

## The Praise of Zechariah: His son, the prophet John will prepare the way for the Messiah.

Luke 1,67-79 (CCAT Text):

- 67 Καὶ Ζαχαρίας ὁ πατὴρ αὐτοῦ ἐπλήσθη πνεύματος ἁγίου  
καὶ ἐπροφήτευσεν λέγων,  
68 Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ,  
A ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο  
B καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ,  
69 C καὶ ἤγειρεν κέρας σωτηρίας ἡμῖν ἐν οἴκῳ Δαυὶδ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ,  
70 D καθὼς ἐλάλησεν διὰ στόματος τῶν ἁγίων ἀπ' αἰῶνος προφητῶν αὐτοῦ,  
71 E σωτηρίαν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν ἡμῶν καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς πάντων τῶν μισούντων ἡμᾶς·  
72 F ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν  
καὶ μνησθῆναι διαθήκης ἁγίας αὐτοῦ,  
73 F' ὅρκου  
ὃν ὤμοσεν πρὸς Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν,  
τοῦ δοῦναι ἡμῖν  
74 E' ἀφόβως ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ῥυσθέντας λατρεύειν αὐτῷ  
75 ἐν ὁσιότητι καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ  
πάσαις ταῖς ἡμέραις ἡμῶν;  
76 D' Καὶ σὺ δέ, παιδίον, προφήτης ὑψίστου κληθήσῃ,  
προπορεύσῃ γὰρ ἐνώπιον κυρίου  
ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ,  
77 C' τοῦ δοῦναι γνῶσιν σωτηρίας  
B' τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν,  
78 διὰ σπλαγχνὰ ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν,  
A' ἐν οἷς ἐπισκέπεται ἡμᾶς ἀνατολὴ ἐξ ὕψους,  
79 ἐπιφᾶναι τοῖς ἐν σκότει καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου καθημένοις,  
τοῦ κατευθῆναι τοὺς πόδας ἡμῶν εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης;

King James Version 1769, Luke 1,67-79:<sup>1</sup>

- 67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost,  
and prophesied, saying,  
68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;  
A for he hath visited  
B and redeemed his people,  
69 C And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;  
70 D As he spake by the mouth of his prophets, which have been since the world began:  
71 E That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;  
72 F To perform the mercy promised to our fathers,  
and to remember his holy covenant;  
73 F' The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,  
74 That he would grant unto us,  
E' that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies  
might serve him without fear,  
75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.  
76 D' 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;  
77 C' To give knowledge of salvation  
B' unto his people by the remission of their sins,  
78 Through the tender mercy of our God;  
A' whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,  
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.

1 I have used King James here because the literal tendencies in its English give a good reflection of the Greek phrases. For a good modern translation see the NET Bible: <http://www.bible.org/netbible>.

We learn from Luke that Zechariah had nine months to think about and contemplate on the miracle of the birth of his son John. John's name is a program: God will act again with grace and mercy for his people. Therefore a key element of Zechariah's praise is salvation, redemption and forgiveness:

- A God's visit
- B Redemption of his people
- C Salvation
- D Prophets
- E Salvation from the hand of the enemies
- F Our Fathers
- F' Our Father Abraham
- E' Deliverance from the hand of the enemies
- D' Prophet John
- C' Salvation
- B' Forgiveness of sins for his people
- A' Visit of the "Anatole" from on high.

In the chiasmic structure of the praise of Zechariah the key persons involved in favor of God's people (God, Prophets, Fathers, Anatole) alternate with the expressed idea of salvation. In the center of the chiasm is God's faithfulness towards the father Abraham and the "fathers" (sure including Isaak, Jakob and David). The strong repetition of salvation makes it the central concept.

The visit of God A and the visit of God's Anatole A' (who is the Messiah) form an inclusion.<sup>2</sup> Both visits are one and the same: God visits his people in the person of the Messiah who is the "Sprout" prophesied by the prophets and who will now be introduced by the son of Zechariah, John the Baptist.

For the pair B and B' compare Eph 1,7 and Col 1,14 where redemption and forgiveness of sins are equated.

Throughout the passage there is a dominant use of words like "we" or "us" and "our" etc. With Israel's believers Zechariah celebrates the triumph of God's mercy "on us" as the climax of salvation history. To be given the grace to be part of that by becoming the father of John made the joy in his heart overflow. The time has come. Let's leave the darkness and join the rising sun, who is the Messiah of Is 9,1-6; 42,7; 49,6 giving us the light to guide our feet into the way of peace.

---

<sup>2</sup> The NET Bible translates 1,78: "Because of our God's tender mercy the dawn will break upon us from on high" and explains in a footnote: "The Greek term translated *dawn* (ἀνατολή, *anatolh*) can be a reference to the morning star or to the sun. The Messiah is pictured as a saving light that shows the way. The Greek term was also used to translate the Hebrew word for 'branch' or 'sprout', so some see a double entendre here with messianic overtones (see Isa 11:1-10; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12)."