- To “give his people the knowledge of salvation” as we dispense the good news of “the forgiveness of their sins” through Jesus.
- To mirror the brilliant radiance of his glory for souls groping in the shadow of eternal death’s lightless gloom.

Yes, “praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people!”

## Advent Sermons Suggestions

The Benedictus offers a wealth of Advent thoughts and will prove a rich treasury for midweek sermon texts. One approach to dividing those thoughts follows. Please note that the parts for each theme are intended to guide a preacher in developing the focus for the sermon and are not intended as the sermon parts the preacher will announce to his congregation.

### Praise The Lord Who Has Come!

**Week One:** He has redeemed his people. (verses 68, 71)

1. A study of *EPOIAYSEN LUTROSIN*.
2. A study of *SOTAYRIAN* (as another picture of “redemption”).

#### FOCUS:

The reason for Messiah’s coming to earth was to forgive us. Only he could pay the ransom that would purchase our release; only he could save us from our enemies. Now that he has come, our redemption has been secured. We can live in confident and joyous freedom.

**Week Two:** He has kept his promises, promises... (verses 72, 73, 70, 69)

1. Based on a “holy covenant” “of long ago.”
2. Based on a commitment that the Savior would be
  - a. a “horn of salvation”
  - b. “of this servant David.”

#### FOCUS:

The promise of a Savior stretches back to our first parents and extends through Abraham and his descendants, down through David, and beyond through the prophets. More than a promise, God actually initiated a covenant with his people to provide an all-powerful Savior who would give us salvation. Those promises were fulfilled in Jesus. Since God has lived up to his ancient covenant in Jesus, there can be no other promises he has made which he won’t also honor.

**Week Three:** He has rescued and enabled us (verses 72, 74, 75)

1. The purpose of his coming
  - a. “to show mercy”
  - b. ‘to remember his covenant”
2. The result of his coming
  - a. “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies”
  - b. “to enable us to serve him”

#### FOCUS:

When Jesus came to be our Redeemer and Savior, he clearly exhibited the extent of his mercy to those who lived prior to his coming. But that same mercy belongs to us who have lived since. The gracious result is that, in Jesus, we are safe from every enemy. But more than secure, we are also empowered to live for God in a way that praises and honors him for his mercy.

## Luke 1:68-79: A Comparison of Translations

### The Everyday Bible

68 Let us thank the Lord, the God of Israel. God has come to help his people and has given them freedom.

69 God has given us a powerful Savior from the family of God's servant David.

70 God said that he would do this. He said it through his holy prophets who lived long ago.

71 God will save us from our enemies and from the power of all those who hate us.

72 God said he would give mercy to our fathers. And he remembered his holy promise.

73 God promised Abraham, our father,

74 that he would free us from the power of our enemies, so that we could serve him without fear.

75 We will be righteous and holy before God as long as we live.

76 "Now you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go first before the Lord to prepare the people for his coming.

77 You will make his people know that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven.

78 With the loving mercy of our God, a new day from heaven will shine upon us.

79 God will help those who live in darkness, in the fear of death. He will guide us in the path that goes toward peace."

68 Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited His people, and has prepared a ransom for them.

69 He has raised up a Horn of salvation for us in the family of His servant David,

70 as He said long ago through His holy prophets

71 that He would save us from our enemies and from the power of all who hate us.

72 He wanted to be merciful to our fathers and remember His holy covenant

73 the oath He swore to our father Abraham--

74 to rescue us from our enemies and to let us serve Him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before Him all our life.

76 "And you, child will be called a prophet of the Most High. For you will go ahead of the Lord to prepare His ways---

77 to make known to His people that they can be saved by the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because our God is merciful and will let a heavenly Sun rise upon us

79 to shine on those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

turned his face toward his people and has set them free!

And he has raised up for us a standard of salvation in his servant David's house!

Long, long ago, through the words of his holy prophets,

he promised to do this for us, so that we should be safe from our enemies and secure from all who hate us.

So does he continue the mercy he showed to our forefathers.

So does he remember the holy agreement he made with them and the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, to make us this gift:

that we should be saved from the hands of our enemies, and in his presence should serve him unafraid in holiness and righteousness all our lives.

"And you, little child, will be called the prophet of the most high, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for his coming.

It will be for you to give his people knowledge of their salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.

Because the heart of our God is full of mercy toward us,

the first light of Heaven shall come to visit us—to shine on those who lie in darkness and under the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the path of peace."

69 He has provided for us a mighty Savior, a descendant of his servant David.

70 He promised through his holy prophets long ago

71 that he would save us from our enemies, from the power of all those who hate us.

72 He said he would show mercy to our ancestors and remember his sacred covenant.

73-74 With a solemn oath to our ancestor Abraham he promised to rescue us from our enemies and allow us to serve him without fear,

75 so that we might be holy and righteous before him all the days of our life.

76 "You, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High God. You will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his road for him.

77 to tell his people that they will be saved by having their sins forgiven.

78 Our God is merciful and tender. He will cause the bright dawn of salvation to rise on us

79 and to shine from heaven on all those who live in the dark shadow of death, to guide our steps into the path of peace."

### Today's English Version

68 Let us praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to the help of his people and has set them free.

### Phillips

Blessings on the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has

### God's Word to the Nations

## Revised Standard Version

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people,

69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

70 as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

71 that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us;

72 to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74 to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

76 And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

77 to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,

78 through the tender mercy of our God, when the day shall dawn upon us from on high

79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

## King James Version

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

69 And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David:

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant:

73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

## New American Standard Bible

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;

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 delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days,

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,

79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

## New International Version

68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people.

69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

71 salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us--

72 to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

## Bibliography

### Footnote Abbreviations

Please note that the footnotes regularly refer to the works below by mentioning the author's name rather than the title of the work. For example, a footnote reference to Lenski directs the reader to Lenski's commentary *The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*.

- A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1957).
- A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, F. Blass and A. DeBrunner, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1961).
- A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Edward W.A. Koehler, (Alfred W. Koehler, Oakland, CA, 1952).
- Barnes on the New Testament: Luke and John*, Albert Barnes, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1976).
- Christian Dogmatics*, Francis Pieper, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1950).
- Concordia Triglotta*, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. MO, 1921).
- Concordia Self-Study Commentary*, Martin Franzmann, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. MO, 1979).
- Dictionary of the Bible*, (Scribner and Son Publishing House).
- Exposition of Luke*, William Hendriksen, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI).
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia: Volume 4*, G.W. Bromley, general editor, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1979).
- Luther's Works: Volume 22, The Gospel of St. John*, Martin Luther, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1957).
- Luther's Works: Volume 40, Church and Ministry* Martin Luther, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO).
- New Dictionary of Theology*, Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, J.I. Packer, editors, (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1988).
- The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, Harold K. Moulton, (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978).
- The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel*, R.C.H. Lenski, (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, MN, 1946).
- The Interpreter's Bible: Volume 8, Luke and John*, George A. Buttrick, commentary editor, (Abingdon Press, New York, NY 1952).

*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1971).

*The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel of Luke*, Norval Geldenhuys, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1977).

*The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, C.F.W. Walther, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1928).

*The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, Alfred Edersheim, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, reprinted July 1972).

*Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. Luke*, Leon Morris, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1977).

*Vincent's Word Studies of the New Testament*, Marvin R. Vincent, (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MS).

*What Luther Says*, Martin Luther, compiled by Ewald M. Plass, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO 1959).