

The Music Of Heaven

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[0 : 00] These were dark, difficult days for middle-aged composer George, who had recently suffered a stroke, and the left side of his face was paralyzed, was very painful for him.

! He was despondent, he was discouraged, he was broke, he didn't know how he was going to pay his rent, he was fearful of being sent to debtor's prison.

This is a few hundred years ago. One night, in his discouragement, he went out of his apartment and began to wander the lonely streets of London, trying to figure out a plan for his life. What was he going to do? What was he going to accomplish? How could he make it?

And while he was out, someone came by and dropped an envelope at his apartment. And inside that envelope, when he got back to his apartment, he opened it up and there were pages there with a number of verses written down on those pages.

There were verses that had to deal with, specifically, prophecies of the coming Messiah. And he read through them and then he just kind of tossed them aside, not giving it much thought, and climbed into bed and covered himself up, but he couldn't sleep.

[1 : 33] He had in his mind some of these verses just kind of going over and over in his head and he couldn't stop. And so finally, he got up out of his bed and he went over to the piano.

And he started thinking of some of these verses. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light and things like that.

And for the next 24 days, he simply wrote, played and wrote, hardly ever stopping to eat or to sleep. He refused any visitors. Just 24 straight days of just writing and writing and writing until finally, a friend who was close and knew how to get into his apartment, got inside and found George Handel there at the piano with music strewn all over around him and tears streaming down his face.

And George Handel said to his friend, I think, I do believe, I have seen the greatness of God.

[2 : 50] And from those 24 days of writing and a little bit more after that came what we know as Handel's Messiah, which included the great Hallelujah Chorus.

The part of the gospel that we're in now, Luke chapter 1, concludes a very difficult time in the history of Israel.

400 years of silence. The last prophet, Malachi, had received words from the Lord to preach to the people of Israel and to write down.

But after he was gone, that was it. No more words from God. No more songs to sing. Nothing of encouragement.

Nothing of impending judgment. Just nothing. Just silence and darkness for 400 years. That's a long time.

[3 : 50] Our country's not even 300 years old. And we have a tough time thinking back that far. And then suddenly, angel sightings.

Words from God spoken by angels to people. Songs being sung.

Supernatural events. Joy. Joy. In Luke chapters 1 and 2, there are as many as five songs that we find in the text.

And today we're going to look at two of those songs. Two incredible statements of joy. Two songs, when put to music, have incredible messages.

But before we get to the music, we've got to catch up from where we were last week. Last week, the angel Gabriel had visited Mary, had given her the news that she would be pregnant, that she would be bearing a child, the Messiah, even though she was a virgin.

[5 : 09] And she had met with her cousin, Elizabeth, who was also expecting a child much further along. And she responds to this angel by what she says here in verse 38.

Mary said, Behold. This is her response to the angel. Behold, I am the servant or the slave of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. I had originally intended that we would be talking about these next two points on your notes last week, but last week was quite long, and so I decided a better part of wisdom would be to leave it to this week.

So a little bit of a catch up here. So observations from Mary's response here. The first thing that we notice is that surrendering to God's will won't necessarily make your life easier.

There's a lot of bad theology out there today, particularly if you like to watch preachers on TV. Not all of them are bad, but a good number of them want to make it seem as if if you start following Jesus that you're going to have everything coming your way.

[6 : 34] And the reality is if you surrender to God's will, your life is probably not going to be easier. That certainly was true for Mary. Mary would have been just a small town girl, would have married her betrothed Joseph, had children, raised them, and lived a long life perhaps, and that would be it.

But now she would have to answer all of these angry looks about how a young virgin could be pregnant. What did she do?

How did she mess up? Her own husband-to-be, Joseph, would have questioned how she would have gotten pregnant. Who would believe a Holy Spirit-conceived baby?

Yet God orchestrated all of that, and ever since the birth, as we'll see, on the run, Herod wants to kill the baby Jesus.

They escape to Egypt. They come back, again, living in poverty, and all of that that they were going through. In fact, if you're going to be willing to surrender to God's will, it may very well make things more difficult for you.

[7 : 52] And you have to understand that. But Mary was, whatever that means for my life, I'm willing to follow you no matter what.

She gave the Lord a blank slate with a signature of hers at the bottom of it. It was blank. She had no clue what this news was going to bring for her life.

But she was willing to sign on the dotted line and say, whatever your will means for my life, Lord, I'm in. I'm all in. And that's what she did.

And that's what God is calling us to do as well. Am I willing to say, yes, Lord, no matter what it is, whatever it is that you ask of me, the answer is yes.

I will do it. And then, secondly, surrendering to God's will doesn't require you to have experience. Remember, Mary is young.

[8 : 54] She's probably 15, maybe 16 years old. She's not from the right part of town. She doesn't have all of this background of parents who would have had all of this spiritual training or religious training.

None of that. And yet, God chose her. Surrendering to God's will is simply an invitation to obedience. God called her.

She said yes. And she had lived uprightly up until this point. And now she was willing to say yes to the Lord and to continue living her life in simple obedience to him.

And we are called to do the same as well. And then we have it. Mary's song.

Beginning in verse 46. And Mary said, My soul, my soul, magnified. Right? You guys aren't singing with me.

[10 : 00] Actually, the chorus of the song goes, it's verse 47.

My soul magnifies the Lord. And then it's verse 49, which we don't have on the screen yet. But it's, My soul magnifies the Lord. And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant, of his slave.

For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me. Again, the second part of that chorus.

He has done great things for me. And holy is his name and his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. Mary is quoting and alluding to a number of Old Testament passages. And as she, I don't know if she is reciting these words or if she is singing these words, but certainly they can be put to music.

[11 : 12] They are songs in that sense. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.

He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy. He has, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

And then, as she, as Luke summarizes the visit between Mary and Elizabeth, she remained with Elizabeth, was probably there for the birth of John the Baptist and returned to her home.

And so I want to talk about this song, this Mary's Magnificat, it's called. That's from the Latin. I don't know it that way. I just refer to it as Mary's song. But I want you to see a couple of things that she describes. The first is this. Mary described the recipients of God's mercy.

[12:29] We talked a few weeks ago about this has said, the Old Testament idea, the Hebrew word has said, which means the loyal love or the committed love of God or committed mercy of God.

There's no good English translation to carry it through for us. It's just an undeserved mercy of God. And this is what she's talking about, the recipients.

She describes, she gives some descriptions of the recipients of this mercy, including herself. And she states it in a way that's very personal.

These recipients of his mercy would know God personally as their Savior. this is true for us now too. This description that she gives of recipients of his mercy describes us.

We would know God personally. And she states that in the second phrase there, my soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.

[13:38] She's declaring her own need for a Savior here. She recognizes her need because of her sinfulness. Even though God recognized her living an upright life, she still recognized, I'm a sinner, I'm no different, and every sinner needs a Savior.

And it's become personal for her in that way. Secondly, the recipients of God's mercy would be filled with praise and joy in the Lord.

this ought to be a mark of our lives as well. Mary said, my soul magnifies, praises God, exalts God. It just simply means make him big. He's already big, we're just describing it. Okay? That's all what it means to praise the Lord, to magnify, to exalt the Lord, is just making much of him.

He's, and it's not we're making him that way. He already is that way. We're just declaring it. That's all we're doing. And my spirit rejoices.

[14:50] There's joy for those who receive the mercy of God. Third, they would have a high view of God and a low view of themselves.

And certainly Mary fit that description. We ought to fit that description. My soul magnifies the Lord.

And then the last statement there, the humble estate of his servant. She's talking about herself.

She considers herself the slave of God. She recognizes I've not done anything to deserve this favor that God is giving to her.

It's all of God's grace, God's mercy, God's goodness. And then, finally, they will be hungry. They will be hungry. And they will also have been satisfied by God.

And I think this is describing more than physical hunger. I think it also is spiritual hunger as well.

And that would describe he has filled the hungry with good things.

[15:56] And then, the second list of descriptions that she gives might cause some folks to have a little bit trouble with her song.

Sometimes you hear people, particularly today, it's been true since as long as I've been a Christian, people in some churches and some theological circles that would describe well, hey, let's talk about the goodness of God.

Let's talk about the love of God. We don't need to go down this negative road. We don't need to talk about all the harsh things that are found there. In fact, let's just kind of ignore them and let's just rejoice and be glad and talk about the good things.

Let's be positive. Let's not emphasize the negative. Let's emphasize the positive. That's not what Mary does. Mary presents both sides.

So, with that in mind, Mary also described, this is kind of hard to put it this way, but this is the way the Bible talks about it, the objects of God's wrath, or the objects of God's judgment.

[17:13] And people would say, well, let's just not even read those portions, let's just kind of skip over them. Let me give you a for instance. Everybody loves John 3.16, right?

John 3.16, we memorize it, we talk about it, and it's a real positive verse, right? It's talking about the love of God, you know, for people who would just believe, for God so loved the world that he gave

his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

What a positive statement. That's how we ought to focus. But I want to ask you a question. Do you see the hint, do you see the shadow of what I would call bad news?

what's the shadow of the bad news? And I've highlighted it for you, make it a little bit easier. The shadow of the bad news is that those who would believe in him should not perish, would not perish. What does it mean to perish? Die. Yeah, you know, you think of a banana that starts to go bad. Think of yourself doing the same thing, okay? But spiritually.

[18:26] Should not perish, but have eternal life. So what happens to the people who don't believe in him? That's the shadow of the bad news, right?

People who don't believe in him will perish and not have eternal life and instead have what? Eternal death, okay?

That's still in existence, it's just not eternal life. Eternal death describes people who are the objects of God's wrath, a way of saying that, who would spend eternity, their existence, in what we would call hell.

It's actually the eternal existence would be in the lake of fire. fire. I would call that bad news. Would you not call that bad news? Let me show you.

It's good to keep these verses in context as well. Let's look at verse 17. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world. Oh, we're back to the positive part, right? Because God said that he didn't send his son into the world to condemn the world, so we're not going to condemn the world either.

[19:39] And that's true, we're not. But in order that the world might be saved through him, all right, we're back to the good news. And it's awesome news that the world would be saved through Christ and that he's not coming to condemn the world, and so it's not our job to condemn the world either.

But someone has. Look what he says in verse 18. Whoever believes in him is not condemned. again, that's good news.

But whoever does not believe is condemned already. So God doesn't have to, in a sense, freshly condemn them.

They're already condemned. Matter of fact, that's how we all start off. We all start off condemned. Most of the time we have this idea, in churches, people who aren't saved, it doesn't matter, that before people come to Christ that I'm kind of stuck here in neutral.

I'm in the middle. And that I either have to either choose to believe in Christ or choose not to believe in Christ, but until I make that decision, I'm here on the fence.

[20:59] I'm in the middle. That is not biblical. It's not theologically correct. God views us as already condemned, already dead in our trespasses and sins.

And when we put our faith and our trust in him to save us, he rescues us out of that. He saves us out of that condemnation and makes us alive in Christ, forgiven for our sins, no longer condemned, will never be condemned, John 5, 24.

And so we have to be consistent and I think as we'll see here shortly, Mary is also consistent in sharing bad news as well as the good news.

So we see that in Mary, she describes those who are objects of God's wrath as being proud people, as being mighty, and as being rich people, not in God's appraisal, not in God's view, but in the world's view.

Again, we see this in her song, verses 51 and 52. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate, and he has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.

[22:40] And then the verb part of that, he considers them proud, mighty, rich, they think of themselves in that way, but here's the action verb, God actively scatters them, he brings them down, sends them away empty handed.

This is God's view, this is what God does to those who are lost. And I want you to notice as well Mary's words, and these are quotes from the Old Testament.

But it's interesting to me, I read this and I thought, well that's kind of odd, I never thought of it this way. There are missionary agencies back in the day that would tell their missionaries when they were going to particular countries not to publicly read this song of Mary's.

Because the concern would be, Mary's song sounds very revolutionary. Right? We're going to throw the mighty down, we're going to bring them down off of their thrones, we're going to rise up and be satisfied.

Look at this language that's used. Scattered the proud, he has brought down the mighty from their thrones, exalted those of humble estate.

[24 : 12] So the concern, particularly in India, when the English, when Britain was sending missionaries to India, they would say, be careful about this particular passage of scripture because you don't want the authorities in India to think that you're preaching revolution, that you're going to bring down people from their thrones and all of that, that he helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy, all of these things that sound perhaps revolutionary.

So be concerned about that. And then we come to the birth of John the Baptist. And we saw earlier the announcement from the angel Gabriel to Zechariah there in the temple, in the tabernacle, in the holy place.

And Zechariah is stricken mute, can't speak, possibly can't hear as well as we'll see in our text today. And yet this promise that's given that his wife in her old age, she's probably late 70s, early 80s, that she would conceive and bear a son has come to pass and she has conceived and she's carried this child for the nine months.

And now the time, verse 57, has come 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.

This is cool. This is before she was concerned about her reproach because Zechariah and her hadn't had children. And so many in that culture would have thought, well, God is judging them because he's not allowing them to have children.

[26 : 10] And yet they would recognize because they lived an upright life, they lived an honorable life, it was a matter of confusion. But now in their old age, and certainly Zechariah would have had some time to awkwardly share the news of Gabriel coming and the announcement and all of that, not being able to speak it, but having a tablet and writing it down as best he could and all of that.

And so now they're coming and they're rejoicing with her that in her old age, God is finally honoring Zechariah and Elizabeth with a child.

And on the eighth day, which was the custom, they came to circumcise the child. This was normal, it was meant to be a public occasion, like a celebration, if you will.

I don't think we do that today, do we? Do we on the eighth day when we're getting ready to circumcise a boy? Do we have like a little party or anything like that?

I didn't think so. Interesting. They did. Okay. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father.

[27 : 31] That was a normal thing to do, but that's what all the people, the friends, and the relatives were expecting. But his mother answered, no, he shall be called John.

And that was frustrating to the relatives and the friends and the family. And they said to her, none of your relatives is called by this name.

And so they were certain that Zechariah would correct Elizabeth. and he can't speak, so we've got to somehow figure out, we've got to ask him somehow.

They made signs to his father, and if he could hear, why are they making signs to him? I don't quite get that portion of it, because initially you think he just can't speak, but maybe he also cannot hear. Inquiring what he wanted him to be called. So they're expecting Zechariah to say, well, name him after me. That's normal custom. And he asked for a writing tablet, and he wrote, and I want you to notice this little detail.

[28 : 45] His name is John. Not his name will be John. His name is currently, present tense, John.

According to Zechariah, from his perspective, and probably Elizabeth too, John already had his name. So on the eighth day, the day of the circumcision, they weren't there to give him his name, they were there to just simply announce what his name was, because the angel let them know that his name would be John.

So they honored that. And the people all wondered, well, what is the meaning of this? What's, why? What's going on with that?

They were puzzled by it. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue was loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

And fear came on all their neighbors. neighbors. It was a miraculous thing that happened right in their midst. Not just the fact that Zechariah could speak where he couldn't before for nine months or longer.

[30 : 07] And now they recognized, all right, there's something, there's something afoot here. There's something unusual with this kid. There's something going on here that is supernatural because now I really believe Zechariah.

If I doubted Zechariah's story before, now after witnessing this miracle, that's just the second part of the miracle. Because the first part of the miracle was the angel coming and saying, you're going to have a baby.

Maybe the second part was her conceiving. And then the third part was... And so now they're awestruck. Again, this is for Luke.

This is a major part of his story. All throughout the gospel, people were amazed. People were awestruck. People were... And that's true here. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea.

Remember, they didn't live in Jerusalem. They lived outside of Jerusalem in the hill country. And all who heard them laid them up in their hearts.

[31 : 15] They're collecting all of this information. This kid is special. They're watching him growing up. They're talking about the unusual circumstances of his birth story. And they're saying, God has something special in line for this kid, this child.

And so they're soaking this all up. And they're asking themselves, what then will this child be for the hand of the Lord was with him? And his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And he prophesied. He's filled with it. We see this statement also made in the case of Elizabeth earlier when she sees Mary. Luke is mindful to tell us she's filled with the Holy Spirit.

I'm certain Mary was also filled with the Holy Spirit. Luke doesn't tell us that, but when she sings her song, when she shares that. And so the idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit, it's something that we're commanded to do.

Ephesians chapter 5 tells us to not be drunk with wine wherein is excess or dissipation, but instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. So that's something that we're commanded to be.

[32 : 35] And a lot of times when we think of the filling of the Holy Spirit, we think of it almost like a fill my cup kind of a thing. And so I want to be filled up. I want to be filled full of the Holy Spirit.

When actually the picture that we should have is that we be controlled by. In the same sense that when someone is drunk with wine, they're controlled by the alcohol, their decisions the way they think is controlled by the alcohol.

When we're filled with the Holy Spirit, we're controlled by the Holy Spirit. He is in control of my life and so I think about what it would mean to honor God with my life.

I'm purposely conscious of being obedient to Him. That's what it means. I'm following His lead. I'm walking step by step with Him.

I'm keeping in step with Him. I'm following Him. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit. As He does this, He prophesies.

[33 : 41] Now, it's interesting that He's speaking words of prophecy and yet at the same time you could put this to music. He's, again, like Mary, quoting much of what He says is coming directly out of Old Testament passages of Scripture as we will see.

As we make our way through the prophecy, prophecy, there are a couple of things that I want us to take notice of. The first is this.

Zechariah prophesied about the salvation that God would provide to... to whom? who is the recipient of God's salvation according to Zechariah in this text?

Automatically, when we think about salvation, we think of individuals, me, myself, other people, other individuals. That's not what Zechariah is talking about here.

He's talking specifically about Israel. So, Zechariah prophesied about the salvation that God would provide to Israel through his Messiah according to his covenant.

[34 : 57] And this is what he's saying to the people that are gathered there for the circumcision and the naming of John. So, look at the text here and see what Zechariah says.

Verse 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel. For he has visited and redeemed his people, Israel, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant, David.

So, he's talking about, he's going back to the promise that God had given, covenant that God had made with David, that a Messiah would come out of his line, a king who would reign over Israel, forever.

So, that's what he's referencing. As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved. Again, this is collectively, Israel should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

When we think of salvation, we don't think of it in these terms. We don't think of being saved from our enemies. We don't think of being saved from the people who hate us.

[36 : 19] Israel certainly did. And I want you to notice, too, if you pay attention to the news, Israel certainly does, present tense, think about salvation from their enemies and those who hate them.

So, I want you to see how Zechariah's prophecy, not only is it connected to the Old Testament, it's just a carry on, a carry over from prophecies that were made in the Old Testament.

Zechariah is repeating them and you and I today are seeing prophecy in action, in our midst, in our world.

All these people that are gathering and marching and protesting against Zionism or Israel or the attacks that Israel, the Israelite people in the Middle East are having to face with all of these different, all around them.

This has been true throughout history, that you have this hatred for Israel. And of course, it is satanic in nature.

[37 : 36] Satan wants nothing more than to destroy God's people and that has been true all throughout history. We've seen it in different periods throughout history.

And we're seeing it again in our midst. I remember as a kid thinking, oh, you know, studying World War II, I was a big fan of World War II.

Even as a kid, I had World War II little plastic army men and my friend had German soldiers and we would fight each other, you know, in the dirt.

So I remember thinking, boy, it's good, we'll never see that again. we'll never see things like the Holocaust again. And that was naive on my part.

And it's naive in the sense that this has been happening throughout history over and over and over again.

[38 : 38] And until Jesus comes, as long as he waits, as long as he tarries, we will continue to see Israel being hated and being attacked.

And so we, this is what Zechariah is saying here about Israel, to show the mercy promised to our fathers. Remember, there was a covenant that was made between Abraham and God, between David and God.

So this mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, covenant that God made, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, the one-sided covenant, to grant us that we being delivered, Israel, we being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Now this is yet future tense. This didn't happen at Jesus' first coming. Israel rejected Christ at his first coming.

But God's promise to Israel still stands. It was unconditional. And so while Israel today has been set aside, if you will, Jesus is coming again and when he does, he will then fulfill his promise to Israel once again.

[40 : 18] And so we look forward yet to this day when the people of Israel will be able to serve him without fear. Are they able to serve him without fear right now? No.

Matter of fact, most of them are blind to the truth of the gospel. Most of them reject Christ as Messiah. Messiah. That, Romans chapter 9, 10, and 11, that by the way has opened the door for us Gentiles now to receive the gospel, to be saved, to be part of God's plan for all the ages.

And we are the beneficiaries of that. But yet, there's coming a day when he will return once again, his sights to Israel and fulfill his promises to them so that they might serve him without fear and in holiness and righteousness before him all of our days.

So Zechariah was looking forward to that day. He was absolutely excited about that day. Now, unfortunately, there is a theology out there.

It's called covenant theology that teaches that once Israel rejected the Messiah, that God forsook his promise to Israel and instead instituted the church to be the recipient of the promises God made

to Israel, which I struggle mightily with because that means that God is not going to fulfill his promise to Israel any longer, that somehow magically the church replaced Israel.

[41 : 56] That's not in God's plan. In Romans chapter 11, I just want to show you a couple of verses from here that demonstrate this. Paul, a Jewish believer, who there are Jews today, there are Israelites today, who do get saved, a small number of them, but there are some.

That was true in Paul's day as well. His normal pattern when he went into a new city to preach the gospel and to plant a church was to go into a synagogue and preach to the Jews first.

And when they rejected the message of the gospel, then he went outside of the synagogue and went to the Gentiles of that city and began to plant a church there. But all along the way, there were always Jews in each city.

There were always a small number of Jews who were getting saved, who were trusting Christ as Savior. There's always a small number of Jews who will be Christians. But there's coming a day when, as Paul will say here, all of Israel will be saved.

We'll have to discover what that means here. He says this, and we're kind of jumping into the middle of his discussion here in verse 25. Lest you be wise in your own sight, and he's talking to us Gentiles here, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers.

[43 : 13] And this mystery he's talking about is how he is handling Israel during this time of the church age. He says a partial hardening has come upon Israel.

A partial hardening has come upon Israel. And this hardening is a different kind of hardening than we normally talk about in the New Testament.

The word hardening, we normally get the word hardening from the word sclerosis. The Greek word is sclerosis. And if you have like hardening of your arteries, that's the word that's used there, the sclerosis of your arteries, the hardening of your, there's stuff that gets there and it gets hard and it makes it difficult for blood to flow in your arteries.

That's not the word that's used here for hardening. It's a different word that means the dulling of, dulling of their senses so that they just, it's not that they're hardened to the, it's when Jews hear the gospel today, they're just dull to it.

They don't respond to it. It's not that they're against it. They just don't really even understand it.

They don't, it doesn't register with them. So a partial hardening has come upon Israel for a time.

[44 : 34] In other words, it's temporary. This hardening is temporary until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. In other words, God knows when, when the church will be completed, when the church would, would be full and he's going to send Christ and come and rapture the church and take us away into heaven and then the tribulation will begin.

And that's, tribulation is once again, God dealing with Israel. That's why we're not here during the tribulation because he's not dealing with the church. He's dealing with Israel once again.

And when that happens, during the tribulation, there will be millions of Jews who come to faith in Christ during the tribulation. And a lot of them are going to be slaughtered by the Antichrist.

Many of them will be killed, put to death during the tribulation. But they will come, not every one of them, but many of them will.

In a sense, as a nation, they will come to Christ. In this way, all Israel will be saved. Now, Paul is not saying that every individual will be saved.

[45 : 47] Again, we think of salvation as being for individuals. But again, he's talking about Israel as a nation will be saved. So the majority of them will come to faith in Christ, I believe.

But there will still be many who won't. But the nation itself, God will take up again his covenant with Israel to fulfill it.

As it is written, the deliverer will come from Zion, Jesus. He will banish ungodliness from Jacob.

Now, if Israel has been replaced by the church, what does this mean then?

Jacob is the word for Israel. Jacob was renamed in the book of Genesis, Israel. So he's talking specifically to the nation of Israel.

And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins. He's now talking about the fulfillment of all of these Old Testament prophecies about what it would be like when the Messiah would come.

[46 : 54] They thought first coming, but it's the second coming of Jesus. When you have during the kingdom, all of these incredible, everyone's going to be saved and you'll have lion that lays down with the lamb and there won't be any more war and all of this incredible stuff that happens during

the kingdom that we're looking forward to.

That's all. He's going to fulfill those promises once again to Israel. We get to be part of it too as Gentiles because we've been grafted in, but he's going to fulfill it to Israel.

And this is what Zechariah is prophesying. He's talking about Israel, God's promises to Israel. And then the second part of his prophecy is talking about his own son, John.

So Zechariah prophesied about the ministry of his own son, John, in the way that John would be preparing the way for the Messiah.

Now, don't just read these words. I want you to picture what this would have looked like. This is John's circumcision.

[48 : 11] People are gathered there. Imagine Zechariah holding his baby boy. And as he's holding his boy, he says this, and you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High.

And I just imagine Zechariah at this point, as he's prophesying, he's receiving these words from God. And you, child, I imagine him looking at his son.

I imagine him at this point with tears streaming down his face, and his wife, Elizabeth, too. You, my son. God has called you to be a prophet of the Most High.

For you, my son, will go before the Lord to prepare his ways. Can you imagine? Your son is called to prepare the way for the one that we've been looking forward to all this time.

that you, my son, will give knowledge of salvation to his people and the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God.

[50 : 00] this is the chesed, the undeserved favor, grace of God.

John, my son, you're going to carry this message. Whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high.

Now, depending on which translation you use, this is the ESV.

This is the morning sun comes across the horizon to dispel the darkness. The King James, the New King James, used the word dayspring.

I don't know if you've heard that term before, the dayspring, that Jesus is the dayspring. He's the one who's coming over the horizon to bring the light to all those who are in darkness.

[51 : 12] Right? To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. It's from Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2.

Right before the verses where we talk about, and his name shall be called wonderful counselor to guide our feet into the way of peace.

And a lot of times we see this way of peace and we think, oh, there's not going to be any more war anymore. That's not what that's a reference to, although that will also be a consequence of his coming.

But it's peace with him, with God. He provides peace with God through what he did for us at the cross.

And so here's Zechariah holding his son, prophesying about God's fulfilling his promise to Israel through the Messiah who was to come and his own son was going to be preparing the way for that Messiah.

[52 : 34] Remember their age. All their lives. It's been nothing but darkness and silence and nothing. God didn't allow them to have children and yet they were still faithful.

And now this new day is dawning in their midst. And the emotion of that, I don't know if we could understand, any of us could understand what must have been in Zechariah's heart and Elizabeth's heart in that moment.

That promise is for you and me today as well. It's a promise for the nation of Israel. God's still got you.

God will fulfill his promise to Israel. Until he comes again we need to be faithful witnesses sharing the good news of Jesus Christ to every Gentile and every Jew to people that we know who need Christ so that they too can be participants in the same covenant, the same promise.

It's coming. We're going to be a part of it. We are a part of it. We see it unfolding right before our eyes.

[54 : 05] We look at the pages of Scripture. You look at the news as it happens and you can see it's happening. It's real.

This faith of ours is not some imaginary play thing. It is real and it is concrete and it's coming to pass.

And so you and I we can hold on. We can wait patiently. We can look to the skies and expect that at any moment they're going to split open and Jesus is going to be calling and saying come up here. It's going to happen and we will in that kingdom that God promised Israel we will be together serving him in peace and prosperity and joy and health and all the things that these guys on TV are promising is going to happen for today.

No. But it will that day. and we have so much to look forward to and it's not pie in the sky.

[55 : 29] It's coming. The chapter concludes with the child grew John the Baptist grew and became strong in spirit.

This is all we really have about his growing up years. This is it. And he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel. That's all we got about John the Baptist. because then we're going to get into chapter 2.

The beginning of chapter 2 is the Christmas story that we're familiar with. We went through that on Christmas Eve. Next Sunday we're going to start with when they bring Jesus to the temple for his dedication and a couple of more prophets get to see unfolding before their eyes notice what God is doing and rejoicing in their old age both of them old and yet so much to look forward to.

Lord we thank you thank you for the promises that you have made that we know you will fulfill. you've made so many promises that have already come to pass so many things that we have seen in the scriptures that have already been fulfilled how could we not believe and fully expect your other promises about your second coming to come to pass how could we not fully expect you to fulfill the covenant that you made with Israel your people your chosen people Lord we know it will come to pass we know that you have not abandoned your chosen people Israel that for now yes you have opened the way for us

Gentiles and we are so grateful and we are grateful for Israel because it is through Israel that the promise is given to us and now we get to be part of it this invitation to join you for all of eternity and to know your grace and your goodness the one who created us and we get to live with you for all of eternity in peace and true love and joy thank you for that Lord I pray for those here today that don't know you as Savior for anyone watching online

[58 : 38] I pray Lord that they would see that these promises that you make these covenants that you that you strike that you promise to fulfill and you commit to fulfill that you will bring them to pass and it's true how could we look at the way the world treats Israel today and not see with our very eyes the truth of the scriptures right in front of us Lord help us to really walk in the confidence and the assurance that this is real to not be swayed by the way the world thinks the way the world mocks the way the world hates the things of God we have so much

Lord to be thankful for let us be faithful into living like these people that we've been reading about Zechariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Simeon and Anna that we'll see next week may faithfulness and obedience be the mark of our lives Lord not because we deserve anything because we've been given so much already we don't deserve it and yet you give us your grace so freely your love and your goodness we've received Lord we thank you and we love you may we live it out all of our days until we see you face to face we ask it in Jesus name amen voy