

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #15: Zechariah's Praise – God's Promise To Preserve Israel
Luke 1:67-80

In our previous study, Luke #14, *Elizabeth Gives Birth, Zechariah Gives Praise*, we began examining Zechariah's praise to God. Let's continue this study.

Zechariah and the Jewish people were wondering what was the future of Israel, what would happen to the:

- **NATION** of Israel
- **PEOPLE** of Israel
- **LAND** of Israel

The people were wondering if the God of Israel had:

- **FORGOTTEN** Israel?
- **ABANDONED** Israel?

In Zechariah's praise, we learn that God had not forgotten or abandoned the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, or the land of Israel.

God would preserve Israel by fulfilling the promises he made to them in the Jewish Scriptures.

To understand the promises God made to Israel and how he will preserve Israel, and to understand the praise of Zechariah that references God's promises and plan to preserve Israel, we must first understand the historical background of Zechariah's praise.

The Historical Background Of Zechariah's Praise

1. God PROMISED land to Abraham.

In **Genesis 12:1-3**, God told Abraham to, "*Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.*"

- Much of the Bible **takes place on this land.**
- Much of the Bible **is about this land.**

2. Abraham ARRIVED at the land.

Genesis 12: 4-5

Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

- We know this land as modern day Israel.

3. Nations OCCUPIED the land. (see Daniel chapter 2 and 8)

- The land was conquered and occupied by Babylon (modern day Iraq).
- The land was conquered and occupied by Persia (modern day Iran).
- The land was conquered and occupied by Greece.
- The land was conquered and occupied by Rome.

4. Zechariah LIVED in the land.

- Zechariah lived in the land of Israel during the time of Roman occupation.
- The people of Israel lived in the land during this time and experienced tremendous exploitation.
 - The Romans placed high taxes on the people.
 - The tax collectors illegally profited off of the taxes by raising the amount of the taxes required.
 - The Roman soldiers often mistreated the Jewish people.
 - Remember that after Jesus was born King Herod had all the Jewish males in Bethlehem two years and under killed.

The Jewish people, including Zechariah, living in the land:

- Lived in INTIMIDATION under Roman rule.
- Longed for LIBERATION from Roman rule.
- Looked for SALVATION when the Messiah/Christ reigned.

It was during this time and under these conditions that the angel Gabriel appeared to:

- Zechariah telling him that he and Elizabeth would have the child who would prepare the people for the arrival of the Messiah/Christ.
- Joseph and Mary telling them Mary would give birth to the Messiah/Christ, Israel's long awaited Savior-King.

Following the naming of Zechariah and Elizabeth's child, John, Zechariah erupted in praise to God.

Let's examine Zechariah's praise by asking and answering a few questions.

Question #1: Who is Zechariah praising?

Luke 1:68

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel...

Zechariah is praising the God of Israel.

Deuteronomy 6:4 (Legacy Standard Bible)

"Hear, O Israel! Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one!

Question #2: How did the nation of Israel come into existence?

- The **SEPARATION** of the nations (Genesis 10-11).

The people of the world turned from God, united as one, and were seeking to worship and place themselves under the dominion of the demonic world (see the Tower of Babel and Nimrod – Genesis 10-11). Therefore, God separated the people into different nations with different languages to prevent them from uniting under the dominion of the demonic world.

God then created one nation to bring salvation to the world.

- The **CREATION** of the nation of Israel (Genesis 12).

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a people holy (separated from the other nations) to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

-God created the nation of Israel to **BE A BLESSING** to the other nations (Genesis 12:1-3).

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.**"*

This blessing is Jesus, the world's Savior-King (Christ) who would die for the sins of the world as Savior, rise from the dead, and rule as King.

As Savior, Jesus died for the sinfulness of the world and offers us forgiveness and righteousness, bringing peace with God. Righteousness is received through faith in Jesus. Paul writes about this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.

As King, when Jesus returns, he will bring justice, righteousness, and peace on earth (Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zechariah 9:9-10; Micah 5:2-4; Acts 1:6, 9-11; 3:17-21).

-God created the nation of Israel to **SHINE THE LIGHT** of the One True God to the other nations (**Isaiah 49:6** – Jesus is this light; Paul takes the light of Jesus to the nations – See Acts 13:47; 26:15- 18; Colossians 1:13-14).

The other nations worshipped the demonic gods. However, God created the nation of Israel to worship him so the other nations would see the success of Israel and look to the God of Israel as the One True God.

Deuteronomy 4:5-6

*See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the **land** you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the **nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."*

Much of the history of the nation of Israel is recorded from Genesis 12 through Acts.

In the Jewish Scriptures, Genesis-Malachi, **God made promises to the people of Israel.**

These promises include the:

- Promise of land (Genesis 12:1-3)
- Promise Abraham would be a become a nation (Genesis 12:1-3)
- Promise Abraham would be a blessing to others nations (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 3:25; Romans 4; Galatians 3)
- Promise of a King from the family tree of David (Psalm **89**; **132**:17; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9-10; Micah 5:2-4)
- Promise of a Savior from the family tree of David (Jeremiah **23**:6; **33**:14-16; Isaiah 4:2; 11:1)
- Promise of a new testament for the forgiveness of sins and personal relationship with God (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- Promise of the restoration of Israel (the Jewish prophets consistently spoke about the restoration of Israel after they were removed from the land because they rebelled to the law of Moses and turned away from God to the false gods of the other nations)

Note: The Jewish Scriptures record the history of the Jewish people being removed from the land returning to the land, and then being restored as a nation both geographically, nationally, and spiritually. An example of this is when Babylon removed the people of Israel from the land. The people eventually returned to the land were restored under Nehemiah, Zerubbabel, and Ezra. Yet, they were scattered again when they were overtaken by Persia, then Greece, then Rome. In the late 1800's, a movement called **Zionism** resulted in many Jewish people returning to Israel, their homeland.

In 1948, Israel was recognized as a nation.

In the book of Acts, the apostles of Jesus asked Jesus when he will return to restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus stated only the Father knows the times and dates for Jesus to reign as King and restore Israel fully to its prominence in the world and to bless the world. The angels announced that Jesus would return to earth (Acts 1:3-11). According to Peter in Acts 3:17-21. Jesus will one day return to bring times of refreshing.

Currently, the world's stage is being set for THE RETURN OF JESUS. We see chaos and corruption around the world. We see the nations of the world moving to a one-world government, as foretold in Revelation. This is simply setting the world's stage for the appearance of Jesus who will rule and reign as the world's king when he establishes the kingdom of God on earth.

- Promise of a messenger (forerunner) to prepare the way for the Christ (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1).

This takes us back to Zechariah and the Jewish people living in the land but living under Roman occupation.

- Zechariah and the Jewish people were **FULLY AWARE** of all the promises God made to Israel.
- Zechariah and the Jewish people **FAITHFULLY AWAITED** the fulfillment of the promises.

This this provides the historical setting for Question #3.

Question #3: Why is Zechariah praising the God of Israel following the birth of John?

Luke 1:68

*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, **because he has come to his people and redeemed them.***

Zechariah is praising God because God has not forgotten his promises to Israel. It had been 400 years since the nation of Israel had heard from God through a prophet. God's final word to Israel came through Malachi. The final words in Malachi are about the coming of the of the forerunner and the coming of the Christ.

Malachi 3:1 (see also Malachi 4:5 and Isaiah 40:3-5)

I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me.

Malachi 4:2

But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness [the Messiah/Christ] will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.

The people of Israel during the days of Zechariah were awaiting the **Sun of Righteousness** to arrive.

Now, through the angel Gabriel, God announced to Zechariah that Zechariah and Sarah would give birth to the forerunner of the Christ who would announce the arrival of the *Sun of Righteousness*. Nine months later, the forerunner was born. He was named John.

Following the birth of John, Zechariah begins praising the God of Israel because God has come to the people of Israel to redeem them...to set them free...liberation and salvation had come!

Question #4: How would God redeem, or set free, the people of Israel?

Remember, the land of Israel was under Roman occupation. The land of Israel had first been occupied by Babylon (modern day Iraq), then Persia (modern day Iran), then Greece, and in the time of Jesus, it was occupied by Rome (this was prophesied by Daniel in Daniel 2 and 8).

Based on the promises and prophecies from the Jewish Scriptures and by the Jewish prophets (God spoke his messages through them to the people of Israel), a ***Deliverer, Redeemer, Ruler, King*** was coming...a Christ, a Messiah – one who would free the people of Israel from the occupation of foreign nations and who would establish peace on earth (Psalm 2; Psalm 89; Isaiah 9:6-7; 49; 59:20-21; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Zechariah 9:9-10; Micah 5:2-4).

He would be like Moses (Deuteronomy 15:18-19; Acts 3:17-23; Acts 7:37).

The Jewish people longed for the coming of the Messiah/Christ.

His arrival was now close.

The Messiah's messenger (Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5) had been born – John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

The birth of John produced praise within Zechariah, starting with, "*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and **redeemed** them* (Luke 1:68)."

Redeem was an important word to the Jewish people (still is for many today) and in the Jewish Scriptures. One of the uses of the word redeem by the Jewish people and in the Jewish Scriptures is being liberated from the captivity and control of an enemy nation. For example,

Exodus 6:6

*"Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will **redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.'"*

Other verses on God redeeming Israel from the hand of their enemies include: **Isaiah 59:20-21; Jeremiah 31:11; Micah 4:10; Zechariah 10:8**

During the days of Zechariah, the people of Israel were looking forward to the redemption of Israel (being redeemed, freed, liberated, saved, rescued) from the suppression and control of Rome.

We see this supported in the following verses in Luke:

Luke 2:36-38

*There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, **she***

gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Luke 24:19-21 (the words of the two men on the road to Emmaus as they walked with Jesus)

*“He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but **we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.**”*

Not only were the people of Israel awaiting:

- **REDEMPTION FROM THEIR ENEMIES**

but they also awaiting

- **REDEMPTION FROM THEIR SINS.**

Psalm 130:3-8

*If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you. I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. **He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.***

We will examine Israel’s redemption from their sins in our next study.

In this study, let’s examine how would God would/will redeem Israel from their enemies.

This leads us back to Zechariah’s praise and to Question #4.

Question #4: How would God rescue, redeem, and liberate (salvation) the people of Israel from foreign powers?

The liberation from these enemy nations would come from **the horn of salvation** raised up by the God of Israel to rescue the people of Israel.

Luke 1:69-75

*He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us—to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to **rescue** us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

The *horn of salvation* from the family of David is the Messiah/Christ (Jesus), the King prophesied by the Jewish prophets in the Jewish Scriptures (see Psalm **2**; **89**:3-4, 19-29; **132**:17-18; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6).

In the Jewish Scriptures, the word *horn* is symbolic for a powerful king (see 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 132:17-18; Daniel 7:24).

The Jewish prophets, as recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, foretold of a powerful King who would come from the family tree of David and who would:

Rescue the people of Israel...that's salvation!

- The word **rescue**(d) is used often in the Jewish Scriptures to describe the people of Israel being rescued from their enemies.

Exodus 18:10; 1 Samuel 7:8; 17:37; 2 Samuel 3:18; Judges 6:9; Nehemiah 9:27; Psalm 44:26; 144:7; 144:11; Isaiah 19:20; 35:10; 46:4; 50:2, 11; Zephaniah 3:19; Micah 4:10.

- Stephen, in Acts 7, used the words **rescue** and **rescued** when he spoke to the Jewish leaders about how God rescued Joseph from the Egyptians and how God through Moses rescued the people of Israel from the Egyptians.

Note: Read Acts 7 for a cliff notes version of the Jewish Scriptures and the response of the Jewish people to the arrival of Jesus, their Messiah/Christ.

The Jewish prophets, as recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, foretold of a powerful King who would come from the family tree of David and who would also:

Redeem the people of Israel...that's liberation!

Restore the nation of Israel to its land and prominence...that's restoration!

- The word restore is used often in the Jewish Scriptures relating to restoring the nation of Israel as a nation when they returned to land of Israel after being scattered throughout the nations.

Deuteronomy 30:3; Psalm 80; 126:4; Isaiah 1:26; 44:26; 49:6; 57:18; 61:4; Jeremiah 16:15; 30:3, 18; 33:11, 26; 42:12; Lamentations 5:21; Ezekiel 39:25; Hosea 6:11; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:11; Nahum 2:11; Zephaniah 3:20.

See also, Matthew 17:11; Acts 1:6, Acts 3:21

Rule the world...that's transformation! (see Isaiah 9:6-7)

With this understanding, let's read Luke 1:69-75 again.

Luke 1:69-75

He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us [a common phrase in the Jewish Scriptures used about 65 times – for example, see Micah 4:10]—to show mercy to our ancestors [the compassion of God to the nation of Israel is common in the Jewish Scriptures – see Lamentations 3:23] and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hand of

our enemies, and to enable us to serve him [relate to God] without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

The horn of salvation, the Messiah/Christ, would redeem the people of Israel by:

- **Physically Rescuing** the people of Israel from the hand of their enemies.
- **Geographically Restoring** the people of Israel to the land and the land to the people.
- **Spiritually Reconciling** the people of Israel to God so they could relate to him with no fear of condemnation and no fear of the foreign nations.

Zechariah and the people of Israel were looking forward to fulfillment of each of these.

With the arrival of the ***horn of salvation***, the Messiah/Christ (Jesus), God was demonstrating compassion to Israel and remembering the promise of land for the people of Israel he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God was remembering the promise of redemption and restoration.

Luke 1:68-75 (Berean Standard Bible)

*Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and redeemed His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke through His holy prophets, those of ages past, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, **to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath He swore to our father Abraham**, to grant us deliverance from hostile hands, that we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.*

God made an oath, a holy promise (covenant), to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning the land God gave Abraham.

Understanding the promise God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is one of the keys to understanding the praise of Zechariah to the God of Israel.

We read about his promise [covenant, oath] in the Jewish Scriptures.

Genesis 12:1-3

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to **the land I will show you**. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."*

Genesis 22:15-18

*The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I **swear** by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring [Jesus] all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

The promises God made to Abraham were passed down through Isaac and Jacob (Jacob was later renamed Israel). The nation of Israel comes from the twelve sons of Jacob. Nations would be blessed through Israel.

Genesis 26:1-4 (see also 28:13)

Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring [Jesus] all nations on earth will be blessed...

Genesis 35:12

“The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you [Jacob], and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”

Genesis 50:24-25

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Exodus 33:1 (see also Exodus 6:8; 32:11)

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath [Genesis 22:15-18] to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’

Leviticus 26:42

I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

Deuteronomy 1:8 (see also Deuteronomy 6:10)

See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.”

Deuteronomy 34:4

Then the LORD said to him [Moses], “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.”

1 Chronicles 16:15-18 (see also Psalm 105:9)

He remembers his covenant forever, the promise he made, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.”

These verses are what Zechariah was referring to in his praise when he spoke:

Luke 1:68-75 (Berean Standard Bible)

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and redeemed His people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke through His holy prophets, those of ages

*past, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, **to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath He swore to our father Abraham**, to grant us deliverance from hostile hands, that we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.*
Let's continue in Zechariah's praise with **Luke 1:76**.

And you, my child [John], will be called a prophet of the Most High [Most High was an expression for God from the Jewish Scriptures]; for you will go on before the Lord [the Messiah/Christ-the Savior-King; the horn of salvation; the Deliverer, Redeemer – the one who would redeem, rescue, and restore Israel] to prepare the way for him [Isaiah 40:3-5; Malachi 3:1; 4:5; Matthew 3:3; 11:9-10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 3:4-6; John 1]

Zechariah spoke about John who would:

- **PROCLAIM** the coming of the Christ
- and
- **PREPARE** the way for the Christ.

Question #5: How would Zechariah prepare the way for the Lord, the horn of salvation?

Luke 1:76-79

And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

John would prepare the way of the Lord by proclaiming to the Lord's people, the people of Israel at this time, the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins.

In Zechariah's praise, **SALVATION** is mentioned **THREE TIMES**: Luke 1:69; Luke 1:71; and Luke 1:77

The **FIRST MENTION (Luke 1:69)** is the horn of salvation – the Messiah/Christ, King, Deliverer, Ruler, Redeemer

The **SECOND MENTION (Luke 1:71)** is Israel's salvation from the nation of Rome who was oppressing them, and salvation from all of Israel's enemies who hated them.

This is **national** and **geographical salvation** for the people of Israel that would come through the Lord – the horn of salvation, the King.

This salvation **DID NOT COME** during the time Jesus was on earth.

The people of Israel rejected him as King (Luke 22:66-23:25; John 19).

When Jesus ascended into heaven, Rome was still occupying the land of Israel and suppressing the people.

After the ascension of Jesus, the land was occupied by the:

Islamists, Crusaders, again by the Islamists, and then by the Ottoman Empire, Germany, Egypt, and Britain.

After WWII, Britain divided the land between the Islamists and Israel. This was in 1948.

NOTE: In AD 135, Rome renamed Israel Palestine, which is where the word Palestinians comes from. Later, the land was renamed Israel.

In 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan advanced against Israel, but they were soundly defeated by Israel in the **Six Days War**.

Two movies about this war are: ***In Our Hands*** and ***Six Days In June***.

An excellent book to read about the history of Israel through the 1990's is ***UnHoly War*** by Randall Price. Not only will this book help the reader understand the history of Israel, but it will also help the reader understand the current conflict in the Middle East.

Currently, Israel is the most hated nation in the world and is held responsible by many nations in the United Nations as the cause of the problems in the Middle East. The armies of these nations will one day advance to attack Israel. When this happens, according to prophecy, Jesus will return as King and bring **geographical** and **national salvation** to the nation of Israel. At this time, the people of Israel will recognize Jesus as the Messiah (Zechariah 12; Revelation 1:7), resulting in many of the Jewish people trusting in Jesus for **personal salvation**. Jesus will then rule as King, establishing justice, righteousness, and peace on earth – just as the prophets foretold.

The **THIRD MENTION (Luke 1:77)** is the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins that would come through the *Rising Sun...the Sun of Righteousness...*from heaven.

This is **personal salvation** through the forgiveness of sins that was not only for the Jewish people but also for Gentiles-all non-Jewish people.

In our next study, we will examine the ***Sun of Righteousness*** who brings salvation through the forgiveness of sins.

Thanks for being a part of this Bible study!

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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