

(The Names of Jesus) 10. The Horn of Our Salvation

by A.B. Simpson

Transcript

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.” (Luke 1: 68-75.) Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist and the author of this song, was practically the last of the priesthood. Because of his priestly office he was chosen to be the father of John the Baptist, and thus, both directly and through his son, the witness of the coming dispensation and the Messiah. God so ordered it that Judaism bore witness to Christ, although Judaism afterwards rejected Christ notwithstanding its own testimony. True to the spirit of Judaism, when the message came to Zacharias about the birth of his son, his unbelief refused to accept it, and God visited him with dumbness and silence until the birth of John. The silence of Zacharias was significant of the silence that was to fall on Judaism as she gave place to the testimony of Christ and sank back into silence at His feet, while all heaven proclaimed, “This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.”

How different was the spirit of Mary when the message came to her requiring even greater faith! More truly she represented the spirit of Christianity. She implicitly believed it, and her answer was, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” But at length Zacharias’ lips were opened at the circumcision of his son, and with this last song his voice died away with the voice of Judaism into eternal silence. There is a beautiful bird which has but one song, and that its own death dirge. After silently sailing the waters for its whole life long, the beautiful swan at last, on the bosom of some peaceful lake, perhaps as the shadows of evening are falling and darkness is passing over its simple brain, opens its mouth and pours out the strangest, saddest song that ever fell upon the ear, and then its beautiful, graceful neck relaxes, and it sinks upon the waves in the silence of death. It has breathed its life out in its one last song. So Zacharias passes out of view with his own song, but it was a song worthy to be lost in, for it is the keynote of redemption, and yet shall re-echo in the song of Moses and the Lamb. There are three strains in it; like all great songs, it is extremely simple, but swells out into infinite echoes of glory and blessing.

He Has Visited His People

We love to receive a letter from a friend, but how much more the friend himself! Sweet is the message of affection, but sweeter the visit of our loved ones! The glory of Zacharias's song was that God was about to visit His people. This was the cry of Moses, "Your presence goes not with me, do not carry us up hence. For wherein shall we differ from all the other people of the earth, except it be that You go with us." Not even an angel's presence would satisfy or fill the place, none but God Himself. This was the burden of all Isaiah's promises. The Lord Himself shall come to visit His people. This is the preeminent glory of redemption. God Himself has undertaken it. The Eternal One has come to our world in person and identified Himself forever with humanity.

It tells the story of the incarnation. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." He has come into our house of clay, and He has come to stay, and to the latest ages of eternity, as generation after generation shall visit the metropolis of the universe and lift up their eyes to look upon God, they shall see the face of a man, a form like our own, God in the likeness of humanity. He has come so near to us that He has come into our own nature. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death. . . . For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God."

When the first missionaries went to St. Thomas, they could not get near the suffering and degraded slaves until they took part in their bondage and asked the masters to make them slaves also. Then they were received with perfect confidence and were able to bring multitudes of the poor savages to Christ. They trusted them when they saw that they had become identified with their own very life and lot. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He has visited and redeemed his people."

But He comes closer. These missionaries could work by the side of the slave; but they could not come into their hearts. I can sit down and talk with you in your home; but I cannot walk into your brain and into your spirit and put my being into yours, so that you shall have my thoughts and feelings and life. In some measure love can impart almost its own soul to the beloved one, and yet only in a faint measure compared with the great and divine example which Christ has forever set before us; for He not only has visited our race, but He has visited our hearts, and made our very bodies His temple and home. "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I will dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." "I will set my tabernacle among you . . . and I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people."

Has He visited you, beloved? Has He come into this brain and possessed all its thoughts, and given to you His light and wisdom, His understanding and mind? Has He come into this will and taken the key of the chamber from which all the acts and purposes of your life are directed? Has He been admitted to the boudoir chamber of your confidences, where only your dearest ones ever come, and does He control all your heart's affections, and supremely hold them for Himself, so that you have no life apart from Him? Has He found His way without restraint into every inmost apartment, until you find they are being enlarged by His ministry and filled in every capacity with His love and life, as He thinks in you, trusts in you, wills in you, rejoices in you, speaks in you, prays in you, praises in you, and pours out through your whole being the fullness of His life "not a transient visitor, but a perpetual Guest? Oh! how much He will do for the heart that thus receives Him!

Happy was the loving woman of Shunem the day that Elisha passed her door that she received him in the name of the Lord, and made him welcome to her home and her heart. Little did she dream that it was going to bring her, in the coming years, deliverance from her sorrows and her trials, the child of her affection, and that child a second time restored from death itself. What care He will take of the house that He owns and lives in! How He will love to heal, strengthen, beautify and glorify the temple of His indwelling, and what infinite rest it is to live with Christ in His own house, and have Him bear all the burdens and responsibilities, while you dwell a happy guest in the house you once called your own.

And then He is coming in a little while on a still more glorious visit, with sound of trumpet and mighty processions of angels and ransomed men, while earth and heaven shall signal His glorious advent by signs and wonders such as the universe has never beheld.

The King of kings is passing by these days of time, a lowly man and a wayfarer. He asks a sacrifice of you. He asks a welcome from you. He asks the key of your heart's inmost chamber. Will you trust Him? The day is coming when it will be much to have one glance from His glorious face, to have Him recognize you among the myriads of the resurrection and say, "Come my little child, and sit with me on my throne, and share my kingdom; for on earth you received me, and even so do I now welcome you." Yes, He is coming again to visit our earth and to leave it no more. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," will be the announcement of that glad day, "and he will dwell with them . . . and God himself shall be with them. . . . And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there." And even when the glad Millennial age is ended, it will expand into a gladder and better time, and the new heavens shall be added to the new earth, and redeemed humanity shall colonize over all this great universe, and we may have stars for kingdoms, and worlds for our inheritance. Then shall we sing as we cannot now, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited . . . his people."

He Has Redeemed His People

This is much more. The missionary can stoop to the lowly condition of the heathen slaves; but he cannot set them free. He can die with them in their chains; but he cannot break the fetters. But Jesus not only visited His people, but He has redeemed them. He has given His own freedom for ours, and the ransom suffices, and the great manifesto has gone forth. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek & to proclaim liberty to the captives." This word "redeemed" is the characteristic term of the gospel. It speaks of the crimson tint of sin and the deeper crimson of Calvary's blood. It tells of a heaven that has cost something, a salvation that is established on the eternal principles of justice and righteousness, that has met every claim of law and right, and that has placed the ransomed soul in as good a position as if he had never sinned.

All human hearts instinctively know that such a redemption was demanded. The rudest savage is conscious that some propitiation must be made for sin and that evil cannot be lightly passed over even by clemency, without some satisfaction. When the proud and haughty Tarquin sat upon the bench to judge his own son, with the Roman instincts of justice he could not acquit him. When the mother pleaded for her boy with bitter tears, and brothers and sisters claimed his life, and the citizens who loved him interceded, the father could only answer, "The father loves him as much as you, but the judge must punish him," and to the lictors he was delivered without mercy, to be beaten and slain, because law and justice could know no mercy.

Very beautifully have the Hindu legends embodied this truth, and at the same time foreshadowed the mystery of the gospel through which love has triumphed over justice, and yet has left justice uncompromised and vindicated. In the ancient Hindu legends there is a story of a poor sinner pursued by the spirit of retribution in the form of a demon. Flying from its pursuer and about to be overtaken, the sinful spirit cried to Vishnu, the goddess of Mercy, for help, and she immediately changed the fugitive into a dove. With a glad cry of gratitude the dove swept up into the air, striking her wings upon the firmament and bore away above her pursuer, thanking her kind deliverer. But a moment later the demon had been changed into a hawk, and she found herself pursued by a stronger wing and a swifter flight than her own, and she was about to be struck down by the cruel talons of the hawk, when suddenly she lifted up her prayer again to Vishnu, and the goddess opened her bosom as an asylum for the fluttering dove, and folded her wings about her as she lay there secure from her enemy. Then the hawk approached the goddess and demanded his prey. "She is mine," he said, "by every right of justice. You, Vishnu, have declared and know that sin must be punished and that I am entitled to my victim, and I demand her life or its equivalent." Vishnu answered, "I recognize your claim. Her life you cannot have, but you may have as much of mine as will be its equivalent." And with that she opened her bosom to the devourer and bade him thrust his fierce beak and talons into her quivering flesh until he had torn from her breast as much as he would have consumed if he had devoured the little dove. Satisfied, he withdrew, and the trembling dove looked upon the bleeding breast and knew what its life had cost its deliverer: and as it floated away a little later, with the stain of blood upon its wings, it never could forget what its redemption had meant. Beloved, you and I were that dove. Justice pursued us with every claim of right. Even God could not forego its claim, but must execute it or cease to be God; but the blessed Redeemer opened His bosom, gave His life and blood to meet the claim, bore the judgment we deserved, and now sprinkled with this precious blood, we sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood . . . be glory and dominion for ever and ever. . . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, . . . and glory, and blessing. . . . For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood . . . and have made us unto God kings and priests." "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people."

He Has Raised Up an Horn of Salvation for Us

Salvation is the fruition of redemption. Redemption purchases it, salvation realizes it and brings it into our actual experience. Zacharias speaks not so much of salvation as of the "horn of salvation." This bold figure, perhaps, originated in primitive times, when mighty hunters, like Nimrod, returning from the chase, loved to grace their tents with the splendid horns of the animals that they had slain, the antlers of the deer, the tusks of the elephant, and the horn, perhaps, of the mighty rhinoceros. And so the word "horn" came to be the figure of beauty, power and dominion. It has passed into the imagery of inspired prophecy and song, so that we find the earthly powers described by Daniel and John as horns upon the head of the beast.

And so we find the Psalmist speaking of God as his Horn of Salvation and his High Tower. In speaking, therefore, of Christ as a Horn of Salvation, Zacharias meant to emphasize the glory and beauty of the Savior, His supreme and universal dominion, and His infinite and divine power. It is Coronation, singing, "Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all." The verse that follows explains this thought more perfectly than any words of ours can do. This glorious salvation does five things for us.

1. It delivers us from all our enemies. Christ has come to overcome everything that is against us. Never does He want us to be crushed or defeated. Always He causes us to triumph if we will but trust and allow

Him. How beautifully does the prophet Zechariah illustrate the words of his New Testament namesake, as in his first chapter he gives us his vision of the four horns, horns that were lifted up against Judah and Jerusalem, representing the evils that are opposed to us from all sides, so that whichever direction we look, north, south, east or west, we sometimes can see nothing but enemies. But he saw four carpenters following the four horns, and as he asked the meaning of this vision he was told that these were come to fray the horns, that is, to soften them, to peel them down, to take their sharpness from them, to render them harmless.

How wondrously does God do this for His people! How He takes the point out of the devil's sting and the enemy's sword-thrust, and quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one with the shield of faith, so that things that seemed sufficient to destroy us pass away harmlessly, and we wonder in great amazement at the providential goodness of our wonderful God. Each of us has often had enough perils to wreck our life and work many a time, but as we look behind we cannot even trace a shadow of the clouds that once covered all our sky, and everything that seemed against us has become a voice in the chorus, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. We are delivered from our enemies that we might serve him without fear. Our fears are sometimes worse than our enemies. Who of us is there that has not spent hours and days fighting clouds that never came to rain or lightning. They seemed intensely real, and they hurt as much as if they were real. Christ comes to deliver us from all our fears. He tells us that the king of fear is the devil, and that fear from him must always be recognized. As long as we abide in Christ, it is a voice from Satan. If it is a voice from Satan, it is a lie; therefore it is not to be allowed to come into the soul. Indeed, we may turn it into a benediction, and say to Satan as he holds up the shadow, "Thank you very much, for now I know that the opposite is coming" a blessing as glorious as the shadow has been dark. This is the way to get the victory over your fears. Refuse them and extract good out of them, even as the woman of Canaan did from her Savior's refusal and from the dark and discouraging prospect that for a time seemed to overshadow all her cares. God cannot use you fully in His service if you are loaded down with a pack of worries. You must be rested workers. You must come to Him for rest and then take His yoke upon you.

3. We are delivered that we might serve in holiness and righteousness before him. You will observe that it is not righteousness and holiness, but holiness first. We often begin the wrong way, and try to get our lives right before our hearts are pure. Like Elisha, let us go up to the spring and put salt there, and not in the channels of the river below. Cleanse the fountain and the waters will always be pure. Get the holiness of Christ in your heart, and your life will be regulated with the full tides of life and love. Divine life regulates itself and the more it overflows the more it purifies.

4. We shall serve all the days of our life. We used to think that holiness and victory were for our last days, and that if we got too near to God we were being prepared to die and might go soon; indeed, that it was not very safe to be too devout. But thank God, we have found that holiness is to live by, and that we need it for earth's duties and trials much more even than for heavenly enjoyments. Christ sanctifies us to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. We can spring into the very fullness of His grace from the very morning of our conversion. We can go from Egypt to Canaan in less than three months and need not spend forty years wandering in the wilderness of sin. "Oh, if I only had known of this twenty-five years ago, how sweetly I could have lived," said the dying Payson as he stood in the last moments of his life looking into heaven, realizing the full salvation that he might have known all his days. Beloved, shall we take Him for all the days, and go forth singing,

Iâ€™m so glad Iâ€™ve learned to trust Him, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend; And I know that You are with me, Will be with me to the end. There are two closing thoughts suggested by this figure, on which we shall dwell for a moment. In the blessing of Joseph in Deuteronomy 33, it is said that his horns shall be like the horn of the unicorn. The unicorn has only one horn, and the idea suggested by the strong figure is that they alone are strong who have no strength but God. The glory of my strength is to have God alone. God is never the fullness of power to us until He alone is our power, until we can say, â€œWhom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.â€

The other reference is in connection with the sublime vision of the Lamb in the fifth chapter of Revelation, where we behold Him standing in the midst of the throne having seven horns and seven eyes, representing the seven-fold power and authority with which He is invested, and the seven-fold wisdom of the Holy Ghost which He administers. It is as the Lamb that He has the seven horns. It is because He suffered and redeemed us that God has invested Him, not only with His own eternal deity and power, but with all the resources of the Fatherâ€™s own fullness, so that He could say as He ascended from earth to heaven, â€œAll power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.â€ And yet that power is in the hands of One whom John describes as a â€œlittle Lamb.â€

Oh! the ineffable gentleness and nearness combined with majesty and power expressed by this figure. With a hand as soft as a childâ€™s, a touch as gentle as a motherâ€™s, and yet a scepter as mighty as omnipotence, He sits on the heavenly throne, so near and yet so great, so tender and yet so mighty, the blended gentleness and almightiness of the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne.

He is our Horn of Salvation. He has visited us and redeemed us, and He must reign until all our enemies shall be made His footstool. Let us join in the chorus that swells in this chapter in billows and billows of praise, surging and surging out to the confines of the universe until â€œevery creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, (are) heard . . . saying, blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.â€

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