

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

<p>NOTHING RECORDED</p>	<p>NOTHING RECORDED</p>	<p>CHAPTER 1, VERSES 67-80</p> <p>1:67 - And his father Zacharias¹ was filled² with the Holy Ghost³, and prophesied⁴, saying, 1:68 - Blessed⁵ be the Lord God⁶ of Israel⁷; for he hath visited⁸ and redeemed⁹ his people¹⁰, 1:69 - And hath raised¹¹ up an horn¹² of salvation¹³ for us in the house¹⁴ of his servant David¹⁵; 1:70 - As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets¹⁶, which have been since the world¹⁷ began¹⁸; 1:71 - That we should be saved¹⁹ from our enemies²⁰, and from the hand²¹ of all that hate us²²; 1:72 - To perform²³ the mercy²⁴ promised²⁵ to our fathers²⁶, and to remember²⁷ his holy covenant²⁸; 1:73 - The oath²⁹ which he sware³⁰ to our father Abraham³¹, 1:74 - That he would grant³² unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies²⁰ might serve him without fear³³, 1:75 - In holiness³⁴ and righteousness³⁵ before him, all the days of our life³⁶. 1:76 - And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest³⁷; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord³⁸ to prepare his ways³⁹; 1:77 - To give knowledge of salvation⁴⁰ unto his people by the remission of their sins⁴¹, 1:78 - Through the tender mercy²⁴ of our God; whereby the dayspring⁴² from on high hath visited us⁴³, 1:79 - To give light⁴⁴ to them that sit in darkness⁴⁵ and in the shadow of death⁴⁶, to guide our feet⁴⁷ into the way of peace⁴⁸. 1:80 - And the child grew⁴⁹, and waxed⁵⁰ strong in spirit⁵¹, and was in the deserts⁵² till the day⁵³ of his shewing⁵⁴ unto Israel⁷.</p>	<p>NOTHING RECORDED</p>
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CHRONOLOGY: 8 days after John's Birth (October 11, 5BCE), **Approximated at October 19, 5BCE***

* The established year for this chapter is based on the year of Jesus' birth, which is highly debated. Below is a list of possible years for Jesus' birth. The chronology of Jesus' life in this book is based on the author's belief that Jesus was born in 4BCE. The most likely years for Jesus' birth are 1BCE, 4BCE and 5BCE. The other years are problematic.

- Year theories:
- 1 BCE - Supported by **the Apostle James E. Talmage** & Secular Biblical Scholars Pearson and Hug & the creator of Gregorian Calendar: Dionysius Exiguus.
 - 2 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholar Scallinger.
 - 2/3 BCE - Supported by early Christian writers and historians Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Africanus, Hippolytus of Rome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Origen, Eusebius and Epiphanius.
 - 3 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Baronius and Paulus.
 - 4 BCE** - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Bengel, Wieseler & Greswell. **Supported by this Author.**
 - 5 BCE - Supported by **the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie**, **the Apostle J. Rueben Clark**, and Secular Biblical Scholars Usher and Petavius.
 - 6 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Strong, Luvin and Clark.
 - 7 BCE - Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Ideler and Sanclemente.

LOCATION: JUDAEA (HEBRON, BETHLEHEM, OR NEAR VICINITY)

COMMENTARY:

The BENEDICTUS

The Benedictus is a powerful expository uttered by Zacharias at his son's circumcision. It was customary for a father to speak at the close of such a circumcision. Zacharias, who would have been familiar with Old Testament prophecies, referencing many of them as a form of testimony. Zacharias is bearing testimony of the fulfillment of the prophecies with the birth of his son and the birth of the Messiah which was at hand. Some of the prophecies being referenced are illustrated below;

	The BENEDICTUS	OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES	
Luke 1:68	Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people ,	Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people , he hath redeemed Jerusalem.	Isaiah 52:9
Luke 1:69	And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;	The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation , and my high tower.	Psalms 18:2
Luke 1:70	As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:	The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation , my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.	2 Samuel 22:3
Luke 1:71	That we should be saved from our enemies , and from the hand of all that hate us;	I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.	Deuteronomy 18:18
Luke 1:72	To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;	And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies ; because I rejoice in thy salvation.	1 Samuel 2:1
Luke 1:73	The oath which he sware to our father Abraham ,	Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel.	1 Kings 9:5
Luke 1:74	That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,	The Lord therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the Lord promised, and have built the house for the name of the Lord God of Israel.	2 Chronicles 6:10
Luke 1:75	In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life .	Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father ;	Genesis 26:3
Luke 1:76	And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways ;	And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies .	1 Samuel 4:3
Luke 1:77	To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,	The Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.	Isaiah 38:20
Luke 1:78	Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,	Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me : and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.	Malachi 3:1
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 .	And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation : the fear of the Lord is his treasure.	Isaiah 33:6
		Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.	Psalms 51:1
		Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.	Psalms 40:11
		Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies ;	Psalms 103:4
		A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death , without any order, and where the light is as darkness.	Job 10:22
		The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light : they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death , upon them hath the light shined.	Isaiah 9:2
		How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!	Isaiah 52:7

FOOTNOTES:

- 1- **Zacharias** - See the commentary in Chapter 2, footnote #6 and Chapter 7, footnote #7.
- 2- **filled** - The term "filled" is translated from the Greek word "πίμπλημι" or "pimp̄lēmi". It means to fill, to be filled or to be fulfilled. It has also been translated into English as accomplished or furnished. To be filled with the Spirit implies our worthiness and submission to the mind and will of God giving the Holy Ghost the ability occupy our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, and our very being. We become "filled" with his influence. See also the commentary in Chapter 5, footnote #14.
- 3- **Holy Ghost** - See the commentary in Chapter 2, footnote #30, Chapter 3, footnote #38, Chapter 4, footnote #12, and Chapter 5, footnote #15. Nearly every chapter makes specific mention of the Holy Ghost. The third member of the Godhead had an intricate role in the Savior's birth and the factors associated with it. For Hundreds, even thousands of years, prophets had foretold of Jesus' birth, and the Holy Ghost bore testimony of the truthfulness of their revelations. Even so, the day was at hand and ongoing revelation was necessary to assure that God's plan went forth as foretold. The angels of heaven paved the way, and the Holy Ghost validated the will of the Lord to righteous people. The same pattern exists in our day. President George Q. Cannon said, **"We have the Bible, the Book of Mormon and the Book of Doctrine and Covenants; but all these books, without the living oracles and a constant stream of revelation from the Lord, would not lead any people into the Celestial Kingdom. ... This may seem a strange declaration to make, but strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless true. Of course, these records are all of infinite value. They cannot be too highly prized, nor can they be too closely studied. But in and of themselves, with all the light that they give, they are insufficient to guide the children of men and to lead them into the presence of God. To be thus led requires a living Priesthood and constant revelation from God to the people according to the circumstances in which they may be placed."** (Gospel Truth, Classics in Mormon Literature Series, 2 vols. in one, sel. Jerreld L. Newquist, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987, p. 252.). To this end, the Holy Ghost performs His work. He testifies of truth. He verifies the mind and will of God to the children of God.
- 4- **prophesied** - The word "prophesied" is derived from the Greek word "προφητεύω" or "prophēteuō". The Greek word means to speak forth by divine inspirations, to predict or prophesy. It is to speak as a prophet. To prophesy is to be able to accurately predict future events or warnings through manifestations of God revealing his knowledge. Prophecy results in revelation. They go hand in hand. **"Revelations have come by different means. Among other ways, they have come by the guidance of the Holy Ghost (which is perhaps most common), by the spoken word, and by visits from holy messengers."** (General Conference, "Continuous Revelation", James E. Faust, October 1989). Prophecy and its subsequent revelations come by faith. God reveals His will to those that believe in him. President Wilford Woodruff declared, **"Whenever the Lord had a people on the earth that He acknowledged as such, that people were led by revelation"** (In Journal of Discourses, 24:240.)

The Lord reveals Himself to all who come unto Him, and submit themselves to the doctrines and ordinances of His kingdom. However, He follows a very specific pattern as He gives revelations. The Old Testament prophet Amos taught, **"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."** (Amos 3:7). Revelations comes through prophets, but the revealing does not end there. As the Lord's knowledge is revealed through a living or past prophet, those that receive such knowledge can receive personal revelation or prophesy confirming the truthfulness and validity of the prophets words. President J. Reuben Clark stated, **"We can tell when the speakers are 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost' only when we, ourselves, are 'moved upon by the Holy Ghost.'"** (Daniel H. Yam, Jr., ed., J. Reuben Clark: Selected Papers on Religion, Education, and Youth, Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1984, pp. 95–96.). We believe in Prophets. We believe that the Lord reveals himself through them, but we must not neglect our role in the Lord's pattern of revelation. Brigham Young said, **"I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire for themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path the Lord dictates, or not."** (The Journal of Discourses 9:150).



The Lord has, since the beginning of man's mortality, revealed himself through prophecy to those he chose to be Prophets. We gain much by studying, and reading the recorded revelations that have been given since the days of Adam through these men. Even so, **"The most important knowledge to be gained in this life is that which comes by revelation through the Holy Spirit. This is not to belittle in any way information available in a multitude of disciplines or fields of study. But any of it individually or all of it together can never equal the importance of receiving the personal witness, borne on the wings of the Spirit, of sacred things. That witness brings light and certainty and peace."** (General Conference, "The Spirit of Prophecy", L. Aldin Porter, October 1996). Personal revelation should not, and cannot supersede revelation given to the Lord's prophet, but it should accompany it. The Lord will not circumvent the Prophet in the guiding of His children. Parley P. Pratt disclosed, **"The legislative, judicial, and executive power is vested in Him [the Lord]. He reveals the laws, and he elects, chooses, or appoints the officers; and holds the right to reprove, to correct, or even to remove them at pleasure. Hence the necessity of a constant intercourse by direct revelation between him and his church."** (Millennial Star, Mar. 1845, p. 150.). So the pattern is that the Lord reveals His will to Prophets that He has called. His faithful children listen to the prophet, and as they demonstrate faith and obedience in the prophet's words, they receive revelation confirming truth. This is the pattern. This pattern builds faith and

testimonies. **"Revelation was required to establish this church. Revelation has brought it from its humble beginnings to its present course. Revelation has come like flowing, living water. Continuing revelation will lead it forward to the windup scene. But as President Clark told us, we do not need more or different prophets. We need more people with "a listening ear." (In Conference Report, Oct. 1948, p. 82.)"** (General Conference, "Continuous Revelation", James E. Faust, October 1989).

Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, to the point that he was overcome by the spirit of prophecy. He had obviously studied the words of the prophets. He knew the revelations. Consequently, he recognized their fulfillment. He had faith. He was obedient. Here he was at his son's circumcision. Circumcision was a sacred ritual, with covenant and obligation. It was customary for the father to speak and pray at the close of the ritual. Zacharias completed the rite, and then delivered what has become known as the Benedictus. In his revelatory speech, he declares the mission of his son as revealed by prophets and angels. He also declares that his son is to be the frontrunner of the Holy Messiah. The time was at hand.

- 5 - **Blessed** - The word "blessed" is derived from the Greek word "εὐλογητός" or "eulogētos". It means blessed or praised. See also the commentary for Chapter 3, footnote #17 and Chapter 5, footnote #19.
- 6 - **the Lord God** - The word "Lord" is translated from the generic word for deity in Greek which is "κύριος" or "kyrios". The word God is translated from the Greek word "θεός" or "theos" which is also a generic term for deity; however it is often used to reference the only and true God.
- 7 - **Israel** - See the commentary for Chapter #5, footnote #64. The name Israel is first introduced as a new name given to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. When Jacob entered into the same covenant that Abraham did, the Lord named him Israel. The name literally means, "He shall become a prince of Elohim" What an interesting choice of a name. A prince is the heir, to the king. The covenant gave promise to Jacob that he would inherit that which is possessed by the Father of the Heavens. All who enter the Abrahamic covenant, and abide in that terms thereof, are called house of Israel and become co-heirs with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- 8 - **visited** - The term "visited" is translated from the Greek word "ἐπισκεπτομαι" or "episkeptomai". The Greek word can be defined as follows:
 - I. to look upon or after, to inspect, examine with the eyes
 - A. in order to see how he is, i.e. to visit, go to see one
 - i. the poor and afflicted, the sick
 - B. to look upon in order to help or to benefit
 - i. to look after, have care for, provide for: of God
 - C. to look (about) for, look out (one to choose, employ, etc.)

"In the Greek Old Testament it often denotes God's gracious visitation of His people to bring them deliverance of various sorts... Yahweh's visitation is associated with 'salvation'". (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 382-383). The Messiah himself was to be born shortly. He was to literally visit His people in the flesh. His birth was the start of a mortal ministry that would culminate in the redemption of all mankind from physical death and give opportunity for redemption from spiritual death to all who were willing.

- 9 - **redeemed** - **"Literally 'made, or brought about, redemption for His people'"** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 383). The word redeemed comes from the Greek word "λύτρωσις" or "lytrōsis" means a ransoming, redemption, or deliverance. **Literally 'made, or brought about, redemption for His people'"** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 383). In Christianity, being redeemed has a special association with deliverance from the penalty from sin.

The word redeemed has its roots in Hebrew culture; however, the word was initially associated with slavery and indentured servants. To fully understand the figurative uses of the word redeemed, an understanding of Hebrew slavery and the redeeming of slaves is necessary. Let's first look at the different types of Slaves that were allowed according to the Law.

Classification of Israelite Slaves

Hebrew Slaves: A Hebrew, one who has entered into the covenant of Abraham, could only become a slave by the following means; **1.** The Elder's ordered it as a consequence of criminal activity (see Criminals below). **2.** Voluntary submission as a Slave due to extreme poverty (see Paupers below; Yad, Avadim 1:1). **3.** Involuntary submission due to inability to repay a debt.

Alien Slaves: Other slaves were often purchased from other nation. This was actually a business. Slave traders would often purchase slaves of different cultures and sell them to others. The Old Testament records, **"Of the nations that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondwomen. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them may ye buy and of their families that are with you which they have begotten in your land; and they may be your possession"** (Leviticus 25:44-45). This was actually part of the Law.



Paupers & Debtors: A debtor who is unable to pay his debts may give himself in bondage to his creditor (cf. Leviticus 25:39; Proverbs 22:7; see also II Kings 4:1; Isaiah 50:1; Amos 2:6, 8:6; Nehemiah 5:5) as a form of payment. He would work off his debt through labor. In some cases, a debtor might give himself, and his family (including children) to the creditor should the debt be such that it would require the work of the entire family to repay the debt. This appears to have exceptions for close relations. The law reads, **"And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant"** (Leviticus 25:29). Although it happened from time to time in practice, it was considered against the law. (see Elon, Herut ha-Perat, 1-10, and n. 9; *Execution (Civil)).

Criminals: A thief who is unable to make restitution is "sold for his theft" (Exodus 22:2).

Prisoners of War: It would appear from Numbers 31:26–27 and Deuteronomy 20:10–11 that prisoners of war could be, and were, taken into bondage, but it has been contended that no prisoners of war were ever taken into private slavery (Kaufmann, Y., Toledot 1 (1937), 651).

Female Slaves: A father may sell his daughter into slavery (Exodus 21:7), usually apparently for household duties and eventual marriage (Exodus 21:7–11). Many provisions applying to slaves in general do not apply to female slaves. Thus, a woman may not sell herself into slavery (Mekh. Nezikin 3; Yad, Avadim 1:2), nor is a woman thief sold into slavery, even though she cannot make restitution (Sot. 3:8; Yad, Genevah 3:12). Contrary to an express scriptural provision (Deuteronomy 15:17), a female slave's ear may not be pierced (Sif. Deut. 122; Kid. 17b; Yad, Avadim 3:13). The female Hebrew slave can only be a minor below the age of 12 years whom her father (not her mother: Sot. 3:8; Sot. 23b) has sold into bondage (Exodus 21:7; Ket. 3:8; Yad, Avadim 4:1); he may do so only when he has no other means of subsistence left (Tosef. Ar. 5:7; Mekh. Sb-Y 21:7; Yad, Avadim 4:2) and must redeem her as soon as he has the means (Kid. 18a; Yad, loc. cit.).

Children of Slaves: The Bible mentions "the son of thy handmaid" (Exodus 23:12), "he that is born in the house" (Genesis 17:12, 13; Leviticus 22:11), indicating that the status of slaves devolved upon their children.

Status of Slaves

Slaves are members of the master's household, and as such enjoy the benefit and are liable to the duty of keeping the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10, 23:12; Deuteronomy 5:14–15) and holidays (Deuteronomy 16:11–14, 12:18). They must be circumcised (Genesis 17:12–13); partake of Passover sacrifices when circumcised (Exodus 12:44), as distinguished from resident hirelings (Exodus 12:45); and may inherit the master's estate where there is no direct issue (Genesis 15:3) or perhaps even where there is (Proverbs 17:2). Although slaves are the master's property (Leviticus 22:11, etc.), they may acquire and hold property of their own; a slave who "prosper," i.e., can afford it, may redeem himself (Leviticus 25:29; instances of property held by slaves are to be found in 2nd Samuel 9:10; 16:4; 19:18, 30; cf. 1st Samuel 9:8). The killing of a slave is punishable in the same way as that of any freeman, even if the act is committed by the master (Exodus 21:20).

Treatment of Slaves

In the case of a pauper, who sells himself into slavery or a man who is redeemed from bondage to a stranger, no distinction may be made between a slave and a hired laborer (Leviticus 25:40, 53). A master may not rule ruthlessly over these slaves (Leviticus 25:43, 46, 53) nor ill-treat them (Deuteronomy 23:17); Ben Sira adds: **"If thou treat him ill and he proceeds to run away, in what way shalt thou find him?"** (Ecclus. 33:31). A master may chastise his slave to a reasonable extent (Ecclus. 33:26) but not wound him (Ex. 21:26–27). The workload of a slave should never exceed his physical strength (Ecclus. 33:28–29). A fugitive slave must not be turned over to his master but given refuge (Deut. 23:16). There was no similar rule prevailing in neighboring countries (cf. I Kings 2:39–40). The abduction of a person for sale into bondage is a capital offense (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7). In general, **"thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt"** (Deuteronomy 15:15), and that you are now the slaves of God who redeemed you from Egypt (Lev. 25:55).

Termination of Slavery

Hebrew Slaves: Because Hebrews were of the covenant, their ability to be freed was not only possible, but plausible. There are several conditions that would terminate or release a Hebrew from slavery. **1.** The Law states that after a Hebrew slave served six years, the slave must be freed in the Sabbath year or seventh of service (Exodus 21:2, Deuteronomy 15:12). **2.** It is thought that a slave could be freed by the payment of 30 shekels of silver. This is based on the fact that if an ox killed a slave, the owner of the ox must pay 30 shekels of silver to the master of the slave (Exodus 21:32). **3.** If the Slave was serving to repay a debt, freedom could be obtained by the repayment of the loan. This could be done through the value of the service given, a cash payment, or a combination of the two. **4.** The Jubilee Year arrives. In that year all debts are forgiven and all slaves are freed. **5.** Any physical abuse of a slave results in the slaves freedom. **5.** A slave may be released by a deed of release delivered by his master (Kid. 16a; Yad, Avadim 2:12). **6.** He is released on the death of his master, provided the master left no male descendants (Kid. 17b; Yad, loc. cit.). **7.** Where the slave has had his ear pierced (a perpetual slave), he is released on the death of his master, irrespective of the master's surviving issue (Kid. 1:2; Kid. 17b; Yad, Avadim 3:7). **8.** The redemption money is paid by a third person, either to the slave or to the master, on condition that it is used only for the redemption (Kid. 1:2; Yad, Avadim 2:8). **9.** In addition, their bondage is terminated when the slave comes of age, i.e., shows "signs" of puberty (simanim: Kid. 1:2; Yad, Avadim 4:5; also see Legal Capacity)

If the slave refuses to go free and wishes to stay on in his master's service, then the master pierces his ear with an awl and in this way the slave is bonded to him forever (Ex. 21:5–6; Deut. 15:16–17).

If a Hebrew slave has been sold to an alien, he must be redeemed at once; he then enters into the redeemer's service, which terminates with the jubilee year (Lev. 25:47–54).

Alien Slaves: Alien slaves serve in perpetuity: **"Ye may make them an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession, of them ye may take your bondmen forever"** (Leviticus 25:46). The same rule would appear to apply to prisoners of war. Even so, there are ways for Alien or POW slaves to be freed. **1.** Release may be obtained by the payment of money, the price demanded by the master being paid to him by a third party, either directly or through the slave (Kid. 1:3; Yad, Avadim 5:2). **2.** A deed of release may be delivered by the master (Kid. 1:3; Yad, Avadim 5:3). **3.** A verbal release, or a promise of release, is not sufficient in itself, but the court may enforce it by compelling the master to deliver a deed (Sh. Ar., YD 267:73–74). **4.** The slave is freed if the master causes him grievous bodily injury: the two biblical instances of gouging out the eye and knocking out the tooth are multiplied, and a long list of eligible injuries has been laid down (Kid. 24b–25a; Yad, Avadim 5:4–14; Sh. Ar., YD 267:27–39). While the list in the codes was intended to be exhaustive, the better rule seems to be that all injuries leaving any permanent disfigurement are included (Kid. 24a). The rule is confined to non-Hebrew slaves only (Mekh. Nezikin 9); injuries inflicted on Hebrew slaves, male or female, are dealt with as injuries to freemen (BK 8:3; Yad, Hovel 4:13 and Avadim 4:6). **5.** A slave may also be released if his master bequeaths him all his property (Pe'ah 3:8; Git. 8b–9a; Yad, Avadim 7:9; YD 267:57). **6.** By marriage to a freewoman, or by his de facto recognition, in the presence of his master, as a free Jew (e.g., using phylacteries and reading the Torah in public; Git. 39b–40a; Yad, Avadim 8:17; YD 267:70) a slave obtained his freedom. Marriage to the master's daughter seems to have been a not infrequent means to emancipation (Pes. 113a).

Paupers & Debtors: When the amount of debt for which the debtor sold himself is fulfilled, he is free. He must be freed on the first ensuing jubilee year (Leviticus 25:40). The same is true of a pauper. In that year, he regains his lands and holdings (Leviticus 25:10, 13) and can go back to his family and ancestral home (Leviticus 25:41).

Criminals: Restitution is paid by the criminal, the criminal's family or a Third Party. Restitution may also be paid my servitude.

Prisoners of War: There appears to be no recorded rules on the freeing of Prisoners of war, though the Jubilee required that ALL slaves were freed and all debt forgiven.

Female Slaves: Female slaves sold into bondage by their fathers go free if their master's sons deny them their matrimonial rights (Exodus 21:11).

Children of Slaves: Bondage is terminated when the slave comes of age, i.e., shows "signs" of puberty (simanim: Kid. 1:2; Yad, Avadim 4:5; also see Legal Capacity)

The idea of redemption may be more complicated than this, but in summary; the redemption of a slave would indicate that someone has paid the debt, or the restitution for the crime, and thereby freeing the slave. **"To redeem' is to buy or to buy back. As a legal matter, property is redeemed by paying off the mortgages or other liens on it. In Old Testament times, the law of Moses provided different ways that servants and property could be freed, or redeemed, by the payment of money (see Leviticus 25:29–32, 48–55)."** (General Conference, "Redemption", October 2011, LeGrand R. Curtis Jr.).

Figuratively, we are all slaves. We are slaves in the fact that we have committed crimes for which we cannot make restitution. We have debts for which we have no means to pay. How so? **"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23) We lie. We cheat. We steal. We commit all manner of sin. In spite of our best efforts, we find ourselves far from worth of Father's blessings. On our own, we cannot remove our sins. We cannot work out our own salvation, not without help. We are a slave that has no personal means of redemption. Our debt is so large that we have no possibility of repaying it, even with a lifetime of work. What a desperate state!

When the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, he promised Land and Wealth. This is the language of the redemption of a slave. When a slave is truly freed, the lands and wealth of his fathers are restored. So Abraham made promises to the Lord, who would redeem him. This too is reminiscent of redemption. When a third party redeems a slave, he is allowed to set term. These terms may be gracious or harsh. The Lord required that Abraham live the Law of Jehovah, in return, redemption was made. This redemption was fully illustrated when the Lord asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, and then a scapegoat was provided and redemption was made.

The Lord has long since promised redemption to all who are willing to enter into His covenant, and abide His Law. The Psalmist recorded, **"He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name."** (Psalms 111:9). Note the connection between the covenant and redemption. Without condition, the Lord has redeemed all mankind from physical death. He also paid the redeeming price for sin for all mankind; however, like a slave being freed by a third party, we must agree to the terms. The terms are the covenant. They require **repentance** and obedience. To Isaiah the Lord said, **"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."** (Isaiah 44:22).

Zacharias understands the events that are transpiring with the birth of his son. He knows that the way is being prepared for the Messiah. He understands that redemption is at hand. President John Taylor taught that because of the Redeemer's sacrifice, **"the debt is paid, the redemption made, the covenant fulfilled, justice satisfied, the will of God done, and all power is ... given into the hands of the Son of God"** (Teachings of Presidents of the Church: John Taylor, 2001, page 44).

Below are a couple of scriptures in the Old Testament that reference this redemption;

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psalms 107:2)

"And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever." (Psalms 136:24)

"For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." (Isaiah 63:4)

"Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs." (Numbers 18:15-16)

"And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: But as an hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee: And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return. For they are my servants, which I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen. Thou shalt not rule over him with rigour; but shalt fear thy God. Both thy bondmen, and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they begat in your land: and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession; they shall be your bondmen for ever: but over your brethren the children of Israel, ye shall not rule one over another with rigour. And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother that dwelleth by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger or sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him: Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself. And he shall reckon with him that bought him from the year that he was sold to him unto the year of jubilee: and the price of his sale shall be according unto the number of years, according to the time of an hired servant shall it be with him. If there be yet many years behind, according unto them he shall give again the price of his redemption out of the money that he was bought for. And if there remain but few years unto the year of jubilee, then he shall count with him, and according unto his years shall he give him again the price of his redemption." (Leviticus 25:39-52)

"Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my **creditors is it to whom I have **sold you**? Behold, for **your iniquities** have ye **sold yourselves**, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot **redeem**? or have I no power to **deliver**? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst."** (Isaiah 50:1-2)

The Dead Sea Scrolls have an interesting passage in the War Scroll, which is a record which discusses the final battle between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. In this passage, it has striking similarities to Zacharias' Benedictus. Even to the point that it mentions that the dumb (which Zacharias was) will open the mouth and praise God (the Benedictus). Here is an excerpt.

"Blessed be the God of Israel, the one who keeps mercy for his covenant and pledges of deliverance for the people he has redeemed. He has called those who are tottering to prodigious [exploits]. He has gathered an assembly of nations for destruction with no remnant. In judgment he has lifted up the melting heart; he has opened the mouth of the dumb to sing God's marvels..." (The Dead Sea Scrolls, The War Scroll, Translated by Wilford G.E. Watson, iQM 14:4-6)

- 10 - **his people** - There is a relationship evident here. The Lord will redeem HIS people. Those that covenant with Him, become His people. It is His people that he shall redeem from their sins. See the commentary in Chapter 4, footnote #32
- 11 - **raised** - The word "raised" is translated from the Greek word "ἐγείρω" or "egeirō". It means to arouse, or cause to rise. It is most often used in relation to sleep, though it can be used for getting up from a chair, erecting a building, or developing a child. The definition does not include lifting something. The implication here is that the raising up of the horn of salvation is not the lifting of a horn, but rather the raising of a person. The horn of salvation must be reference to a person rather than a thing. See the commentary in Chapter 4, footnote #40.
- 12 - **horn** - The term "horn" is derived from the Greek word "κέρας" or "keras". It is the horn of an animal. **"The figure is derived from an animal's horns especially that of wild buffalo or oxen, which symbolize strength and power. The lifting up of the horn in the Old Testament refers to the animals tossing of its horns in a display of might,"** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 383). The Hebrews saw the horn as a symbol of a mighty and valiant helper, the author of deliverance, or the Messiah. Their culture and religious rites are closely associated with the horn. Several specific examples are included below;

Blood of the sacrifice was poured on the horns of the Altar

The Altar of Burnt Offering or the Brazen Altar had a horn placed on each corner. **"And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with brass."** (Exodus 27:2). The Altar was square and symbolized exactness and perfection. The four angles totaled 360 degrees and represented completeness. The four corners symbolically represented the four corners of the earth, while the horns represented the power and might of the Messiah. The Altar as a whole represented the complete nature of Jesus' sacrifice. It was indeed an infinite atonement. It was and is capable of spanning the entire earth and all its inhabitants. It is complete, and perfect.



Animals brought to the Altar were brought there in similitude of the Sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father. Thus, they were required to be unblemished, the firstling of the flock, perfect and clean. They were set apart by the laying on of hands as a sacrifice for sin. They were then killed and laid upon the Altar of the world. The blood of the Animal, representing Jesus Christ, was collected and a priest placed the blood on the horns of the altar. The Old Testament reads, **"And he slew it; and Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it."** (Leviticus 8:15). The atonement (blood) of the Almighty (horn) was clearly symbolically taught to the children of the covenant to see and understand.

The blood was also taken to another Altar. Inside the Temple or the Tabernacle, depending on when you lived, there was a smaller Altar called the Altar of Incense or the Golden Altar. It too had four horns, one on each corner. It was similar to the Brazen Altar in symbols, but smaller and of different use. A Priest would take a stick that had a hand in cupping shape on the end. He would use the stick to collect hot coals from the Altar of Burnt Offering. He would transport the coals inside the temple and place them on the Altar of Incense. He would then sprinkle incense upon the coals and it would give a sweet savor to the Lord's house. The coals represented the sacrifice, and the smoke of the incense represented the prayers of the saints. It was here that the priests offered prayers, and the prayers symbolically raised to heaven. The priest placed the blood of the sacrifice upon the horns of the Altar of Incense. **"And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, which is in the tabernacle of the congregation; and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."** (Leviticus 4:7). The blood represents Jesus' intermediary role between us and heaven.

Shofar Horn

The shofar (שופר) is a Jewish instrument most often made from a ram's horn, though it can also be made from the horn of a sheep or goat. It makes a trumpet-like sound and is traditionally blown on Rosh HaShanah, the Jewish New Year.

According to the famous Jewish philosopher Maimonides, the sound of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is meant to wake up soul and turn its attention to the important task of repentance (teshuvah). It is a commandment to blow the shofar on Rosh HaShanah and there are four specific shofar blasts associated with this holiday:

1. **Teki'ah** – An unbroken blast lasting about three seconds
2. **Shva'rim** – A teki'ah broken into three segments
3. **Teruah** – Nine rapid fire blasts
4. **Tekiah Gedolah** – A triple teki'ah lasting at least nine seconds, though many shofar blowers will attempt to go significantly longer, which the audience loves.



The person who blows the shofar is called a Tokea (which literally means "blaster") and it is no easy task to perform each of these sounds.

There are many symbolic meanings associated with the shofar and one of the best known has to do with the Akedah, when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. The story is recounted in Genesis 22:1-24 and culminates with Abraham raising the knife to slay his son only to have God stay his hand and bring his attention to a ram caught in a nearby thicket. **"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram,**

and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son." (Genesis 22:13). Abraham sacrificed the ram instead. Because of this story some Midrashes claim that whenever the shofar is blown God will remember Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son and will therefore forgive those who hear the shofar's blasts. The oral law also claims that the shofar blasts not only reminds us to turn our hearts towards repentance, but it also reminds God to forgive us for our trespasses. God needs no reminding, nevertheless, this is the symbolism of the oral law.

The shofar is also associated with the idea of crowning God as King on Rosh HaShanah. The breath used by the Tokea to make the sounds of the shofar are also associated with the breathe of life, which God first breathed into Adam upon the creation of humanity.

The Shofar horn also symbolizes the voice of warning from on High. Remember the famous wall of Jericho that fell with the blasts of the Shofar. **"And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets."** (Joshua 6:4).

Horns of the Crown

Anciently, the crowns of royalty were crafted with protrusions pointing upward that were meant to represent horns. Kings who wanted to demonstrate their might and power put on crowns with many horns. Since the Horn was also a symbol of the Messiah, this was also an important symbol for a crown. Kings often made claims that they were crowned by God. They wanted to convey an idea that they were sanctioned by the Most High. Consequently, a crown has taken the symbol of royalty. It is often associated with the Messiah's royal lineage through David. The book of Samuel makes reference to the Lord's king in what might be considered reference to his crown.

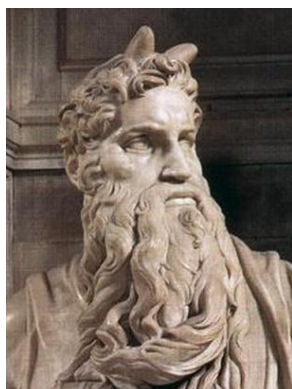


Samuel says, **"The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed."** (1 Samuel 2:10). Another Old Testament reference is made to King David, **"There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed."** (Psalms 132:17).

Moses was drawn in antiquities with horns

The last area we will review may seem odd at first, maybe even a little surprising. Horns on people are often seen as Satanic and Evil; however, this has not always been the case. In centuries past, horns were seen as a sign of might and power, hence prophets and figures of righteousness were often depicted with horns. Horns are a symbol of righteousness. The fact is, Satan is the father of the great lie. He is the usurper. He claims power and dominion where he has none of his own. It is of little wonder that he would take such a powerful Messianic symbol and adopt it for his own. In fact, was it not he that wanted to be the Savior of mankind and keep the glory for himself.

The Prophet Moses is often depicted with Horns. This is done to symbolize the power of the priesthood that he exercised and the might of heaven that he welded. Here are several examples of Moses with horns.



- 13 - **Salvation** - The word "salvation" is derived from the Greek word "σωτηρία" or "sōtēria". The Greek word is used to mean deliverance, preservation, safety or salvation. It is mostly used in reference to deliverance from one's enemies. Religiously, the word is used in reference to the safety or salvation of the soul. It is commonly used for Messianic salvation.

The combination of the term horn and salvation results in a name for the Messiah. **"In any case, 'horn of salvation' must be understood here as a title for an agent of God's salvation in David's house, i.e. in a loose sense a messianic title"** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 383). The title is used in several location in the Old Testament as follows;

"The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence." (2nd Samuel 22:3)

"The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower." (Psalms 18:2)

Interestingly, the horn representing the Messiah and Salvation is used to convey the idea of deliverance from one's enemy. The Ancient Israelites honored a rule that one could flee from an enemy and find safety by grabbing hold of the horn of the Brazen Altar of the Temple. It was a safe zone. One taking hold of the horn was granted deliverance. The Old Testament provides an example of this practice which reads, **"And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword."** (1st King 1:50-51). The practice teaches us that deliverance can be obtained when we hold fast to the covenants that bind us to Jesus: the source of salvation. When we do that we are saved. Ezekiel prophesied, **"In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the Lord."** (Ezekiel 29:21). Micah prophesied, **"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth."** (Micah 4:13).

- 14 - **house** - See the commentary for Chapter 2, footnote #48, Chapter 3, footnote #12 and Chapter 5, footnote #7. The term "house" refers to descendants from a particular person or people.

- 15 - **servant David** - See the commentary for Chapter 1, footnote #4 & #19, Chapter 3, footnote #13, and Chapter 4, footnote #25. David, though he was not the first King of Israel, is considered the Father of Israelite Royalty. It is David's line that the Messiah was to come through. Should a Messiah be born, the Jews would expect that His genealogy would validate Him as being of the House of David.
- 16 - **Holy Prophets** - See the commentary for Chapter 4, footnote #35. Zacharias bears testimony that God's oracles on earth have prophesied of the Messiah's birth since the beginning. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob teaches, "**Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him.**" (2nd Nephi 11:4). This is what prophet's do. They testify of Christ. All things given of God, point us to the Savior.
- 17 - **world** - The word "world" is translated from the Greek word "αἰών" or "aiōn". The Greek translation is questionable. The word means forever, eternity, an age, or a period of time. It can be used to represent the universe or the worlds. The message is not that the prophets have prophesied from the beginning of the world, but rather that the prophets have "ALWAYS" prophesied of the coming of the Messiah.
- 18 - **began** - There is no word in the Greek from which "began" is translated. The word has been added by translators.
- 19 - **saved** - See the commentary for Chapter 4, footnote #31. The Savior has saved all mankind from physical death. While it is true that all men will die, He broke the bands of death so that all men (regardless of their goodness) shall live again. He has also paid the price of sin, and therefore all who repent and accept his generous terms (contained in the everlasting covenant) shall be saved from spiritual death.
- 20 - **enemies** - The phrase "saved from our enemies" is "**Literally 'salvation from our enemies' "** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 384). The word "enemies" in Greek is very interesting. It is derived from the Greek word "ἐχθρός" or "echthros" which means hated, odious, and hateful. It is used of men at enmity with God by their sin. We typically don't see the word enemy that way; however, let's look at what potential enemies that threaten you and I. Who are our enemies?



1. **Natural Man** - "...the natural man is an enemy to God..." (Mosiah 3:19)

2. **Death** - "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26)

3. **The World** - "a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4)

4. **The Devil** - "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4)

"...the devil, who is the master of sin, or who is the evil spirit which hath been spoken of by our fathers, he being an enemy to all righteousness." (Mosiah 4:14)

5. **False Doctrine** - "They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is." (Psalms 38:20)

6. **Pride** - "The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out. Only by pride cometh contention..." (Proverbs 13:10)

"Be not ashamed, neither confounded; but be admonished in all your high-mindedness and pride, for it bringeth a snare upon your souls." (D&C 90:17)

The common thread? Our enemy is not a people, or a nation, or an army. Our enemy is sin. Our enemy is our selfish desires. Our enemy is the author of sin: Lucifer. While it may be true that the wicked despise and hate righteousness. Our salvation comes by overcoming sin. Even so, there are literal enemies to the righteous. Whatever the case the Messiah is the only salvation. The Old Testament prophesies of the Lord's triumph over the enemies of the righteous. Here are just a few;

"They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the Lord was my stay." (Psalms 18:18)

"And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy." (Psalms 106:10)

"I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies." (Psalms 18:3)

"But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." (Exodus 23:22)

21 - **hand** - See the commentary for Chapter 7, footnote #37. The hand symbolizes one's ability to act and move.

22 - **hate us** - The word "hate" is a harsh word. I know of home that considered it a swear word, and prohibited it's use for the children of the home. The word "hate" is derived from the Greek word "μισέω" or "miseō", which means to hate, pursue with hatred, detest. Hate is one of the core elements of evil. The Apostle, Marvin J. Ashton taught, "**Never will peace and hatred be able to abide in the same soul. Permanent peace will elude those individuals or groups whose objective is to condemn, discredit, rail at, or tear down those whose beliefs are different from their own. These people live by hatred and would destroy others insofar as it is in their power to do so. True Christians have no time for contention. Lasting peace cannot be built while we are reviling or hating others. Those who preach hate, ridicule, and untruths cannot be classified as peacemakers. Until they repent they will reap the harvest to which those engaged in the business of hatred are entitled. Feelings of enmity and malice can never be compatible with feelings of peace.**" (General Conference, "Peace - A Triumph of Principles", Marvin J. Ashton, October 1985). Those that hate, cannot find themselves on the

side of the Jesus. In fact, the practice of evil acts breeds hatred. The Book of Proverbs teaches, **"Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not."** (Proverbs 29:24). We cannot find love and peace in evil doing.

- 23 - perform** - See the commentary for Chapter 2, footnote #44 and Chapter 5, footnote #29. The word "perform" is translated from the Greek word "ποιέω" or "poieō". It means to make, produce, construct, prepare, to do, to carry something out, or to perform. Zacharias is declaring what prior prophets had prophesied. He declares that the Messiah was coming to carry out the great atonement, which would provide mercy to all mankind. He would perform this act as promised by the prophets. He would remember the covenants that had been made.
- 24 - (tender) mercy** - See commentary for Chapter 5, footnote #45 and Chapter 6 footnote #4. The word "mercy" is often coupled with the word "tender". Zacharias uses the term "tender mercy" in verse 78. The word "tender" is derived from the Greek word "σπλαγγχνον" or "splanchnon". **"The Greek word splanchna basically means 'entails, bowels' that part of the body that in antiquity was often regarded as the seat of compassion."** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 386). **"Literally 'merciful compassion' "** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 386).

The Savior was sent to earth to pay the price of our redemption from sin, and thus satisfying the demands of Justice for our sins. We learn through the scriptures that He also did so to extend mercy and compassion. Alma taught the people of Gideon, **"And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."** (Alma 7:12). His atonement gave him understanding of our sorrows, guilt, pains, losses, and all manner of grief. Because of this, He has become Mighty to Save. His love has no bounds, and His mercy is endless. He truly comprehends all that we are faced with in mortality. Nephi taught, **"...But behold, I, Nephi, will show unto you that the tender mercies of the Lord are over all those whom he hath chosen, because of their faith, to make them mighty even unto the power of deliverance."** (1st Nephi 1:20). The closest we can come to personally understanding His great love and mercy, other than receiving it from Him, is that of being parents. Perhaps that is the design. Nephi recorded of his own father dealing with his sinful brothers, **"And he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; yea, my father did preach unto them."** (1st Nephi 8:37).

The prophet Isaiah refers to the Savior as a tender plant. **"For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."** (Isaiah 53:2). There is an implication that tender might also be figurative for humble. Compassion and humility go hand in hand. The Old Testament teaches, **"Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord."** (2nd Kings 22:19, see also 2nd Chronicles 34:27).

- 25 - promised** - This is an interesting choice of translation. The word "promised" is taken from the Greek word "μετά" or "meta". It means with, after or behind. Hence, the literal translation should be "the mercy after our fathers". I suppose that the promise is implied there. Abraham entered a covenant, a two way promise, where the Lord promised him the tender mercies of the atonement. This covenant is made available to all who partake of the covenant of our fathers. The Psalmist records, **"He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations."** (Psalms 105:8). We see that the Lord's promise was definitely extended to the children, and the fathers promise was not to be forgotten. In spite of our poor choices **"...he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies."** (Psalms 106:45).
- 26 - fathers** - See the commentary for Chapter 5, footnote #66, and Chapter 7, footnote #6. The Greek word is a generic term for father and can be used for male ancestors, or forefathers. The Greek word is "πατήρ" or "patēr".
- 27 - remember** - See the commentary for Chapter 5, footnote #65. The word remember is translated from the Greek word "μνάσκειν" or "mnaomai". It means to remind, to remember a thing or to be mindful of. I personally like the term mindful. The Lord is mindful of us. The scriptures teach, **"For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant."** (Psalms 105:42). And with that holy promise he also forgets. What a wonderful thing. Isaiah taught, **"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."** (Isaiah 43:25).

Another important gospel application for the word 'remember', is the fact that we must remember that the Lord has made promises which He will not break. When the world is full of evil, when it feels like there is no hope, when it feels like the wicked have won... we must remember the strength of the Savior, President Kimball taught, **"Now, my brothers and sisters, as you read of troubles in so many parts of the world, remember that the Lord knew these problems would come, and that even with these problems He has foreseen the growth of this Church and its people. Be of good cheer, for the Lord is guiding His church. For nearly forty years as a General Authority, I have watched Him guide this church. I marvel at how He can work to bring to pass His purposes by using us in our weaknesses, but He does!"** (General Conference, "Remember the Mission of the Church", Spencer W. Kimball, April 1982).

- 28 - holy covenant** - **"A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. An oath is a sworn attestation to the inviolability of the promises in the agreement."** (General Conference, "The Oath and Covenant which Belongeth to the Priesthood", Marion G. Romney, October 1980). A holy covenant is one of a sacred nature. It has to do with exaltation and salvation. It pertains to the things of eternity. Abraham entered into a holy covenant. Elder Nelson taught, **"One of the most important concepts of revealed religion is that of a sacred covenant. In legal language, a covenant generally denotes an agreement between two or more parties. But in a religious context, a covenant is much more significant. It is a sacred promise with God. He fixes the terms. Each person may choose to accept those terms. If one accepts the terms of the covenant and obeys God's law, he or she receives the blessings associated with the covenant. We know that 'when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.' Through the ages, God has made covenants with His children. His covenants occur throughout the entire plan of salvation and are therefore part of the fulness of His gospel. For example, God promised to send a Savior for His children, asking in turn for their obedience to His law."** (General Conference, "Covenants", Russell M. Nelson, October 2011).

The Lord's covenants are eternal. The Psalmist recorded, **"He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations."** (Psalms 105:8). The weak link in these "holy" covenants is mortal men. That is why the apocrypha records, **"Now therefore let us cry unto heaven, if peradventure the Lord will have mercy upon us, and remember the covenant of our fathers, and destroy this host before our face this day:"** (1 Maccabees 4:10) Isn't it wonderful that the Lord's covenant includes the Savior's mercy.

- 29 - oath** - The word "oath" is translated from the Greek word "ὄρκος" or "horkos". The Greek word means "that which has been pledged or promised with an oath". **"A gospel covenant is a holy contract. 'God in his good pleasure fixes the terms, which man accepts.' (Bible Dictionary, LDS ed., s.v. "covenant".)"** (General Conference, "The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood", Carlos E. Asay, October 1985). President Eyring stated, **"Rising to the possibilities of the oath and covenant brings the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life. That is a purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Through keeping the covenants as we receive the priesthood and renewing them in the temple ceremonies, we are promised by an oath made by our Heavenly Father, Elohim, that we will gain the fulness of His glory and live as He lives. We will have the blessing of being sealed in a family forever with the promise of eternal increase."** (General Conference, "Faith and the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood", Henry B. Eyring, April 2008). **"I stand in humble adoration of my Maker when I realize that he has sworn and confirmed his part of the agreement with an oath. (See Heb. 6:13-17.) He will never fall short of his promise, nor will he void it or compromise it in the slightest degree."** (General Conference, "The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood", Carlos E. Asay, October 1985).

30 - swear - The word "sware" is translated from the Greek word "ὀμνῶ" or "omnyō". It means to swear, or to affirm or promise with an oath. The ancient Jews had cultural and legal processes for the Administration of Oaths. Though they probably changed over the ages, the Pentateuchal and mishnaic oaths were generally taken by holding the Scroll of the Torah in one's hand and swearing by God (Shevu. 38b; Yad, Shevu'ot, 11:8; ḤM 87:15). God need not be mentioned by name but may be described by one of His attributes. The oath is taken standing up (Shevu. 4:13; Sh. Ar., ḤM 87:16, 17). The post-mishnaic oath is taken without holding the Scroll and without mentioning God (Sh. Ar., ḤM 87:18; a contrary rule is given by Yad, Shevu'ot, 11:13, to the effect that the Scroll should at least be held out to the deponent so as to instill fear into him). The oath is pronounced either by the person taking it or by the court administering it; in the latter case, the deponent responds with "Amen" (Shevu. 9:11; Yad, Shevu'ot 11:10). There was a rule to the effect that oaths must always be taken in Hebrew (Yad, Shevu'ot 11:8), but it was later mitigated so as to allow the oath to be taken in the language best understood by the deponent (ibid., 11:14; Sh. Ar., ḤM 87:20).

Before administering the oath, the court warns the deponent of the gravity of the oath and the inescapability of divine punishment for any false oath. This warning is not required for the post-mishnaic oath (Shevu. 39a; Yad, Shevu'ot 11:16; Sh. Ar., ḤM 87:20–21). The court also warns the party at whose instance the oath is administered that he should abstain if his case was wrong, so as not to have the oath administered unnecessarily, whereupon that party has to say "Amen" to confirm his own good faith (Yad, To'en ve-Nitan, 1:11; Sh. Ar., ḤM 87:22).

Swearing an oath in the Near East as a whole was a serious thing. A man's word was his character. One would rather die than break one's word. Hence, once a man swore an oath, it was binding and presumed valid by all parties. The Law states, "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." (Numbers 30:2). Perhaps this is why when Nephi swore an oath to Zorom, the freed him and Zorom abided with them. Nephi swore, "... as the Lord liveth, and as I live, even so that if he would hearken unto our words, we would spare his life. And I spake unto him, even with an oath, that he need not fear; that he should be a free man like unto us if he would go down in the wilderness with us." (1st Nephi 4:32-33). Notice that Nephi started the oath with "as the Lord liveth, and as I live". This is typical oath language. It was serious stuff. Once Zorom heard it, he knew he was going to be safe, because an oath had been sworn. Similar oaths are found in the Old Testament. The Lord's direction on oath taking is very clear. Here are some scriptural references;

"Then shall an oath of the Lord be between them both, that he hath not put his hand unto his neighbour's goods; and the owner of it shall accept thereof, and he shall not make it good." (Exodus 22:11)

"That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day;" (Deuteronomy 29:12)

"They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes;" (Nehemiah 10:29)

"For thus saith the Lord God; I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant." (Ezekiel 16:59)

"And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;" (Genesis 26:4)

31 - Abraham - See the commentary for Chapter 1, footnote #5, and Chapter 5, footnote #67. Abraham is known as the Father of the covenant. It is not surprising that Zacharias mentioned his name when speaking of the coming of the Messiah. It was Abraham's covenant that promised a Savior.

32 - grant - The word "grant" is derived from the Greek word "δίδωμι" or "didōmi". It means to give something to someone, to bestow a gift, to grant permission, supply, furnish or extend.

33 - fear - See the commentary for Chapter 3, footnote #22, Chapter 4, footnote #26, and Chapter 7, footnote #27. "The Greek word-order of verses 74-75 is complicated; the adv. aphobos, 'without fear', occupies an emphatic position, following immediately in the infin phrase, tou dounai hemin, 'to grant us' in verse 74. The infin letreuein, 'to worship' expresses the consequence of the deliverance brought about by Yahweh for His people." (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 385). Those that fear the Lord are not scared of him, but rather revere and respect Him. Joshua taught, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord." (Joshua 24:14).

34 - holiness - The word "holiness" is translated from the Greek word "ἁσιότης" or "hosiōtēs". The Greek word means to have piety towards God, fidelity in observing the obligations of piety, and holiness. In other words, "...holiness is a product of covenant living." (General Conference, "With Holiness of Heart", Bonnie D. Parkin, October 2002).

To be holy, means that you have committed yourself to the will of God, and follow it with exactness and diligence. Quentin L. Cook taught, "Separation from the evils of the world needs to be accompanied by holiness. A Saint loves the Savior and follows Him in holiness and devotion. Evidence of this kind of holiness and devotion is exemplified by consecration and sacrifice. President Hinckley has taught, "Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God." Sacrifice is the crowning test of the gospel. It means consecrating time, talents, energy, and earthly possessions to further the work of God." (General Conference, "Are You a Saint?", Quentin L. Cook, October 2003).



35 - righteousness - The term "righteousness" is translated from the Greek word "δικαιοσύνη" or "dikaïosynē". It means to be acceptable to God. It carries the idea of integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, and correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting. "The word righteousness is a most interesting and unique word. It is an umbrella word that spreads out and covers all the attributes of God. A person, then, who is righteous is Godly or Godlike. Right and wrong do exist and are opposite to each other. The actions of mankind do have moral consequences. The gospel of Jesus Christ defines for us the difference between what is good and what is bad. That which is good comes from God. Christ has said: 'And whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do good is of me; for good cometh of none save it be of me. I am the same that leadeth men to all good' (Ether 4:12). Righteousness is a composite of all that is good. It embraces the principles of heavenly power and law by which all things of God are handled and controlled and governed. In righteousness there is great simplicity. In every case that confronts us in life there is either a right way or a wrong way to proceed. If we choose the right way, we are sustained in our actions by the principles of righteousness, in the which there is power from the heavens. If we choose the wrong way

and act on that choice, there is no such heavenly promise or power, and we are alone and are destined to fail." (General Conference, "Righteousness", William R. Bradford, October 1999).

We are commanded to be righteous before the Lord. **"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you."** (Hosea 10:12). Righteousness requires us to covenant with the Lord, and it requires that we honor our covenants.

- 36 - **our life** - The word "life" is derived from the Greek term "ζωή" or "zōē". It means life or mortality. It makes reference to our mortal probation.
- 37 - **Highest** - See the commentary for Chapter 3, footnote #28. It is another name for God. It places the true and living God above all others. He is Higher than all others.
- 38 - **Lord** - See the commentary for Chapter 2, footnotes #21 & #38, Chapter 5, footnote #23, and Chapter 7, footnote #38.
- 39 - **prepare his ways - *Herein is prophecy fulfilled***. Isaiah prophesied of a front runner that would come before the Messiah. Isaiah said, **"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."** (Isaiah 40:3). Zacharias make reference to this prophecy which will be fulfilled by the 8 day old son that he was having circumcised. Malachi gave a similar prophecy in reference to John, the Son of Zacharias, when he said, **"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."** (Malachi 3:1).
- 40 - **salvation** - The word "salvation" is translated from the Greek word "σωτηρία" or "sōtēria". It means deliverance, being saved from sin, or Messianic preservation. **"John's task will be to make known to his compatriots the coming salvation in the Davidic lineage ."** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 386). He was to pave the way for the Salvation that Jesus would bring.
- 41 - **remission of their sins** - **"This is the first time that this Lucan phrase turns up in this Gospel."** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 386). See also the commentary for Chapter 4, footnote #33.

Ritual purification was important to all Jewish groups, and the inhabitants of Qumran were no exception. It is suspected that John the Baptist was raised in an Essene community, possibly at Qumran. Several ritual pools (mikveh) are found at Qumran. Even so, the Essenes believed that mere ritual of immersion was considered ineffective if the individual did not repent and accept upon himself God's commandments, as interpreted by the Yahad (the way the Essenes seemed to have referred to their community). **"So shall all together comprise a Yahad whose essence is truth, genuine humility, love of charity and righteous intent, caring for one another after this fashion within a holy society, comrades in an eternal fellowship...Yet he cannot be justified by what his willful heart declares lawful, preferring to gaze on darkness rather than the ways of light. With such an eye he cannot be reckoned faultless. Ceremonies of atonement cannot restore his innocence, neither cultic waters his purity. He cannot be sanctified by baptism in oceans and rivers, nor purified by mere ritual bathing. Unclean, unclean shall he be all the days that he rejects the laws of God, refusing to be disciplined in the Yahad of His society."** (Dead Sea Scrolls, Manual of Discipline 2:24-25, 3:3-6). This seems to coincide with the words Joseph Smith recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants, **"Wherefore, although a man should be baptized an hundred times it availeth him nothing, for you cannot enter in at the strait gate by the law of Moses, neither by your dead works."** (Doctrine and Covenants 22:2).

Josephus writes of John the Baptist stating, he was **"a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to for the remission of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness."** (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 18.5.2). John provided more than baptism. He taught repentance. He prepared souls for baptism, and then he baptized. This prepared them for the redemption that would be provided by the Messiah. **"Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people."** (Hebrew 2:17).

John the Baptist, was to help men see the error of their ways and encourage them to have a change of heart. Isaiah prophesied, **"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."** (Isaiah 55:7). Even so, it was not John that could forgive sins. He could only prepare men for the opportunity. It would be Jesus, and only Jesus, that could make that offer. The Psalmist said, **"Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins."** (Psalms 25:18).

- 42 - **dayspring** - The word "dayspring" is a unique and seldom used title for the Savior. It is a Messianic title. It is translated from the Greek word "ἀνατολή" or "anatolē", meaning the rising of the sun in the east, or the rising of the stars. **"Literally 'the rising from the height' or 'the dawn from on High'. This unique, enigmatic phrase has long been a crux interpretum."** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 387). The Messiah has the power to triumph over darkness. It is He that dispels darkness and gives light.

This beautiful English word, is found in the Old Testament as the translation of shachar, **"Hast thou. caused the dayspring to know his place?"** (Job 38:12). This is no doubt intended literally for the dawn. The "place" of the dayspring is the particular point of the horizon at which the sun comes up on any given day. This slowly changes day by day through the year, moving northward from midwinter till midsummer, and back again southward from midsummer to midwinter. It is also used in the Apocrypha, **"At the dayspring pray unto thee plead with thee at the dawning of the light,"** (The Wisdom of Solomon 16:28). Both the Hebrew and Greek words, however, are of frequent occurrence, but variously rendered "dawn," "break of day," "morning," "sunrise," and "east." It is also translated as **"the spring of the day"** (1 Samuel 9:26), **"the day began to spring"** (Judges 19:25). When used with the Greek word "heliou" or "sun," for rising of the sun



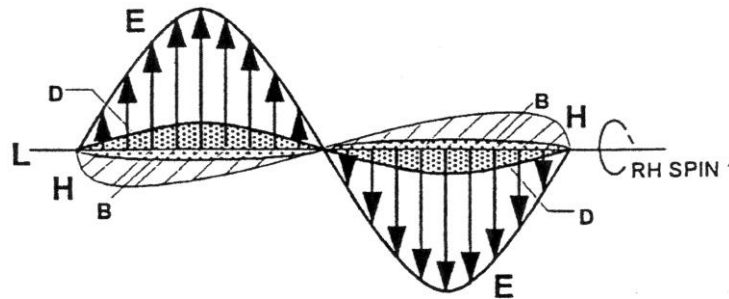
(Revelation 7:2; Revelation 16:12). In the Septuagint, the same Greek word is used for Hebrew "tsemach", or "branch," to designate the Messiah (Jeremiah 23:5, Zechariah 6:12). But this sense of the word is wholly unknown in profane Greek. The word is also employed in the Septuagint to express the rising of a heavenly body, as the moon (Isaiah 60:19).

The English word expresses the force of the Greek very beautifully. The dawn is seen in the East rising upward, breaking through the darkness. We must remember, however, that the word has acquired another specially Messianic association, through its use in the Septuagint version as the equivalent for the "Branch", or "that which springs upward" (Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8). Here the thought of the sunrise is prominent, and it connects itself with such predictions as, "The glory of the Lord hath risen upon thee" (Isaiah 60:1), or "The sun of righteousness shall rise" (Malachi 4:2). What had become a Messianic name is taken in its primary sense, and turned into a parable.

43 - visited us - "will take note of us" (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 388). It is not just a visit of the Savior, but a message of constant watchfulness. The Messiah is mindful of His children. He takes note of us. What sweet comfort to know that he watches and takes notice of our struggles and trials. This is the work of someone that loves us.

44 - to give light - A friend of mine, Baker Moyes, attended a fireside put on by a scientist who was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He presented a very interesting theory. He read Doctrine and Covenants 88:12-13, which reads, "Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space— The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things." We understand gravity to be the controlling factor that binds the planets, and tributaries in their proper placed; however, he theorized that based on this scripture in the Doctrine and Covenants light must control gravity. It must be the controlling force of all things. So as scientist do, he went to work. Here is what he came up with;

"The 'physics of the light field' is best demonstrated by the photon. Photons, which manifest themselves as both particles and waves, 'mediate' the electromagnetic field which is unified with the light field. Each photon, whether within space or massive bodies like the earth, sun, and all matter (even our bodies) carries three attributes - energy, momentum, and impulse. Photons can be best described in single wavelength form like this"



E = Electric field intensity
 H = Magnetic field intensity
 L = Angular momentum vector
 D = Electric flux density
 B = Magnetic flux density

The energies of photons are governed by the frequency intensities, the higher their frequency, the greater their energy. For an example: aware that space is filled the light field's momentum density, capable of penetrating all massive bodies, one can work backwards from D&C 88:12-13, and by correlating with the physics or relativity, demonstrate mathematically that an extraordinarily weak light field governs all gravitational forces in the universe by the following equation:

Equation for Light's Interaction Governing Gravity

$$-\frac{1}{c^2} \int_A S \cdot da - \frac{1}{c^2} \int_V \frac{D}{\epsilon_0} \cdot J_s dv = \frac{1}{c^2} \int_V \left(\sigma \left| \frac{D}{\epsilon_0} \right|^2 + \frac{D}{\epsilon_0} \cdot \frac{\partial P}{\partial t} + B \frac{\partial M}{\partial t} \right) dv + \frac{1}{c^2} \frac{d}{dt} \int_V \left(\frac{|D|}{2\epsilon_0} + \frac{|B|}{2\mu_0} \right) dv$$

momentum density of light supplied to V
momentum density absorbed by matter within V
momentum density absorbed by D and B fields in V

(Note: "V" stands for "volume, e.g. the earth, "D" and "B" are shown in the photon wave above, and ε and μ are the permittivity and permeability of space.)

- 45 - **sit in darkness** - The word "sit" carries the figurative message of idleness. One who sits, is not in motion. He is going nowhere. The word "darkness" is derived from the Greek word "σκότος" or "skotos". The Greek word for darkness means either the darkness of night, darkness from being blind, or any condition that would cause the absence of light. Metaphorically, it means wickedness, the lack of spirituality, ignorance, or be lost from God.

This world is full of individuals who sit in darkness. **"And in this world, the darkness is never far away. In fact, it is always just around the corner, waiting for an opportunity to come in. "If thou doest not well," the Lord said, "sin lieth at the door." (Genesis 4:7) It is as predictable as any physical law: if we let the light of the Spirit flicker or fade by failing to keep the commandments or by not partaking of the sacrament or praying or studying the scriptures, the darkness of the adversary will surely come in. "That wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience." (Doctrine & Covenant 93:39) In the scriptures we read that some individuals "grope in the dark without light" and "stagger like a drunken man." (Job 12:25) Stumbling along, we may become accustomed to the dimness of our surroundings and forget how glorious it is to walk in the light. There is a way out of the "mists of darkness" (1st Nephi 12:17) and onto the path that leads to happiness in this life and eternal life in the world to come. The Lord told Isaiah, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them." (Isaiah 42:16)." (General Conference, "Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light", Robert D. Hales, April 2002).**

The Savior came to earth to extend light to those lost souls. Without light, there is nothing to govern man. He becomes lost and confused. His path is chaotic. The Savior provided light not only to the living but to all mankind, living and dead. Isaiah said the he would come **"To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."** (Isaiah 42:7). This gives reference to those who have died in darkness and were held in figurative spiritual prison. They find themselves there because of the sins of the world. **"Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High"** (Psalms 107:10).



- 46 - **the shadow of death** - This is a figurative term for death. It is most known from the Book of Psalms, which reads, **"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."** (Psalms 23:4). Isaiah makes a similar reference to the shadow of death. He states, **"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."** (Isaiah 9:1).

"As mortals we all must die. Death is as much a part of eternal life as is birth. Looked at through mortal eyes, without comprehension of the eternal plan of God, death is a bleak, final, and unrelenting experience described by Shakespeare as "the undiscover'd country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns" (Hamlet, act 3, scene 1, lines 79–80)." (General Conference, "The Greatest Miracle in Human History", Gordon B. Hinckley, April 1994) The term shadow, carries the same figurative meaning as darkness. A shadow is created by blocking the light.

- 47 - **guide our feet** - The word guide is translated from the Greek word "κατευθύνω" or "kateuthynō". It means to make straight, guide or direct. It implies the removal of hindrances. Our path to eternal life and exaltation is very specific. It is a narrow path. Without guidance, it is difficult for us to find the path and maintain our journey on it. It is for this reason that we seek the prince of peace. It is His path, and He knows well the way. Without Him, **"The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace."** (Isaiah 59:8). The term feet is figurative for man's ability to move and to act. It represents our agency.

- 48 - **peace** - The word "peace" is a powerful word in scripture, and has many meanings. It is derived in this verse from the Greek word, "εἰρήνη" or "eirēnē". It has the following definitions.

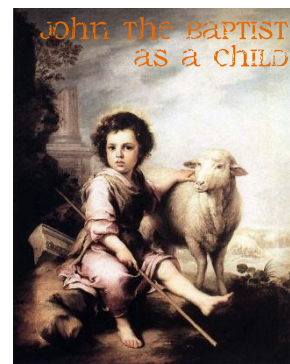
- I. a state of national tranquility
 - a. exemption from the rage and havoc of war
- II. peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord
- III. security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous)
- IV. of the Messiah's peace
 - a. the way that leads to peace (salvation)
- V. of Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is
- VI. the blessed state of devout and upright men after death

Zacharias is speaking Messianically; therefore, we will discuss the peace that the Messiah brings. The Messiah brings a peace that cannot be found anywhere else on earth. It is a peace that only He can provide. He does not force this peace upon us. He invites, and we choose. Marvin J. Ashton said, **"Peace is not a purchase away. Peace is not when the final installment is paid. Peace is not when marriage comes nor when all the children are enrolled in school. Peace is not when the last child returns from the mission field. Peace is not when an inheritance is received. Peace is not when the scars of death start to heal. True peace must not be dependent upon conditions or happenings. Peace must stem from an inward contentment built upon trust, faith, and goodwill toward God, fellowmen, and self. It must be constantly nurtured by the individual who is soundly anchored to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only then can a person realize that the trials and tribulations of daily life are less important than God's total goodness. Lasting peace is an eternal personal quest. Peace does come from obedience to the law. Peace comes to those who develop character and trust."** (General Conference, "Peace - A Triumph of Principles", Marvin J. Ashton, October 1985). Those who find true peace, find Jesus. The peace the world offers is fleeting and counterfeit.

So how do we find the peace that Jesus offers. **"they who reach down into the depths of life where, in the stillness, the voice of God is heard, have the stabilizing power which carries them poised and serene through the hurricane of difficulties."** (Ensign, Spencer W. Kimball, Jan. 1974, page 17). It was Ralph Waldo Emerson who declared the mighty truth, **"Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but a triumph of principles."** ("Self-Reliance," in Ralph Waldo Emerson: Essays and Lectures, New York: The Library of America, 1983, page 282). Peace come from not only finding Jesus, but following Him. It comes from centering our lives around the principles He teaches. **"Peace will never be the possession of those who participate in vulgar conversations and behavior. Let us not be planters of poisonous seeds. Rather let us nourish roots of peace in the soil of righteous principles."** (General Conference, "Peace - A Triumph of Principles", Marvin J. Ashton, October 1985).

If the peace of the Messiah is brought about by following Him, it stands to reason that the key to peace will rely on our faith in Him. It requires faith to follow, and live the principles of eternity. The following story illustrates the faith required to find this peace. **"Many years ago I heard a story that impressed me. I share it with you today as I endeavor for a few minutes to direct your thinking toward the important word peace. A beautiful little blind girl was sitting on the lap of her father in a crowded compartment in a train. A friend seated nearby said to the father, "Let me give you a little rest," and he reached over and took the little girl on his lap. A few moments later the father said**

to her, "Do you know who is holding you?" "No," she replied, "but you do." Some might be inclined to say, "What a perfect trust this child had in her father." Others may say, "What a wonderful example of love." And still others might say, "What an example of faith." To me it indicates a beautiful blending of all of these principles, which brought a priceless inner peace to the child. She knew she was safe because she knew her father knew who was holding her. Affection, respect, and care over the years had placed in this little girl's heart a peace that surpasseth all understanding. She was at peace because she knew and trusted her father." (General Conference, "Peace - A Triumph of Principles", Marvin J. Ashton, October 1985).

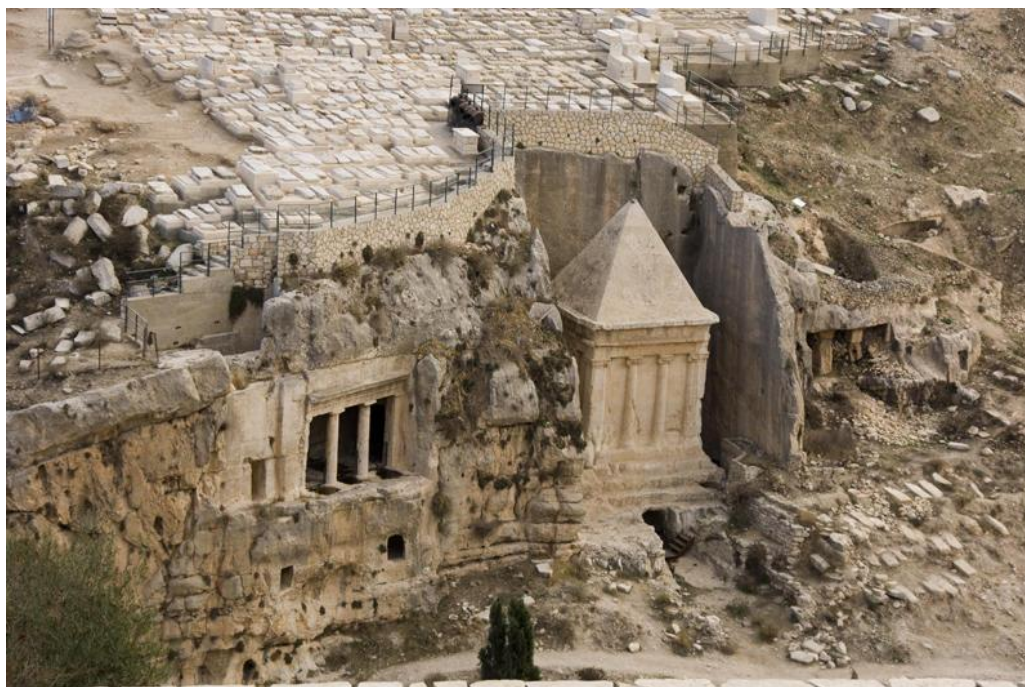


49 - **grew** - The word "grew" is translated from the Greek word "αὐξάνω" or "auxanō". It means "to cause to grow", "become greater" or "increase". John the Baptist grew up. This is the extent of the Biblical insight to his childhood. We are unsure how long his parents lived after his birth. They were stricken with age.

Origen suggested that the Zechariah mentioned in Matthew 23:35 as having been killed between the temple and the altar may be the father of John the Baptist. Orthodox Christian tradition recounts that, at the time of "the massacre of the Innocents", when King Herod ordered the slaughter of all males under the age of two in an attempt to prevent the prophesied Messiah from coming to Israel, Zechariah refused to divulge the whereabouts of his son (who was in hiding), and he was therefore murdered by Herod's soldiers. This is also recorded in the Infancy Gospel of James, an apocryphal work from the 2nd century.

Apocryphal Writing: "Chapter 16, verse (3) Elizabeth also, hearing that her son John was about to be searched for, took him and went up unto the mountains, and looked around for a place to hide him; (4) And there was no secret place to be found. (5) Then she groaned within herself, and said, O mountain of the Lord, receive the mother with the child. (6) For Elizabeth could not climb up. (7) And instantly the mountain was divided and received them. (8) And there appeared to them an angel of the Lord, to preserve them. (9) But Herod made search after John, and sent servants to Zacharias, when he was (ministering) at the altar, and said unto him, Where hast thou hid thy son? (10) He replied to them, I am a minister of God, and a servant at the altar; how should I know where my son is? (11) So the servants went back, and told Herod the whole; at which he was incensed, and said, Is not this son of his like to be king in Israel? (12) He sent therefore again his servants to Zacharias, saying, Tell us the truth, where is thy son, for you know that your life is in my hand. (13) So the servants went and told him all this: (14) But Zacharias replied to them, I am a martyr for God, and if he shed my blood, the Lord will receive my soul. (15) Besides know that ye shed innocent blood. (16) However Zacharias was murdered in the entrance of the temple and altar, and about the partition; (17) But the children of Israel knew not when he was killed. (18) Then at the hour of salutation the priests went into the temple, but Zacharias did not according to custom meet them and bless them; (19) Yet they still continued waiting for him to salute them; (20) And when they found he did not in a long time come, one of them ventured into the holy place where the altar was, and he saw blood lying upon the ground congealed; (21) When, behold, a voice from heaven said, Zacharias is murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped away, until the revenger of his blood come. (22) But when he heard this, he was afraid, and went forth and told the priests what he had seen and heard; and they all went in, and saw the fact. (23) Then the roofs of the temple howled, and were rent from the top to the bottom: (24) And they could not find the body, but only blood made hard like stone. (25) And they went awry, and told the people, that Zacharias was murdered, and all the tribes of Israel heard thereof, and mourned for him, and lamented three days." (Protoevangelium, or the Infancy Gospel according to James, 16:3-25)

zacharias' TOMB



The structure with the Pyramid looking roof is believed to be the tomb of John the Baptist's Father, Zacharias. It lies just east of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley at the base of the Mount of Olives.

50 - **waxed** - The word "waxed" is an old term with regards to its usage in this verse. It is used to mean "to increase in extent, quantity, intensity, power, etc.". In this case, John developed or increased in his use and knowledge of the spirit. He matured and became a spiritual giant.

51 - **strong in spirit** - The word "spirit" is derived from the Greek word "πνεῦμα" or "pneuma". It has multiple usages and definitions. They are as follows;

- I. the third person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, coequal, coeternal with the Father and the Son
 - A. sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his personality and character (the "Holy" Spirit)
 - B. sometimes referred to in a way which emphasises his work and power (the Spirit of "Truth")
 - C. never referred to as a depersonalised force
- II. the spirit, i.e. the vital principle by which the body is animated
 - A. the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides
 - B. the soul
- III. a spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting
 - A. a life giving spirit
 - B. a human soul that has left the body
 - C. a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel
 - i. used of demons, or evil spirits, who were conceived as inhabiting the bodies of men
 - ii. the spiritual nature of Christ, higher than the highest angels and equal to God, the divine nature of Christ
- IV. the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one
 - A. the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc.
- V. a movement of air (a gentle blast)
 - A. of the wind, hence the wind itself
 - B. breath of nostrils or mouth

See the commentary for Chapter 2, footnote #33, and Chapter 5, footnote #32.

52 - in the deserts - The word "deserts" is translated from the Greek word "ἐρημος" or "erēmos". It is an interesting word. It can mean a desert in the traditional sense. It can also be used of a person who is alone or abandon. The dictionary uses of the word are as follows;

- I. solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited
 - A. used of places
 - i. a desert, wilderness
 - ii. deserted places, lonely regions
 - iii. an uncultivated region fit for pasturage
 - B. used of persons
 - i. deserted by others
 - ii. deprived of the aid and protection of others, especially of friends, acquaintances, kindred
 - iii. bereft
 - a. of a flock deserted by the shepherd
 - b. of a woman neglected by her husband, from whom the husband withholds himself.



The Judean Desert, or Judean Wilderness as it is often called, is one of the most inhospitable places on earth. It is hot, barren, and dangerous. When looking upon it, the first question that comes to mind is; how can anything live there? Going into the desert is a scary thought, and yet that is exactly where John was to go. What good could have come from John's sojourn in the desert? Interestingly, God often prepares us for our greatest work, through the fire of affliction. The desert surely provided John the spiritual experience necessary to prepare him to be the frontrunner of the Messiah. We have no record of his childhood, not even apocryphal. However, there might be something to be learned by studying the Judean wilderness itself.



In the Judean wilderness, west of Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea, are a series of caves in an otherwise desolate area. Caves are actually common and very numerous in the Judean wilderness. These specific caves contained something very special. In late 1946, a Bedouin shepherd named Muhammed Edh-Dhib, his cousin Jum'a Muhammed, and Khalil Musa, while looking for a stray sheep entered into a cave that had large clay pots containing ancient scrolls. The scrolls were ancient records of many Old Testament books, older than our oldest records, and additional records that were otherwise lost. The Scrolls became known as "The Dead Sea Scrolls". Among the scrolls were writings from a community that lived by the caves in the Judean desert. Archeologists have since found the ruins of these people just a short walk from the caves. The people of the "Dead Sea Scrolls" called themselves the community of light. They are believed to belong to a sect known as the Essenes. The Essenes are a group that literally abandoned Jerusalem, in a form of protest against the way the Temple was being run, and the way church leaders were conducting their lives. The Essenes went out in the desert to prepare the way of the Messiah, following the commands, as they saw it, of the prophet Isaiah. They went into the desert to get away from what they saw to be the worldliness of Jerusalem and the worldliness of the Temple.

The Essenes, though we have limited information about them, are known to have some very interesting core beliefs.

- i. The Essenes denied themselves of the indulgences of life. They lived with minimal provisions, believing that a life of humility would bring them closer to God.
- ii. The Essenes believed in baptism by immersion. They believed that being ceremonially washed clean was so important that they did so before all meals and prior to any worship. The Jews used a Mikvah, or a ritual immersion bath, for removing impurity and baptizing converts. The Jews did not believe that they needed to be baptized because they were the children of Abraham and therefore born under the covenant. The Essenes believed in the Abrahamic covenant; however, they believed that all men needed to enter the waters of baptism. When they were ritually washed by immersion they clothed themselves in sacred white garments.
- iii. The Essenes practiced the law of consecration. They held all things in common. No one was richer than another. They actually used no money, and had no individual wealth.

iv. The Essenes believed in simple, modest dress. They wore cloths that could be made from the simple resources of the desert. Fine and costly apparel was rejected.

v. The Essenes did not have private houses, but lived in common dwellings that welcomed guests and travelers.

vi. Josephus says that marriage was important for the continuation of the race; therefore, there were Essenes that married and had sexual intercourse only for the purpose of procreation. Josephus is probably correct because he lived with the Essenes for three years.

vii. The Essenes believed in the Torah, and were indeed Jews or Israelites. They followed the Law. This included Sabbath observance, obedience to the Laws of God, and temple worship. They did not attend the temple because they believed that the priest were violating its sanctity; however they sent sacrifices to the temple knowing that they had an obligation that must be followed.

viii. They ate a simple menu of things they could produce themselves or find in the desert. Hence, they ate a diet of things like locust and wild honey

ix. They believed that they should be engaged in virtuous deeds and good works.

x. The Essenes sought for further light and knowledge. They studied the words of the prophets and sought after the spirit of revelation.

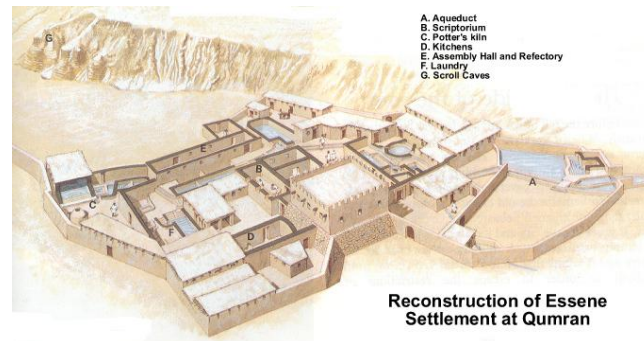
xi. They believed in work.

xii. They believed in the resurrection, unlike the Sadducees.

xiii. They shunned evil, and members who committed grievous acts were cast out from among them.

xiv. The Essenes were known to take in stray or orphan children and teach them the ways of the scriptures.

xiv. The Essenes believed that their retreat to the desert was prophetic. They also believe that it is a necessary step in preparing the way of the Messiah. The Essenes wrote, **"When such men as these come to be in Israel, conforming to these doctrines, they shall separate from the dwelling-place of the men of perversion in order to go to the wilderness to prepare there the way of truth, as it is written (Is.40:3): 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God!'—this means the expounding of the Law, decreed by God through Moses for obedience, that being defined by what has been revealed for each age, and by what the prophets have revealed by His holy spirit."** (Dead Sea Scrolls, Manual of Discipline 8:12–16).



The Essenes had been around for a hundred years by the time John the Baptist was born. Even so, they are a little known group.

So here is where everything comes together. John grew up in the Judean desert. He wore clothing made of camel hair and ate locust and wild honey. He was not a man of fine or costly apparel. He appears to have chosen a simple life. His parents were stricken in age when they had him, leading us to believe that he was probably orphaned during his youth. He preached in the wilderness and invited all to come and be baptized, believing that all man had need of baptism. He preached repentance, calling people to purify themselves and their lives. This is where most people embrace the theory that John was raised by the Essenes, who prepared him for his important mission.

53 - till the day - See the commentary on Chapter 2, footnote #1.

54 - his shewing - The wording "shewing" is translated from the Greek word "ἀναδείξις" or "anadeixis" meaning "a pointing out" or "a public showing forth", "proclaiming", or "announcing". Some translate the word as "manifesting". **"Literally 'until the day of his manifestation to Israel.' This is a foreshadowing of the Gospel proper, viz. 3:2-6. Luke depicts John as part of God's formal disclosure of a new way of salvation.....the Greek word 'anadexis' used here can also have a technical meaning, found in the papyri, of 'commissioning' or 'installation'. This would then be a solemn expression for the public ministry of John."** (The Anchor Bible, The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., page 389). It feels like Luke is telling us that John was to remain in the desert until the designated time to prepare the way of the Messiah. John's ministry was on God's time table, and God designated when he would manifest himself to the people of Israel.

