

‘THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT’
(The Spiritual Sound Track of Christmas)
Studies in Luke 1

Holiday Hot Line

“*It’s the hap-hap-happiest time of the year...*” sings an old Christmas crooner of the past. And it really is for most people, but it’s also a very depressing time of the year for many, many people as well. The weeks around Christmas and New Year’s are when more domestic violence incidents tend to occur and most suicide attempts are made. There are logical reasons for this:

- 1) gloomy winter weather arrives in most places north of the equator,
- 2) colds and flus, etc. spread,
- 3) financial debt looms larger, with end of the year spending,
- 4) broken relationships and long distances from family accentuate loneliness,
- 5) sentimental holiday music conjures up good memories for some, but others are haunted by past failures, current life disappointments and hopelessness about the future,
- 6) the constant barrage of negative news and melancholy movies can wither the spirit,
- 7) liquor, drug and medication consumption increase and
- 8) just the weariness of life’s difficulties all combine for ‘*the drab-drab-drabbiest time of the year*’ for many people.

While most are singing ‘*Joy to the World!*’ others mumble ‘*Bah humbug, everybody!*’ It’s little wonder that the seasonal ‘**Holiday Hot Line**’ offering counseling, advice, and prayer is activated just in time for Christmas.

For Satan and the demonic fallen angels, the holidays are their busy season. They delight in causing a sense of desperation upon all spiritually weak hearts, minds, and souls of people who do not truly know the Lord Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. During the waves of emptiness, oppressed victims seek to drown their sorrows with liquor, drugs, and indecent revelry. Desperate souls often plunge into erratic behavior that ruins themselves and others with self-destructive conduct or suicide. Sadly, some of the most miserable people at holiday times are carnal Christians who have gone astray from God, and in addition to usual problems, are under His chastisement for disobedience. They wonder ‘*Am I really saved?*’ or ‘*Will God ever forgive me?*’ ‘*How long will this go on?*’ ‘*Will it get even worse before it gets better?*’ The enemies of our souls get diabolical delight in tormenting wayward believers with such worries and fears.

The Christmas story in **Luke Chapter 1** is God’s spiritual hot line counseling about **hope for the holidays** for all wise enough to study and apply virgin Mary’s biblical focus upon her Lord, her prayer of commitment to be used of Him (**Luke 1:31-38**), her active pursuit of good fellowship with her Spirit-filled sister in the Lord, Elizabeth (**Luke 1:39-44**), and her worshipful praise to God during a stressful time in her life (**Luke 1:45-55**). Three whole months of fellowship between Mary and Elizabeth helped. As Elizabeth’s husband, Zacharias, silently listened, enduring his *speechless chastisement*, he was encouraged to snap out of it regarding his discipline from God (**Hebrews 12:11-13**). God then removed the *speech impediment* from Zacharias (**Luke 1:57-66**), filled him with the Spirit to compose a powerful prophetic poem, and go on to complete his ministry for the Lord (**Luke 1:67-79**).

If you catch a bad case of *soul sickness (spiritual flu)*, just follow the **Biblical Hot Line** advice of **Luke Chapt. 1**:

- 1) Make that call to God in prayer for biblical understanding and insight;
- 2) Next, yield and commit yourself to the Lord regarding whatever in your life is causing you stress;
- 3) Get with Spirit-filled Christians who are blessed and fruitful believers;
- 4) Rejoice, pray, and give thanks for God’s goodness and grace to you in Christ;
- 5) Go, be a blessing to others to get your thoughts off yourself and all negative circumstances;
- 6) Believe that God is going to do some great things in and through the rest of your life; and
- 7) **Repeat #1-#6** until they become automatic every time you feel down, gloomy or depressed.

Make the Christmas season and every season the ‘*hap-hap-happiest time of the year*’ for yourself, God and everybody around you by putting God’s **Holiday Hotline** at the top of your *spiritual speed dial* for Christmas. **PtL**

Zacharias' Holiday Break Through! ***(The Holy Spirit of Christmas Revival)***

Luke 1:57-80

After Mary became pregnant with baby Jesus by the Holy Spirit, she followed the holiday hint of Gabriel to visit her relative, Elizabeth, in Judah. Elizabeth was already six months pregnant carrying pre-born John the prophet, when Mary arrived. Elizabeth's husband, Zacharias, had been smitten with speechlessness for not believing God's prophecy about having a son to precede Messiah. After three months of festive fellowship, Mary returned home to Nazareth when Elizabeth's delivery date of John drew near. Upon John's birth, circumcision, and naming, Zacharias' chastisement was lifted as he burst forth with Spirit-filled praise and prophecy (**Luke 1:57-67**).

'THE BENEDICTUS' ***(First word in Latin / Greek = 'Blessed')***

Luke 1:68-79

Proclamation of the Kingdom Promises

*"...**Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for He has visited His people and raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant to us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him **all the days of our life.**"*** **1:67-75**

OT verses cited by Zacharias:

1 Kings 1:48, Psalm 132:17, Jeremiah 23:5, Leviticus 26:42, Genesis 12:3, Jeremiah 32:39

Zacharias' nine months of chastisement (*speechlessness*) most likely led to cultivation of his skills in Quiet Time Bible study, prayer and meditation of the prophetic events underway. No doubt, his disappointment with his lack of faith in the temple was corrected during his 9-month 'Q.T.' with God. Although he withdrew from social activity, he got closer to God.

- Whenever you are chastened by the Lord or just go through a spiritually *low time* in your life, how does the continued study and meditation of God's Word help you avoid negativity, depression and bitterness?
- When you are going through a *sad, depressing* time, what/who should you avoid?
- Do you think being around joyful Mary and Elizabeth helped revive old Zacharias?
- Who are the joyful, Spirit-filled people you get around when you feel *down*?
- Do you think *sad sack saints* would be blessed and revived being around you?

Proclamation of the King's Prophet

*"And **you child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**"* **1:76-79**

OT verses cited by Zacharias:

Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3, Jeremiah 31:34, Isaiah 60:1-3, Isaiah 9:2

These words must have been cited by Spirit-filled Zacharias at baby John's dedication. Note the thrill of this elderly father, that his son will be a full-time minister of Christ. Discuss how great it would be if all Christian parents felt this way about their children.

- Do you (*or those of you who will someday be a parent*) have similar aspirations for the kids God has given you (*or will give you someday? Why? or Why not?*)
- How does this dedication of their son also *raise the bar* spiritually for Zacharias and Elizabeth in their own lives?
- Discuss why ministering to kids is such a spiritually invigorating way to serve the Lord.
- In what way will you get more involved serving in the children's ministries of CBF this year?