

Luke 1:57-75

Sermon: : **Chosen, but not because they are better**

2022.

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PROPHET

1. Let's remind ourselves: when the angel gave instructions to Zechariah, at the very end he clearly emphasized that the child must be given the name John. And when Zechariah did so—as we read here—his tongue was loosed and he spoke. Before we dive into the text itself, I want to stress something important: the sign was not intended only for Zechariah, but also for his neighbors and for the whole Judean hill country. I repeat myself, forgive me, but I want you to grasp this—this was not a petty act of God's ego to punish Zechariah. On the contrary, it was a sign that resounded powerfully throughout all Judea, a message that God was now doing something of enormous significance.

1.1. **(Luke 1:67)** The term *prophet* comes from a root word that essentially means: God sends a person to prophesy, to reveal to the people what He will do in the near or distant future in order to fulfill His plan. In the Old Testament, a prophet was someone to whom God gave special insight into future events and who then declared it to the people in the name of Yahweh.

1.2. When we read Zechariah's declaration, we notice something interesting: he does not prophesy anything that the people of Israel didn't already have written in the Scriptures. His prophecy does not come from some new, secret revelation that only he received and no one else knew. He speaks about the future, yes, but it is precisely the future that had already been promised for centuries through the Old Testament. I think the core of the idea of a prophet is this: a prophet does not necessarily have to possess a hidden revelation that no one else has—that is one role of a prophet, but not the main one. The essence is this: a prophet gathers together everything—who God is, what His plans are, and what promises He has already given—and then connects that information in the light of the time and culture in which he lives. His task is to proclaim it, declare it, and announce it to the people, to the nation around him. That is exactly what is happening here with Zechariah, and that is why Luke says that he was "filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied."

1.3. (Luke 1:68–69) The word *visited* carries the meaning of caring for someone. When someone is sick—we care for them; when someone is hungry—we feed them. That is the tone of this word. And the word *redeem* is even stronger. Let's try an example: in the ancient world, a slave could be redeemed, he could gain freedom if someone paid to release him from his master. That is exactly the language, the imagery, Zechariah uses here. The slave in this context is the people of Israel, a nation enslaved under the Roman Empire. But now God will redeem them, set them free. That is what Zechariah prophesies.

1.4. Let's recall that we already spoke about the word *Savior* and why I prefer to use *Deliverer*. How will God redeem His people? He will do it through the child Mary is carrying. He will strike down Israel's enemies and become their king—the king who will reign forever.

CHOSEN, BUT NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE BETTER

2. (Luke 1:70–74) Through these verses we see that Zechariah confirms what Mary also declared. He mentions David, and then Abraham, linking them into the same Covenant, into the one promise given by God. Throughout history God gradually revealed how He would fulfill His promises: part He revealed to Abraham, then to Moses, and later to David. But all of it belongs to the same promise which can be summed up in this key statement: "*I will be your God, and you will be My people.*"

2.1. In verse 71 we read how Zechariah mentions that the nations "hate" Israel. Why? Why did all the nations that ruled over Israel in the past not only demonstrate political and economic dominance but also personal hatred? It was not just about exploiting their labor or wealth—it was a deep, almost irrational hostility. Where does this universal hatred toward Israel come from? Historians and psychologists have sought an answer to the question of antisemitism for centuries but have never found a final explanation. I believe the answer is simple: every person who does not love God—and Scripture clearly says that in their nature no one does—subconsciously does not love His chosen people. If we do not have a new heart that embraces God's plan, envy easily takes hold of us, and the question arises: "*Why not my nation, God? Why Israel?*" I myself have asked the same.

2.1.1. I know this is a simplified answer to the complex problem of antisemitism. But that does not make it untrue. Take the example of one individual who greatly influenced history—Martin Luther (1483–1546). With his 95 Theses (1517) he launched the Reformation, challenging the authority of the pope and the sale of indulgences. He emphasized justification by faith, Scripture as the sole authority (*sola scriptura*), and the priesthood of all believers. This forever changed the course of church history and laid the foundations of Protestant communities.

2.1.2. Yet, although Luther strongly returned the Church to Scripture, sadly he did not go far enough. At first he was friendly toward the Jews, believing they would embrace the Reformation. But when they did not, his attitude completely shifted. In his treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), Luther called them a "devilish people" and proposed repressive measures—burning synagogues, banning their teaching, and driving them out. This is one of the darkest parts of his ministry.

2.1.3. I am sure that the Jews themselves, by their behavior, partly provoked such a stance—adding, as the saying goes, “fuel to the fire”—but that does not justify hatred.

2.2. Reading Scripture makes it clear: God did not choose Israel because they were better or more moral than other nations. On the contrary, throughout history, even to this day, the Jews have shown rebellion against God just like everyone else. Instead of being a light to the nations, many emphasized their own specialness: *“We are better because Yahweh chose us.”* That was their sin of pride. And through history, engaging in trade, finance, and intellectual pursuits, they often spread immorality instead of being God’s priests. Yet, despite everything, God chose them—not because of merit, but purely by grace.

2.2.1. And had Luther had that perspective, perhaps he would have avoided falling into hatred.

2.2.2. I repeat: God chose them simply because that is how He wanted to tell His story. In His eyes all nations are the same, but Israel’s role is unique.

2.3. Our questions often come from the feeling that we deserve something. But when we realize—if we are children of God—that the reason for our existence lies solely in God’s will, then humility, freedom, and joy follow. For the purpose of life is not “the best life now,” but faithfully playing the role God has given us.

2.4. I recall an example from childhood. In our neighborhood lived a Jew, the owner of a fruit shop. People passing by often mocked him: *“Look at him, that stingy Jew—he would never give you anything!”* There was even a saying: *“As stingy as a Jew.”* And I too used it. Today, from this perspective, I try not to use such words—because I know how deeply unjust they are.

2.5. Let us be honest: nations harbor local and historical hatreds—Croats and Serbs, French and English, Americans and Russians... But where does the hatred of all nations toward Israel come from? The answer is envy. Israel is God’s chosen people, and precisely for that reason all other nations harbor hatred toward them. And that hatred, at its root, reveals hatred toward God Himself and His plan.

2.6. Look at the authors of the Bible—almost all were Jews. The apostles were Jews, the prophets Jews, Jesus Himself was a Jew. Only Luke was likely a Greek. So Jesus was not the European ideal tradition loves to portray—blue eyes, long hair, almost model-like features. That is not the biblical picture. Church tradition reshaped Him in that way, and by doing so it actually distanced the Jews from the Church. Behind it all again stands envy: *“Why them and not us?”*

2.8. Today we are witnessing the renewed rise of antisemitism. The media—the most powerful weapon of our time—shapes culture and attitudes. Look at modern shows: Orthodox Jews are often portrayed as oddities. That is not accidental. It is part of a calculated, insidious antisemitic agenda. That is why I agree with the teacher who says: *“If in an age flooded with information we do not spend*

time in God's Word, we will easily become victims and be deceived." Therefore, our mindset must be biblical, not worldly.

2.9. The point is this: God is writing a special story with the people of Israel, and we are witnesses to that story—now and in the future. The day will come when antisemitism will reach its peak, and when the nations will unite to utterly destroy Israel. And at that very moment, when it seems there is no salvation, Jesus will return. He will defeat all their enemies and establish His kingdom—the Millennial Kingdom in Israel. That kingdom will be admired by the whole world, but also feared, for the King of Israel will reign with justice, with all the power given to Him by God the Father¹.

WHAT ROLE DO WE HAVE AS GENTILE CHRISTIANS?

3. We now come to the question: what role do we, as Christians from Gentile nations, have in all of this? One thing is certain – we will not participate in the campaign that will attempt to wipe Israel off the face of the earth. Quite the opposite – because we will not participate, we will be persecuted², and perhaps at times we will only be silent witnesses to the unfolding events. But when Jesus returns the second time, then we will receive our glorified bodies and reign with Him on earth in the role of priests. Our task will be to proclaim the Gospel to all nations who will live in the Millennial Kingdom. And right here we see – our role as Christians is ultimately incredible, noble, immense, and, I dare say, exalted.

3.1. The apostle Paul in **(Romans 11:17–32)** clearly says:

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but tremble. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in His kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

¹ Book of the Prophet Zechariah 12; Book of the Prophet Zechariah 14; Book of the Prophet Joel 4; Book of the Prophet Ezekiel 38–39; Book of the Prophet Isaiah 2:2–4; Book of Revelation 16:13–16; Book of Revelation 19:11–21; Book of Revelation 20:1–6

² During the Second World War, members of the Jehovah's Witnesses community, although not formally organized in rescuing Jews, often – through their civil courage and refusal to comply with Nazi demands, such as paying homage to the regime or serving in the military – indirectly helped those persecuted for faith and conscience. Because of such resistance, many were arrested between 1933 and 1945, imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps (marked with the purple triangle), and hundreds were executed or died in captivity, especially in Germany.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written:

‘The Deliverer will come from Zion;

He will turn godlessness away from Jacob.

And this is my covenant with them

when I take away their sins.’

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you. For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.”

3.2. In other words, Paul is saying this: *“We, true Christians, must not hate the Jews. Our duty is to love them, even if their behavior does not seem to deserve it. Ultimately – they are God’s chosen people. And because we love God and His promises, we also love them.”*

3.3. Finally, today much is being said about the “end times.” Countless conspiracy theories – both in church and secular circles – attempt to shape our views. We must be extremely careful about what we are being bombarded with and how it affects our daily lives. Personally, I strive not to let it influence me too much. My focus is on studying Scripture and observing the rise of antisemitism in the world. And I know – when that rise becomes so strong that the world is openly prepared to attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, then I will be absolutely certain that Jesus is near, that His return is close, and that the end of this age is swiftly approaching.