

The King's New World Announcement

68 "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 (Luke 1:68-75, NKJV)

Context

Who, What, Where, When and Why?

Who: Zechariah was the father of John the Baptist. He was a priest who served in the Temple and according to the Bible was blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. His wife's name was Elizabeth.

What: At the time of this prophecy he had been unable to speak (And apparently unable to hear, cf Luke 1:62) for at least nine months. This prophecy was uttered under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Where: This took place in the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth. They lived in the hill country of Judea. This is an elevated area of the traditional tribal district of Judah.

When: Zechariah uttered this prophecy eight days after the birth of his son. Friends and relatives had gathered at the home to celebrate the circumcision and naming of the new baby. When he was asked what the baby should be named, Zechariah indicated "John." At that point he was able to speak. These events took place in 3 or 2 BC.

Why: This is the first announcement of God's intention concerning the coming Messiah. In this prophetic utterance, Zechariah declares covenant renewal.

Content

What was the original author concerned with and what did he want his original audience to understand? Furthermore, how would the original audience interpret it?

Zechariah's prophecy is delivered according to the covenant sequence. This means he prophesied concerning the sovereignty of God, representation or line of authority, ethics or behavior, sanctions (blessings or punishments) and continuity. Any Jew of the first century would be familiar with the covenant sequence. It is found throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament as a means of outlining and presenting information. It is found in the construction of the 10 Commandments and in the book of Deuteronomy itself.

Those who heard Zechariah's prophecy would certainly have recognized the covenant sequence. This would alert them to the fact that God, through Zechariah, was speaking to them about his covenant promises. They would hear the covenant was about to be realized in a fashion they had long hoped for.

Consideration

What are the principles found here and how do they apply to the modern Christian?

The covenant sequence remains pertinent to the people of God. God is sovereign and he relates to us in Jesus the Christ. He calls upon us to behave in a particular way and he promises us blessings for obedience to his word. Furthermore, the great Christian confidence of eternity with our Lord and Savior is the ultimate promise of continuity.

It is very important to understand how God relates to us so we may properly relate to him. Jesus said "you call me Lord but you don't do what I say." That kind of behavior reveals an ignorance concerning the covenant relationship we have with God. If we hope to live the fullest life – life and life more abundantly – then we need to understand our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. This requires our understanding of the five point covenant sequence.

Study Questions

- 1. Name the five points of the Covenant Sequence.*
- 2. Who is the preeminent representative for God?*
- 3. What event brought the people together to hear Zechariah's prophecy?*

If you would like input on your answers to the study questions you may message me through myFaithBase.com or email me at mfb@davidericwilliams.com