

March 27th, 2022

“The New Covenant”

Luke 1:72-80

Last week we read (**verses 67-71**), where Zacharias is praising God for returning to Israel in order to offer salvation to all who will repent and believe in the Messiah, just as God had foretold through the prophets.

We also studied about the covenant God had made with David to be fulfilled on the earth during the Millennial Kingdom, a time of peace, prosperity and long life for all.

The Jewish people were looking for the long awaited Messiah to arrive. In their mind, He would conquer their Roman oppressors, initiate His earthly kingdom by sitting on His throne in Jerusalem, and He would restore Israel to the glory it had before it turned away from God, at which time, God departed Israel and remained silent for 400 years, until now.

Read Luke 1:72-75... Today we begin with the covenant God made with Abraham, a covenant that would eternally bless both Jew and Gentile, through faith in God’s Son, made effectual by His sacrificial death and sovereign resurrection.

The covenant we are talking about is found in **Genesis 12:1-3**, “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.’”

Hebrews 11:8-9, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.”

This covenant was not just about peace, prosperity, and long life on earth of the remnant of Israel; but instead, this promise was made to Abraham’s spiritual descendants (Jews and Gentiles] who, like Abraham, were looking far beyond any earthly fulfillment, and were (**Hebrews 11:10**)“ looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

Abraham, along with all genuine believers from all time, will live together with God in the new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem, where there will be no more crying, or mourning, or pain, or death, for all of eternity.

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The Abrahamic covenant, through circumcision, set Israel apart from all the other nations in the world (**Genesis 17**), as we studied about last week. But was the blessing of that covenant based on the act of circumcision? No, it wasn't, it was based on faith.

Romans 4:9-13, “Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, “Faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness.” How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.” **16-17**, “For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, “A father of many nations have I made you”) in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.”

Galatians 3:6-9, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.”

26-29 “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.”

In a sense, the blessing of salvation came through the Jews, as Jesus declared (**John 4:22**), “salvation is from the Jews.” And Paul writes (**Romans 1:16**), “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”

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Salvation comes through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, but the reason for the genealogies given in **Matthew 1; Luke 3**, is to set forth the human lineage through whom the Messiah [Jesus Christ] would come. He would be God in human flesh [Immanuel], He would be God’s Salvation [Hebrew, Yeshua; Greek,-Jesus], He would be God the Son, Lord of all but Savior only to those who believe in Him.

True salvation has always been by faith, not by blood line, not by nation, not by religious ritual, and not by law-keeping (**Romans 1:17**), “For the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous shall live by faith.’”

The promise given to Abraham, that would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ, was meant to be an eternal covenant. Three times in **Genesis 17 (verses 7, 13, 19)**, God says this is to be an everlasting covenant for Abraham’s descendants [meaning all people, Jew or Gentile, who have obedient faith in God, and have been approved by God; like those recorded in the Hall of Faith, that we studied about (**Hebrews 11:1-38**), e.g., Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, David. The writer of **Hebrews** goes on to say (**11:39-40**), “All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”

Look at those last two verses again: all believers who lived before the coming of Christ, like those listed in **Hebrews 11**, looked forward to the promise, i.e., the coming Savior; where as, all believers who lived after the coming of Christ, like us, look back at the promise fulfilled in the death and resurrection of God’s own Son.

Old and New Testament believers receive forgiveness for sins and eternal life, made effectual in Christ (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” **10**, “For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** (*pp.* **2Corinthians 5:17**) for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Read Luke 1:76-80... The fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants is realized through salvation in Christ; for neither of those covenants can provide forgiveness for sin. And so, we now turn our attention to the New Covenant.

Please open your Bible to **Hebrews 8:7-13; 9:15, 27-28; 10:1-18.**

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Every person since Adam and Eve (except for John the baptizer and Jesus), has been born in sin. The reason is we are displeasing to God is not because of our behavior, attitude, or speech; those are only symptoms of a much deeper and eternally deadly problem, sin (cf. **Romans 3:10-12; 23-24; 6:23; 5:8, 8:1**).

Luke 6:45, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

The problem that condemns us is our unregenerate hearts, as **Jeremiah 17:9-10** declares, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it. I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds.”

Everyone will be judged for their sinful words and actions, because those things give evidence of a heart full of sin, bringing eternal condemnation (except for those who are in Christ).

And since neither the Abrahamic or the Davidic Covenants can provide a person with victory over sin, God provided the New Covenant that conquers sin, through the shed blood of God’s own Son.

All through the Old Testament the Israelites declared obedience to God, and yet they continued to disobey God because of sin. **Joshua 24:15-18**, “But if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served, which were beyond the Euphrates River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we would abandon the Lord to serve other gods; for the Lord our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slaves, and did these great signs in our sight and watched over us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. The Lord drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.”

The Law given to Moses cannot be perfectly kept by any human, because the law of sin is working in us (see **Romans 7:14-25**).

See Luke 1:76-77... Zacharias was a genuine believer, a priest who understood what the prophets had written, that all the covenants and promises given to Israel would be fulfilled by the Messiah, who was to come.

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Zacharias had the Holy Spirit in him as he spoke this prophecy about his own son, John, through whom God would bring an end to 400 years of silence with Israel (actually between Himself and all of humanity).

John the baptizer would come on the scene to point people to Christ; to call them to confess their sins and seek forgiveness. The Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants could not change a person’s heart attitude toward sin, so God provided a New Covenant through the shed blood of Christ. Everyone who repents and believes in Him will be saved; that is what the New Covenant promises.

God chose to show mercy to hopeless and helpless sinners like you and me, in order to provide forgiveness, righteousness, and justification from God.

Notice again in **Luke 1:78-79...** God’s tender mercy is expressed to us through His sending of the Sunrise from heaven, “To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

2Corinthians 4:4-6, “The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

The only way to have peace with God is to have the Peace of God, as Jesus promised (**John 14:27**), “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful,” (**Galatians 5:22-23**), “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law,” (**Philippians 4:7**), “The **peace** of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Zacharias’s prophecy of praise toward God, ends in **Luke 1:79**. After which, Luke tells us, “And the child [John] continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”

We are told nothing in the Scriptures about John, from the time of his circumcision to the beginning of his short public ministry, that began near the Jordan River.

See Luke 3:2-4, “The word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the

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words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight.’”

What we do know is that John came to prepare the hearts of the people for the New Covenant, not a covenant of ancestral heritage and privilege, nor a covenant of religious rituals, laws, and acts of piety; but a covenant of mercy and grace from a faithful God who loves us so much, that He came down from heaven, put on the flesh of a man, and let His enemies kill Him, so that He could satisfy the righteous judgement of God on all sin, by paying the full penalty for all our sins.

Acts 2:21-24, “‘And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ Listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”

The New Covenant in Christ, promises that Abraham, Issac, Jacob, and all genuine believers from all time, will live together with God in the new heavens, new earth, and new Jerusalem, where there will be no more crying, or mourning, or pain, or death, for all of eternity.

How you respond to God’s New Covenant, made effectual through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, will determine where you spend eternity.

1John 5:11-13, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Everyone who repents of their sin and believes in God’s Son is saved to eternal life in heaven, because all their sins (past, present, future) are forgiven; and therefore we are justified, being consider holy and righteous by God. Have you done that? Don’t leave where you are right now, without knowing that you have eternal life.

Pastor Mike Hale