



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V26 N49 December 8, 2024

CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST

“Zechariah’s Song: Breaking the Silence”

Luke 1:67-79

THIS WEEK’S CORE COMPETENCY

Hope

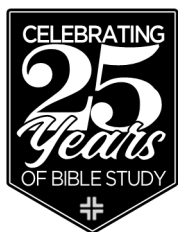
I have a growing anticipation of God’s promises and my secure eternity with him.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.”

1 Peter 1:3-4



Why did Zechariah rejoice?



The first candle lit during Advent, called the “Prophecy Candle,” represents the **hope** of Jesus’ coming. The second, called the “Bethlehem Candle,” represents the **peace** that Christ brings to the world and to us. The third, called the “Shepherds Candle,” in some traditions the pink one, represents **joy** in anticipation of the birth of Jesus. According to one writer, “It marks a shift from the more solemn tone of the first two Sundays of Advent that focus on Preparation and Hope, to a more joyous atmosphere of anticipation and expectancy . . . Whatever sequence is adopted for these Sundays, the theme of Joy can still be the focus for the pink candle. For example, when using the third Sunday to commemorate the visit of the Magi the focus can be on the Joy of worshipping the new-found King. Or the Shepherds as the symbol for the third Sunday brings to mind the joy of the proclamation made to them in the fields, and the adoration expressed as they knelt before the Child at the manger. If used on the fourth Sunday of Advent, it can symbolize the Joy in fulfilled hope” (Dennis Bratcher, “The Season of Advent,” crivoice.org/cyadvent.html). As Advent progresses we are reminded that Jesus is our hope, our peace, and our joy. The fourth candle lit, called the “Angel’s Candle,” represents God’s **love** manifested in the sending of his Son. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son (Jn 3:16a).

These three virtues – hope, peace and joy rooted in God’s love – are obviously related. Take hope and joy, for example. Joy feeds on hope, and starves without it. Mathematically speaking, hope and joy are corollaries; they naturally accompany one another. They’re also covariant; they increase and decrease together. So an increase in hope results in a proportional increase in joy and vice versa. At no time is this more evident than when someone we love is seriously ill. We hear that

a close friend has been hospitalized with cancer and are devastated, but we’re not without hope because our hope is set on Christ (2Co 1:10). What’s more, as long as we have hope, we can cope with the hardships of life and even with death. Hope is potent; it enables us to rejoice in the face of trouble knowing that we’re better off once our faith is tested (Jas 1:2).

It’s after we hear of our friend’s illness that the rollercoaster ride begins. With every bit of bad news, every setback, every failed treatment and complication, hope wanes and so does joy. We pray; we hope; we wait. We fear time is running out. Days of waiting stretch into weeks, good news is followed by bad, not -so-bad, then good, our joy tracks with our hope, waxing then waning with every piece of good, then bad news. We know God’s people are praying. Finally, we hear our loved one’s tumors are shrinking and some have disappeared altogether. He has tons more energy, and the ugly, discolored skin in the area of those tumors is returning to normal. Hope soars and so does joy.

The relationship of hope and joy is evident in Zechariah’s Song, sometimes called the Benedictus (Lk 1:67-80). As the hope of Israel’s redemption welled up inside him, bursting with joy, John’s father exclaimed, “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel because he has come and has redeemed his people” (v. 68). The promise God had made long ago through his holy prophets had been kept in Mary’s child. God had raised up a strong Savior in David’s house, and his own child, John, would prepare the way for him. So if your joy gauge is sitting on empty, reflect on the hope you have in Christ made manifest at Advent. Zechariah praised God for the hope of salvation to come through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

1

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Luke 1:67-79

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

- 68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
- 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 ancestors
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."
- 80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and
he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to
Israel.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Highlight prose lines in vv. 67, 80.
- Circle "Israel" in v. 68.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 68.
- Circle "has come" in v. 68 and "has raised up" in v. 69.
- Circle "redeemed" in v. 68.
- Circle "horn" in v. 69.
- Circle "salvation" in vv. 69, 71, 77.
- Circle "house" in v. 69.
- Box "as" indicating *comparison* in v. 70.
- Circle "enemies" in vv. 71, 74.
- Box "to" indicating *purpose* in vv. 72, 74.
- In the margin next to v. 73 write, "Cf., Ge 15:7-18; cf. 12:1-3, 7."
- In the margin next to v. 76 write, "Cf., 3:4-6."
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 78.
- Circle "rising sun" in v. 78.
- Bracket "those living in darkness" in v. 79.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Verse 67 is like verse 80, but both are different from verses 68-79. How so?
2. Explain the relationship of verse 68 to verses 69-75.
3. Put what verse 69 means in your own words. (See note on v. 69; cf. 2 Sam. 7:11.)
4. According to verses 72-75, God “raised up a horn of salvation for us” (v. 69) for four purposes (note pattern: “to . . . and . . . to”). List them.
5. Zechariah mentions Israel’s “salvation” three times (vv. 69, 71, 77). What does that salvation include?
6. Zechariah’s words indicate that God has provided salvation for Israel, for the Jewish people (cf. “Israel” v. 68; “us” vv. 69, 71, 74; and “our” vv. 71, 72, 73, 74, 75). How do we know that this salvation is for Gentiles as well? (See v. 79; cf. Gen. 12:3.)
7. Describe the twofold *purpose* of John’s ministry (see “to” vv. 76-77).
8. People receive “the knowledge of salvation *through* the forgiveness of their sins.” What kind of *knowledge*?
9. If “the rising sun” refers to Christ, explain the point of the rich imagery in verse 79 (cf. Jn 1:6-9).
10. **Discussion:** Discuss the “Living Questions:” what does the passage teach me about God, and what does it lead me to do?

Commentary On The Text

The Benedictus is Zechariah's psalm of praise to God sung on the day his son, John, was circumcised. It's actually a prophecy as well, one that predicts the future fortunes of two children, the newborn son of Elizabeth and the yet-to-be-born son of Mary. To appreciate Zechariah's song, you might need to be reminded of the remarkable events that led up to it. First, Luke tells us that "Zechariah and Elizabeth were both upright in the sight of the Lord, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years" (Lk 1:6, 7). He begins by contradicting our expectations. They were righteous, but they were childless. How odd! And then he adds a note of desperation. Their biological clocks weren't running out; they had run out!

Second, Luke surprises us with what an angel of the Lord said to Zechariah, "'Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord...' (13-15). And again he contradicts our expectations. Zechariah should have been ecstatic, but instead he was pensive, hesitant. He knew where babies came from and doubted one would come from an old man and a woman well along in years. So the angel gave him a sign, "You will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens because you did not believe my words" (v. 20). Clearly Zechariah's unbelief had stolen his hope, leaving him speechless and without joy.

Finally, Luke reveals how the angel's words came true. On the eighth day after his son's birth, the time came to circumcise and name the boy. Friends and family expected him to be named Zechariah after his father, but his mother said, "'No! He is to be called John'" (v. 60). And when Zechariah was asked what he would like to name his son, to everyone's amazement he wrote, "'His name is John'" (v. 63). Immediately he could speak, and for the first time in nine months he did. And his first words were the words of the Benedictus.

The Benedictus "can be divided into four parts: 1:67 (the narrative introduction); 1:68a (the opening statement of praise); 1:68b-79 (the hymn itself, which can be subdivided into 1:68b-75, 76-79); and 1:80 (the narrative conclusion)" (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 96). Verses 68b-75 give the reason for Zechariah's

praise. The Lord has once again visited his people to redeem them like he repeatedly did in the past. He has raised up a descendant of David who is strong enough to bring salvation to God's people and deliver them from their enemies, political and spiritual, so they might serve him without fear. He has done this because of the oath he swore to Abraham. The past tense verb refers to a future event so certain to occur that it is stated as if it already happened (see note). One commentator remarks: "Zechariah speaks as a righteous Jew here. He longs for the nation's vindication, possibly from Rome and the forces that direct her. In Luke's story, however, the scope of the hymn's hope may even be broader. He will show how the Promised One from David's house has power that extends beyond the political forces that sit over Israel (8:22-56). God has 'raised up' (cf. Deut. 18:15, 18; Judg. 3:9, 15; 1 Sam. 2:35; 2 Sam. 23:1) this significant figure onto the world's stage. The Son of David (God's 'servant'; v. 69) will become a servant himself (cf. Phil. 2:7). He will take on the cosmic forces that oppress humanity and bring pain and suffering into the world. When liberation comes through his ministry, sin and Satan will lead the enemy lines (Luke 4:16-30; 11:14-23). That is why when Zechariah turns to compare the career of his son John with the child to come, it is the spiritual issues of their ministry that dominate" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 76, 77).

Verses 76-79 describe John's role with respect to the Promised One. He will be a prophet who will prepare the way for the Messiah. He will give the Lord's people "the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins." In other words, through his ministry they will experience salvation, that is, the forgiveness of sins. Of course, the Messiah, Mary's Son Jesus, is the one who will provide that salvation. Zechariah knew this given that Mary had spent three months in his home during Elizabeth's pregnancy. That same forgiveness of sins will also come to the Gentiles, "those living in darkness and in the shadow of death" (v. 79). Zechariah's prophetic words are being fulfilled sequentially. Jesus has come, has provided salvation, Jews and Gentiles are currently being saved, and yet, the redemption, that is, the salvation of Israel as a nation and the fullness of Messiah's rule on the earth await future fulfillment.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 67 *prophesied*

Whereas Mary's "Magnificat" is praise psalm, Zechariah's "Benedictus" might be called a "prophetic psalm of praise." "While Mary's hymn of praise is modelled on Hannah's song and the Psalms, we find in Zacharias's song a closer resemblance to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament" (Norvel Gledenhuis, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, NICNT, 92).

v. 68 *Israel*

The redemption and salvation to which Zechariah alludes pertains to Israel, but it is neither limited to national security alone (cf. v. 77) nor is it limited to Israel alone (cf. v. 79).

v. 68 *has come*

Lit., "looked upon" or "visited" (Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 141; cf., ESV, NJB). "The key word in this verse is the verb 'to visit' (NIV: has come). In the LXX [the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT called the Septuagint] this word often occurs in reference to 'God's gracious visitation of his people' (Fitzmyer, p. 383). The following examples should make this idea clear: With reference to God's intention to deliver Israel from Egypt, Exod. 4:31 states in part: 'they heard that the LORD had visited the people of Israel and that he had seen their affliction' (RSV). In Ruth 1:6 the discouraged Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem, 'for she heard . . . that the LORD had visited his people and given them food' (RSV). (See also the petitions found in Pss. 80:14; 106:4)" (Craig A. Evans, *Luke*, NIBC, 32).

v. 68 *redeemed*

The past tense (*prophetic aorist*) refers to future events that are so certain that they are stated vividly as if they had already taken place. "The reference is undoubtedly to the saving work of God which has already begun with the birth of John and the conception of Messiah; but the content of the verbs indicates that Zechariah is looking forward to the redemption which is not yet accomplished but could be said to be 'as good as accomplished' now that the divine train of events has been set in motion" (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC, 90).

v. 69 *horn of salvation*

I.e., "a mighty Saviour" (Marshall, 91; cf., the NET Bible, **sn** 213 on Lk 1:69). "Horn" was used as a metaphor for might since it displayed the strength of an animal. Since John is not linked to the "house of David," the term refers to Christ rather than him. Messiah, before whom John will go (cf. vv. 76-79), is the strong one who brings salvation (Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC, 99).

v. 69 *house of*

Zechariah's language echoes God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:11-13.

v. 70 *a parentheses*

The editors of the NIV take verse 70 as a parenthetical comment (probably of Luke) inserted into Zechariah's song (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, the NET Bible, ESV which do not). The expression does reflect Luke's

interest in fulfilled prophecy mentioned in 1:1.

v. 71 *salvation*

"The term 'Savior' found in Luke 1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23 appears only once in the other Gospels (John 4:42); 'salvation' is found ten times in Luke-Acts but only once in the other Gospels (John 4:22); and the verb 'to save' is found seventeen times in Luke (more than any other Gospel) and thirteen times in Acts. This salvation is not primarily concerned with political matters but with the individual's relationship to God. It involves the individual's 'life' (Luke 9:24) and is for those who recognize that they are 'lost' (19:10). It comes through faith and involves the forgiveness of sins (1:77)" (Stein, 99; cf. Evans, 32). Other commentators argue the term does pertain to political matters. "There follows a very loosely attached description of the salvation resulting from God's action, *sōtērian* [salvation] being in apposition to the content of vs. 68f. The language, drawn from Ps. 106:10 (105:10) (cf. 2 Sa. 22:18; Ps. 18:17 (17:18)), suggests political deliverance, which is of course not to be excluded from the Christian concept of salvation and formed part of contemporary Jewish hopes (1QM 14:4-10; 18:6-11; Ps. Sol. 17:23-27; She-moneh Esreh, 7, 10, 12). But the language is formal, no particular enemies are specified, and the thought is of those "who now prevent us from serving God 'without fear'" (W. Foerster, TDNT, II, 813); political need and spiritual need are closely linked" (Marshall, 91, 92).

vv. 72, 73 *covenant, oath*

The covenant referred to is the one he made with Abraham, swore to Isaac, and confirmed to Jacob (Ps 105:8-11; cf., Ge 12:1-3; 22:15-18; 26:3-5).

v. 76 *Most High*

While "Most High" clearly refers to God (cf. 1:35), "Lord" and "him" likely refer to Jesus, the one whose way John prepared (cf. 3:4; 7:27).

v. 77 *knowledge of*

Or simply "to give his people salvation." "The knowledge described is not something imparted theoretically, but refers to the inward appropriation or experience of salvation as the result of a divine gift (1QS 11:15f.; cf. R. Bultmann, TDNT I, 706; J Gnilka, 234)" (Marshall, 93).

v. 78 *rising sun*

Variouly translated, "the Sunrise from on high" NASB, "the dawn from on high" NRSV, "the Dayspring from on high" NKJV, "the bright dawn of salvation to rise" TEV. The Greek term can refer to the "rising" of a heavenly body hence the area of sunrise, "the east." It can also refer to the "growing" of a plant, hence a "shoot" or "branch." "The imagery is thus that of the Davidic Messiah, the Shoot from Jesse (Is. 11:1ff.) and the star from Jacob (Nu. 24:17) who is to visit men from on high, i.e. from the dwelling place of God (2 Sa. 22:17; *et al.*)" (Marshall, 95). "A likely allusion to Numbers 24:17 and Isaiah 11:1-10" (Darrell L. Bock, *The NIV Application Commentary: Luke*, 77).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Praise God, for he has come in the person of Christ to redeem Israel, bringing salvation and forgiveness to his people and to the Gentiles.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Christmas is around the corner and that means children all over the world are intently making their wish lists with far more effort and consideration than they're likely to use in completing their daily homework. They're making note of everything from new clothes to new computers, stuffed animals to living pet puppies, American Girl dolls to dirt bikes. They're dreaming of Christmas morning when everything on their list, or at least their one big-ticket item, magically appears under the tree. But getting what's on your list for Christmas is more of a wish or dream than a hope. When you pop online and look up the difference between hope and wish, you learn something pretty interesting. Where a wish expresses a desire for something that is unlikely to happen or materialize, hope expresses something that is possible or very likely to happen. Let that sink in a bit. I think Elizabeth and Zechariah wished for a child. After all, they were ancient and didn't really think their dream of being parents would ever be realized. In contrast, the Israelites weren't wishing for a Savior but had solid, concrete, faithful hope. They had confidence in the promised Messiah, faithfully trusting to God to fulfill His promise. After John was born, Zechariah burst out in song, and I find it curious that his first praise wasn't for his newborn son but for the fact that the birth of his son meant the Savior's birth was days away. He praised God for hope realized and dreams coming true. What about the Christmas season gives you hope? How will you praise God because of this hope?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 1:57-79 (with 1:5-7).

1. Read Luke 1:5-7. What do you know about Elizabeth and Zechariah?
2. When Zechariah confirmed the name of their son, what happened to him? What did he do?
3. Who is the first part of Zechariah's song talking about? Who is the second part talking about?

What Do You Think?

Why is Jesus' birth something that gives all people hope?

What Do You Do?

With your parent's help, write a Christmas acrostic poem using the letters from the word *hope*.

CORE COMPETENCY: Hope

I cope with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
 _____ I memorized this week's verse
 _____ I brought my Bible to church
 _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.