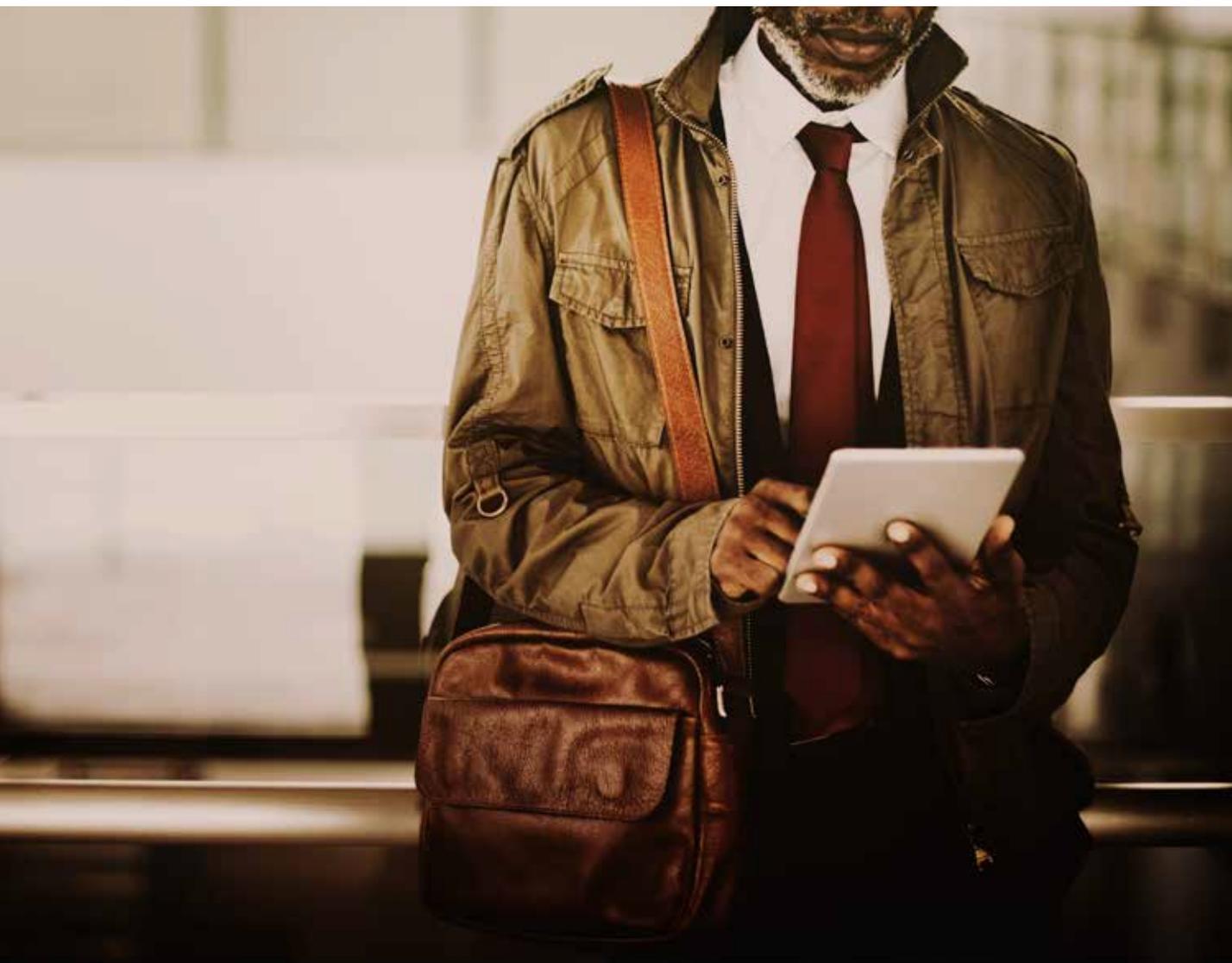


4

WHY DID JESUS COME?



When have you recently turned to the Internet for a solution to a problem?

QUESTION #1

THE POINT

Jesus came to remove our sin.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Warning lights on the car dashboard serve a good purpose—usually. When the low tire pressure warning light came on in my wife’s car, I drove her car to the gas station and aired up the tires, but the warning light stayed on. A week later, we decided to buy new tires. But as we drove home on the new tires, we noticed the low tire pressure warning light was still on!

I didn’t want to drive back to the tire store, so I took out my smart phone and went to the Internet. I found a short video that showed me how to reset the warning light! Problem fixed.

It’s common these days for us to Google the solution we need. No issue seems too obscure; somebody somewhere has made a video! Thanks to the Internet, we have a fast and easy way to fix many of our problems—except our sin problem. “Solutions” are readily offered in a variety of religions, philosophies, and worldviews, but none of them work. Only Jesus can remove the problem of sin. He’s made it possible for us to be forgiven and freed from sin.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Luke 1:68-71

⁶⁸ Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and provided redemption for his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰ just as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets in ancient times; ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us.

My wife and I recently found out that we are going to become grandparents. It's an exciting time! I've begun seeing baby outfits everywhere I go, and my wife has started buying baby supplies, toys, and clothes. Our attention, thoughts, and prayers are focused on this unborn child.

The birth of a child is a happy occasion. It's something we get a glimpse of in Luke 1. Although Zechariah and Elizabeth were advanced in age, they never had a child—but that was about to change. Out of eighteen thousand priests, Zechariah was chosen by casting of the lot to go into the inner part of the temple to burn incense—a once-in-a-lifetime experience. (See Luke 1:8-9.) But this moment was made even more unique because an angel appeared to him while he was on duty. (See vv. 11-12.) The angel announced to a terrified Zechariah that he and his wife would indeed become parents in their old age.

The angel instructed Zechariah how to proceed. The child would be a son and they would name him John, and he would be great in the sight of the Lord. Their son would never drink wine, but would be filled with the Holy Spirit, even in the womb. John would preach and turn many people to the Lord. (See vv. 13-17.)

Talk about good news! Not only would Zechariah have a son, but he would be someone of importance in Israel—a modern day prophet. It had been four hundred years since Malachi, the last prophet, had spoken to the people. (See Mal. 4:5-6.) God was obviously up to something special for Israel, and Zechariah's son, John, was going to play an important role.

What types of things can make us feel defeated?

QUESTION #2

In spite of the exceptional way this message was delivered—the presence of an angel in the inner part of the temple—Zechariah didn't fully believe the angel. As a consequence, Gabriel silenced John's tongue during the time of Elizabeth's pregnancy. (See Luke 1:18-20.)

When John was born and it was time for him to be circumcised, Zechariah's voice was restored. (See vv. 59-64.) He no longer doubted; in fact, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied about his son and the future. (See v. 67.) His prophecy began with two wonderful truths about God:

- ▶ **God provided redemption for His people.** Our sin is a serious problem we cannot begin to fix ourselves, but God stepped in to provide a way for us to be saved. God initiated our redemption; He Himself paid the price to secure our freedom from bondage to sin and death.
- ▶ **God saved us from our enemies.** Zechariah and his contemporaries lived in an agrarian society and viewed an animal's horn as a symbol of its power and strength. Zechariah prophesied that the One God raised up—the Messiah—would have the strength to defeat any enemy. The Jews hearing Zechariah's prophecy knew a history of oppression at the hands of others, from the Egyptians to the Babylonians to the Romans currently ruling over them. The Messiah would bring freedom!

Luke 1:72-75

⁷² He has dealt mercifully with our fathers and remembered his holy covenant—⁷³ the oath that he swore to our father Abraham. He has given us the privilege,⁷⁴ since we have been rescued from the hand of our enemies, to serve him without fear⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.

Fear can be paralyzing. Fear can cause the most determined among us to freeze up, dominating every other emotion and consuming all our thoughts. Fear makes a terrible master.

How would you describe the difference between our proper fear of God and the fear God removes?

QUESTION #3



For centuries the Israelites had lived with varying degrees of fear. When they left Egypt, God instructed them to take the promised land. The problem? People were already living there! God worked through the people years later to take the land, but new fears eventually set in. They faced regular threats from others: the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians to name just a few.

The context of Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:72-75 is that we can serve God without fear from enemies and those who seek to harm or hinder us.

- ▶ ... **"in holiness and righteousness."** In Christ, we are made holy. In other words, we were separated from our old lives and from the world around us. He makes us righteous. "He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).
- ▶ ... **"in his presence all our days."** Because we are made righteous and holy in Christ, we can enter into the presence of God. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God — God remains in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). The Holy Spirit lives in us. His presence is guaranteed daily. We cannot be separated from Him.

Luke 1:76-79

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷ to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. ⁷⁸ Because of our God's merciful compassion, the dawn from on high will visit us ⁷⁹ to shine on those who live in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Zechariah's prophecy turned to the role his son would play in God's redemptive work. John would:

- 1. Prepare the way for the coming Messiah.** Zechariah recalls two prophecies that foretold of one who would come before the Messiah to "prepare the way" (Isa. 40:3, Mal. 3:1). John, serving as forerunner to the Messiah, pointed to the One who was to come. King Jesus was soon to arrive, and He would come to conquer sin and provide forgiveness for His people.
- 2. Point to the salvation the Messiah would bring.** Living in Nashville—Music City—enables me to attend numerous concerts. I have yet to attend a concert that didn't have an opening act. That role is to capture attention, build energy, and prepare them for the main attraction. In a similar way, John served as the "opening act" for Jesus. He preached repentance. He proclaimed the forgiveness of sin. He baptized. He called people to live rightly. (See Mark 1:4-8.)

After four hundred years of silence, something special was taking place. But if the people thought God had broken His silence with John's preaching, they were in for a surprise! The preaching of Jesus was going to be deafening. He was going to build on John's message of repentance and forgiveness. John would proclaim it, but Jesus would make it happen.

The Messiah would provide freedom for His people, but it was a freedom different from what most Israelites expected. Even more than the freedom from physical oppressors, they needed freedom and redemption from sin. We are no different. We each need freedom from sin. We need freedom from guilt and shame. Our sin problem can be fixed—and Jesus came to do just that!

What are some ways you've experienced God's forgiveness and merciful compassion?

QUESTION #4

How can our group guide others to the way of redemption and peace?

QUESTION #5

REACHING OTHERS

Since we are here to enjoy fellowship with God and to tell others about His love, take some time to identify people you can tell about God's love and the forgiveness of sin He offers through Jesus Christ:

In my family:

In my neighborhood:

Where I work:

Where I hang out:

Other places:

Spend some time praying for these individuals and asking God for opportunities to have gospel conversations with them in the coming weeks.

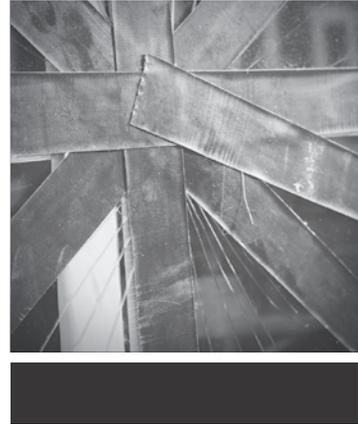
"Jesus Christ did not come into this world to make bad people good; He came into this world to make dead people live!"

— LEE STROBEL

LIVE IT OUT

Zechariah's words in Luke 1:68-79 offer hope to all people: there is a solution for our sin.

- ▶ **Stop using spiritual duct tape.** You might be able to “mask” your sin problem, but you can't fix it. Without Christ, you're lost. Accept the fact that you can't fix your sin problem and ask Jesus to forgive you. If you need help with this step, look on the inside front cover of this book.
- ▶ **Live free from fear.** If worries periodically arise, memorize Romans 8:38-39. Embed the truth in your mind that nothing you might fear can separate you from Christ and His love.
- ▶ **Share the truth.** You know others who are spiritually broken. Give them hope by sharing what you've learned in this study about the redemption Christ offers.



We are a people who love to fix things ourselves, but when it comes to sin, we can't do it. Thankfully, we don't have to because Jesus removed our sin for us. Jesus made it possible for us to be forgiven and freed from sin.

My thoughts