Sneak Prophetic Peak; Coming Attractions Of The Son of Man
Luke 1:67-80

Introduction

We now come to the portion of Scripture known as the “Benedictus” (the opening word in Latin to this portion of Scripture). It has also been called the ‘Song of Zacharias’.

Here we have a ‘sneak prophetic peak’ into the future ministries of Jesus Christ and John the Baptist. The old priest Zacharias-filled with the Holy Spirit-gives us a sneak preview of the ministries of his fabulous Savior Jesus and famous son—John the Baptist. What does the future hold for Zacharias’ little boy (v.66)?

Dr. E.T. Sullivan said, “The greatest forces in the world are not the earthquakes and thunderbolts, the greatest forces in the world are babies”. We have been introduced to Elizabeth’s baby and Mary’s baby. Both babies are prophets. One baby will be Israel’s long awaited Messiah. On my dresser at home is a baby picture of my grandmother taken in 1912. My great-grandfather holds her on his lap, looking strangely like me holding my son on my lap in 1984. My great-grandfather’s future was my past. We hold our babies and wonder what the future will bring. Those born prior to 1926 are called the Senior generation. Builders were born from 1927 to 1945. My generation is called the Boomer generation. We were born from 1946-1964. The next generation was called the Busters, and those after them have been called Gen X. Zacharias’ generation might have been called the Doom and Gloomers. A dark cloud had descended on Israel after the prophet Malachi prophesied some 400 years earlier. Imagine living in a generation where the last time God visited with a word was four centuries earlier. The dark cloud was about to be lifted. There was a new generation. The sun was going to shine and the Son of God was going to shine and rise—shine the light of God’s truth and rise from the dead. I would call Jesus’ generation The Good News Generation. Hope and peace and forgiveness was about to explode on the human scene. The gospel is hope for a disillusioned generation.

Zacharias is holding his baby and God’s Holy Spirit reveals the future as if it were the past, God’s done deal. Some of you are holding your babies. Are you holding a prophet? What is a prophet?

“My mother taught Sunday school in our small rural church. She began one lesson by asking the children if they knew what a prophet was. Little Donny showed his farming background when he offered, "That's when you buy a lamb for 42 cents a pound and sell it for 69 cents a pound.”

No—really—what is a prophet? “A prophet is one who knows his times and what God is trying to say to the people of his times” (A. W. Tozer).

Zacharias’ Prophecy (v.67)

Luke 1:67 (NKJV) “Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:”
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Don’t skip over this portion! Earlier in the chapter Zacharias was disobedient. He refused to believe the Angel’s message concerning his wife’s pregnancy and the miracle birth of John the Baptist. He was living a life of religious ritual and practical cynicism.

Now the old priest is filled with the Holy Spirit! He has been forgiven his sin of unbelief. Do you remember what happened earlier? Zacharias questioned God’s messenger. As soon as Zacharias demonstrated faith in God’s promise, he was healed and forgiven his sin! Zacharias is filled with the Holy Spirit! Often when the Holy Spirit would ‘fill’ someone it would lead to a bold testimony of the wonderful works of God and praise to God! In this case—the Spirit leads Zacharias to predict certain aspects of the ministry of the Messiah and the Messiah’s messenger—John the Baptist! This is in keeping with the ultimate ministry of the Holy Spirit—to point people to Jesus! Any ministry of the Holy Spirit that does not point people to Jesus cannot be rightly called a ministry of the Holy Spirit!

When we repent of our sins, believe and obey God’s Word, we are filled with the Holy Spirit! Acts 2:38 (NKJV) “Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”.

The ancient Etruscans foretold the future by looking at sheep livers. They divided the liver into sixteen parts just as they had divided the heavens into sixteen parts. Certain gods ruled various parts of the heavens and would get into corresponding parts of the liver and give signs that provided guidance for people. How far removed that is from the guidance David wrote about: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

(v.68b) “and prophesied” Prophecy includes predicting the future, but it can also include celebrating the praises of God or to teach or preach the gospel. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith”.

The Prediction of the Perfect Messiah (vv.68-75)

Prophets hail the Son of Man’s coming as “the opening of prison doors” (v.68) “major spiritual battles won” (vv.69-75) “canceling of debts” (vv.76-77) “the dawning of a new day” (vv.78-79).

(v.68) Luke 1:68 (NKJV)
68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people,

Both John and Jesus’ ministries are future yet Zacharias’ speaks as if the prophecy is already fulfilled (the prophetic past tense)! From God’s perspective, past, present and future are in the eternal now.
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There are many things that can be said for predictive prophecy. Predicative prophecy is proof that God spoke in times past through prophets. Predicative prophecy is also proof that the Bible comes from God and has been preserved as an intact revelation of God.

“We do not question that holy men moved by the Holy Spirit have foretold things that were to come to pass, which could not have been foreseen by the natural wisdom of men. But too much of importance has been attached to the purely predictive element of prophecy.

Looking for fulfillment of prophecy in particular historical events, we do not see revelations of the character of our holy God, and his relation to a race of lost men. We do not read the lesson that we are the creatures of his all-wise and gracious purpose, the objects of his redeeming love and providential care.”


There are four important predictions made about the Messiah:

(1) Through God’s Messiah-God would visit and redeem His people (v.68).

Why doesn’t God intervene? Why doesn’t God do something? When Jesus showed up on the planet earth, so did God! The idea of ‘visit’ here means ‘to bless and to save’. This no ordinary visit—this is a divine visit from God! To redeem means to buy back from the market-place or take something off the market. “The Greek literally reads, “made redemption”. It is the noun lystosis-used only here. This was a technical legal term in the Greek papyri of the period. It meant “the releasing of a person through the payment of a ransom price. God was providing redemption for humanity through the ransom price of His Son’s own blood” (Ralph Earle p.53 Word Meanings in the New Testament).

(2) The Messiah was the mighty Savior of David’s House (v.69). “And has raised up a horn of salvation for us”. In the ancient world a horn, like a ram’s horn or an oxen’s horn is a symbol or image of power. In Luke’s gospel the son of Man is a servant and is often represented by an Ox (also a symbol of sacrifice and atonement). A horn of salvation is an image of a ‘powerful way to save’. The horn of an animal was believed to be a source of power, strength, survival, and the ability to fight, that is to defeat its adversaries.

Don’t miss the application for our generation. Jesus is still a powerful way, the only way to be saved from our sins. Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV) 25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Salvation is something we can never accomplish on our own. Jesus came to the earth to save us because we cannot save ourselves. We cannot save ourselves from sin and the consequences of sin. No matter how good we are we cannot remove our sinful nature which is present in all of us. Jesus came to save us from the power of sin and the penalty of sin. Jesus’ death on the cross for your sin gives you hope. Ask Jesus to take control of
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your life. “in the house of His servant David”. God promised David a ruler from his own body.

2 Samuel 7:11b-13 (NKJV); “. . . Also the Lord tells you that He will make you a house.
12 “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.
13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

(3) God’s plan was near completion (vv.70-71). God doesn’t have two plans. He has only one plan to save humanity. Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)
13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.
14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. There may be an information super-highway—but the Truth highway has only one lane—clearly marked Jesus! This doesn’t mean it is difficult to become a Christian, rather there is one road leading to heaven. Believing in Jesus is the only way to heaven, because only Christ died for our sins in order to make us right with God. Living for Jesus may not be popular but Jesus is true and right. We should thank God there is only one way!

(4)The Messiah was the One who fulfilled the promised mercy and covenant, the oath made to Abraham (vv.72-75).

Zacharias’ prophecy is filled with praise for God’s fulfilling His promise to David. God made a covenant or agreement with David, but before that God made a promise or a covenant with Abraham. God promised to make Abraham a great nation (Gen.12:1-3). God gave the promise again and promised Abraham that his seed would be like the stars in the heavens. “The Bible says, “Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness” (Gen.15:6). God was so pleased with Abraham’s faith that on that night, when the sun had set, God himself appeared as “a smoking firepot with a blazing torch. . .and passed between the pieces (Gen.15:7), signifying that his promise was unconditional and that he (God) would be torn asunder like those pieces if he failed to keep his promises” (see Kent Hughes p.76). God swore he would keep the covenant, and when Abraham offered his son Isaac, God swore a remarkable oath;

Genesis 22:16-18 (NKJV)
16 and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—
17 blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.
18 In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Never had God made such an agreement and an oath—by Himself—and He never did again. God wants to deliver humanity by faith in the Messiah. God wants human beings to serve Him without fear. The Lord does not want people living in fear, fearing the future, and the imaginary gods and demons of this world. This is not to say—there is no such thing as the supernatural, or that demonic beings don’t exist or have no power. Many people live in constant fear, fear of pain, fear of the future, fear of death, fear of
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judgment, fear of hell. The Lord is very much interested in people having peace, peace in their hearts, peace in their minds. The Lord wants you to know the meaning and purpose of your life.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NLT) “Because God’s children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the Devil, who had the power of death. 15 Only in this way could he deliver those who have lived all their lives as slaves to the fear of dying.

Isaiah 12:2 (NLT) “See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.”

God sent Jesus the Messiah so that you might live righteously and serve God forever.

Titus 3:4-7 (NLT) “But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love. 5 He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. 6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did. 7 He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life”.

The Prediction of the Powerful Messenger (vv.76-79)

Luke 1:76-77 (NLT) “And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High, because you will prepare the way for the Lord. 77 You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.

Can you imagine the tears that flooded the old man’s eyes? Zacharias’ son, will not be simply an Old Testament prophet living in a New Testament age, John is God’s final prophet and forerunner of the Messiah. John is God’s mouthpiece to Israel. Look back for just a moment at verse 68—“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel”—why not the world? Why not the whole world? Because God’s promise was to use Israel.

Four things are predicted about John the Baptist.

(1) John was to be the prophet of the Most High.
(2) John was to prepare the way of the Lord. He is the forerunner. John’s job was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
(3) John was to proclaim salvation, even the forgiveness of sins.
(4) John was to proclaim the rising of the heavenly Son!

(1) John was to be the prophet of the Most High: There had been no prophet in Israel for about four hundred years. The last prophet was Malachi. John is called the prophet of the “Most High”. This is a title for Jesus, but it is also a title used for God. Jesus is God. The Bible says “God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to Himself”.

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(2) John was to prepare the way of the Lord. He is the forerunner. John’s job was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. How would John do that? By calling people to recognize their sins. By commanding them to repent!

(3) John was to proclaim salvation, even the forgiveness of sins.
R. Kent Hughes: “He would give his people the knowledge of salvation. This would not be theoretical knowledge, but personal knowledge of the inward experience of salvation as the result of a divine gift. Furthermore, the salvation that John would preach would consist of “the forgiveness of their sins”. John would bypass ritualistic religion and go right to the heart of spiritual life” (see page 77).

“This is what the gospel offers—the only real forgiveness of sins in the universe—authentic forgiveness. Those who have experienced it can testify that there is nothing like it. It is complete and penetrates to the very depths of the human soul. The initial experience of divine forgiveness is often described as having a cosmic weight lifted from one’s shoulders. The knowledge of salvation is not only objective but inward and subjective—“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16)” (ibid p.78).

(4) John was to proclaim the rising of the heavenly Son!

Malachi 4:2 (NKJV)
2 But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

John The Baptist: Prepubescent (v.80)

Luke 1:80 (NKJV)
80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Luke 1:80 (NLT)
80 John grew up and became strong in spirit. Then he lived out in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.

Like Jesus, we know very little about the childhood of John the Baptist. It is described in this single verse. Yet we can mine some nuggets out of this verse. He grew up just like any other boy. Yet there are three things said of him that are unusual.

(1) John advanced spiritually beyond his peers. “. . .and become strong in spirit” that is in character, in heart, in commitment, a strong will and decisive. John must have had a strong sense of conscience and conviction, he must have been well motivated. John was a young man who learned early on the value of service, commitment, and obedience to God.

(2) John grew up in a different environment. John grew up in the desert. The desert is an obscure place, a place of solitude and silence, far from the worldliness and sophistication of big city life. The desert is a place for meditation and reflection and for seeking God. Most people do not choose the desert as a place to grow up.
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“When life is bleak and stark we begin to see what the real issues are” (Bruce Larson p.46).

(3) John stayed in his desert home until God was ready to launch him into the ministry. God had a plan for John—to minister to Israel. This gives us a clue, concerning John, he must have obeyed his parents and His Lord in preparation for ministry.

Our young people as well as our older folk need to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ and to grow strong in the Spirit of the Lord.

Luke 1:80 (NKJV)
80 So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Conclusion

Remember the purpose of Biblical prophecy. It is to reveal a message from the true God.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (NKJV)
21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'—22 when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

The ancient test is still a good one. If what the person says or predicts does not come to pass, that person is a false prophet and we are not to fear that person. We can check out what people say, by the Word of God. God doesn’t contradict Himself, so if someone says something that is not consistent with the Word of God or the character of God, we can dismiss it. Remember prophecy was intended to encourage obedience. Jesus warned his disciples about the future so they could learn to live in the present. Jesus said, “Don’t let anyone mislead you, because many will come in my name, claiming to be the Messiah. They will lead many astray. And wars will break out, near and far, but don’t panic. Yes, these things must come, but the end won’t follow immediately” (Mark 13:5-7). Prophecy was intended to encourage trust in the Lord. Prophecy was intended to give hope. Prophecy was rarely given to satisfy curiosity (see Matthew 24:3-25:46).