

AM Luke 1:57-80 Glory of the Incarnation

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[0 : 00] With me to God's Word, as we are going to read from Luke chapter 1, verse 57 to 80, and you can see this in your Pew Bible, page 1032.

Page 1032 in the Pew Bibles, or if you've got your own Bible, it will be Luke chapter 1, verses 57 to 80, which will cover the birth of John the Baptist and Zacharias' prophecy.

Luke 1, verse 57 to 80. Hear the Word of God. Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.

And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child.

And they would have called him Zachariah after his father. But his mother answered, No, he shall be called John. And they said to her, None of your relatives is called by this name.

[1 : 15] So they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, His name is John.

And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was open, and his tongue loosed. And he spoke, Blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbors.

And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea. And all who heard them and laid them in their hearts, saying, What then will this child be?

For the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and was raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets of old, that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us, to show the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us, that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people, in the forgiveness of their sins.

[3 : 02] Because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness unto the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Amen. May the Lord add his blessing to the public reading of his holy and inspired word. Well, please turn with me once again to God's word, as we have before us in Luke chapter 1.

You can see in the order of service that we'll be looking at the glory of the incarnation, in Luke 1, verse 79, which says, to give light, this is concerning Jesus Christ, who came to this world, and he's here to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet unto the way of peace.

So, this morning we'll be considering this particular prophecy of Zechariah. You can see at your top of that particular passage, in verse 67, Zechariah's prophecy.

[4 : 29] Zechariah, or Zechariah's, depends on which version of the Bible you're looking at, Zechariah was a priest in the temple, and the husband of Elizabeth.

Now, you know, you may have heard about the story, they were both childless, due to their old age, and while Zechariah, who was a priest, was in the temple, Gabriel, the angel, appeared before him. You can read all that in the first part of chapter 1. Chapter 1 is a very long chapter, so we didn't get to read that first part, but first part in verse 5, to verse 25, is about the birth of John the Baptist foretold.

And so this is where Gabriel the angel appeared before him, and promised that Elizabeth would bear a son, and this son is going to be named John.

And Zechariah also knew about this, but while Elizabeth believed in the message, Zechariah didn't believe it, or he just couldn't believe it, and because of his unbelief, he was struck dumb, so he could not speak.

[5 : 42] But then, as we read in the birth of John the Baptist, from verse 57 onwards, the baby was born, and they were going to name him after his father, Zechariah, as it was tradition in those days.

But the couple knew better. Elizabeth and Zechariah knew better. Now, he is going to be called John. And so, once the baby was named John, Zechariah, Zechariah's tongue was set free. And the first thing that he did, or the first thing that he said, was to compose, and to sing, what is now known as the Song of Zechariah, or sometimes, you may see in the Latin word, Benedictus, or benediction.

If any of you use the King James Bible, it says, blessed, or it starts, with verse 68, blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

And so, the song itself, it's sometimes known as benedictus, or the benediction. Because it's a blessing to the Lord.

[6 : 55] Now, isn't it interesting that, after a difficult time, of somebody who lost his voice, a priest, in a temple, you know, who needs his voice, and who lost his voice, and the first thing that he did, when he got back his voice, is to rejoice.

Is to rejoice. Deliverance led to great rejoicing, for Zechariah. Now, perhaps that is a really good thing, for us to consider. Do we do that? When we face difficult times, not necessarily losing one's voice, but any difficult situation.

You know, when we have been delivered from that, when we pray, and there's an answer to prayer, do we rejoice? Remember the Apostle Paul said, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. And he wrote that in prison. He wrote that in prison. Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice. Do we do that? Do we do that? Now, Zechariah's song is so instructive for us.

It's so important for us. Because he's going to tell us, why Jesus Christ had to come. Why Jesus Christ had to come. Now, in this particular holiday season, Christmas, as you know, is coming soon, on Wednesday.

[8 : 21] I don't know, some of you may or may not like Christmas. Some of you may like it. Some children do like it, because of the parents. Some parents do like Christmas as well, because they get visits from their grown-up children.

And, it's kind of a mix in this society. You know, we have all the various festivities, you know, the office parties, or the dreaded office parties, the Christmas trees, the decorations, the turkey, the presents, the families and friends.

Those may be the good things. But, largely, in this society, certainly in Western society, Christmas is largely forgotten, in terms of what Christmas is all about.

And so, society, what they've done is, they've kind of dictated what Christmas ought to look like.

And so, when we have that situation, you have, what, many expectations, of what Christmas would look like, are not met, or may not be met.

And so, you get all the various complaints about Christmas. You know, you know what I'm talking about, you know, the dry turkey, you know, the presents that nobody wanted, the visits from families and friends, that we do not particularly like.

[9 : 41] And then, there's the loneliness. You know, apparently, there's a statistic that says, about, almost 20% of people, over 65, and above, in this country, in the UK, wish that they had someone to spend time with, at Christmas.

And you know what? The younger people, the younger demographic, that percentage is even higher. Amazing. When you have all the social media, and the interactions of this day and age, loneliness, during Christmas, is a big issue.

Now, the reason for that is because, people's expectations of Christmas, it's not what, the Bible has to say about, the incarnation, of Jesus Christ.

Now, nobody knows the exact date, when Christ came and all that. We're not discussing that today. But we're going to consider, why Jesus had to come. Why he had, why the Son of God, God in the flesh, had to come into this world, and born, in this world, as a baby, and why he had to come.

Why the incarnation? Now, there are various reasons, why he had to come. We can, we can consider the issue of, fulfilled prophecy.

[11:02] He came to fulfill prophecy. You know, many of the Old Testament, prophecies, all point to Christ. All point to the coming of the Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ.

And, Zechariah, laid a lot of emphasis, on God's fulfillment, of those prophecies, and those promises. He declares that God, we read in verse 68, blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited, and redeemed his people.

You know, he's speaking of the prophets of old, that this God, will come, to visit you. He will not only come, and visit you, but he'll come, and redeem you.

And then he's not only going to, come and redeem his people, we read in verse 69, and he has raised up, a horn of salvation. Strange phrase, horn of salvation, is referring to a king.

He's going to raise up, a king for us. And this king, is going to be a savior, the king, and this king, is going to be, in the house of his servant, David. This is going to be, a king who is going to arrive.

[12:13] And not only that, but we read in verse 70, and verse 72, as he spoke, by the mouth of his holy prophets, in verse 72, to show, the mercy promise, to our fathers, and to remember, his holy covenant, and the oath, that he swore, to our father Abraham.

All this, tells us that, this is all prophets, prophecies, from the old testament, and now, it's all being fulfilled, right before your eyes. This is Zachariah's song, after his tongue, has been loosed, the first thing he says, is, listen, listen, Jesus Christ, or at that time, the name wasn't there, he's going to come, the Messiah is going to come, and he's going to, visit us, God in the flesh, he's going to visit us, and he's going to show us, all the mercy, that has been promised before, he's going to save us, from our enemies, he's going to, fulfill all the prophecies, from old, as he swore to our father Abraham.

All these, wonderful things, in the old testament, is all going to, come true, and it's going to be, very very close, it's coming, this is coming, you know, the incarnation, is not some, random accident, but it was predicted, in the old testament, and it's, in accordance, to God's, eternal plan, and now, we can, we not only, can say that, you know, the incarnation, is about, a fulfilled prophecy, but, the incarnation, shows something about, the humility, of Jesus Christ, yes, he's going to be, a king, he's going to be, the horn of salvation, he's going to be, the king of kings, and lord of lords, but, Jesus didn't come, to be, the king, to be served, but he came, to serve, we read, in Mark's gospel, the son of man, did not come, to be served, but to serve, to give his life, as a ransom, for many, he came, to give his life, for us, and that, shows us, his, not only his humanity, but his humility, from Bethlehem, all the way, to Golgotha, his humility, his humanity, is going to be, on full display, but I think, most importantly, the incarnation, tells us, or the incarnation, shows us, that it was necessary, for our salvation, and this is what, we're going to consider, this morning, and we're going to follow, Zacharias lead, in his song, in Zacharias prophecy, or his song, where we come to, verse 79, that this is about, Jesus Christ, okay, before that, it's all about, the first part, of his song, is all about, his son, okay, John the Baptist, but as we come, towards the end, of his song, we read, and you child, will be called, a prophet, on the most high, for you will go, before the Lord, to prepare his ways, now this is John the Baptist, who's going to be, the forerunner, for the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give, knowledge of salvation, to his people, in the forgiveness, of their sins, that is what, John the Baptist, is going to do, and that's what, Jesus Christ, is also going to do as well, but John the Baptist, is going to pave the way, but look here, it says here, in verse 78, because of the tender mercy, of our God, whereby the sunrise, shall visit us, from on high, now this, is about Jesus Christ, the sunrise, shall visit us, from on high, or if you use the, authorized version, it says, what about the, day spring, from on high, this is about, the Lord Jesus Christ, he's pictured here, as a sunrise, and it's, going to be a sunrise, because why, in verse 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, so before we think about, why Jesus Christ, had to come, in incarnation, perhaps we need to address, why he had to come, in terms of, dealing with the bad news first, so when he came, it was good news, the message of Christmas, is a good news message, but before we think about, the good news, we need to think about, the bad news first, that's why there's a good news, yeah, when we have, we're in a bad situation, and then there's a good news, to come, so Zachariah says, about the shadow, those who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, it tells us that we, are sitting in darkness, what does it, what does it mean, by sitting in darkness, darkness, well, what the, what the, what Zachariah is saying is, we are all on a journey, we're all on a journey, to somewhere, we're all on a journey, to somewhere, some of us

may come from, as far flung as Iran, Eritrea, I came from Singapore, we all come from somewhere, and we're heading to somewhere, now, on this journey, of life, the picture here, before us, is some, somebody who is on the journey, and this journey, to somewhere, somewhere wonderful, a destination, this person, is suddenly hit, darkness, the person is, hit a spell of darkness, perhaps, started walking, the daytime, and then, in the night time, it becomes dark, and so, in darkness, what do we do, we can't go anywhere, we can't see anything, so what do we do, we just sit down, in darkness, now, sitting down in darkness, is not a good thing, okay, darkness, in the Bible, is a metaphor, for many things, sometimes, it talks about, darkness, as in death, but we're not going to consider that, just, not for this morning, darkness, in the Bible, is a metaphor, also for blindness, you remember, in Acts of the Apostles, [18:17] Acts 13, Paul to, Elymas, the sorcerer, says that, now the hand of the Lord, is against you, you will be going blind, for a time, and not able to see, the light of the sun, immediately, mist and darkness, came upon him, so that's about blindness, sometimes, darkness, in the Bible, is a metaphor, for a lack of spiritual knowledge, you remember, in Romans chapter 2, the Jews, who are given, the word of God, the Bible, the Old Testament, they're meant, to use the Old Testament, to be a light, to those who are in darkness, the Bible is there, to give us light, in darkness, to give us spiritual knowledge, so that we're not, spiritually ignorant, of who God is, and who we are, but darkness, in the Bible, many a time, is used to describe, evil, sin, hopelessness, helplessness, and so, when we are sitting, in darkness, we are in that, rather precarious position, we are in, a hopeless, a helpless position, we are in, we are in danger, of being attacked, and so on, so, the world, as we know it, society as we know it, is in the state of darkness, and hopelessness, that's where we are, that's what we are today, we're sitting here, in Dumfries Free Church, but, we know, and we should know, that we live in a society, that is, hopeless, and helpless, and you know, this is to be true, society, in general, we're trying to always, find some purpose, or meaning of life, that's what we all try to do, oh, we can try, and we should try, to find some meaning, and purpose in life, some people, would try, and get a good job, and that is their meaning, and purpose in life, as long as I get a good job, that is it,

I've reached that, that state of, perfection, some say that, well, as long as I can travel, around the world, and see all the societies, all the various countries, and think of all the countries, that I've visited, then I have fulfilled, my purpose, and meaning in life, but some have said, well, perhaps if I have a family, a large family, family with children, grandchildren, perhaps if I have, lots and lots of friends, I will get my purpose in life, there's always, that nagging feeling, that we're always destined, for greater things, better things, I've seen my children, grow up, some of you have met, Joy, who's my third child, and she's, she's looking for, you know, that great purpose, and direction in life, and she's doing various things, to achieve that, and all our children, all do the same, and I'm sure you, you know what I'm talking about, you've probably done that yourself, you may not, articulate it that way, but that's what you've been doing, since you were young, you've always been looking for, some meaning and purpose in life, but the problem is, on the same token, we are always, also in danger, of being attacked, by enemies, just like with those, who are sitting in darkness, you know, if you're sitting in darkness, in those days, you know, you can be attacked, by wild animals, you can be attacked, by robbers, and likewise, we are, in danger, of being attacked, by enemies, such as sickness, old age, and death, there is no peace, and security, in this life, and perhaps now, some of us, will probably feel it, more than ever, this is my first time, wearing, pair of reading glasses, and I need it, because my eyes have gone, has deteriorated, with age,

I can't read, as easily, as I once did, when I was younger, now we can try, and fix things, like you know, getting reading glasses, you can fix things, by getting medication, to sort out, all your health problems, you can try, and fix things, by getting a good education, nothing wrong with that, you can, you can try, and fix things, by getting, assistance, from local council, from government, we can do all these things, nothing wrong with that, it works to some extent, but you know very well, it can only go to, a certain limit, and that is it, my eyes, your eyes, you know, will deteriorate, over time, if you are, if you are blessed, you know, all you need, a pair of glasses, but some people, will be far worse than that, but not only that, the world is, hopeless, and helpless, as we know it, and we are all, in this situation, because of one thing, and one thing only, all that is described to you, we can never find, purpose and meaning, in life, we can try, but we will never find, that, the ultimate purpose, and meaning, life, we will always be in danger, of being attacked, by, all kinds of enemies, sickness, old age, even death itself, and the reason, why we are in this position, is because of one thing, and one

thing only, and that is called sin, a word, that is, completely removed, from the, from dictionaries, and from, from the, from the common language, in this society, sadly, but sadly, if we are honest enough, that is the truth, that is what the Bible, has to say, the reason, why we are sitting, in darkness, is because of sin, and the Bible, makes it very clear, for the wages of sin, is death, the wages of sin, is death, we try, and, fix this, fix our lives, outside of God, outside of Christ, and, because of sin, there is only one, set conclusion to that, and that is going to be, not only death, but, judgment to come, we are cut off, from God, we are not in Christ, we are cut off, from God, you know, and on one hand, we actually know, that to be true, society know this, they know this as well, a society that rejected God, they know it as well, they are pushed around, we are all being pushed around, by society, and yet, we think we can fix things, we reject the Bible, and we think we can fix things, on our own, but yet, we can't, and we are still, as it were, sitting in darkness, we are still sitting in darkness, and, the Bible,

Jesus himself, is going to say, John chapter 3, and this is a condemnation, that light has come to the world, and men love darkness, rather than light, because the deeds were evil, sin has this strange way, of breeding this, contempt in us, when we love sin, rather than we love the things of God, and the more we sin, the more we love it, and we just go into this, horrendous cycle, of being dragged down, and down, and down, into this darkness, sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, you know, the solution to all this, is never going to be, in politics, or in society, but the solution to this, is in the spiritual realm, the solution to all this, must be, light, there's only one answer, to this issue of sin, and that is, light, darkness can only be dealt with, by light, and this is where, the good news comes in, we've just considered, bad news, of this person, in this journey, and walking, to that great destination, perhaps thinking, this is my version, of utopia, that good place,

I'm going, I'm going to that wonderful place, where it's going to be perfect, and then all of a sudden, darkness falls, and we're sitting in darkness, well what's the solution to that, well the solution to that, is light, and that's what Jesus, is here for, he came to give light, to those who sit in darkness, and the shadow of death, you know very well, what happened in the, in the book of Genesis, literally, God is the one, who created light, God said, let there be light, and there was light, and God saw the light, and it was good, and that's literally, what light is, but, metaphor, metaphorically speaking, light, can be also, used to describe, God's commandments, so in Proverbs, we read that, for the commandment, is a lamp, and the law, a light, and, sometimes, light, can be used to describe, the presence of God, we read in Exodus, but all the children of Israel, had light, in their dwellings, all the children of Israel, had light, in their dwellings, in Old Testament,

[28 : 00] God was with, the Old Testament people of God, the Israelites, God was with them, and so they had light, in their dwellings, and, light is also used, to describe life, Psalm 56, says that, I may walk, before the God, in the light, of life, but most importantly, most importantly, light, is a metaphor, for salvation, and you read in Isaiah, chapter 9, verse 2, we read, the people who walk, in darkness, have seen a great light, sounds familiar, Isaiah, prophecy, is being fulfilled, in this passage, in Luke, who walk, in darkness, have seen a great light, those who dwell, in the land, of the shadow of death, upon them, a light, has shined, and this is fulfilled, before us, what was in, Isaiah, chapter 9, 700 years, before Christ came, is being fulfilled, with,

Zachariah's song, who said the very words, to give light, to those who sit, in darkness, and the shadow of death, to guide our feet, under the way of peace, the message, of Christmas, is that Christ, came, to bring light, and life, to those who are, sitting in darkness, and in death, you know, this light, is a light, that is, shone from outside, to us, yeah, if you notice, this is Christ, who came, to give light, to those who are, sitting in darkness, this is not, the light which, what we have, this modern idea, of the light, within you, you may have seen, a lot of that, in social media, and so on, you know, there's, I just picked this out, amazing what you can pick up, from the internet, these days, there's this idea, that you have the light, within you, you know, and what it means, is you have, you have all the knowledge, that you need, within you, so you can, control, to take back your life, you're an incredible person, you're strong, brilliant, you have the ability, to change the world, I'm just quoting, from the internet, this strange idea, that you've got this light, inside you, and no, no, the Bible, is a bit more realistic, than that, you can certainly, try and think, that you can, sort out the world, just with your own light, this, the Bible, the word of God, tells us that, Jesus Christ, came to give light, to those who sit in darkness, he's there to shine a light, to guide us, to give us, a light to our path, that's why, the Bible has, the psalmist says, about the word, your word is a lamp, to my

feet, and a light, to my path, we need, a light, to show us, the way, in our journey, we're in darkness, we're sitting in darkness, the light must shine, in front of us, to say, this is the way to go, and Jesus Christ, is the, the, the, the, the day spring, or the rising sun, to bring light, the sunrise, to bring light, to those who are in darkness, he shows us, the way to God, he shows us, the way to peace, and salvation,

Jesus himself said, in John chapter 8, I am the light, of the world, he who follows me, shall not walk, in darkness, but have the light, of life, you hear that, I am the light, of the world, this is Jesus himself, saying, I am the light, of the world, he who follows me, shall not walk, in darkness, but have the light, of life, amazing, he is the answer, to, where we should be going, what's the path, we should be taking, he is there, as the light, of the world, and he is there, to give light, to us, who are sitting, in darkness, that's the main, that is the, that is the message, of Christmas, that is the message, of the incarnation, that is the, only way, he is the, only way, that we need, to go from this life, to life, in glory, in heaven itself, and not only, does Christ show us, the way, but he is also, going to provide, forgiveness of sins, through God's mercy, he is going to, reconcile us, to God, he is going to, give us the knowledge, of God, he is here, to save us, he is here, to not only give us, light, to show us the way forward, but he is also, going to save us, from our sins, in Colossians, we read, that Jesus Christ, delivered us, from the power, of darkness, and conveyed us, conveyed us, into the kingdom, of his, of the son, of his love, he is going to provide, forgiveness of sins, that is something, that this world needs, that is what we all need,

I already said, at the beginning, that the darkness, the darkness, that we are in, is because of sin, and what is the, what is the, what is the, what is the answer to that, the forgiveness of sins, just like what is the answer, to darkness, light, what is the answer, to sin, forgiveness of sins, and that is what Christ provides, that is what Christ provides, there is a wonderful hymn, which we, perhaps some of us may sing it, in the past, there is a way back to God, from the dark paths, of sin, there is a door, that is open, and you may go in, at Calvary's cross, is where you begin, when you come, as a sinner, to Jesus, that is the answer, that is the answer, that we need, to give, Christ came to give light, to those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet, in the way of peace, and that is the result, of Christ, coming into this world, there is peace with God, there is peace with God, and when there is peace with God, there is going to be peace within, and when there is peace within, there is going to be peace with others, and there is going to be hope and joy, all these wonderful things, all because Jesus Christ, came in that glorious incarnation, on that day, what we call Christmas, the incarnation, it is a glorious day, it is a glorious day, that he came, you know Paul, the apostle Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles, he was recounting, his own conversion to Christ, to a particular king,

[34 : 48] King Agrippa, and he, in recounting his, giving his testimony, of how he came to faith in Christ, to King Agrippa, he mentioned that Jesus, the risen Jesus, this is Acts of the Apostles, so Jesus has already been crucified, rose from the dead, and ascended, but this same Jesus told Paul, when he was on the road to Damascus, this was when Paul was still not a believer, but then, he was converted, on the road to Damascus, Jesus told Paul, you're going to be saved, I'm going to save you from your sins, and the reason why, I'm going to save you from your sins, it's not because you're, you're this great, Jewish rabbi, but no, I'm going to save you, because I've got a task for you, I've got a task for you, your task is, you're going to be, and I'm quoting from Acts 26, verse 18, you're going to, I'm going to send you, to open their eyes, eyes of all the people around him, to open their eyes, in order to turn them, from darkness, to light, and from the power of Satan, to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those, who are sanctified by faith in me,

Paul, just in his testimony to King Agrippa, just gave us a very, very simple, short testimony, of what it means, to be converted, his eyes, was open, and he's going to be sent, to open the eyes of those around him, and to turn them, from darkness to light, that's what we need, Christ came, to those who are sitting in darkness, that we may see, our path, so what about us, where are we today, are we still in darkness, or are we walking in the light, you know, there's nothing in between, the Bible doesn't say about, the kind of halfway point, half light, half darkness, there's no such thing, we're either, we're in darkness, or we're in light, either we're still in sin, or we've been forgiven, from our sins, are we in the good, of the gospel, do we, have we believed in Christ, have we believed in this, Jesus who came to give light, to those who sit in darkness, if you haven't done so already, well, today, may be that, today, is the day, of your salvation, that today, you may put your faith, and trust

in Christ, in this, Jesus Christ, who came to give light, to those who sit in darkness, repent of your sins, cry out to God, say, Lord have mercy on me, a sinner, and embrace Christ, we've considered, to the children, to talk a little, about eating the bread, Jesus the bread of life, we eat that bread, we embrace Christ, we take Christ, as our own, that's what conversion, is all about, that's what Jesus came to do, to give light, to those who sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet, into, the way, of peace, may this, holiday season, may we look beyond, all the, the superficiality, of the, holiday season, and all the, the fun and games, nothing wrong, with all the fun and games, but may we look beyond that, and may we think about, the importance of, why Jesus Christ, had to come, he had to come, to give light, to those, who sit, in darkness, may, may these few words, be a blessing, to all our hearts, and we shall sing, in our closing, what we shall begin.