

In the last part of Luke chapter 1 (v67), the Lord is talking to us about the dawning of a new day. For many the solitude of early morning is the most precious time of day. There is a quiet serenity that disappears a few hours later with the hustle and bustle of the multitudes. The early morning hours symbolize to me a new birth. The anxieties, woes, and frustrations of the previous day seem to have vanished away during the night. God has granted us a new day of life, another chance to do something worthwhile for humanity. It's an opportunity to forget the flaws of a past day and begin a new day with a clean slate. With this line of thinking, the scripture speaks of the coming of Jesus in the terms of the dawning of a new day. His arrival is pictured as a new beginning.

We have this illustrated for us in Luke 1. We have a man in this text describing the birth of his son and in so doing announces the arrival of that new day. ***Luke 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.*** The term “*dayspring*” is from an old English word that refers to the sunrise; the dawning of light. This is what the coming of the Messiah was to be like – a new beginning; a new chapter in the history of humanity.

Let's regress a little and notice the background leading up to this verse. These words were spoken by an old priest named Zacharias. The child referenced would grow up to be John the Baptist. When Zacharias made this prophecy, he was reflecting back to an experience he had just a few months earlier. Zacharias was a descendent of Aaron thus he was qualified to be a priest. Not everybody in Israel could be a priest; you had to be a descendent of Aaron from the tribe of Israel. Zacharias met those qualifications and was ministering in the temple on a particular day.

At this time, there was an over abundance of priest. It has been estimated that there were some 7,000 priest and 9,600 Levites in the land of Israel. With these numbers, they couldn't all minister to the Lord at the same time, so back during the days of King David; the priest had been divided into 24 courses or groups. Each course would sever a week shift in the temple twice a year (appx 300/week). During the week for Zacharias to serve, as he was going about doing his duties an angel appeared to him and said ***Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and***

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thou shalt call his name John. (Luke 1:13) He and Elizabeth were well advance in years and beyond the age of child bearing; but the angel announced that Elizabeth was going to conceive a child.

Now when Zacharias heard that, he was somewhat startled and with doubts he questioned the angel. And the angel told him that he was going to be unable to speak until the child is born. Only then will your ability to communicate return to you and then you will know that what I have spoken is true. So from that moment on Zacharias was unable to communicate with words.

Sure enough, Elizabeth conceived and was expecting a child. This child was one by which God had big plans. Several things about him are revealed to us in this chapter. ***Luke 1:15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*** He shall be great in the sight of the Lord and indeed he was. In fact, on one occasion when questioned about John the Baptist, the Lord said ***Luke 7:28 Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.*** John was great in his humility. John was great in his dedication to the Lord. John was great in the service that he rendered.

Luke 1:15 goes on to say that this child ***shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*** In early Israel, there were people referred to as Nasserites. A Nasserite was a person that had taken a vow of special consecration and dedication to God. In order to do that, there were several requirements; one of which was you could not cut your hair for the duration of your commitment. Another was that you couldn't drink wine or strong drink. Some took the vow far a week/month while others took it as a life-long vow. While the Bible does not identify John as a Nasserite, he certainly fulfilled some of their requirements and embraced some of their standards.

While he would not be filled with intoxicates, he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. In addition to that, we are told as a result of his ministry there would be many that would return to the Lord, and that he would come in the power

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and spirit of Elijah (v16-17). That's significant because that promise fulfilled the prophecy made by Malachi (chapter 4) that one would come in the spirit of Elijah. This prophecy was made in the last few verses of the OT and 400 years of history lapsed between then and the time of John the Baptist. During those 400 years, no other prophecy had been given. Those were silent years when there was no direct communication from God regarding his people. When John came and was introduced as the one who would fulfill that prophecy, the people were excited. ***Luke 1:17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias.***

So it was with hope that the old priest went home and everything that the angel had predicted came true. Elizabeth gave birth to that son, and on the 8th day after his birth they took him to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses (v59). It was customary when a child was circumcised, he would also be given a name and those involved in the ceremony decided that he should be named Zacharias after his father. Elizabeth objected and said his name should be John. This seemed odd to them since no one else in the family was named John, so they went to Zacharias and asked him about this name selection. He asked for a writing tablet ***and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all. Luke 1:63***

Immediately his ability to speak was restored and he began to offer up this marvelous thought of praise to Lord beginning in v 67. He emphasized that through that miraculous life that God would offer salvation to his people. Perhaps he was thinking about the political bondage that they were in and that God would break the yoke of their oppressors. But beyond that he emphasized that God would provide spiritual deliverance. This young baby would be instrumental in bringing salvation; the forgiveness of sin to his people. This baby would be the one who would announce the coming of the Messiah; the dawning of a new day; the dayspring from on high; a new episode in the history of mankind.

It's fitting to picture Jesus as a dawning of a new day because before he came, the world had been engulfed in darkness. But when Jesus came, the light of heaven came to earth and God dispelled the darkness and in so doing he let man know that there was hope

for this life and the life to come. So, when we think about the dawning of a new day in the history of mankind because Jesus came, there are several changes that came about.

First, Zacharias suggests this new day would be a day of salvation. Throughout this prophecy, the context talks about deliverance/salvation. ***Luke 1:68-69 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;*** and here's why. ***(69) And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us...*** That "*horn of salvation*" refers to the Lord Jesus and his coming. In an animal, his strength/power is in his horns; that's what they use to defend themselves. And God's power to save is centered in Jesus Christ. When the Lord came into this world and engaged in his ministry and offered himself as a sacrifice for mankind that was God's "*horn of salvation*"; His power to save. ***Luke 1:71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;***

This idea of salvation was not something new. It was something that God had envisioned for a long time. In fact, it was the fulfillment of a prophecy made to Abraham long ago. ***Luke 1:69-70 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;*** ***(70) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:*** Now skip down to v 73. ***Luke 1:73-74 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, (74) That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear.*** Centuries before, God said to Abraham that he was going to make of him a great nation. He promised to multiply his descendants so that they are like the sands of seashore; like the stars of the sky. And from this great nation will come a blessing for all the nations. From Abraham's seed shall all the nations be blessed. That promise began to be fulfilled when Jesus was born. The Savior from sin came through the lineage of Abraham.

This day of salvation was the result of the mercy of God. ***Luke 1:77-78 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,*** Here's why. ***(78) Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.*** The day of salvation came about by the mercy and tenderness of God. The people of the OT had the image of God is a stern, harsh judge. They see a God of condemnation and punishment. But Jesus came and gave us a more balanced picture of God. While God is a

God of justice and judgment, Jesus helps us understand a view of God that otherwise we could not. He is also a God of mercy, grace and love. It was out of God's great love that he was willing to send his son from heaven to earth; to live among us, and ultimately to die on the cross so that we can receive forgiveness for our sins. When that new day dawned, we saw God in a light that otherwise we could not.

Because of the mercy and love, we have forgiveness. *V77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.* The two greatest problems of man are ignorance and sin. Education can solve the problem of ignorance but education cannot solve the problem of sin. Jesus is the only one that can adequately deal with sin. Of all the millions of people that ever lived, there is not one of them apart from Jesus Christ that can be the savior of mankind. Only Jesus was sinless and thus qualified himself to be our savior. Everyone else who has reached the age of accountability has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. *Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, ... by the grace of God should taste death for every man.* He could do that because he himself had no sin. *Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* When that new day dawned, Jesus offered something new and complete; an eternal forgiveness of sin. It was a day of salvation.

No. 2. That day was also a day of visitation. *Luke 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.* The OT prophet had a vision of God. *Isa 6:1 ... I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.* Then he describes God in all of His glory and His majestic might. He saw it "high and lifted up." But when Jesus came to this earth, he gave us a different picture. He gave us a view of a God lowly and willing to serve. He showed us God not only in majesty but also in manhood. It was a day of visitation because God came in the flesh to live among us. And as a man, he subjected himself to suffering and death. He received humiliation like none of us will ever experience. Before Jesus came, men were in spiritual darkness; the darkness of sin, and he brought the light of

salvation. **2 Tim 1:10** *But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:* Before the visitation of our Savior, men lived a life of desperation; but now we live with hope of a better life beyond.

No. 3. It was a day of reconciliation. Luke 1:79 *To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.* That word “peace” implies “reconciliation.” Reconciliation is to bring together two abstained parties into a restored peace. That’s why Jesus came; to reconcile us to God; to restore a relationship with God. Without Jesus, man is at war with God because of his sin. Sin disrupted our relationship with God, but Jesus came to make things right. He came to bring peace. **2 Cor. 5:17** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself* God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ. He was making it possible for that spiritual relationship to be restored, and that’s the heart of the gospel. You can’t truly be right with yourself and with others until you can be right with God. The peace we receive from God through Jesus ripples down through every aspect of our lives. A life apart from godly principles is a life of hostility; but the life of a child of God is a life of peace.

Some two thousand years ago, a new day dawned because the savior came into this world. It was a day of visitation because this baby was God in the flesh sent from heaven. That day of visitation resulted into a day of salvation and a day of reconciliation.

The blessing of that reconciled relationship is available to any and all today.

Invitation