

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #6: God Remembers His Promises of Grace – Part 1
Luke 1:5-13

Let's begin with **1 Peter 1:10-12**

Concerning this salvation, the prophets [Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, Micah, and the other prophets], who spoke of THE GRACE that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

The prophets foretold of a Messiah/Christ to come who would bring salvation to the world. The coming of the Messiah/Christ to the world to bring salvation is called **grace**. God made promises of grace through the prophets about the salvation of grace to come.

In **2 Peter 1:4**, Peter says it is through these promises, referring to the promises of grace the Messiah would bring, that we would escape the corruption of the world and participate in God's great divine promises of grace.

Note: My understanding of 2 Peter 1:3-4 is that Peter is referring to the Jewish promises foretold by the prophets about the coming of the Messiah/Christ (which he wrote about in 1 Peter) and the grace he did bring and would bring (see 2 Peter 1:19-21; 2 Peter 3).

With this in mind, let's look at Luke 1:5-10.

Luke 1:5-10

*In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named **Zechariah**, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife **Elizabeth** was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.*

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense [Exodus 30, 37, 40]. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

To see an image of the tabernacle and the furnishings as described in Exodus, [CLICK HERE](#).

To see a brief video of how the tabernacle looked after it was built by Solomon, then rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra and added to by Herod, [CLICK HERE](#).

The temple in the video is where Zechariah fulfilled his priestly duties. One of these duties was the burning of incense inside the Holy Place on the Altar of Incense.

NOTE: To learn how the fragrance from the altar of incense is pointing to the sacrifice of Jesus in establishing the new testament of grace, watch or listen to Brad's teaching: **The Altar Of Incense Points To Jesus' Sacrifice For Sins** - [CLICK HERE](#) to access the teaching and notes.

Luke 1:11-13

*Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense [inside the temple, inside the Holy Place]. **12**When **Zechariah** saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13**But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife **Elizabeth** will bear you a son, and you are to call him **John**."*

What was Zechariah's prayer?

Zechariah's prayer was probably not for his wife Elizabeth to have a child, since he was an old man and Elizabeth was an older woman and could not conceive (Luke 1:7). Zechariah confirms this by the question he asked the angel (**Luke 1:18**):

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

If Zechariah's prayer was not for a child, then what was his prayer?

Zechariah was praying for the birth of the Christ. The Christ is the one who the Jewish Scriptures said would be born in Bethlehem as a Savior-King. He would redeem Jews and Gentiles from their sins, according to Isaiah 53, and he would rule as King according to Isaiah 9:6-7, establishing a kingdom of justice, righteousness, peace and joy on the earth.

Zechariah was looking forward and praying for the birth of the Messiah, as was Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38.

SIMEON (Luke 2:25-32)

*Now there was a man in Jerusalem called **Simeon**, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. **26**It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah [Christ]...**28Simeon** took him [Jesus] in his arms and praised God, saying:*

***29**"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. **30**For my eyes have seen your salvation, **31**which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: **32**a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." (see Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47)*

ANNA (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, **37**and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. **38**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. [Jerusalem at this time was under the control of Rome].

There was a longing in the hearts of the Jewish people for the Christ to come and establish his kingdom on earth. The reign of the Christ would free Israel from Roman rule and would be salvation to both the Jews and Gentiles. We will study this in future studies.

The longing in the hearts of Simeon and Anna existed in the heart of Zechariah and was the content of his prayer.

Luke 1:11-13

*Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense [inside the temple, inside the Holy Place]. **12**When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. **13**But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him **John**.*

In the Jewish culture, names had meanings. Let’s look at the names of **Zechariah**, **Elizabeth**, and **John**.

- Zechariah means **God remembers.**

At the close of Malachi, it had been 400 years since God communicated with the people of Israel, leaving them asking, “Has God forgotten about us? Has God forgotten about his promises? Has God abandoned us?”

Through the angel Gabriel, God assured Zechariah, the people of Israel, and the world that he had not forgotten about them or his promises.

- Elizabeth means **God’s promise.**
- John means **God’s grace.**

Put all of these together: *God remembers his promise of grace*

God made promises in the Jewish Scriptures that are based upon his grace. These grace-based promises have everything to do with God’s unconditional love for us and his unmerited kindness to us.

So what are God’s promises of grace?

The meaning of the names **Zechariah**, **Elizabeth**, and **John** is referring to at least seven promises of God in the Jewish Scriptures:

Let’s take a look at these **Seven Promises of Grace.**

In this study, we will examine Grace Promises #1 and #2.

- **Grace Promise #1:** The promise of a male child coming into the world to crush Satan (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12-21 – Jesus is presented by Paul in Romans as the second Adam who, by grace, paid the sin penalty of death by the first Adam and brought eternal life).

Let's look at Genesis 3:15 and Romans 5:12-21.

Genesis 3:15

*“And I [God] will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your offspring [see John 8:44 – the offspring of Satan were the Pharisees and teachers of the Law in their opposition to Jesus – they hated the grace flowing from Jesus to sinners; also see Revelation 12 where Satan pursues Israel and the male child; Israel gave birth to (Jesus) – Satan tried to kill Jesus at his birth and seeks to destroy Israel] and hers [Eve]; he [the male child coming into the human race through a woman– ultimately, he came through Mary – see Isaiah 9:6-7 and **Luke 1:29-33**] will crush your [Satan’s] head [at the cross and the resurrection where Jesus triumphs over death and brings eternal life– see Hebrews 2:14-15], and you [Satan] will strike his [the male child] heel [at the cross].”*

Romans 5:12-21

*Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin [God told Adam that if he ate from the tree he would die], and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—**13**To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. **14**Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.*

***15**But the gift [God’s grace to the human race through Jesus] is not like the trespass [Adam’s sin in the garden]. For if the many [the many is the entire human race – the all of verse 12] died by the trespass of the one man [Adam], how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ [see Romans 3:21-25], overflow to the many [the many is the entire human race minus Jesus; God’s grace through Jesus overflows to everyone]!*

***16**Nor can the gift of God [grace; righteousness] be compared with the result of one man’s sin: The judgment [the pronouncement of guilt and death because of sin] followed one sin [when Adam ate of the tree] and brought condemnation [death], but the gift [grace - all that God did for the human race through Jesus when he died for our sins to bring us righteousness and eternal life] followed many trespasses [committed by the human race] and brought justification [the pronouncement of innocent of sins by God upon those who receive by faith the gift of grace offered by Jesus; justification is God pronouncing a person as righteous the moment one believes in Jesus].*

***17**For if, by the trespass of the one man [Adam], death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!*

***18**Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation [death] for all people [the many], so also one righteous act [Jesus taking upon himself the guilt and sinfulness of all people] resulted in justification and life for all people [Jesus has provided justification for all; yet it must be received by faith –see verse 17].*

19For just as through the disobedience of the one man [when Adam ate of the tree] *the many* [the entire human race] *were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man* [Jesus going to the cross and dying for our sins – see Romans 3:21-25] *the many will be made righteous* [innocent of sins].

Note: This is not universal righteousness and salvation for all. Righteousness and salvation has been provided for all [the many], but must be received through faith in Jesus. Paul makes this clear in Romans 3:21-4:25.

20The law [the Ten Commandments written on stone for the Jews and written on the hearts of the Gentiles – see Romans 2-3:20] *was brought in so that the trespass might increase* [so we would all see our sinful condition as we become fully aware of our sinfulness highlighted by our inability to obey the Ten Commandments – we lie, we cheat, we steal, we covet – Jesus said if we have anger in our hearts we guilty of murder, and if we have lust in our hearts we are guilty of adultery – see Matthew 5]. *But where sin increased* [throughout the human race – sin is breaking the Ten Commandments in our hearts-desires, in our heads-thoughts, and with our hands-deeds], **grace** *increased all the more* [no one can out-sin grace], **21***so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord* [those who receive God’s abundant gift of grace - what Jesus freely did for us on the cross in taking our sinfulness and death - are given righteousness and eternal life].

In Romans 5:12-21:

- Paul explains how sin entered the human race through Adam, bringing judgment and death.
- Paul explains how grace entered the human race through Jesus, bringing justification (righteousness) and eternal life.

Grace is everything God has done for everyone (the many) through Jesus to take our sins, guilt, and death upon himself at the cross, and to provide for all people (the many) justification for sins (forgiveness, righteousness) and eternal life. God’s provision of grace is received through belief or by faith in Jesus as Paul explained in Romans 3-4.

We are examining the promises of grace God made in the Jewish Scriptures. These promises are reflected in the names of Zechariah, Elizabeth, and John: *God remembers his promise of grace.*

- **Grace Promise #2:** The promise to bless the world through the offspring (the seed-singular) of Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:15; 24:7; Romans 4; Galatians 3). Jesus is **the seed** of Abraham through whom the promise of grace came to the people of the world. This promise is righteousness by faith.

Let’s take a look at this promise of the blessing of grace coming to the people of the world through Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-3

*I The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. **2**”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. **3**I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

We see in **Genesis 12:1-4** the promise of:

- land (this is the land of modern day Israel and is where most of Bible history took place and future prophecy takes place)
- a nation (the nation of Israel)
- a blessing upon Abram (I will make your name great)
- a blessing upon all the people upon the earth through Abram and the nation of Israel (no wonder Satan hates and wants to destroy Israel!)

Genesis 12:4-7

*4*So 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. *5*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.

*6*Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. *7*The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your **offspring** I will give this land." [also see Genesis 13:15 and 24:7]

The word **offspring** is singular, ultimately referring to Jesus (see Galatians 3), who will reign as King from Israel, bringing peace to the world. We will examine this later.

The blessings above are about physical blessings; yet they are also spiritual blessings. We learn about the spiritual blessings through Paul (the ascended Jesus gave Paul the knowledge of spiritual blessings of grace – see Acts 26:15-18; Acts 20:24; Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-6) which Paul explained in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians).

Let's look at the spiritual blessings contained in the promise of grace God made to Abraham that has come to us through Jesus.

Galatians 3:6-9

So also Abraham "believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." [Genesis 15:6] *7*Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham. **8**Scripture [Genesis 12:2; 18:18; 22:18] foresaw that God would justify [declare a person innocent of sins, declare a person righteous] the Gentiles by faith [faith in Jesus], and announced the gospel [righteousness by faith apart from works] in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." [Genesis 12:2; 18:18; 22:18] *9*So those who rely on faith [in Jesus, rather than relying on the law of Moses] are blessed [declared innocent of sins, declared righteous] along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Galatians 3:14-15

*14*He [God] redeemed us [God set the Jewish people from the law of Moses- - see Galatians 4:4] in order that the blessing given to Abraham [Genesis 12:1-3; righteousness by faith] might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we [both Jews and Gentiles] might receive the promise of the Spirit [the indwelling presence of Jesus in the heart of believers enabling us to know God as Father – see Galatians 4:4-6].

Galatians 3:15-16

15Brothers and sisters, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case [with the promise God made to Abraham that he would bless the nations through him]. **16**The promises [land, nation, make your name great, blessing] were spoken to Abraham and to his seed [Jesus]. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” [Genesis 12:7; 13:15; 24:7] meaning one person, who is Christ.

Galatians 3:17-18

17What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later [after the promises were made to Abraham in Genesis 12:2], does not set aside the covenant previously established by God [the Abrahamic Covenant] and thus do away with the promise [God’s promise to Abraham that all people would be blessed through him, specifically through his seed-Jesus]. **18**For if the inheritance [of the blessing of righteousness by faith] depends on the law [righteousness through obedience to the law of Moses], then it no longer depends on the promise [the promise to bless the nations given in Genesis 12:3]; but God in his **grace** gave it [the promise of righteousness by faith] to Abraham through a promise [all people on the earth will be blessed – declared righteous by faith – through your seed].

Galatians 3:22, 26-29

22...what was promised [righteousness], being given through faith in Jesus Christ [righteousness is given through the faithfulness of Jesus in taking our unrighteousness upon himself-see Romans 3:21-25], might be given to those who believe [see Romans 4].

If you would like to read a series of short articles I have written called: **Are We Saved By The Faith Of Jesus or the Faithfulness of Jesus?**, [CLICK HERE](#).

Many people within the current grace movement and outside of the grace movement teach we are not saved by our own faith but by the faith of Jesus. I don’t believe the Bible teaches that we are saved by the faith of Jesus. I believe the Bible teaches it is through Jesus’ faithfulness that grace comes to all people, who then, individually, place their own faith in Jesus for righteousness and eternal life.

26So in Christ Jesus you are all [Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female] children of God through faith [in Jesus], **27**for all of you who were baptized into Christ [placed into the work of Jesus] have clothed yourselves with Christ [his righteousness]. **28**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one [one family of grace] in Christ Jesus. **29**If you belong to Christ [if you have placed your faith in Jesus], then you are Abraham’s seed [the spiritual offspring of Abraham – the righteous ones who are as numerous as the stars in sky and sands upon the shore], and heirs [possessors of righteousness] according to the promise [all nations will be blessed through you – the blessing of righteousness – Genesis 12:3].

Here is a summary of Galatians 3.

Sent out by Jesus, Paul went into the Galatian cities (see Acts 13:13-14:1-28) proclaiming the message of grace that righteous comes by grace and is received through faith in Jesus. He explained righteousness is not earned by following the law of Moses but is a gift received by faith in Jesus. Initially, the Galatian people responded with joy to this message of grace, inviting many of their friends and family to hear Paul speak on the topic of

righteousness by faith in Jesus not by following the law of Moses (see Acts 13:38-39). Eventually, the law teachers arrived in the Galatian cities, convincing people that righteousness is achieved by believing in Jesus PLUS keeping the law of Moses. These law teachers told the believers in Jesus that if they did not obey the law of Moses (keeping the days, diets, deities, festivals, Sabbaths, washings, and tithes, then they were not and could not be saved). This prompted the meeting in Acts 15.

Paul explained in Galatians 3 that the grace-promise God made in Genesis 12:3, to bless the people of the world with righteousness, did not end when God gave the law to Moses. Paul explained that the reasons God gave the law to Moses was so people would see their need for Jesus. Through his death, Jesus put an end to the law, setting people free from the law of Moses. Through faith in Jesus, one is given the gift of righteousness and eternal life, which the law could not provide.

Believers in Jesus are now children of God and a valued part of the family of grace, regardless of nationality, gender, or social status. They gather as one family under the name of Jesus not the name of Moses.

In the next study, we will examine Grace Promises 3-7.

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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