

# The Glory of Christmas Series: The Theology of Christmas Luke 1:5-80

## Isn't it amazing how excited the witnesses of Christmas became, as they saw Him?

Surrounding Christ's birth are groups of believers who overflow with geysers of praise.

Sometimes we need to get close to them and see what they saw, then we will also feel the wonder, and overflow with praise.. In each of these five hymns of praise we find the truths about God which are the Theology of Christmas.

There is the hymn of Elisabeth, of Zacharias, of Mary, of the angels, and finally of Simeon & Anna. So the Christ of Christmas is introduced to us by a series of five Spirit prompted hymns, with Elisabeth's in Luke 1:42 being the first. If you have never noted these in your Bibles, let me point them out as:

## The Hymns or Psalms of Christmas

1. First we see the scene when Elisabeth, the 6-months-along expectant mother of John the Baptist, breaks into praise at her cousin Mary's arrival. These verses have been called since ancient times by a name derived from the first word of the Latin Vulgate, which is the: "**Exclamavit**" (Luke 1:42-45).

Luke 1:42-45 (NKJV) Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "**Blessed** are you among women, and **blessed** is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup> **Blessed** is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

2. Then we catch the wonders of the words of Mary, who follows Elisabeth's outpouring of praise with her marvelous "**Magnificat**" (Luke 1:46-55). In these ten verses Mary points to the Lord 19x, mentions herself 4x, and quotes over twenty different Scripture portions!

Luke 1:46-55 (NKJV) And Mary said:

“ My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in **God my Savior.**  
48 For **He** has regarded the lowly state of **His maidservant;**  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
49 For **He who is mighty** has done great things for me,  
And holy is **His name.**  
50 And **His mercy** is on those who fear **Him**  
From generation to generation.  
51 **He** has shown strength with **His arm;**  
**He has scattered** the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
52 **He** has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted the lowly.  
53 **He has filled** the hungry with good things,  
And the rich **He has sent** away empty.  
54 **He has helped His** servant Israel,  
In remembrance of **His mercy,**  
55 As **He spoke** to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

3. Just about three months later, at John the Baptist’s naming ceremony and circumcision, his dad Zacharias, breaks forth into his famous “**Benedictus**” (Luke 1:68-79).

Luke 1:68-79 (NKJV) “ Blessed is the **Lord God of Israel,**  
For **He** has visited and **redeemed His people,**  
69 And has raised up a **horn of salvation** for us  
In the house of His servant David,  
70 As **He spoke** by the mouth of **His holy prophets,**  
Who have been since the world began,  
71 That **we should be saved** from our enemies  
And from the hand of all who hate us,  
72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers  
And to remember **His holy covenant,**  
73 The oath which **He swore** to our father Abraham:  
74 To grant us that we,  
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
**Might serve Him without fear,**  
75 In holiness and righteousness **before Him** all the days of our life.  
76 “ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;  
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,  
77 **To give knowledge of salvation to His people**  
**By the remission of their sins,**  
78 Through the tender mercy of our God,  
With which **the Dayspring from on high has visited us;**  
79 To **give light** to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
**To guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

4. Then, about six months later: Christ is born; and to welcome His arrival the angels break into the night sky over the shepherd's fields of Bethlehem with their "**Gloria**" (Luke 2:14).

Luke 2:14 (NKJV) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

5. And finally, forty days after Christ's birth, Joseph and Mary are in Jerusalem on their way to offer the offering, at the Temple, God had prescribed in His Word. There they meet an elderly man who amazes them. Simeon lifts his eyes to God as he stood on the Temple steps, and holding baby Jesus in his arms, he praises God in his hymn that has been title the: "**Nunc Dimittis**" (Luke 2:29-32).

Luke 2:29-32 (NKJV) "Lord, now You are letting **Your servant depart in peace**, according to Your word; 30 For my **eyes have seen Your salvation** 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Each of these hymns: before Christ's birth, at His Birth, and after His Birth are overflowing with thanks to God. These praise offerings remind us that when we at last come into His presence—as the book of Revelation records: we will forever be singing the praise hymns that He alone is worthy!

Now turn back with me to Luke 1:5 and we will examine just Zacharias' hymn of praise, and apply the truths about Christ's coming to our lives today.

## **Zacharias was just One of Thousands**

Zacharias was just one of 24,000 priests who served at the Temple 2 weeks per year; but among all those thousands, God was looking for him—and Zacharias is chosen by God to be the father of the final Old Testament prophet named John the Baptist. That is what Zacharias hears as he meets Gabriel. After he hears the good news of his son of promise, John the Baptist, he waits in muted silence because of his disbelief. Please stand with me and follow along as I read these words of Scripture:

Luke 1:5-25 (NKJV) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. 8 So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. 10 And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon

him. 13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." 18 And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." 19 And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. 20 But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time." 21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. 23 So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. 24 Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, 25 "Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

## Pray

After 40 weeks of waiting (and studying God's Word) John is born and his dad sings. What was ZACHARIAS doing while he had no voice?

It would appear that he spent much of the time while he was set aside, handicapped as it were, studying God's Word!

Whenever we get incapacitated, crippled, handicapped, out of circulation, laid aside, out of work, and so on—***we can either waste the time or invest it with God.*** The choice is ours!

Now move on in your Bibles to that praise hymn of Zacharias" in Luke 1:67-79.

The praises of Zechariah's hymn summarize the ministry of John pointing to Jesus. The song introduces the Coming One – Jesus, and explains why He came.<sup>1</sup>

By the act of faith, naming John as Gabriel had told him to do (Luke 1:63), God looses Zacharias' tongue and he bursts into a Spirit prompted hymn.

As we study these verses closely, they reveal the beautiful pictures of what the coming

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<sup>1</sup> The song that Zechariah sings summarizes the ministry of John pointing to Jesus. The song introduces the Coming One – Jesus, and explains why He came. But this song also reflects the notes from Zacharias' 40-week plus Bible study conducted as he waited in mute silence for his son's birth. Here are all the places Zacharias found promises of Christ's coming. First he quotes from Psalms 18, 23, 32, 34, 83, 106, and 132. Plus he uses extensive quotations from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Malachi!  
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of Jesus Christ to earth really means.

*First, Zacharias tells us that JESUS CAME TO **OPEN** OUR PRISON DOOR—JESUS HAS REDEEMED US (v. 68).*

*"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and **redeemed** His people."*

We see such power in that word *redeem* which means "to set free by paying a price." It referred to the ancient custom of releasing of a prisoner or the liberating of a slave by purchasing them. So we can say that:

## **Christ's Redemption Opened our Prison Doors**

Jesus Christ came to earth to bring "deliverance to the captives" (Luke 4:18)—that was the message He preached at His hometown synagogue. Christ's salvation is offered to us who are in bondage to sin and death. We are powerless to set ourselves free; only Jesus the Lamb of God could pay the price necessary for our redemption (Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18–21).

This Christmas, remember with Zacharias that ***Christ's redemption means*** that there is: **NO BONDAGE that Christ's Power cannot break.**

Think of all those that Jesus freed: the leper in Mark 1, the demoniac in Mark 5; the palsied man by the pool in John 5; and countless others. Jesus has no less power today.

The only difference from His earthly ministry in the Gospels is that Jesus can now be everywhere at once. He is no longer localized to healing one person in one place at a time.

Jesus showed His power to Paul in Acts 16 when the earthquake shook the jail doors open, and the chains fell off of Paul & Silas, but they had to get up and walk out!

In a very real sense, each day we surrender to Him: Jesus shakes the prison houses of our habits, our bondages, and our besetting sins with His resurrection power. The chains that bind us He breaks off, the barred doors that imprison us He bursts open: all we need to do is walk out, and by faith realize we have been freed. Turn back with me for a moment to John 8:31:

John 8:31-36 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "**If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**" <sup>32</sup> And you shall **know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**" <sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* You say, 'You will be made free?'" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.**" <sup>35</sup> And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. <sup>36</sup>

Therefore **if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**

Are you bound to some secret or public sin today? Jesus came to live and die because He wants to redeem and liberate you—just ask Him.

Say “Jesus: open the prison door that holds me back, let me believe that You have set me free”. “Jesus, redeem me from my bondage.”

The Glorious Truth of Christmas is that: there is **NO BONDAGE that Christ's Power cannot break.**

This Christmas, remember with Zacharias that ***Christ's redemption means*** that there is: **NO FEAR that His Presence cannot banish.**

The most frequently repeated negative prohibition in God's Word is: Fear Not. We humans are so much like sheep: we are fearful and weak, helpless and defenseless against most of the dangers we fear. Be honest, confess your fears to Jesus. Then hear what He says.

Matthew 28:20b “and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”  
Amen.

Are you chained to fear about the past, the present or the future? Jesus banishes all fears when we open our eyes to His Presence. Just say, “Jesus, redeem me from my fears.”

The Glorious Truth of Christmas is that: there is **NO FEAR that His Presence cannot banish.**

This Christmas, remember with Zacharias that ***Christ's redemption means*** that there is: **NO STAIN that is Precious Blood cannot cleanse.**

Jesus clearly stated in His ministry that all sins are forgivable. Just ask Him, seek His cleansing. Say to Jesus this Christmas, “Cleanse me now.” And hear Him say, “I am willing—be clean.”

Revelation 1:5b “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood”.

The Blood of Jesus God's Son cleanses from some or all sin? ALL! Listen again to 1 John 1:7 (NKJV): But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin.**

The Glorious Truth of Christmas is that: there is **NO STAIN that is Precious Blood cannot cleanse.**

This Christmas, remember with Zacharias that ***Christ's redemption means*** that there

is: **NO PAST that His Promises cannot make new.**

Jesus will never condemn us if we come to Him. All we need to do is confess and forsake our sin, He does the rest. Just say, "Jesus let me start over again in you—give me Your new beginning."

John 8:11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Jesus offers the same to us today.

Many of us have forgotten what being born-again means. The New Birth is an offer of the ultimate fresh start. Think about a baby at birth: a baby is a person with no past, just a future.

The New Birth offers us a brand new start, with the record of every sin, every failure, every stain removed forever. All that a born-again believer has is a FUTURE! That is why salvation is the greatest gift of all.

The Glorious Truth of Christmas is that: there is **NO PAST that His Promises cannot make new.**

**This may be the best gift you get this Christmas.** More than a digital device to add to your entertainment, scheduling, or social interaction: Jesus came to offer you something money, technology, and status can never buy.

Jesus says, I came to give to you TODAY my redemption. Here are the features that owning your own personal copy of His redemption provides:

1. There is **NO BONDAGE that Christ's Power cannot break.**
2. There is: **NO FEAR that His Presence cannot banish.**
3. There is: **NO STAIN that is Precious Blood cannot cleanse.**
4. There is: **NO PAST that His Promises cannot make new.**

If you have not yet overflowed with thanks to God and praise to Him for His sending Jesus, then you must not yet understand what He has done.

We who know Jesus personally and intimately today have His gift of redemption: bought, wrapped, and given to us freely in Christ.

The Glory of Christmas is our Savior Jesus who came to assure us that He has saved us and nothing can take away our gift of the new birth: NO bondage, NO fear, NO stain, and NO past.

We are living each day with an endless new beginning through His redemption.

That truth should make us break into hymns of praise just like it did those who first saw him. Why not stand with me and with our voices, lift our thanks to Him (#82): O Come let us adore Him; We'll Praise His Name forever; We'll give Him all the Glory; For He alone is Worthy!

## APPENDIX:

# Christ's Death has Defeated our Enemies

*Second, from this amazing song of Zacharias we can learn that:*

*JESUS CAME TO **DEFEAT** OUR ENEMIES—Christ's Death Saves Us: (vv. 69–75).*

*And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, 71 That we should be **saved from our enemies** And from the hand of all who hate us, 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 To grant us that we, Being **delivered from the hand of our enemies**, Might serve Him **without fear**, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*

In the first word picture, we as captives are set free. In this second word picture our enemy is defeated *so that he cannot capture us as prisoners any more*. God offers total victory to us His people.

In the Old Testament a horn symbolizes power and victory (1 Kings 22:11; Ps. 89:17, 24). As Zacharias had studied the Scriptures he reflects upon God as He is often pictured in the Old Testament delivering the army of His people as they are about to be taken captive. But when the Lord arises, the enemy is defeated.

*The word salvation (Luke 1:69, 71) carries the meaning of "health and soundness." No matter what the condition of the captives, their Redeemer brings spiritual soundness. When you trust Jesus Christ as Savior, you are delivered from Satan's power, moved into God's kingdom, redeemed, and forgiven (Col. 1:12–14).*

Jesus came to open every prison door of our life: there's no bondage He can't break; and there's no fear He can't banish; and there's no stain He can't cleanse; and there's no past He can't make new.

This Christmas remember with Zacharias that there is **No enemy can stand before Him, not Death (John 11:25), not Darkness (John 8:12), not Despair, not Defeat, not Defilement—nothing stands before Him.**

Matthew 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NKJV) Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those



who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

*Third, from this amazing song of Zacharias we can learn that:*

**JESUS CAME TO PAY OUR DEBTS—OUR DEBT WAS CANCELLED BY HIS DEATH** (vv. 76–77).

*"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins*

*Remission* means "to send away, to dismiss, as a debt." All of us are in debt to God because we have broken His law and failed to live up to His standards (Luke 7:40–50). Furthermore, all of us are spiritually bankrupt, unable to pay our debt.

But Jesus came and paid the debt for us (Ps. 103:12; John 1:29). This is the glorious truth of our great salvation through Christ.

- When Jesus JUSTIFIED us, we as sinners stood before God as accused, and were declared righteous by His imputed righteousness.
- When Jesus REDEEMED us, we as sinners stood before God as slaves and were granted freedom by His ransom.
- When Jesus FORGAVE us, we as sinners stood before God as debtors and our debt was forgotten by His payment.
- When Jesus RECONCILED us, we as sinners stood before God as enemies and were made friends by His peace.
- When Jesus ADOPTED us, we as sinners stood before God as strangers and were called sons and daughters by His choice.

*Fourth, from this amazing song of Zacharias we can learn that:*

**JESUS CAME TO BRING THE DAWNING OF A NEW DAY THAT KNOWS NO NIGHT—OUR NIGHT WAS ENDED BY HIS LIGHT** (vv. 78–79).

*Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."*

*Dayspring* means "sunrise." God's Word sees lost people as those sitting in darkness and death, and distress. Christ's birth brought light, life, and peace. Christ's birth was the dawn of a new day because of the tender mercies of God.

Jesus is the only key to the day that knows no night.

He came into a manger one dark night to bear away the sin of the world. He will take your penalty, your debt, your stain, your sin if only you will ask Him.

The story of Christmas is that the Sunrise has come, He is here, open your heart to Him!

He has redeemed us, defeated every danger, and now gives us His light.

Proverbs 4:18 (ESV) But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.