

The Book of Luke

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Unless otherwise noted, the ESV; capitalized will be used throughout.

I have been studying the Word of God since 1972, spending no less than an hour a day listening to the excellent teaching ministry of pastor-teacher R. B. Thieme, Jr. At some point, a few decades ago, I began studying on my own; and today, I study and write about the Bible 3–6 hours each day (this has been the case for the past two decades).

R. B. Thieme, Jr. never exegeted the entire book of Luke (although he did cover some passages in Luke); and his son, R. B. Thieme III has covered more of Luke in his Life of Christ series; but neither man covered the book of Luke as a singular entity. Nor did either man cover the entirety of this book in exegesis.

One of the things about the Bible which I find to be remarkable is the amount of narrative that there is. There are massive portions of Scripture where we follow one person or a few people around. Furthermore, it is rare for there to be any accompanying moral commentary. That is, we don't read, *Moses did A, B and C; and God was pleased with A and B; but when Moses did C, God was angry*. Now and again, we will read some editorializing; but, for the most part, we simply read, *Moses did A, B and C*. We have to be careful when making moral judgments over what past saints have done. This does not mean that we cannot evaluate their actions; we simply have to be careful about that.

Nation Israel has a history, and it is often a mistake to begin our studies in the New Testament. God has laid a rich foundation for all that we study in the New Testament. In fact, God takes us all the way back to the beginning of mankind in the book of Genesis. Knowing what takes place in the Old Testament often gives us a depth of understanding when it comes to the New. If there had been no Old Testament, the New Testament would make little or no sense.

There is a very rich history of mankind concerning which we only have the most basic history. From man's creation to his sin, to the corruption of almost all mankind, we have the barest recorded narrative—just the first 6 chapters of Genesis. After the judgment of God on the world known as the flood or the great deluge, we have another lengthy period of human history which is covered in only chapters 9–11 in Genesis. The period of time contain in Gen. 1–11 is often called The Gentile Dispensation (or words to that effect).

Around 2000 B.C., God spoke to a man named Abram, and told him to leave the place where he grew up and to move to Canaan in the far west. He was living in what is today modern Iraq and he moved eventually to the land partially occupied by modern Israel today. The Mediterranean Sea located as the western border of this special land. God told Abram that he would have a son and that there would come from this son a large group of people who are specially connected to God. In fact, there were several promises made by God to Abram concerning his progeny, and in our study of the book of Genesis, it is clear that God fulfilled those promises.

Abram was renamed Abraham; he had a son Isaac, and Isaac had a son Jacob. Two sets of great people came from these men. Whomever is descended from Abraham or Isaac, but not from Jacob, is an Arab. And anyone who is descended from Jacob is considered to be one of God's people, set apart from the rest of the human race. These became a peculiar people to God, first known as the Hebrew people; and much later, known as the Jewish people. In the book of Genesis, we studied how carefully this people was isolated from all other groups. They could bring in women from other races and groups; but men, generally speaking, did not become a part of this people (there are notable exceptions to this). In any case, in the early days of the sons of Jacob, there was no intermarriage with any other family or group (with the exception of bringing women into the family).

Circumstances took all of Jacob's descendants (and their wives and children) to Egypt, where they lived for 400 years. Also, during this time, they became slaves to Egypt. The book of Exodus is primarily about Moses, a Levite (Levi was Jacob's third son), leading the people of God out of Egypt, as per God's direction.

God will lead His people out of Egypt and into the desert-wilderness, where they will remain for 40 years. At the very beginning, God will give them the Ten Commandments and His national laws. However, the people will be resistant to entering the land given them by God and taking it. So God keeps them in the desert until that recalcitrant generation dies off. Then the next generation will enter into the land under the guidance of Joshua, and take it. The books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers describe Moses and the people of Israel—their leaving Egypt and spending 40 years in the desert—along with direct words from God as to their national laws.

In Deuteronomy, Moses speaks to the people of Israel—to the new, younger generation—and distills and explains their history to them. These are the people who were 20 years or younger when they left Egypt. "You have experienced this;" Moses will explain to them, and then he explains the significance of these experiences. Whereas, significant portions of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers are the direct words of God to Moses; nearly all of Deuteronomy are the direct words of Moses; and yet, his words are considered every bit as authoritative as those words spoken directly by God (early on, in the book of Luke, Jesus will quote authoritatively from Moses' words in Deuteronomy).

In the book of Joshua, the people of Israel will take the land given them by God. In the second half of the book of Joshua, that land will be distributed to the various tribes.

After taking the land, Israel continues for several hundred years in this land and under the guidance of various judges. However, Israel will long for a king; so a monarchy is established under King Saul; whose reign is then followed by King David and finally King Solomon.

King Saul began as a great warrior and a decent king, but his leadership falls apart due to his rejection of God's authority (in Samuel), jealousy (of David) and mental illness. David, from a different tribe, took the reigns of the kingdom after Saul and all of his sons died in

battle. David is called a man after God's Own heart, although he was clearly not a perfect man.

David's son Solomon was one of the richest men in history (relatively speaking, as wealth is a relative measurement). Solomon ruled at a time when Israel enjoyed its greatest blessing. However, even though Solomon was known for his wisdom, his materialism and lust for women overcame him, and the nation Israel became two national entities after Solomon passed. In the north was the Northern Kingdom, also called Samaria, Ephraim or Israel. In the south was the Southern Kingdom, also called Judah or Judæa. The great kingdom of Israel—all of the land ruled over by David and Solomon—would never again to be reunited until the promise of the end-time Kingdom, under the reign of David's Greater Son.

The two kingdoms to emerge from nation Israel were often at odds. The northern kingdom was in opposition to God so much that, in 721 B.C. they were overrun by the Assyrians, and many of them were moved to other lands in the east (when a people were conquered, it was common to lead the survivors away into another land and for them to function as slaves). This situation became known as the Assyrian captivity or the Assyrian exile. This was a result of their negative volition towards God and His Word. This removal of the Hebrew people from their land is called the 5th Cycle of Discipline by some; the 5th Stage of National Discipline by others.

Although the 10 tribes who lived there in the northern kingdom are often called the *ten lost tribes*, most of them continued still as separate tribes even into the New Testament. The tribes of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, and Asher are all named in the New Testament. That is, people in the New Testament knew that they belonged to this or that tribe. The line of Jesus (which we will study in Luke) reveals detailed birth records which appear to be superior to our own today. So, despite the diaspora, most Jews retained knowledge of their genealogy.

As an aside, even though Jews from the various tribes ended up in England (and all over the world), there is nothing legitimate in the concept of British-Israelism, which is the belief that, in some way, the people of Britain are "genetically, racially, and linguistically the direct descendants" of the Ten Lost Tribes of ancient Israel.

Great Britain, at one time, was the greatest nation in the world, and they ruled over perhaps a fifth of the entire inhabited world (it is quite amazing to see a map of the British Empire and to view tiny Great Britain on that map). Many recognized that this was clearly blessing from God (which it was); but then some then came up with this false theory that, therefore, the people of Britain have inherited the blessings of Israel because they are Israel. Certainly, people descended from Israel had found respite in Great Britain; and there was, no doubt, some intermingling of the peoples. But, we know much of England's history, and we know where their peoples came from, and it is not Israel (by which I don't mean nation Israel but the people of Israel).

Speaking of which, let's go back to ancient Israel again:

The Southern Kingdom was also filled with spiritual degeneration (called *reversionism* by some) and they were also overrun in 586 B.C., by Babylonia. Babylon removed the Jews from the land (this is from the southern kingdom) after defeating them. Removing a conquered people from their homeland was a common practice of that era.

Not long after, the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, defeated the Babylonian empire, and he inherited the Jewish people, with whom he developed a good relationship. Therefore, Cyrus soon decided to return the people of God to the land of promise, which occurred in 516 B.C. That was God giving the Jews another chance. However, Israel has not been an autonomous nation since then until most recently in 1947.

The last independent monarchs of Judah were Jeconiah (who ruled less than a year due to his degeneracy—an important topic that we will later take up in the book of Luke); and Zedekiah. Zedekiah was the final ruler of Judah, ruling about 11 years until 586 B.C., when Babylon conquered the southern kingdom.

The Jews remained in the southern kingdom from 516 B.C. until A.D. 70. The Old Testament was completed around 400 B.C. There continued to be writings by various Jewish men, but what is accepted as authoritative begins with Genesis go as far as the final chapters of Chronicles (the final book in the Hebrew Bible).

The period of time between the testaments, between 400 B.C. (the end of the writing of the Old Testament) and A.D. 25 (the public ministry of John the Herald), is known as the *intertestamental period*. For about 400 years, there was no word from God; until various people were spoken to around 6–4 B.C. (the time of the births of John¹ and Jesus). Since God did not speak to anyone, no Scripture was recorded—as Scripture is basically the history of man and God. Stuff was going on and God was on His throne; but there was no direct communication taking place between God and the people of Israel. They had a complete canon of Scripture—up to that point in time (which we call the Old Testament). All of these books looked forward to the coming of a Messiah/King/Prophet to come.

Between the last verse of the Old Testament and the first few verses of the book of Luke, there are 400 *silent* years. There is no Scripture written during that time. There are books written by believers (I assume that they are believers) known as the apocrypha, but those books have been rejected for theological and historical inaccuracies (the Catholic religion accepts them as divinely inspired). This does not mean that these books are not helpful to fill in historical gaps, but they must be taken with a grain of salt, just like any other historical record which is not divinely inspired.

Got Questions is a pretty good source for accurate information. So I will let them tell what happened in between the two testaments.

¹ John the Herald; often called John the baptist.

The Intertestamental Period (by Got Questions?)

Israel was under the control of the Persian Empire about 532–332 BC. The Persians allowed the Jews to practice their religion with little interference. They were even allowed to rebuild and worship at the temple (2Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4). This span of time included the last 100 years of the Old Testament period and about the first 100 years of the intertestamental period. This time of relative peace and contentment was just the calm before the storm.

Prior to the intertestamental period, Alexander the Great defeated Darius of Persia, bringing Greek rule to the world. Alexander was a student of Aristotle and was well-educated in Greek philosophy and politics. Alexander required that Greek culture be promoted in every land that he conquered. As a result, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, becoming the translation known as the Septuagint. Most of the New Testament references to Old Testament Scripture use the Septuagint phrasing. Alexander did allow religious freedom for the Jews, though he still strongly promoted Greek lifestyles. This was not a good turn of events for Israel, since the Greek culture was very worldly, humanistic, and ungodly.

After Alexander died, Judea was ruled by a series of successors, culminating in the Selucid king Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus did far more than refuse religious freedom to the Jews. Around 167 BC, he overthrew the rightful line of the priesthood and desecrated the temple, defiling it with unclean animals and a pagan altar (see Mark 13:14 for a similar event to take place in the future). Antiochus' act was the religious equivalent of rape. Eventually, Jewish resistance to Antiochus, led by Judas Maccabeus and the Hasmoneans, restored the rightful priests and rescued the temple. The period of the Maccabean Revolt was one of war, violence, and infighting.

Around 63 BC, Pompey of Rome conquered Israel, putting all of Judea under control of the Caesars. This eventually led to Herod being made king of Judea by the Roman emperor and senate. This is the nation that taxed and controlled the Jews and eventually executed the Messiah on a Roman cross. Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures were now mixed together in Judea.

During the span of the Greek and Roman occupations, two important political/religious groups emerged in Israel. The Pharisees added to the Law of Moses through oral tradition and eventually considered their own laws more important than God's (see Mark 7:1–23). While Christ's teachings often agreed with the Pharisees, He railed against their hollow legalism and lack of compassion. The Sadducees represented the aristocrats and the wealthy. The Sadducees, who wielded power through the Sanhedrin, rejected all but the Mosaic books of the Old Testament. They refused to believe in resurrection and were generally shadows of the Greeks, whom they greatly admired.

From <https://www.gotquestions.org/intertestamental-period.html> accessed November 14, 2018.

James Allen provides a more thorough examination of this history of the Jewish people [here](#) (it is in outline form).

At the time of the New Testament, Israel is ruled over by Rome as a part of the Roman empire.

Lessons 002–003: Introduction to the Book of Luke

The Promised Messiah

One fundamental purpose of the Old Testament was to set up the concept of a Messiah, Who would come and deliver the Hebrew people. He is known by many names in the Old Testament: the Seed of the Woman, the Messiah, the King of kings, David's Greater Son, the Suffering Servant.

Jesus is revealed in the Old Testament in two principle ways: (1) By direct prophecy (examples: Gen. 49:10 2Sam. 7:16 Psalm 2:6–9 110:1–7 Isa. 7:14 9:6–7). The Jewish people themselves and their theologians understood these passages to speak of their Messiah. (2) Though typology.

Regarding prophecy, many of the passages about the Messiah are spoken by God directly to the writer of Scripture (Gen. 3:15 Isa. 7:14 9:6²). I don't believe that most of these passages were fully understood when written; but there did seem to develop an understanding that certain specific passages were about the Messiah. The religious class appeared to be obsessed with the Law; but less discerning when it came to the Jewish Messiah.

Typology is where a person, an institution, or an event is understood *after the first advent*, to represent or point to Jesus Christ (or to His work on the cross). A *type* may mean one thing when originally written; but come to mean something different with the passage of time. Abraham, Moses and David are all types of Christ. Long after the fact, we are able to see what is recorded about their lives; and we are able to connect these things to a plethora of parallels that even the human authors of Old Testament Scripture did not recognize. Generally speaking, when a typological event occurs (or an institution is presented), the writer who records this event (institution or person) has no idea that he is writing about the Messiah (or about some aspect of the Messiah).

The priesthood is an institution established by God with a set of specific purposes in the Old Testament. However, in retrospect, it is clear that the priesthood—and specifically the office of the High Priest—is representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. God knew this; but when Moses wrote down all of what God had to say about the priesthood, he never thought to himself, “Aha, God is talking about the Messiah here.” The various high priests never thought, in the midst of a service, “Wow, I am a representation of the Messiah to come.”

Typology is mentioned in the New Testament, but, like many other doctrines of the faith, was not fully developed in the 1st century. Quite frankly, today, we know much more about typology than Paul, Peter or the writer of the book of Hebrews.

² Isa. 9:6 appears to continue a quotation from God begun back in Isa. 8).

Typological passages Psalm 22 and Isa. 53 both speak of actual historical events of great suffering—the precise details of those events (who, what, where) are lost to us. However, those two passages provide us with great insight as to what Jesus did for us on the cross. Psalm 22 tells us about His actual physical suffering; and Isa. 53 speaks of the theological nature of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

One example that we will study below is God ordering Abraham to offer up his beloved son as a sacrifice to God. At the time, this is presented simply as an act of great obedience and trust on the part of Abraham. God told Abraham to do something, and Abraham just went ahead and did it (almost). However, in retrospect, this act is clearly all about God the Father offering up His Beloved Son for our sins.

Current Judaism has the problem that, at the heart of their Scriptures is the promise of a Savior-Messiah. They have, for the most part, set that part of their Scriptures aside³, along with their complex system of rituals, all of which reveal this Savior-Messiah. Their problem today is, their Messiah came to them, and they rejected Him, hanging Him on the cross⁴ as a trouble-maker, despite being unable to find anything wrong that He did.

What I would like to do in this lesson, is briefly go through a few Old Testament passages and explain some of the places where Jesus is revealed. My emphasis will be upon the Old Testament Scriptures, without spending much time in the New Testament. The point being, the Old Testament is a solid foundation for the New. The list that follows is representative, not exhaustive.

The Seed of the Woman:

The first time that the Savior is revealed is back in Gen. 3:15, which is known as the proto-evangel. The serpent has tempted the woman, and she has disobeyed God and eaten from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When Adam returned home, he looked at the woman, the partially eaten fruit, and he chose to eat the fruit that she handed to him. The woman had been deceived, but Adam ate the fruit, knowing full well that he was disobeying the one explicit negative command of God.

Both Adam and the woman also suddenly realized that they were naked and covered themselves up with fig leaves. When God came to the garden to speak to them, they hid themselves, guilty for their transgression. Through interrogation, God found out that the woman ate the fruit because she had been deceived by the serpent; and Adam ate the fruit that his wife gave him to eat. The woman acted, in part, out of ignorance having been deceived; but Adam knew that he was disobeying God.

³ Hebrew theologians have various ways of interpreting the Messianic passages; but most do not understand them in the same way that their forefathers did.

⁴ The Jews did not directly hang the Lord on the cross; but they manipulated the Romans and Pontius Pilate so that Jesus—the most innocent man Who has ever lived—would die a most horrific death.

God pronounced judgement upon the man, the woman and the serpent, but one verse in particular stands out.

The Revealed God is speaking to the serpent, announcing its judgment:

Gen. 3:15 *I will put enmity between you [the serpent] and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring [lit., between your seed and her seed]; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.*" (ESV; capitalized; which is the translation which I will use throughout this lesson, unless otherwise noted).

Throughout human history, it is the man who provides the seed. This is his contribution to any child who is born; yet, God speaks of the woman's seed here (Who is Jesus Christ). What will Jesus do? He would bruise the head of the serpent. That is a deathblow to serpent, also known as Satan. Jesus would completely crush the serpent. The serpent would bruise the heel of Jesus (that is, the Seed of the Woman). This means, the serpent would harm Jesus—enough to knock Him off His feet, so to speak; but this would not be a permanent deathblow.

We understand today that the sins of all mankind would be poured out upon Jesus and He would take upon Himself our judgment. His death on the cross is the bruise to His heel. The Seed of the Woman would be off His feet, but only for a limited time.

After judgment was pronounced, then God did something very interesting for Adam and the woman:

Gen. 3:21 *And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.*

This does not mean that God looked at the clothing that Adam and the woman had quickly devised and said, "Look, those are some very sad threads. Let Me show you how clothing should be done." This was not about fashion; it was about temporarily providing a covering for the man and woman (the verb *to make atonement for* means *to cover over*). Adam and the woman needed to be given a temporary covering. They needed to be atoned for. This gave them respite from the judgment of God, which they deserved.

God did something that Adam and the woman had never seen done before—God killed an animal and then made leather clothing from the skins of the animal. The sacrificed animal represents Jesus and the leather clothing that God made *temporarily covered* Adam and the woman, protecting them from judgment.

This sacrifice of animals—the innocent on behalf of the guilty—is a theme which runs throughout the Old Testament. It started as far back as Gen. 3; right after Adam and the woman had sinned.

The Genealogy Gospel:

This is the list of names of those descended from Adam to Noah, found in Gen. 5. The names and their meanings are given.

The Genealogy Gospel		
Hebrew	English	Making a Sentence of Those Names
Adam	Man	Man (is) appointed mortal sorrow; (but) the Blessed God shall come down teaching (that) His death shall bring (the) despairing rest.
Seth	Appointed	
Enosh	Mortal	
Kenan	Sorrow;	
Mahalalel	The Blessed God	
Jared	Shall come down	As you can see, the gospel message is hidden in the names.
Enoch	Teaching	
Methuselah	His death shall bring	
Lamech	The Despairing	
Noah	Rest, or comfort.	

I took this from [Chuck Missler](#) (accessed December 7, 2018). Missler goes into much greater detail at that link. Many people have presented this gospel in this way; so I don't believe that it is original with him.

Animal Sacrifices by Noah:

When Noah exited the ark with his family after the great flood, he offered up animal sacrifices from the clean animals (he took extras of those into the ark).

Gen. 8:20 [Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.](#)

Noah offered up animals in sacrifice to God. These were burnt on an altar with fire. The fire speaks of judgment and the sacrifice of animals represents the sacrifice of the just for the unjust.

Gen. 8:21a [And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man..."](#)

God was pleased with the aroma of the animal sacrifice, which means that God is temporarily placated by the animal sacrifice, which are representative of the cross. He is pleased with the animal sacrifice. The animal sacrifice provides a temporary stay of execution.

When God gave the Hebrew people the Law, included in the Law was a set of animal sacrifices which the people were to participate in. By the time a person was old, he had seen hundreds upon hundreds of animals offered up for his sins. However, since these sacrifices continue for all his life, he would know that they were not actually effectual for the taking away of sin.

Abraham Offers Up His Son Isaac as a Type of Jesus Offering Himself for Our Sins:

In Gen. 22, God did something quite remarkable—He told Abraham to take the son whom he loved and to offer him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that God would designate. Not before or since has God required that anyone offer up any human sacrifice, and yet here, that is exactly what He was doing.

This was a 3-day trip to get to the mountain; and on the trip, Abraham was cognizant of who was to be offered up; but his son, Isaac, was not. They traveled with two servants and many believe that they went to the mountain that would later be associated with Jerusalem and the cross (called Mount Moriah).

Then we read words which are unlike anything else in the Bible:

Gen.22:9–10 *Then they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.*

But Abraham is stopped by God. Then Abraham sees that there is a ram stuck in a thicket and that ram is offered up instead of Isaac.

For Abraham and Hebrew readers of the Old Testament, this has always been understood to be an act of great obedience and trust on the part of Abraham. However, after Jesus had been offered on the cross as God's only begotten Son Whom God greatly loved, it is clear that Isaac was a type of Christ being offered up. The ram illustrates the substitutionary element of this event.

Joseph as a Type of Christ:

Joseph as a Type of Christ	
Joseph	Jesus
Joseph was Loved by His Father. Genesis 37:3	God said about Jesus "This is My beloved Son." Matthew 3:17
Joseph's brothers did not believe him and they hated him. Genesis 37:4-5	The Jews Did Not Believe in Christ (John 7:5) and they hated Him (John 15:24).

Joseph's brothers rejected the idea that he would rule over them. Genesis 37:8	The Jewish leaders said " we will not have this Man to rule over us. " Luke 19:14
Joseph's brothers conspired against him. Genesis 37:23	The religious types took counsel against Jesus. Matthew 27:1
They stripped Joseph of his garment (his cloak of authority). Genesis 37:23	They stripped Jesus (Matthew 27:28); also, Jesus divested Himself of access to His Deity.
Joseph was sold for silver. Genesis 37:28	Jesus was sold for silver. Matthew 26:15
Everything Joseph put his hand to prospered. Genesis 39:3	"... And the pleasure of the Lord prospered in his hand. " Isaiah 53:10
All things were laid into Joseph's trust. Genesis 39:4-8	God has given all things into His hand. John 3:35
Joseph's own brothers did not recognize him.	The Jews did not recognize their Messiah
Joseph was tempted and did not sin. Genesis 39:9	Jesus was tempted in all things yet was without sin. Hebrews 4:15
Joseph was bound. Genesis 39:30	Jesus was bound. Matthew 27:2
Joseph was condemned with two criminals. Genesis 40:2, 3	Jesus was crucified with two criminals. Luke 23:32
One criminal was given life and the other was condemned. Genesis 40:21-22	Jesus told one of the criminals " Today you shall be with Me in paradise. " Luke 23:43
Joseph was trustworthy and wise. Genesis 41:39	God said about Jesus " this is My beloved Son in Whom I well pleased. " Mark 1:11
Joseph's brothers bowed their knee to him. Genesis 41:43	" At the name of Jesus every knee will bow. " Philippians 2:10
Joseph was 30 years old. Genesis 41:46	Jesus was " about 30 years old. " Luke 3:25
God planned the suffering of Joseph in advance to save many. Genesis 50:21	Jesus said " God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him shall be saved. " John 3:16
Joseph was made ruler over all of Egypt. Genesis 41:42-44	Jesus said " all power has been given unto Me. " Matt. 28:18
Joseph married a foreign bride who shared his glory. Genesis 41:45	Believers in Christ are " joint heirs " with Him in his glory (Romans 8:17). Throughout the NT, the Church (and not Israel) is called the bride of Christ (2Cor. 11:2 Eph. 5:25-27).

Joseph was cast into a pit and then later delivered out of it. Genesis 37:24, 28	When Jesus died he descended into the lower parts of the earth, and later ascended into heaven. Ephesians 4:9
Joseph was imprisoned based on false charges. Genesis 39:19, 20	During the trial of Jesus false witnesses were brought in testifying against Him. Mark 14:56
Joseph's brothers later repented for what they did to him. Genesis 42:7	"and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." Zechariah 12:10
Such a set of comparisons could have been developed between Abraham and Christ, Isaac and Christ, Moses and Christ, etc. The parallels in every case are remarkable.	
Like all types, Joseph did not know that he was a type of Christ; nor did the people of Israel recognize that Joseph was a type of Christ. No ancient Jewish theologian ever pointed to the life of Joseph and exclaim, "Herein, we find the Messiah!"	
From https://www.bible-history.com/old-testament/types-joseph.html (Bible History online); accessed December 28, 2018 (edited). A similar list is found on the Jews for Jesus site .	

The Passover and the Death of the Firstborn:

In the book of Exodus, Moses had gone before Pharaoh (the king of Egypt) requesting that the people of God, the Hebrew people (those descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) be allowed to go out from Egypt in order to worship their God. Pharaoh was obstinate about this and refused to let them go. Each time Moses asked and Pharaoh refused, God sent another plague to Egypt. The final plague was the death of the firstborn. Moses gave this warning:

Exodus 11:4–6 [So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle. There shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there has never been, nor ever will be again.'"](#)

There would be one way only to keep the firstborn from being killed in any particular house. Each household was to offer up a lamb sacrifice.

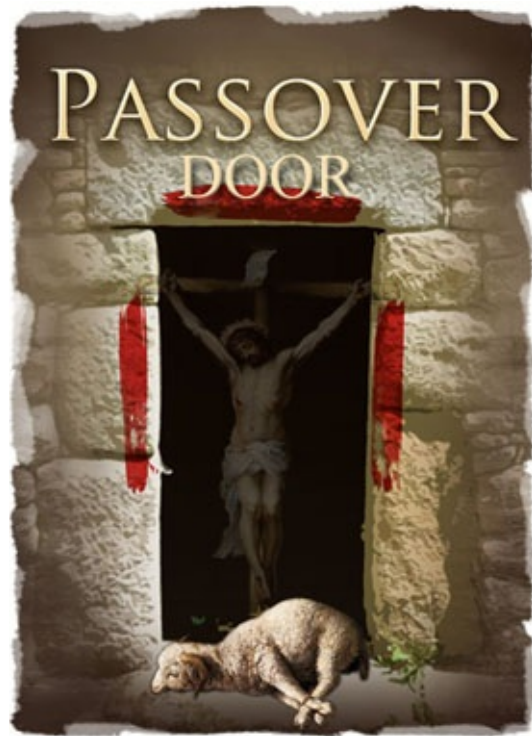
Exodus 12:5–6 [God is speaking, giving Moses the directions] ["Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it."](#)

The lamb to be offered represents Jesus Christ dying for our sins. It must be a lamb without blemish (as Jesus was without sin). When the time was right, ["and then the entire](#)

assembly of the congregation of Israel is to slaughter it [lit., *Him*] at twilight.” (ISV).⁵ The literal translation of the Hebrew is even more striking: And you [all] will slaughter him—all of the assembly of a congregation of Israel—between the evenings. The literal rendering of this verse is quite remarkable, as, when Jesus died on the cross, the entire congregation of Israel seemed to rise up to slaughter Him.

Blood from that lamb would be painted on the side posts of the door and at the top of the doorframe (the blood from the top would have dripped down). The blood on the doorframe would match the blood of the Lord coming from His head, hands, and feet during the crucifixion.

The Passover Door (a graphic); from [Blue Stocking Red Neck](#); accessed December 7, 2018.



Every household which applied the blood of the lamb to the door saved their household. The households which ignored this requirement saw their firstborn die that night. There were no restrictions here; anyone—Israeli or Egyptian—could have done this in order to preserve their family. And all of those who didn't, lost their firstborn.

Waters from the Rock at Horeb:

In Exodus 17, there is a fascinating record of the people complaining to Moses of their thirst, accusing him of taking them out to the desert to kill them. Moses, upset, goes to the Lord with this problem.

Exodus 17:4 So Moses cried to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

Moses was reasonably afraid for his own life.

Exodus 17:5 And the LORD said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go.

⁵ The original Hebrew reads the *entire congregation of Israel slaughters Him*.

God tells him to go before the people, taking some elders with him and the staff which he used to strike the Nile (it was with this staff that Moses turned the waters to blood, a sign of judgment upon Egypt).

Exodus 17:6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

The word *behold* is a form of the word, *to see*; and God is telling Moses that he will see God on the rock at Horeb. Moses is to strike the rock with his staff—and God is on that rock, so Moses is very nearly striking God.

Living waters, the water of life, will come forth from that rock and give the people the water which will preserve them.

The Rock is Christ; striking the rock is the judgment of God upon Jesus; and out from Him will flow living waters, the water of life. If we drink of Him, we will never thirst again.

John 4:7–8 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.)

John 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

John 4:10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

John 4:13–14 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The Ark of God:

One of the most holy and revered objects designed by God is the Ark (also known as the Ark of God or the Ark of the Covenant—described in Exodus 25–37). The Ark represents Jesus Christ. It is made out of acacia wood, overlain with gold. The wood represents the humanity of Jesus and the gold His Deity.

No one could touch the Ark; actual contact with the Ark would result in immediate death. Mortal man cannot come into direct contact with the holiness of God. God is too holy and man is sinful.

In or beside the Ark were 3 objects: the Law of Moses; Aaron's rod that budded; and the pot of manna. The Law of Moses represents our condemnation; as we are unable to keep the law. Aaron's rod that budded represents resurrection; as all believers will rise again. The pot of manna is God's provision for each and every believer in life (also known as, logistical grace).

On the great day of atonement, the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies (a room within the Tabernacle and later within the Temple). No one was allowed in this room and all that was found in this room is the Ark of God and some items built specifically for the Ark. Once a year, the High Priest would enter into this room with blood from a sacrifice, and some of that blood would be sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, which sat upon the Ark (there are also two carved angels overlooking the Mercy Seat). The blood on the Mercy Seat represents Jesus dying for our sins on the cross; and the two angels represent the Angelic Conflict; the fallen and elect angel who watch mankind during our time in history. A description of the Ark can be found in Exodus 25:10–28 and Heb. 9:1–5. The activities of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement are found in Lev. 16:15–17.

“A Prophet Like Unto Me”:

Moses, when speaking to the people of Israel, before they were to come into the land, said this:

Deuteronomy 18:15 [Moses is speaking] ["The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to Him you shall listen—..."](#)

This prophet, who was to be raised up from among the people, would be Jesus. He would be a prophet like Moses, inasmuch as He would have that great authority that Moses had.

The Kinsman Redeemer:

In the book of Ruth, Ruth is a Moabite woman married to an Israelite man who dies before they have children. She chooses to ally herself with the Hebrew people and goes to live in Israel with her mother-in-law.

There is a tradition in the ancient world that, a near relative can marry Ruth and raise up a child to perpetuate the name of her late husband. Such a man is known as a kinsman-redeemer. The kinsman means that he is a near relative and redeemer means that he, by raising up a child, redeems the name of the past husband.

Ruth married her kinsman-redeemer, a very successful man named Boaz; and from them came Obed, who fathered Jesse who fathered David (who would be king over Israel).

The parallel is, Jesus is our Kinsman, inasmuch as He is a man as we are. And He has redeemed us from sin (that is, He has paid for our sins).

These are but a handful of illustrations, types and prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ found in the first 8 books of the Old Testament. There are many, many others throughout Scripture. I simply wanted to include enough to show that, Jesus is revealed in the Old Testament in many, many ways. All of this foreshadowing is certainly foundational to the revelation of the New Testament. At the heart of the Jewish faith has been the Law of Moses (which tells us that we have sinned), the special relationship between God and the people of Jacob, and the Messiah-Savior.

Modern-day Israel is a great and wonderful nation. But, modern-day Judaism lacks most of its founding principles. That is because the Old Testament is *not* the foundation for Judaism but for Christianity (that is a very profound statement, by the way; about which book could easily be written).

Lessons 004–005: Introduction to Luke

Canonicity and Inspiration

Before we move any further along in this study, allow me to personally encourage you to focus upon the process and the study of each verse and each lesson, rather than being overly concerned about completing the book of Luke. It is a great feeling to go all the way through a book in the Bible and to understand most of it. But, that can be a long journey, depending upon the book itself. Luke is quite a long biography of the Lord.

When I was younger, my family took a trip from California to Ohio by train. That trip, which took around 3 days, was an adventure in itself. We saw beautiful landscapes, met interesting people, and had a fascinating ride. This trip was every bit as important as arriving in Ohio and doing what families do once we got there.

The same will be true of this study of Lukian biography of Jesus. Enjoy the journey; do not focus on the completion of this study, as I have not even the slightest idea how many lessons will be involved. My intention is to thoroughly study this particular book, yet being mindful not to get bogged down. Also, there will be a few instances where we examine at specific biographical incidents in more detail than what Luke does (I can only think of 2 or 3 incidents where I would like to do this). There are also sections of Luke which lend themselves to extremely important doctrines for the believer.

The LXX (the Septuagint) and the preservation of Scripture:

There is a very important event which takes place during this Intertestamental period: the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. The world, at that time, was speaking more and more Greek (because of the conquests of Alexander the Great). The Jews were finding themselves spread throughout Alexander's kingdom; and increasingly, more of them spoke Greek and fewer of them spoke Hebrew. At some point, it became clear that the Jewish people needed their Scriptures written in the Greek language rather than in Hebrew, which was becoming somewhat of a dead language.

Translating the authoritative books required that they actually determine the inspired (or authoritative) texts of the Old Testament. No one was going to translate just any Hebrew writing and throw it into the canon of Scripture; but we actually do not know what steps were taken to determine the proper texts, what texts were used, or if anyone really understood what it meant for the text to be inspired. Was this list of books already known and agreed upon?

Deuteronomy is a very significant book regarding the topic of inspiration as almost everything in this book was written by the man Moses and *not* quoted from God. Yet, this

book has, from the very beginning, taken to be authoritative—every bit as authoritative as portions of Exodus which read, *Thus saith the Lord*. It is quite remarkable for Deuteronomy to be seen like that, but it seemed to be a natural acceptance. Interestingly enough, the acceptance of Deuteronomy as authoritative, to the best of my knowledge, was never really discussed theologically—not in the Hebrew writings, anyway. I am not aware of any rabbis who found the acceptance of Deuteronomy as being authoritative to be a remarkable thing. By the time they got around to writing commentaries and opinions, the authoritative nature of Deuteronomy was a given.

During this time period between the testaments, the canon of Scripture for the Old Testament was settled. We do not have any idea how exactly this happened. People just accepted certain books as being authoritative. I am unaware of anyone writing any deep dissertation at that point in time about what it meant for writings to be inspired by God nor do we have lists of the authoritative books developed by this or that group. Just, somehow, certain books were accepted as being authoritative; and these are the books which were read in the synagogues. It is these books that would be translated into other languages, as the Jews were dispersed throughout the world at this time. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, called the Septuagint or the LXX, was common and in use during the time of our Lord (it was often quoted from directly by the disciples), and most guess the translation to be made around 200 B.C.

People speaking Greek; people speaking English: Because of Alexander the Great, the great conqueror, koine Greek became the universal language; and most everyone spoke that language (just as many people today speak English).

People throughout the world speak English today for two reasons: the famed British Empire and the United States. The British Empire was established by Great Britain, where they went all over the world and conquered various lands, bringing to these lands the gospel of Jesus Christ, law and order, and the English language. As Great Britain became less devoted to the Word of God, its kingdom began to diminish. However, the United States stepped into Britain's place. Although we do not have conquered lands all over the world as the Brits did, we have economic, military and cultural influence—but more important than those, we have a spiritual influence on the rest of the world. This is because the gospel of Jesus Christ, taken abroad by thousands of missionaries from the United States, who have been in virtually every country of the world. Because of WWII, we also have air bases and military bases all over the world.

Generally speaking, it is United States policy to protect our citizens all over the world, whether they be tourists or missionaries.

People who are 20 years or more younger than me do not appreciate the influence of the United States throughout the world. In my teens, it was almost an accepted fact that, at some point, WWII would happen—probably between the free nations and the communist nations. However, that cold war only heated up on a limited number of fronts, and it was nearly always confined to relatively small geographical areas.

As long as the United States continues to send out missionaries, we can rest assured that our economic and political power will remain strong and influential all over the world. But, if we turn toward human solutions and away from the gospel, our power and influence throughout the world will disappear, just as it did for Great Britain. Either some other nation will step up (like South Korea) and take our place in the world, or the world will become a battleground of a hundred warring nations again.

Back to the LXX:

When it comes to the canonicity of the New Testament, we understand the issues which were brought up and what made a book a part of the canon; but we do not have a similar set of criterion for the Old (that we are aware of). The scribes continued to preserve the Hebrew manuscripts and this Greek translation provided another witness to which books were understood to be canonical.

The Hebrew manuscripts and the manuscripts of this new Greek translation were both preserved, but by different groups of people. The Jewish scribes continued to preserve the Hebrew Old Testament; and the Christians preserved the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were also other ancient translations which were made, and all of them act as sort of a cross-check. Both Testaments were translated into Latin, Syriac (also know as Aramæan) and Arabic. Each translation was preserved by a different groups of men in a variety of nations subject to a variety of cultures.

By *preserved*, I mean that copies of the manuscripts were made on regular intervals, with various checks in place to insure the accuracy of the text. In most cases, when new manuscripts had been completed, the old ones were thrown away—often burned or completely destroyed. But, bear in mind, there is all this possible cross-checking which took place, attempting to insure that the copies are accurate. Old manuscripts could not be easily handled or read after a time, so they were not just discarded, but destroyed.

Today, I can place a Latin manuscript next to an Aramaic manuscript next to a Hebrew manuscript (and we have internet access to most of these), and easily compare them for differences in order to determine the most accurate text. What is remarkable is, the text is very consistent. If I was required to use Saint Jerome's Latin manuscripts as my starting text, I would be teaching the exact same thing as if I chose the Greek texts instead. There is no Roman Jesus, Arabic Jesus or Greek Jesus. It is *not* that case that each tradition is infested with the customs and culture of that particular language and people.

As an aside, so that there is not confusion, let me point out that, the text of the original Hebrew manuscripts is the text which is God-breathed. On the one hand, we have copies of copies of copies of those original manuscripts; but these ancient manuscripts in other languages, preserved by other peoples, serve as a check on our current Hebrew manuscripts. My point is, is I could use the Latin OT as my fundamental text, and the teaching which came from that would be virtually identical to teaching from the original Hebrew text.

What we would expect is, one group would begin to modify the text, to suit their cherished beliefs and traditions, but that did not happen. There are differences in all of these manuscripts, but they are not, for the most part, substantive differences. There are in existence many English Bibles which are translated from different origins: some come from the original Hebrew and Greek transcripts; some were translated from the Aramaic; and some were translated from the Latin manuscripts (if you use [e-sword](#), you can have English texts which were translated from any one of those specific languages).

Now, if you were given some random English translation of the Old Testament, without you knowing its origin, you would be *unable* to say, “I know that this came from the Greek translation, because of all the Greek references and Greek ideas which have clearly crept into the text.” You simply would not be able to distinguish one from the other, unless you were particularly scholarly in this specific area. The reason is, there are no Greek images, references or ideas in the Greek translation; just as there are no specific Roman ideas, images or references to be found in the Latin manuscripts. They are not perfectly in synch with one another; but their differences are insignificant. There are some very serious problems with the Catholic church today; but none of these can be blamed on Saint Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin (the common language of his day) around A.D. 400. He did an excellent translation from the Hebrew into the Latin.

My point here is, we know that the text of the original Hebrew has been preserved, because at least 4 or 5 groups preserved parallel texts in different languages. For instance, first the scribes and later the Masoretes preserved the Hebrew texts. The early church preserved the Greek manuscripts. The Catholic church—which became quite corrupt as it consolidated religious and political power—still preserved accurate Latin texts. Now, we can take these texts and examine them side-by-side, and see that there is very little difference between them. No matter which group we are speaking of, they clearly had a reverence for the text before them and therefore did not attempt to corrupt it with their contemporary cultural influences.

There are some very specific linguistic differences and let me explain one particular difference, by way of illustration. In the Hebrew, when speaking of a man’s *face*, a plural verb is used, because Hebrew people understood the face to be a collection of physical features. We in the English use the singular noun *face*. So, there are times when a noun is plural in one language yet singular in another—the correct number simply suits the language being used. So, when I am reading an English translation and come across the phrase *the face of Moses*, and then I check the Hebrew and find that it literally reads, *the faces of Moses*, I don’t suddenly conclude that Moses originally had two or more heads. I understand that the English and the Hebrew are different in that respect.

Similarly, definite articles are used in different ways. So, whereas *the God* is commonly found in the Greek; we rarely say *the God* in the English. *God* is just *God*. He is not more fully God in English by throwing the definite article *the* in front of it. So, most of the differences between the ancient manuscripts preserved in those ancient languages are matters of how the language was used. There is no meaningful difference between *the God* in the Greek; and *God* as we use it in the English. Interestingly enough, it is just the

opposite with the word for *Lord*. In the English, we always use the definite article before the word *Lord* (unless He is being directly addressed); but the Greek almost never uses the definite article before *Lord*. There are probably more of these sorts of linguistic differences between ancient manuscripts than any other category of difference. One language uses words in one way; another language uses those same words, but slightly differently. So, these kinds of differences are found when comparing Hebrew to Latin to Greek manuscripts/translations.

You may be surprised, but the oldest complete and nearly complete Hebrew manuscripts that we have of the Old Testament goes back to A.D. 1008, the Leningrad Codex (there are earlier Hebrew manuscripts, but they are not complete—for instance, the Cairo Codex—A.D. 895—has the prophets).⁶ Ancient, hand-copied Old Testament manuscripts of any significant size are quite rare, and that is because old manuscripts would be copied and then destroyed. This is because when a set of manuscripts became old and difficult to read, they would be copied; and the old manuscript would be purposely destroyed. But these witnesses by other groups of preservationists preserving these same manuscripts, but in a different language, act as a check on what we have.

When it comes to ancient manuscripts, there is a very significant witness. We have partial set of manuscripts known as the Dead Sea Scrolls which was a very ancient library. These scrolls date back to 100 B.C. (or earlier) and include Greek translations of the Old Testament (no manuscript is complete, due to the flimsy nature of the 2000 year old manuscripts). These were discovered around 1947 and various manuscripts continued to be unearthed for the next several years. As a result, we have manuscripts 1100 years older than our oldest manuscripts. Yet, the differences are trivial. As time passes, things are spelled differently. As time passes, grammar changes (even in a rarely used language). So these changes would be reflected when comparing the Dead Sea Scrolls to the manuscripts which are from the 12th century; but substantive differences are rare. Furthermore, substantive differences which actually may change or modify a doctrine are virtually non-existent.

I have translated about the first third of the Old Testament word-by-word and I have come across one serious substantive error. If memory serves, Saul asks for the Ark to be brought to him; but it should have been the *ephod* that he asked for (he wanted to know some information that he could trust). These two words in the Hebrew are not much different. So, some scribe erred and accidentally wrote *ark* when he should have written *ephod*. That is the biggest, most significant problem that I observed in the first third of the entire Old Testament. This is one of the very few times when context and logic force me to say, “The word here should be *ephod*, not *ark*.” For the average person, this does not stand out as a substantive difference; but if you know what these things are, then it is. However, this substantive difference does not cause me to panic and think, “I need to go back and rework the doctrine of the Ephod; this changes everything!” Even with that error, there are no changes to be made in discussions of the Ark or the Ephod.

⁶ Not exactly the same as we think of them.

One of the reasons that we can be so certain of the text and what it means is, a huge amount of the Bible is narrative. I have never sat down to consider the percentages, but, as a guess, perhaps half the Bible is narrative (or something which approach narrative). In a narrative, you can often rephrase this or that sentence, and still end up with the same story. Minor mistakes by scribes over the years do not invalidate the text or give us a whole new set of doctrines. It is hard the screw up a narrative.

The preservation of New Testament manuscripts is quite another story. There are manuscript scraps which date back to the 2nd and 3rd century A.D. And, whereas discussion of OT manuscripts can be limited to fewer than 10 significant manuscripts, there are perhaps 26,000 Greek manuscripts of the NT. In the New Testament, there are perhaps a half dozen places where the text is questionable (the end of Mark I recall as being the most significant textual problem). However, for the most part, there are very few words in the NT which are in doubt.

The point I am making is, despite there being some errors in the text, these errors do not affect the overall doctrines that we extract from the Bible. These errors do not disturb a careful systematic theology which is the result of a careful examination of the Scriptures.

There is a great deal written about the inspiration of the Biblical text today; and there are perhaps a half dozen or more theories as to what it means for the Biblical text to be inspired. Geisler and Nix present 8 different theories of what it means for Scripture to be inspired in their [*A General Introduction to the Bible*](#) (a must-have book for any serious Christian, despite the vanilla-sounding title).

Today, we have developed a doctrine which explains how the Bible is to be understood and interpreted; and we know all about the false theories of inspiration which have been used by others. For instance, there is one very subjective approach where the Bible *becomes the Word of God*. That is, someone reads it, and suddenly, he recognizes that portions of what he is reading go deep into his soul; and he knows that the Bible has become the Word of God for him.

There is another theory where the Bible *contains* the Word of God. That is, the Bible was written and preserved by imperfect men, so we know that there is a lot of dross in the Bible; but, if you look carefully, you can find the stuff which is really the word of God (many people use this approach suggest that the miracles are just nonsense added in by the superstitious). Both of those theories are false approaches to understanding the Bible.

The correct way to understand the word of God can be explained by the verbal, plenary approach. That is, every single word, phrase and sentence is the word of God and, simultaneously, the words of man. These words are inspired by God, but not in such a way that the writer of Scripture is a secretary taking dictation. That author's feelings, thinking, experiences, vocabulary and grammar all contribute to both the content and the writing style of each book. So, this is why the books of John and Luke are so different in style and subject matter, even though each is a biography of Jesus. Nevertheless, each book is still

inspired by God; each book is still fully the Word of God, and, as such, perfectly accurate—doctrinally and historically.

I mentioned that we do not know how the Old Testament books were chosen or decided upon; but there seems to be almost no disagreement here (the exception is the intertestamental books known as the [apocrypha](#)—which books are accepted by the Catholic church as divinely inspired and by no one else—insofar as I know).

The New Testament books have, on the other hand, simple and specific criteria by which they were determined to be in the canon: (1) they had to be written in the 1st century. Those making a determination of canonicity (and there were many people who did this) would not accept some book which is known to have been written in the 2nd or 3rd century. They know that is phony. (2) Each acceptable book must be written by a known apostle or a man closely associated with an Apostle (like Mark or Luke). There is one major exception to this and that is the book of Hebrews, the author of which no one knows (but many people have a theory). It is a book that is so obviously doctrinal and important to the early church that it had to be accepted, even though no one knows who wrote it.

Geisler and Nix NT Canonicity Chart (a graphic); from *Introduction to the Bible*, ©1968, p. 193. I redid the chart, splitting it into two parts, because it was hard to read.

X=Quoted or allusion to O=Named as authoritative ?=Named as disputed		Pseudo-Barnabas (c. 70-130)																				Clement of Rome (c. 95-97)																				Ignatius (c. 110)																				Polycarp (c. 110-150)																				Hermas (c. 110-150)																				Didache (c. 115-140)																				Papias (c. 120-150)																				Irenaeus (c. 130-140)																				Diognetus (c. 150)																				Justin Martyr (c. 150-155)																				Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215)																				Tertullian (c. 150-220)																				Origen (c. 185-254)																				Cyrus of Jerusalem (c. 315-336)																				Eusebius (c. 325-340)																				Jerome (c. 340-420)																				Augustine (c. 400)																				Maimonides (c. 1100)																				Munichian (c. 170)																				Apostolic (c. 300)																				Chalcedonian (c. 380)																				Augustine (350)																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																														
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This is a fantastic chart which tells us that, right from the 1st century, people were trying to determine which books of that era were authoritative. Which books (which all circulated separately throughout the ancient world) could be trusted as accurate portrayals of the Lord or could be read in order to understand correct doctrine? There are 17 individuals who we know about, dating from A.D. 70–400 who made reference to various books and letters in their own writings. Given that this is who we know about today, no doubt there were 10x or even 100x as many writers who referenced specific books in the first 4 centuries of the new era.

You will note that, as time went on, more and more people did not simply refer back to these books and letters, but they began to treat them as authoritative (that is what the O's mean).

At the same time, some individuals and some groups began to define what the New Testament canon was (now, bear in mind that this all takes place before anyone fully appreciated what canonicity in the realm of theology really means). You can see that Muratorian (circa 170), Baroccio (circa 206—not listed above) and Apostolic (circa 300) listed almost the same canon that we have today. Jerome, Augustine, and Athanasius (350–400) had the exact same canon as we have today (I see that I made an error in my chart and listed Augustine twice).

But besides these individuals, there were translations and councils which also put together lists of the canon.

Geisler and Nix Translation and Council Chart (a graphic): from *Introduction to the Bible*, ©1968, p. 193. This is the second half of the chart. As you see, Geisler and Nix divided these into 4 sets of witnesses: individual writers, specific canons, translation, and councils.

From Norman Geisler and William Nix: *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, ©1966, p. 225).

Although many portions of this book have been duplicated and are found on the internet, I highly recommend this book to their collection of reference books.

X = Claim or allusion to
O = Named as authoritative
? = Named as disputed

Titan/Diatessaron (c. 170)
Old Latin (c. 200)
Old Syriac (c. 400)
Nicaea (c. 325-340)
Hippo (353)
Carthage (397)
Carthage (419)

Early Determinations of Canonicity

Jesus Christ did not come and present the gospel one day; Paul sent out epistles on the next, and on the day after that, some important council gathered to determine which books belonged in the Bible and which did not. This was all a very natural, organic process, as we would assume. The church at Corinth would get a letter from Paul, and they would make copies of it, and someone from the church in Galatia would request a copy of that epistle and it would be sent to them. In this way, the letters of Paul and the other Apostles were circulated throughout the various churches. Pastors would rise up, study these letters, study the Old Testament, study the gospels (the biographies of the life of Jesus), and they would both teach and write. As they wrote, they would cite passages from this or that letter, from this or that gospel, from this or that Old Testament book.

At some point, various individuals and groups saw a need to determine which books of the New Testament were authoritative. As a result, individuals and groups began to specify certain books as clearly canonical, which meant that they were authoritative (that is, they could be cited as accurate). Also, as the gospel spread, translations were made for new peoples, and a determination must be made what to translate.

These are lists of individuals, councils and translations and which books they either cited or recognized as authoritative.

This first table has early translations of the New Testament and the decisions made by various church councils. The next page has individuals and lists of some of the canons developed at that time. There are undoubtedly other individuals, canon determinations and councils from this early era that have been lost to historians.

	Translations			Councils			
Matthew	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Mark	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Luke	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
John	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Acts		O	O	O	O	O	O
Romans		O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Corinthians		O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Corinthians		O	O	O	O	O	O
Galatians		O	O	O	O	O	O
Ephesians		O	O	O	O	O	O
Philippians		O	O	O	O	O	O
Colossians		O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Thess.		O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Thess.		O	O	O	O	O	O
1 Timothy		O	O	O	O	O	O
2 Timothy		O	O	O	O	O	O
Titus		O	O	O	O	O	O
Philemon		O	O	O	O	O	O
Hebrews			O	O	O	O	O
James			O	?	O	O	O
1 Peter			O	O	O	O	O
2 Peter				?	O	O	O
1 John		O	O	O	O	O	O
2 John		O		?	O	O	O
3 John		O		?	O	O	O
Jude		O		?	O	O	O
Revelation		O		O	O	O	O

Early translations into other languages needed to figure out which books needed to be translated into another language. Also, various councils would meet with representatives and scholars attending from various churches, and they would come together to discuss and set forth what they believed the canon of the NT to be. As you see, there are at least 3 ancient councils who came up with the exact same list of books that we use today.

There are so many people today who think our canon of Scripture was developed by the Catholic church who just put out a list and that was final. As you can see, these books were discussed for 4 centuries. Furthermore, we do not have a translation into Aramaic with one set of books, and a translation into Latin with a slightly different set of books. It took time, it took a great deal of discussion and, no doubt, debate; but a canon was decided upon.

What is very important to note is, *none* of those listed above appear to have advocated for the Gospel of Saint Thomas or the Apocalypse of Peter or any of the other weird, non-canonical books (there were dozens). There is nowhere a list of books who got really close to being included in the NT canon, but just missed out. There is another list of books from

that general era known as the Pseudopigrapha; also known as, the books rejected by everyone. Eusebius called these books “totally absurd and impious.”⁷

You will notice by the charts that there was very little difficulty in determining which books did not belong in the canon, no way, no how. The problems were with books that we accept as a part of the canon: Revelation, because it was weird; Hebrews because it could not be attributed to an author; and some of the epistles because they were too short. The Pauline epistles were pretty much universally accepted; the general epistles required more discussion.

In the end, we have the canon that we have, and there are no serious theologians throughout the years who argue that some spurious book was left out but it should not have been; or that we need to take another look at Philemon.

The best way to understand this is, the canon was established by God. He allowed us to recognize it.

Lesson 006: The Book of Luke (intro)

The Biographies of Jesus Part I

The Biographies of Jesus:

The gospels (which term means *good news*)—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are 4 different biographies of Jesus the Messiah. Make no mistake about it—these are biographies, where each man observes and/or investigates; and then writes, taking into account his own sensibilities, contacts and experiences. Matthew was not favored by the general Jewish population because he was a tax collector. He would have been regarded as a national traitor by some; but he was a very devout and learned man—and apparently, quite successful at his work.

Matthew knows the Old Testament and he knows the prophecies of the coming Messiah; so he, more than any of the other biographers (and more than most pharisees), brings Old Testament Scripture into the picture. Jesus is *the Prophet like Moses, the Suffering Servant, David's Greater Son, the Messiah*—and this is confirmed in His life when compared to the Scriptures about the Messiah. Matthew does this throughout his gospel. Furthermore, Matthew's ears are honed to hear Old Testament teaching, which is most of what Jesus did. So when Jesus taught something which lined up with the Old Testament, Matthew was likely to recognize it and write down (or remember) both what Jesus taught along with the pertinent Scripture down (from memory). Therefore, Matthew often quoted pertinent Old Testament Scriptures.

Mark was a younger man, closely associated with Peter. He would have been a kid during the Lord's earthly ministry. Mark may be understood as representing the next generation of believers. He is from the generation who never actually saw Jesus. He does not

⁷ Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 199.

present the gospel as an eyewitness, but very much from Peter's viewpoint, Peter being a man of action. Less talking and more doing. Mark may have acted as Peter's secretary, which would have made the gospel of Mark actually the gospel of Peter. However much Mark was influenced by the testimony of others in writing of his gospel is unknown.

Dr. Peter Pett describes Mark's gospel in this way: *In the Gospel the historical material is brought together with the intention of presenting Jesus Christ in the fullness of His glory. It is not a life story, written out of academic interest, nor, except in general outline, a chronological history, but the reverent recording of truth about Jesus and His teaching that was carefully remembered and passed on by those who knew Him (who were skilled at memorising) because of Who He was, put together in order to present the truth about Him. The purpose was in order to demonstrate that He was what they had come to know Him to be. But there is no extravagance in the descriptions (this lack of extravagance is a distinctive feature of the four Gospels), they are sensible, deliberate, and even understated.*⁸

Luke was a gentile, and he focuses primarily upon the humanity of Jesus Christ. The title for Jesus as such is the Son of Man (a title, interestingly enough, found 28 times in Matthew and 25 times in Luke; this title is found half as often in Mark and in John).

Because Luke is focused upon the Lord's humanity, he is the biographer who focuses in on Mary, and upon the early years in Jesus' life. (As an aside, Mary is *not* the mother of God; but she is the mother of the humanity of Jesus Christ).

Because Luke concerns himself with the Lord's humanity, he therefore focuses on the line of Mary, which goes back all the way to Adam—the key being that Jesus is fully and completely a man. The promise of this Savior goes back to Gen. 3, where He is called *the seed of the woman*, a very important title, which we will study in the book of Luke.

I have heard it said that, people of that era were more concerned that the humanity of Jesus might get lost in His history, because He did things that no man has ever done before (or since). Therefore, his extraordinary qualities—even His Deity—stand out. But Jesus is fully and completely a man; and this is something that Luke emphasizes throughout.

Whereas, Matthew focuses, in part, upon Jesus' Jewishness (and, therefore, he takes the paternal line⁹ of Jesus back to Abraham), Luke is not confined by the Jewish religion in any way, since he is a gentile to whom God's grace came. However, Luke clearly respects the Scriptures and he quotes from them from time to time as well. The New Testament believer should never forget that God established a foundation for His faith in the Old Testament. We do not discard the Old Testament for any reason.

⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Mark (book comments).

⁹ That is, the paternal line through Joseph, Jesus' legal father.

Luke was not an eyewitness to any of the incidents in his gospel, but he was an historian and he had contact with perhaps a dozen or more eyewitnesses or people whom he trusted. So he compiled his gospel based upon what others told him (and, I believe, upon the gospels of Matthew and Mark). Luke may have even had access to other biographical material lost to us but written by other Apostles or disciples (we don't know this; I am simply expressing that this as a possibility). No doubt there were writings in that era lost to time and decay, where others chronicled their encounters with Jesus.

Luke, more than any other writer, emphasizes women who interacted with the Lord. My guess is, he interviewed quite a number of women for writing his gospel; some of their experiences are recorded; and many of their observations are recorded by Luke.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all wrote their gospels around A.D. 50–60. John waited until A.D. 90 or later and wrote his. I believe that he read the other gospels and thought, “What is missing from these gospels? How can I add to this conversation?” Also, people develop a perspective of their life experiences, which might be quite different when a person is 90 as opposed to being 60.

Two things stand out in particular in John's gospel: a clear delineation of the gospel (“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved**”); and a clear identification of Jesus with God. In John, Jesus is God the Creator, the God to be worshiped; the Person who, if you have seen Him, you have seen the Father. The gospel message and the Divine Nature of Jesus are nowhere else more perspicuous than in the book of John. I believe that John has a more *holistic* view of the Lord; a view which is the result of seeing Who the Lord is from more of an historic-theological perspective.

Even though Jesus' Divine Nature is certainly found in Luke, it is not nearly as prominently featured as it is in John. There is a reason for this. Luke very closely follows the earthly ministry of Jesus. For the most part, Jesus did not go from town to town proclaiming, “I am the Son of God!” Throughout most of His public ministry of 3 or 4 years, Jesus allowed others to recognize and publically witness as to His identity; but Jesus did not do this very often Himself (there is a reason for this). Luke takes that into consideration in recording his biography of Jesus; John presents Jesus as the Son of God, the Creator of mankind and the universe.

Dr. Peter Pett makes this observation: *[John's] Gospel is full of incidental things which confirm that he was an eyewitness to the events that took place. He remembers almost incidentally the time at which events took place, the places at which they occurred, and significant details relating to the events which demonstrate his vivid memory of them. He also portrays himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' who 'sat' (lay on a kind of mattress) next to Jesus at the last supper (John 21:20). And so important were his words seen to be that early church leaders wrote a superscription to confirm his authority (John 21:24).*¹⁰

¹⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Gospel of John (book comments).

All of this information is very important because, 2000 years later, skeptics claim that Jesus is simply a legend. However, we have 4 men who record his biography, all of them writing in the same century in which He lived. Whether described by a man who observed Jesus directly, or by a man who never saw Jesus, but heard all about Him—the gospels are very similar. They describe the same man, but from a different perspective. No gospel appears to exaggerate more than the other; neither no gospel to be based upon a legend. There does not appear to be any indication of the formation of a legend or of a mythological person.

It often takes hundreds of years for legends to be formed; and it is nearly impossible to build a legend upon existing contemporary biographies. We know the era during which these biographies were written because theological writers from the 2nd century are already quoting from these biographies. By the 2nd century, there were already discussions about which writings were considered to be authoritative, and the gospels were the first to be considered (as well as the first writings to be universally accepted).

Dr. Peter Pett, BA BD Doctorate of Divinity, is an excellent teacher of Scripture and he explains how he got skeptical students to consider the reality of Jesus Christ.

Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels

When I was teaching in a comprehensive school in England I was once called on to take a class of fifth formers for a one off RE (Religious Education) class. They greeted me quite cynically on my arrival, although with no hostility, and made it quite clear that they thought that religion was purely speculative, and that I was wasting my time. What grounds, they asked, could there ever possibly be for accepting it? And besides, there was no proof that Jesus ever existed. They were not interested in anything that I had to say.

So I commenced by saying, 'well, let us look at the facts'. At least that brought a reaction. Their instant (and totally expected) reply was, 'there are no facts. It is all just people's beliefs'. To this I replied, 'OK. I will write a fact on the board and you can then tell me whether it is a fact or not.' I then proceeded to write on the board, 'The Gospels exist.' Of course they immediately began to say that that did not prove anything, but I pointed out that I was not suggesting that it proved anything about the Gospels (that is discovered by reading them sympathetically). All I wanted them to agree to was that they did exist. At last I got them to admit that it was true. In the end they admitted that whether they contained truth or not, they did exist. After all I had a copy of them with me. There was the first fact.

Peter Pett on the Testimony of the Gospels

I then went on to point out that those Gospels contained teaching which was universally admired around the world. Wherever they reached the teaching within them was acknowledged by most thinking people, if not all, to be that of a 'master', indeed, a moral genius. This was not disputable. This too was a fact. They now had two facts. I then asked them where that teaching had come from. It had not existed in the previous century, and yet here it was suddenly arising in 1st century AD. What then was its source? Either we had to posit a number of moral geniuses who all wrote at the same time and pretended that what they wrote was spoken by someone else, (a unique event in the history of the world), or we had to posit that there was one moral genius of whose teaching they all wrote. One thing was sure it was not the production of a committee. Such unique gems do not result from committees. And had anyone even begun to manipulate it, its moral genius would have been lost. We know we have the genuine teaching of Jesus because if it had not been recorded accurately it would have been obviously spoiled. So now we had the fact that in 1st century AD there walked this earth a unique figure whose teaching is contained within the Gospels.

Then I pointed out that it did not matter what name we gave him. All we needed to see was that within that teaching that living genius had made claims that in any but a madman would be impossible. He had claimed to be the unique and only Son of God (e.g. Luke 20:1–18), and that although He would leave this world through death He would one day come in glory to gather those who were His to be with Him for ever. Now such a claim could be made by a religious fanatic or a madman. But this was no religious fanatic or madman. He was surrounded by religious fanatics, and He alone remained calm. Every word He spoke revealed sanity and moral purity and perfection. Read His teaching for yourself. If He was not sane, no one was. This too was a fact, for these teachings were not just added on, they were interwoven within all His teaching. They were an essential part of it.

So now they had three facts where previously they had had none, firstly that the Gospels exist, secondly that they contain a moral teaching second to none, spoken by someone who actually lived by them, and thirdly that He claimed that He had uniquely come from God, was looked at uniquely by God, and that He had come to fulfil God's will in a unique way. We will see more of this in the Gospel.

Thus I left them to think about something that they had never realised before. There were facts and they needed to think on them. And that is what the Gospel of Luke is all about. If you are not already a believer read it carefully and ask yourself, 'From where did this man have these things? Who was He'. For Luke is not just a history, it is a living reproduction. And it reveals Someone Who was 'out of this world'. And for your own sake, not for mine, you need to ensure that you come to the right conclusion about Him.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Introduction to the Book of Luke.

For me, when deciding which gospel to begin with, it was a toss up between Luke and John. John would have been an easier choice based upon the Greek, but more difficult when it came to chronology.

Unless otherwise indicated, the ESV; capitalized will be used below.

I will use the words *gospel* and *biography* almost interchangeably below.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Date of writing ¹¹	A.D. 45–60	A.D. 40–55	A.D. 60–70	A.D. 80–100
Date of writing ¹²	A.D. 58–68	A.D. 55–65	A.D. 60–68	A.D. 80–90

There are significant limitations on the dates—most people believe that Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in A.D. 70. This is never mentioned by any of the authors; and it would have been a very significant event to them. John waited perhaps 60 years before writing his gospel.

Skepticism is expressed by unbelievers concerning the gap between the experience and the writing of the gospels. People often need to have some perspective on life to recognize what has been most important in their lives. Furthermore, the disciples were apparently quite active in spreading the gospel message, planting churches and avoiding persecution for several decades. Most of the disciples were doers; they were active men; they were not, for the most part, theologians or writers (Matthew may be the exception to this).

Also, the disciples believed that Jesus would be returning any day; so writing a biography that would stand up for the ages was not something that they thought about at first. They were simply trying to evangelize the world. Furthermore, the disciples expected the return of Jesus any day—so leaving an historical record behind did not occur to them at first.

¹¹ From <https://synopticgospel.com/four-gospels-comparison-chart/> (accessed December 1, 2018).

¹² *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The author:	Matthew Levi, was the wealthy tax collector, whom Jesus called as a disciple.	John Mark, a close associate of Peter's (Peter the Apostle); also associated with Paul. Mark came on the scene after the Lord's public ministry.	Luke, a physician and an historian, also came on the scene after the public ministry of our Lord.	John ben Zebedee; the well-known Apostle and disciple of Jesus. He had been in business with Peter and his brother James (all were Apostles).
About the author	Matthew's authorship seems to be the most questioned of the biographers of Jesus; however, there is no compelling reason to think that this is anyone else wrote his gospel.	John Mark is an early Christian convert who likely never met Jesus.	Luke, is the only gentile writer of Scripture (insofar as we know ¹³). He systematically put together his gospel after conducting interviews with many people who knew Jesus.	John appears to have done much of his writing from the Isle of Patmos, when he was exiled. It is very likely that John wrote his gospel and letters <i>because</i> he had been exiled.
The author's associations	Matthew would have been one of the 12, and actually a part of the Lord's 3–4 year public ministry.	Mark served both with Peter and with Paul. Most of his knowledge of Jesus probably came from Peter.	Luke was an important person from the first century, a gentile convert. He worked with Paul and apparently met and spoke with many eyewitnesses	John, like Matthew, was familiar with the public ministry of the Lord; and with the other 11 disciples.

¹³ We don't know who wrote *Hebrews*. Despite its name and emphasis, its author may be unknown *because* he is a gentile.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
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At some point—and we do not necessarily know the motivation for these 4 men—they each individually decided to record the events of the Lord's life. Were they looking far into the future? Did they simply think this was another evangelistic tool? Did they simply want to record the events which they each experienced or knew about? We can only guess.

Possible motivation (s) for writing his gospel:	Perhaps Matthew, having slowed down later in life, realized he needed to record all that he saw.	Perhaps Mark wrote his gospel at the insistence of Peter; also who grew older and perhaps slowed down.	Luke seems to indicate that he received a great deal of information and possibly written accounts, which caused him to write his gospel.	John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, leaving him with few options in life but to write. His dynamic relationship with God no doubt motivated him.
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The disciples have seen with their own eyes the most important events of human history. Two of them actually saw the Lord, in His short ministry, and after He had been raised from the dead. The other two were taking part in events which were changing the world. At some point, they took part in writing the most important literature in human history. Finally, their establishing Christianity and the message of the gospel turned the world upside down. No doubt, it took some time before they realized themselves the importance of what they had participated in.

Relationship with Jesus:	Matthew was a disciple called by Jesus and who was with Jesus for 3–4 years. He wrote his gospel a few decades after this experience.	Mark apparently never met Jesus; and would have been a 2 nd generation Christian. He would only know what people have told him about Jesus.	Luke appears to have had no direct association with Jesus, but was also a 2 nd generation Christian like Mark (but likely older).	John was a disciple of Jesus, living with Him and learning from Him for 3–4 years. John was part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples.
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Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Relationship with other gospel writers:	Matthew knew John as one of the disciples of Jesus. Matthew likely had access to Mark's biography of Jesus.	Mark appears to have written Peter's gospel. It is believed that he wrote the first gospel.	Luke had access to both Matthew and Mark's gospels. He probably met Mark.	John certainly knew Matthew; but we don't know about Mark or Luke. John likely read all 3 gospels before writing his own. I say that because John's gospel is so unique of the four.
Associations	Although Matthew is sometimes paired with another disciple, there is no indication of his close association with anyone.	John Mark worked with both Peter and Paul, although he seems to have had a falling out with Paul.	Luke is closely associated with Paul at the end of Acts as traveling with him to spread the gospel and to plant local churches.	John seems to be a part of the inner circle of disciples, which included James and Peter.
Writer's style:	A man fully familiar with the Old Testament. He may have desired to teach, given his knowledge.	Mark seems to be very interested in plot progression and action—likely a result of his association with Peter.	Luke was an historian who provided an historical texture to Jesus' ministry.	John, although his Greek is simple, approaches Jesus from a sophisticated theological perspective.
Previous employment	Matthew was a tax collector.	Unknown.	Luke was apparently well-educated and previously a physician.	John was co-owner of a fishing business with his brother James and associate Peter.
Other writings	None	None	Acts	1John, 2John, 3John and Revelation

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Audience	Jewish believers and unbelievers, to show Jesus is undeniably the Savior-Messiah.	It is said the Mark wrote for gentiles and Romans. He has concern for those being persecuted.	Specifically written for Theophilus. Assuming Luke thought of a wider audience, then he wrote for gentiles, believers and unbelievers, to tell them that the Jewish Messiah came for them.	John, although Jewish, seems to have a more universal approach. Many believe that his is the gospel for the newly formed church—the universal church. The emphasis on the gospel suggests that John thought that unbelievers might read his gospel.
Layout	Arranged in 5 sections of narrative followed by a discourse; possibly intending to mimic the 5 books of the Torah.	Arranged into 4 sections by geographical location: Galilee, other journeys, back to Galilee, and the final week in Jerusalem.	Arranged into 3 main sections covering 3 periods of time and place: Galilee, other places, and Jerusalem for the final week.	Arranged chronologically into 4 main sections.
Style	Rhythmic; poetic.	Fast-moving; emphasis upon action.	Precise, historic, educated and scholarly.	Written in the 1 st person; very simple Greek.
Length	18,345 Greek words; 23,534 in the NASB.	11,304 Greek words; 14,833 in the NASB.	19,482 Greek words; 25,794 in the NASB.	15,635 Greek words; 19,519 in the NASB.

As an aside, the dramatically different styles of these authors suggests to me that they originally wrote their biographies in the koine Greek language. I have heard some claim that the New Testament was first written in Aramaic; but I do not find any evidence of that.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Beginning of each gospel:	Matthew begins with the genealogy which confirms Jesus' paternal link to King David.	Mark begins with the ministry of John the Herald, who prepared the way of the Lord.	Luke has a formal introduction, telling us for whom the book is written and how Luke composed it.	John goes back to the beginning of creation. Then John speaks of the herald, the calling of the disciples, and the wedding at Cana.
Primary focus of Jesus.	Jesus as David's Greater Son, the Messiah-King, fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament.	Jesus is God's suffering Servant, man's Redeemer, and Prophet. He is a healer and miracle worker.	Jesus is fully man, a man of prayer, is the ultimate Teacher. He reveals great concern for women, the poor and gentiles.	Jesus is fully God, the Son of God, the Living Word of God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.
Unique features	Matthew provides 50 direct quotations from the OT and 75 allusions to the OT. He calls Jesus the Son of David 9x.	Written in a simple Greek. Also, Aramaic words are defined, suggesting a non-Jewish audience.	Luke has perhaps the most difficult Greek, featuring many words not found elsewhere in the New Testament. Many quotes from the Greek Septuagint.	John writes in the simplest Greek; it is the perfect assignment for a first-year Greek student to translate. The only gospel referring to Jesus as the Word.
Unique sections	Christ as a child; the Sermon on the Mount	He explains some Jewish terms and customs and Aramaic words to a non-Jewish audience.	The rich man and Lazarus; salvation of the thief on the cross; the prodigal son.	The turning of water into wine; raising Lazarus from the dead; the <i>I Am</i> statements; Thomas doubting.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Unique emphasis:	<p>Jesus fulfills Old Testament promises, and is therefore the promised Messiah.</p> <p>Matthew is filled with OT quotations.</p>	<p>The actions and ministry of Jesus. Jesus' deeds are in the forefront.</p> <p>There is less emphasis on chronological order in Mark, according to Papias of the 2nd century.</p>	<p>It is clear that Luke is well-researched, including a plethora of historic details in his gospel. This is integrated with the Lord's teachings.</p> <p>Also, Luke features an emphasis on women believers during this time period.</p>	<p>An holistic approach to Jesus, His Person and deeds. John provides some emphasis not in the other gospels.</p> <p>Mentions only 8 miracles of Jesus and calls them signs.</p>
Key phrase, key word:	<i>Kingdom of Heaven</i> (found 32 times in Matthew and nowhere else).	<i>Immediately</i> (found 36 times in Mark; 14 times in Matthew)	<i>Kingdom of God</i> (found 32 times; 14 times in Mark)	<i>Believe, believers, etc.</i> (occurs 99 times; 16 times in Mark)

Although many identify *Son of Man* with Luke, it occurs 25 times in Luke and 30 times in Matthew (also, 14 times in Mark and 13 times in John).

Quotations from the Old Testament ¹⁴	96	34	58	40
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The specific quotations are listed at the Blue Letter Bible site [here](#) and [here](#). The verses are actually quoted with their OT counterparts [here](#). Luke, in the book of Acts, makes an additional 57 references to the OT. Only Paul, previously a pharisee, has as many references as Matthew (74 alone in the book of Romans and 173 overall).

¹⁴ These numbers are taken from the [Blue Letter Bible site](#), accessed December 28, 2018.

Gospel Comparison Chart				
Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Interesting facts of author's unique approach:	Matthew has more references to money than any of the other biographers.	Mark does not mention the words <i>Messiah</i> , <i>law</i> , <i>Samaria</i> or <i>Samaritan</i> .	<p>Luke has far more references to political leaders and their actions.</p> <p>Luke focuses on the women in his gospel far more than the other writers.</p> <p>The only gospel with the words <i>redeem</i>, <i>redemption</i>.</p>	<p>John seemed to feature more interactions with the disciples.</p> <p>Mentions 6 Jewish feasts/celebrations; including the Passover (3x).</p>
Passover	Only one Passover is mentioned—the final one.	Same as Matthew.	Same as Matthew.	3 or 4 Passover celebrations are referenced.
Geographic Emphasis	Galilee Ministry			Judæa
The end of each gospel:	<p>Jesus makes some appearances to the disciples; a plot is hatched among the chief priests to explain the empty tomb.</p> <p>Jesus encourages His disciples.</p>	<p>The final passage is strongly disputed (Mark 16:9–20). How much of it is accurate is unknown and how it was added is unknown as well.</p>	Several post-resurrection narratives are recorded. Then Jesus is taken up into heaven.	<p>Jesus appears to His disciples for the 3rd time (specifically to 8 of them). They are fishing. Jesus speaks to Peter and tells him 3x, “Feed my sheep.”¹⁵</p> <p>Jesus also tells Peter and John how they will die.</p>

¹⁵ The wording is slightly changed each time.

Gospel Comparison Chart

Author	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Final passage	Mat 28:18–20 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."	Mark 16:19–20 So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.	Luke 24:51–53 While He blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.	John 21:25 Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.
Uniqueness of material:	42%	7%	59%	92%

The uniqueness percentages, which I took from *the Open Bible*, are quite logical. Each successive biographer is aware of the previous biographies, but is also aware of information not found in previous gospels; and desires to share that additional information with the body of Christ. John, in particular, had a great deal to share about the Lord's life, which was not previously covered.

Comments:

We will accept the traditional names assigned to these books as the names of the authors. Although these names are not found *in* the gospel text to indicate authorship, there is no compelling reason to assume that someone else authored these books.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels; they can fairly easily be set up in parallel. John's gospel is very different from theirs.

Some of this material is from:

The Open Bible; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 1228 (footnote).

<https://synopticgospel.com/four-gospels-comparison-chart/> (accessed December 1, 2018).

<https://owlcation.com/humanities/Comparing-the-Gospels-Matthew-Mark-Luke-and-John> (accessed December 1, 2018).

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/273-examining-the-four-gospels> accessed December 1, 2018.

Also from from so4j.com; accessed November 21, 2018.

Lesson 008: The Book of Luke

The Biographies of Jesus Part III

How many people in history, prior to the invention of the printing press, have 4 biographies written by their contemporaries? I would suggest that there is no one in human history prior to A.D. 1500 who has 4 contemporaries who have written biographies of him. For one thing, few people are that interesting; secondly, few people would allow anyone to be so close as to be bold enough to write a biography. But, even more incredible is, the bulk of these 4 biographies primarily focus on a 3 or 4 year period of time in the life of Jesus. There is a smattering of early information found in Matthew and Luke (and John does go back to the beginning of history); but these biographies primarily concentrate on the public ministry of Jesus Christ.

Speaking of which, Jesus is the most unlikely *religious figure* in human history. He traveled mostly on foot; He did not travel very far (mostly He taught in Galilee region and in Jerusalem—traveling perhaps 60 or 70 miles); and He never wrote anything down. We do not have the gospel of Jesus or the epistles or psalms of Jesus (actually, the entire Bible is that).

Furthermore, His public ministry was a scant 3 or 4 years long. We should not even know Who He is; there is nothing in the basic facts of His life and ministry which suggest that Jesus should be remembered at all. Yet, Jesus is the most well-known Man in human history. We divide our history into what happened before Him and what takes place in human history after Him. Not only are there 4 biographies of Him written by 4 contemporaries; but, there have been more books written about Him subsequently than about any other man in human history.

Even those who reject Jesus, cannot help but use His Name in order to swear.

Unlike other religious figures (like Confucius, Buddha or Mohammed), Jesus is essential to Christianity. Confucius, Buddha and Mohammed are not necessary to their respective religions. Had those religions been begun by Larry, Moe and Curly, they would have been the same religion. All religions are a set of beliefs and precepts; and if someone is able to sell those beliefs and practices to a large enough population, then it becomes a significant religion. But whether Curly tells you to pray 5x a day towards Mecca or Mohammed says to do that, it makes no difference. You still have to engage in the same act in order to please God.

Jesus is different. Even though there are a set of precepts which are applicable to the believer in the Church Age, what is fundamental to our thinking is, first, we have to place our faith in Jesus Christ. Not in His teachings, not in His parables, not in any set of rituals that He taught, but in the Person of Jesus Christ. I am saved because Jesus Christ died for my sins. I am sinful before God and have no access to God because of my sinfulness—my sin nature, my personal acts of sin, and the imputation of Adam's sin to me. It is only through Jesus the Person that I have a relationship with God.

Jesus took my sins upon Himself and paid the penalty for those sins. Because of Jesus, I now have access to God. He is integral to the faith of Christianity. Without Jesus specifically, there is no forgiveness of sin; there is no Christian life; there is no relationship with God. It is the Lord's death on the cross and His taking upon Himself the penalty for my sins that saves me. If I do not stand upon the Person of Jesus, then no matter what I do in my life, I have no relationship with God—no matter how much I try to obey the Bible or the teachings of Jesus. My access to God is based wholly upon Jesus dying for my sins; my access to God is based wholly upon God accepting my faith in Christ as fundamental and sufficient.

You will notice that I said nothing about any specific church, denomination, sect or group. When it comes to salvation, the local church that you attend is immaterial, as long as they present Jesus Christ as the only Mediator between man and God.

A person might attend church regularly; he might take communion; he might serve on the board of deacons. But—and nearly every denomination will teach this—if he has not placed his faith in Jesus, he is not saved, no matter how *Christian* he acts. Every person in the world who meets Charley Brown might say, "Now, that Charley is a real Christian—he lives it in his daily life." But, if Charley has not placed his faith in Christ Jesus, then he is not saved and he will spend eternity in hell—no matter how many people would testify in his behalf.

Furthermore, once you have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, you are saved forever. You cannot lose your salvation, because it is based upon Jesus and what He did for us upon the cross, not upon anything that we do. Some believers even take the attitude, “Well, thank you, God; I will see you in eternity.” And, with that, they go off and they do whatever they want to do. However, even with that attitude, we cannot lose our salvation because our relationship with God is completely based upon the finished work of Christ, not upon anything that we can think, say or do after the fact. Our faith in Jesus Christ is a one-time act; and it places us with God in eternity, no matter what we do after that moment.

The *where* of Jesus is important. We are going to read about Him traveling from place to place. Therefore, this map will help us to orient to His movements.

Israel During the Time of Jesus (a map); from [Conforming to Jesus.com](http://ConformingToJesus.com); accessed December 1, 2018.

Jesus visited many synagogues in the Galilee area, indicating that the people there were mostly Jewish. South in Judæa, this would have also been occupied by Jews.

These 4 biographies each view Jesus from a slightly different angle. For this study, we will focus on Luke’s understanding of the Lord. For some incidents, we will refer to other gospels; but, for the most part, I will try to confine our study to Luke’s work.



Luke, as the Author of the Gospel of Luke/ Canonicity: Luke has been presumed to be the author of this book, even though his name is not actually affixed to it. This tradition

goes back to the early Christian writings of Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) and Tertullian (born ca. 160). Both men identify the author as Luke. Even though these writers are making these claims perhaps 80 years after Luke has written *Luke* and *Acts*, these men would have gotten this information from tradition and/or writings from their era. These men are writing so soon after the century of Christ, that we may assume that they are accurate with a reasonable certitude.

The gospels, by the way, were recognized very early on as divinely inspired; and they were each identified by their human author. Pseudo Barnabas (70–130); Clement of Rome (96–97), Ignatius (110), Polycarpa (110–150) all recognized one or more of the gospels as divinely inspired, along with 13 other individual witnesses living in the 2nd and 3rd centuries. These early witnesses both help to confirm the New Testament canon which we have today, and further insure that changes or editing did not take place in the centuries that followed. Furthermore, such editing would have been virtually impossible, as copies of the various books were scattered all over the Roman world and beyond. Furthermore, these ancient scholars just referred to—they often quoted from the gospels and from various epistles, taking them as authoritative writings. If you have thousands of copies of these gospels (or quotes from the gospels) being circulated, it is pretty hard for someone to decide to make a change or an insertion.

Besides these individual witnesses, there are 5 canons of New Testament Scripture assembled prior to A.D. 400; 3 translations; and 4 church councils. It is from these various witnesses that we know who wrote which books (or letters); and why we have the canon of Scripture that we have today. Let me add, these are the witnesses that we are aware of 2000 years or so after the fact. There would have been hundreds of individuals, as well as other canon listings, translations and councils who have been lost to history.

One of *the* hot topics of Christian theologians in the first 3 or 4 centuries of Christianity was canonicity. *Which* books were canonical? It is highly unlikely that they thought of inspiration in the terms that we do today. They would have simply wanted to know, which books were authoritative. *If I am making a theological point*, Polycarpa might muse, *from whom may I quote in order to establish that point?*

There were two primary considerations: who wrote the book and was he an Apostle or closely associated with an Apostle? Obviously, they could only consider books written in the first century and they needed to know who the author was. Interestingly enough, there is an exception to this rule. The book of Hebrews was accepted into the canon, but without knowing who wrote it.

Insofar as the gospels are concerned, neither Luke nor John Mark (the author of Mark) had been actual eyewitnesses to these events (Luke would have been an eyewitness to some of the things recorded in the final chapters of Acts). However, Mark's gospel is essentially Peter's gospel; but, for some reason, Mark recorded it. For all we know, he could have been Peter's secretary/amanuensis.

In his travels with Paul, Luke apparently had opportunities to meet with many eyewitnesses; and it is clear in the first few chapters that Luke must have met with Mary, the mother of Jesus. There is information in the book of Luke that only she would have known.

We also can guess that Luke wrote his gospel between A.D. 60 and 65. Peter's death, Paul's death and the fall of Jerusalem are not recorded in the book of Acts; suggesting that Luke completed his work (the gospel of Luke and Acts) before any of those significant events took place.

Luke, realizing that the Advent of Jesus Christ was the most important event of all history, and because he knew many people who were associated with Jesus Christ at the beginning of His public ministry; Luke endeavored to write down, in chronological order (for the most part), the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Luke does not have a preface to his book, nor did he write a forward, so we do not know all those that he spoke with. However, since this is the Word of God, we may trust the historical accuracy of all these events.

Luke, the man, is mentioned directly in Scripture only 3 times: in Col. 4:14 2Tim. 4:11 Philemon 1:24. If not for the title of His book *Kata Loukon* (Κατα Λουκον), which means *according to Luke*, we would not know that Luke wrote the Gospel according to Luke (we know that Luke wrote Acts because it was written to the same person the book of Luke was written for).

Much of this study was written based upon information which I have accumulated over the years, as well as a careful, word-by-word examination of the text. However, I did refer to some specific teachers from time to time.

Back Up and Occasional Bibliography

Stephen Ellis on the [book of Luke](#).

Dr. Dan Hill in [Grace Notes](#).

James Allen at [Alive and Powerful](#).

I did not refer to these studies throughout. However, I read them carefully for the introduction and for any passages where I was either confused by or was unable to provide a full explanation that I was satisfied with.

One thing I ought to point out—the disciples did not necessarily know it all (nor did the prophets of old). Paul was probably the most doctrinally oriented of all the Apostles, and yet, you can know more than Paul knows. My point being, even though Luke records His gospel in accordance with the leading of God the Holy Spirit, Luke does not know everything. He hangs with Paul and he knows a lot of stuff; but he does not know it all. It is possible for you to know and understand more than Luke; and even more than Paul.

How can I make such a statement? Easy, and I will back it up. All of the gospels and most of the epistles had been written by the time that John was exiled to Patmos. He had access to much of this material, and he read the other biographies and he knew what they did not have is, a clear delineation of the gospel and the fact that Jesus is God come to live among mankind. What could be more fundamental to our faith than those two facts; and yet, after studying 3 gospels, those two important founding principles do not jump out at us as they do in the gospel of John. My point being, these truths are fundamental to the faith, and yet, they are not found in the 3 existing gospels.

There are many important doctrines which have been fully developed not necessarily in any passage in the Word of God, but by comparing many passages of the Word of God together. The concept of typology certainly goes back at least to the letter to the Hebrews; but this has been developed in far more detail *after* the completion of the canon of Scripture. What the inspiration of Scriptures actually means—that comes *after* the canon was completed. Now, all of these doctrines are based upon the existing Scriptures, but there is nothing to indicate that they were fully developed during the ministry of Paul or Peter or John.

Lesson 009: The Book of Luke

Israel and the Church Part I

There will be two technical theological terms used in this lesson: *dispensationalism* and *covenant theology*. *Dispensation* is originally the translation of the word *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) [pronounced *oy-koh-nohm-EE-uh*], which means: 1) *the management of a household or of household affairs*; 1a) *specifically, the management, oversight, administration, of other's property*; 1b) *the office of a manager or overseer, stewardship*; 1c) *administration, dispensation*. Strong's #3622. The word *dispensation* is brought over into theology in this way: a dispensation is a period of time in which God oversees His people by functioning through a specific entity—it is how God *manages and oversees His household*, if you will. We have taken the word *dispensation* and have applied it to periods of time—epochs—during which God deals with His people in a specific way. If we wanted to strictly stay with the original use of *dispensation*, then we would speak of the Age or the Epoch of the Jews rather than the *Jewish dispensation*. However, in common usage today, *dispensation* can refer to the epoch itself or to how God oversees and interacts with His people (during a specific period of time).

Personally, I was introduced to dispensational theology at a very young spiritual age while purchasing small booklets in a Pentecostal-type bookstore during my first year as a Christian. Even though I rejected the whole second blessing movement; I to this day remember getting this very small and inexpensive booklet which explained the dispensations of God, and it made complete and perfect sense to me.

Covenant theology—which is in opposition to dispensationalism—actually include two very different points of view: (1) the first view is where the differences between Israel and the church are so blurred that, they believe that the first church started in Abraham's tent. Because of the radical differences between Israel and the church, this is a very difficult

position to justify. (2) The second view sees Israel as a specific national entity; but believes that God transferred His promises from an unfaithful nation Israel to those who have believed in Jesus, regardless of their national identity. The more that you push on this second view, following their thinking out to logical conclusions, the closer you move towards dispensationalism.

The umbrella term applied to these two theological positions is covenant theology; but there is no real consistency among groups today who see themselves as churches of the covenant (so to speak). At one end of the spectrum, there are those who believe the first church began in Abraham's tent and somehow, that is the same thing as the local churches that we have today; and at the other end of the spectrum, we have those who believe that God began with an actual nation Israel, but that they rejected Jesus so strongly, that God took all of His promises for Israel and gave them to people who believed in His Son.

Dispensationalism views nation Israel as a national entity with an important relationship with God up to the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ. However, the church was established after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Israel and the church are logically two very different entities. God worked through Israel for a time (about 2000 years) and now God is working through the church, which, so far, has been a period of about 2000 years.

This point in human history that we live in is known as the Church Age. *Church* in the Greek is the word *ekklesiá* (ἐκκλησία) [pronounced *ehk-klay-SEE-ah*] which means *an assembly, a gathering, church*. Strong's #1577. It is used in several different ways: (1) for any public gathering of people; (2) for what is often called the *church universal*, which refers to all believers (sometimes, we are speaking of all believers on the earth at any given time; and sometimes, all believers who have lived during the Church Age); (3) for the local church, such as, the First Grace Church of Podunk Falls (generally speaking, some members will be believers and some will not be believers; ideally speaking, all who attend are or will become believers). The designation Church Age is all about the universal church—the body of believers—and their responsibilities in this epoch.

One of the reasons that God introduced the concept of Jews and Gentiles is so that He could get across the idea that there are two kinds of people in this world: Jews and Gentiles; saved and unsaved; those who have a relationship with God and those who do not. This does not mean that all Jews were saved; but, that was true when they left Egypt. Interestingly enough, the Exodus generation constantly rebelled against God, despite being saved. But, the larger point is, God differentiates. The Jews, generally speaking, have a relationship with God; and the gentiles, generally speaking, did not. There were certain exceptions to this; and it will become clear in the book of Luke that many Jews did not believe in Jesus. They did not believe Him to be the Jewish Messiah or the promised Jewish King.

God began the Hebrew race with Abraham and his wife Sarah, who went for a very long time without having children. God promised Abraham a child, but, up to this point, they had

had none. Sarah finally insisted that Abraham have relations with her personal servant girl, Hagar, and Hagar gave birth to Ishmael. That was not God's directive will; that was all on Sarah. Ishmael was not the son God had promised to Abraham.

Regardless, 13 years later, Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. God only accepted the son Isaac, but not Ishmael, because Isaac believed in Jehovah Elohim. Actually, it was more complicated than that¹⁶, but we will stay with the simplified version to begin with.

Isaac later had twin sons, Esau and Jacob; and God called Jacob a Hebrew and Esau was a Gentile (God said, "[Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.](#)"). This is because Jacob believed in Jehovah Elohim and developed a relationship with God; but Esau did not (Esau probably believed in God, but he too willingly set his birthright aside). In their lifetimes, Jacob eventually followed the guidance of God; but Esau did not. I say *eventually*, because Jacob fought against God most of his life (illustrated by his wrestling match with God); but he appeared to finally accept God's will when living in Egypt.

For about 2000 years, God worked through the Jews; and primarily through the nation Israel. This we call the Age of Israel. However, after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, things changed. The Jews, as a whole, outright rejected their Savior-Messiah. Therefore, God set the Hebrew people aside—temporarily—and began a new program known as the church. The Church began at the Day of Pentecost, sometime around 30–34 A.D., when God poured out His Spirit upon all believers who were assembled in one place with one accord on that day (Acts 2:1–4). Some of the converts of the early church were Jewish and some were gentile. There was no difference between them, because they had all believed in the Risen Christ and they had all been give the Holy Spirit.

However, in between the temporary halt of the Age of Israel and the beginning of the Church Age, we have what has been coined by R. B. Thieme, III (and perhaps others) as the Age of the Hypostatic Union (a term which we will later define). If it is easier to understand this as the Epoch of Jesus, that is just as good of a designation.

During at least the public portion of Jesus' ministry, God became flesh and lived among us (John 1:1–3, 14). During that time, Jesus Christ first offered the Kingdom of God to the Jews of Judah. However, as a nation, they rejected their King and therefore, they rejected the Kingdom that He offered to them.

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus began to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the Samaritans (half-Jews) and then also to those who were Gentiles. Jesus came to His people, but His people rejected Him; and He would then make Himself available to those who were not His people (compare Hosea 2:23 Romans 9:25). At the very beginning of the book of John, the author John warns us about this: [He came to His Own, and His Own people did not receive Him.](#) (John 1:11; ESV; capitalized)

¹⁶ Ishmael appears to have believed in the Revealed God, but he did not fully follow God's guidance. His harassment of the child Isaac indicates that he was not willing to accept what God was doing.

The reason that dispensations are important to the study of the book of Luke is, to understand what Jesus was teaching. He was teaching the Law of God; He lived in the Epoch of Israel and was teaching them the Old Testament as they should have learned it. However, Jesus will also teach some Church Age doctrines; and, therefore, it is important to understand that both dynamics are occurring during the Age of the Hypostatic Union.

Many people do not understand that most of what Jesus teaches in the gospels, during His 3–4 year ministry is primarily the Law of God. He taught the Old Testament. He taught the Law and the Prophets. There is this nonsense generalization that the God of the Old Testament was a God of vengeance; but Jesus reveals a God of Love. Both of those characteristics can be found in the Old and New Testaments; and, interestingly enough, some would argue that both of those character traits of God are anthropopathisms.

When quoting Scripture to make a point, Jesus quoted from the Old Testament—the only Scripture which existed at that time. We should understand the vast majority of the gospels are all about the Jewish Age—and the great failure of the religious class to preserve and accurately teach the Old Testament teachings.

Consequently, Jesus had to prepare His disciples for a change in programs (or a change in *household management*, if you will). So, Jesus taught His disciples a little about the Church Age (most prominently in the Garden of Gethsemane and during the Last Supper). John presents this teaching in detail; but the other gospels do not. This information was brand new; it did not come out of the Old Testament. These are some of the doctrines that we adhere to today.

Luke, the man, was originally a physician. While associated with Paul, he was an evangelist and probably could be called an *apostle* (small *a*). There are the original 11 Apostles, whom we will meet in the Book of Luke; there is Paul, called by Jesus on the Damascus Road; and then there are a half dozen or more people who are called apostles (in the epistles), who had, presumably, several communication gifts and extended authority over more than one local church. These men evangelized (which means to tell groups of people Who and What Jesus Christ is), and they also taught the Word of God, including Church Age doctrines. Some of them founded and stayed with one church, but most traveled around and had authority over more than one local church.

Before the Day of Pentecost, when Jesus gave the Spirit to those who believed in Him, there was no such thing as a local church. After the Day of Pentecost, churches began to be established by the Apostles all over the Roman empire and beyond.

This gift of apostleship died out (it allows for a person to have authority over more than one local church). All of the sign gifts died out. What replaces these gifts is the complete Word of God, which we know as the Old and New Testaments. There are still gifts given by God the Holy Spirit in the post-canon Church Age, but they do not include healing, tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles or apostleship. These gifts were instrumental in establishing the authority of the men who had them; and through them, local churches were established. However, once these local churches had been established and once the

authority of these men had also been established, there became less and less reason for the *sign* gifts. Once the New Testament had been fully written (prior to A.D. 100) and circulated, there was no longer a need for these early gifts. In fact, most of those gifts died out long before the New Testament had been completed, because the authority of the men with those gifts had been established. The second time that Paul went to a church, he did not have to reestablish his authority there. When Paul's reputation preceded him or when other established Apostles, like Peter, vouched for his teaching abilities (which Peter did), then Paul did not have to establish his authority.

And regarding the most important gift of the early Church Age—Apostleship—John was the last living Apostle.

For about 2000 years, God worked through the national entity Israel. He sent them prophets and priests; He interacted with Israel; and the Old Testament Scriptures were written by Hebrew people (Job and the first 10 or so chapters of Genesis may be exceptions to this). After Jesus, God works through the church—the body of believers who have believed in Him. There are a set of protocols established for nation Israel; there are a separate set of protocols established for the local church.

The church and nation Israel are two very different entities with great differences between them. There are some things which they have in common; and many places where they diverge. However, make no mistake about this fact: the church is not a reworking of Israel, it is not a new and somewhat improved incarnation of Israel, it is not a replacement for Israel. The covenants which God made to Israel have not been taken away from the Hebrew people and given to or applied to the church, either as they stand in Scriptures or in some modified, spiritualized way. The church is not a permanent replacement for or new version of Israel. The promises that God made to Israel are not somehow spiritualized and then applied to this new entity, the church. In today's computer-driven parlance, the Church is *not* Israel 2.0. Those are a variety of incorrect notions, most of which are known today as covenant theology.

You may have noticed that I kept using the word *spiritualized*, regarding the reworking of the original promises (covenants). This is somewhat of a nonsensical term, because Israel was not reworked in some spiritual way and out comes the church. And how exactly do you take the very specific promises of Israel and give them to those who have believed in Jesus? Does this mean that God has given you an apartment in downtown Jerusalem that you only need claim?

Even worse is the theology which somehow puts on blinders and sees the church as being basically the same thing as Israel. The blinders keep such a person from seeing the stark differences between the two.

Covenant theology claims that (1) God made a variety of covenants (contracts, agreements, promises) with Israel (most of which are one-sided agreements); (2) Israel did a really lousy job holding up her end of these contracts; and so (3) God sets Israel aside for good and develops a similar relationship with believers after the time of Christ, who then

take the place of Israel, and are, in a sense, spiritualized Israel. Many of this theological position go so far as to claim that the church actually began in Abraham's tent, and that what we have today is just some normal outgrowth of that tent-church. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. so succinctly put it, *balderdash!*

Hopefully, you can see that these are very different beliefs, but they fall under the classification of covenant theology. The problem with taking this position is, just how much credence do you give to ancient nation Israel? The more than you distinguish between ancient Israel and the modern church, the closer you come to dispensationalism (which is the correct way to view the history of man through God's eyes).

To be continued....

Lesson 010: The Book of Luke

Israel and the Church Part II

Recall that Covenant Theology teaches that (1) Israel was set aside because of her failure to believe in Jesus and all promises to Israel were spiritualized and transferred to Christians; or (2) Israel always was the same thing as the church; it began in Abraham's tent (that was the first meeting of the church).

Let's begin this second section with the problems of covenant theology.

What are some of the problems with covenant theology?

1. God gave Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a very specific set of covenants. He promised Abraham a blessed seed; a partial piece of property, a peculiar people, and a number of nations. All of this was related very carefully to Abraham's genealogical line. Abraham was not in charge of convincing others of his teaching or of evangelizing or converting others; he was in charge of raising one son, who would then raise one particular son, who would then have 12 sons, who would make up the 12 tribes of Israel (actually, 13).
2. How exactly are those promises applied to me? What is my plot of ground? How about my promised seed? Who are they exactly? Now, certainly, we can take the very specific promises of God and *spiritualize* them; that is, make them sound similar to God's original promise, but is that really God's plan? Are God's promises to me that I will have a plot of ground in heaven and that people who hear me evangelize will be my spiritual seed in heaven? The problem is, we take some very specific promises—promises that never had some odd connotation for 2000 years, and suddenly, they are changed to fit me and my life? That is absurd.
3. No one can doubt the connection of Israel to the land of Canaan. This is one of the big themes of the Old Testament. In Covenant Theology, this has somehow disappeared?
4. Although Jesus was rejected by the people of Israel as a whole and by the religious class, He was not rejected by all Jews. His 12 disciples (later Apostles)

What are some of the problems with covenant theology?

- are all Jews. Paul came from the religious class.
5. There are a great many prophecies in the Old Testament still to be fulfilled. Most of these are related to Jesus and to Israel. Have they been set aside?
 6. There is a future for Israel taught by Jesus and taught in the book of Revelation and in some passages in the Old Testament. There are many prophecies to be fulfilled, and those prophecies appear to be closely related to Jesus, not to the church.
 7. The book of Revelation has the church in it (first 3 chapters) and the tribes of Israel. If the book of Revelation can distinguish between these two groups, why can't we?
 8. It makes little sense for the relationship between God and Israel to be so specific and so literal; and then to suddenly change all of that, to the point where, everything that took place over 2000 years is completely and totally gone, even though, that is the first $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the Bible.
 - 9.

The concept and function of nation Israel is so tremendously different from the church; that it is hard to believe that someone could see them as being, somehow, the same things.

It is also rather self-centered to only see things in the light of your reality. Obviously, my reality is not the Jewish people, being raised Jewish, or having the affinity for the land of Canaan. However, that does not mean that I can simply dismiss them as not really existing any more.

In reality, the church and Israel are two separate and distinct entities. To construct the people and later, the nation, of Israel, God began with a people who were descended genetically from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (named *Israel* by God). God preserved this people and He isolated them, so that there was no intermixture with other peoples. The books of Genesis and Exodus are very careful about presenting the protection and preservation of this genetic identity.

This people were cultivated, you might say, by God, in the land of Canaan in Genesis 12–45. God then brought all of them in Gen. 46 to Egypt, where they remained isolated from the Egyptians, in whose nation they lived. They lived in Egypt for 400 years and then God removed them, taking them back to the land of Canaan.

At this point in time, after Israel had been 400 years in Egypt, the inhabitants of Canaan had reached a point of terrible degeneracy. At this point in time, the people of Israel were large enough to defeat the peoples of Canaan and to end their perverted religious practices (which included child sacrifice). God brought them into Canaan and gave that land to them. However, they had to take this land militarily, which is the story of the book of Joshua. It ought to be clear that none of this has anything at all to do with the modern church. Israel was called upon on many occasions to use her military might. This is not part of what is required of the church. We don't have a church military force. We don't

meet with other churches and go on military maneuvers or to combat retreats (this does not mean that some believers of the same church cannot share this sort of enthusiasm with each other—I am simply saying that this is not a church-wide experience).

God's relationship with Israel was defined by a series of covenants (or contracts or agreements), given successively to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and later to Moses and the people as a whole. Finally, God gave a covenant specifically to King David.

When God sent the promised King/Messiah to Israel, they rejected Him. Had Israel, as a whole, accepted Jesus as their King/Messiah/Savior, then that nation would have gone right into the Millennium and God's ultimate promises would have been fulfilled to them. Most of the covenants of God were one-sided, meaning, God made promises of what He would do for Israel—it would have been very hard for Israel to *break* their half of the covenant, because the covenant never really depended upon them. However, the people of Israel rejected their Messiah Whom God sent—they crucified Him (actually, set Him up to be crucified by the Romans). Obviously, because God cannot fulfill His covenants with people who have rejected their Savior and Messiah; He had to set this people aside *temporarily*. The people of Israel *will return* to their God.

There will be a literal nation Israel in the future ruled over by Jesus Christ. After the church is raptured, the Age of Israel will be concluded. There are 7 more years remaining on Israel's clock. When Jesus rules over nation Israel, that will be a new dispensation known as the Millennium.

On a temporary (or interim) basis, God has raised up the church, the body of believers who believe in Him. The church is the entity through which God works on earth today. We are not confined to a particular nation; we do not continue to write Scripture; and who we are descended from is never an issue. We do not observe any of the rituals which the people of Israel engaged in. We do not keep the Sabbath.

The fact that God is working through a different entity in no way supports or encourages antisemitism. We do not refer to the sons of Jacob as *Christ-killers*; we would be foolish to think that they no longer have any part in the plan of God. It would be wrong to see ourselves as superior or better than them, in any way. A child of Jacob can, today, believe in Jesus Christ, and many do. That person is eternally saved and he becomes a part of the church (the body of believers). When we encounter recalcitrant Jews—those who continue to reject Jesus Christ—then we bear them no animus and we pray for them. God wants all people to come to the knowledge of repentance (= a change of mind), regardless of their racial or ethnic background (this promise extends to Arabs and Muslims, the drug addicted, and gays and even transgenders; there is no one for whom Christ did not die—no matter how repugnant they might be to us; no matter how much they have screwed up their own lives).

Essentially, everyone is on a level-playing field now, but it would be evil on our part to treat nation Israel or people descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as wrong, bad, or inferior. God wants to see every person saved, which includes every Jew. God's promises

concerning Israel have not been retracted. Those who bless Israel will still be blessed by God. Those who disparage the sons of Jacob will they themselves be cursed. That promise of God still stands and it means what it says it means.

When I use the term *Israel*, I will primarily be referring to the institution through which God worked between the very approximate dates of 2000 B.C. to the birth of Christ.

Israel and the Church	
Israel	The Church
What Israel would be was prophetically revealed by God to Abraham.	What the church would be is prophetically revealed by Jesus to His disciples at the Last Supper and later in the Garden of Gethsemane. There is no Old Testament prophecy about the church.
Israel began inauspiciously with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants.	Begun with the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; at which time, they added many souls to the church.
It is quite amazing that we know anything about Abraham at all, as he was a simple shepherd. What is key is, he was a shepherd who followed God's calling.	The church had an amazing ride into the consciousness and history of Rome. The church (the body of people who believed in Jesus Christ) grew at a phenomenal rate.
Whereas, most of mankind had no idea who Abraham was during his life, he is the most well-known person of his era, eclipsing the history and reputation of all kings and warriors contemporary to him.	Whereas, the murder of Jesus was thought to destroy this movement, the growth of believers after Him was remarkable. The literature written by His disciples in the first century is the best selling literature of all time—even today.
Attacks on Abraham and the Abrahamic line were quite subtle. Abraham seemed to try to live at peace with all men, if possible.	Persecution of the church was also remarkable. Thousands, if not millions, of people were killed by Rome for the crime of being Christian.
Israel was and is a very specific people in a very specific genetic line (although others were able to join them, beginning in the Exodus era). Those outsiders who willingly became a part of Israel worshiped their God.	Becoming a member of the church is related directly to choosing to place your faith in Jesus Christ, Who is the Living God and not a dead martyr.

Israel and the Church

Israel	The Church
<p>Israel was clearly associated with a specific piece of land. God told Abraham to move to that piece of land. God later told Jacob (Abraham's grandson) to leave this land—but with the knowledge that his people would return to it.</p> <p>Even today, Israel is associated with that same specific plot of ground.</p>	<p>The church, a body of believers, is not associated with any specific piece of land. Rome was first nation associated with the church. However, more recently, Spain, Ireland, Scotland, and England were associated with the church; and today, the United States is. In the Middle East today, the United States is synonymous with Christianity in their perception.</p>
<p>Israel was originally associated with specific rituals, like circumcision, festival days, and animal sacrifice. The people of Israel today are associated primarily with circumcision and the Passover (known today as the Seder), although they celebrate other holidays as well.</p>	<p>The church is associated with only one specific ritual, which is the Lord's Supper.</p> <p>Although many churches practice baptism, this ritual is less universal in how it is observed (and a few churches do not observe this ritual at all).</p>
<p>Abraham was given the Abrahamic covenant; which is repeated by God to Isaac and Jacob. Then God gave them the Mosaic Law; and then God gave David the Davidic Covenant.</p>	<p>The church is given the Holy Spirit and the epistles of the Apostles to guide them. Although we study the entire Bible, our specific Church Age practices come out of the epistles.</p>
<p>The covenants of God to Israel are promises which God made to Israel. These promises have not been completely fulfilled, either in the past or in today's world.</p>	<p>The doctrines and practices of the church are found almost entirely in the epistles (letters written by Paul, John, Peter and others);</p>
<p>Israel is given judges, kings, prophets and priests as their authorities. These men have different functions, and each represents the Messiah in one way or another.</p>	<p>The early church was first given the Apostles, who had absolute and ultimate authority. There are no Apostles today. Every believer in the Church Age is a priest, having authority over his own life.</p>
<p>Judges, kings, prophets and priests are all related to nation Israel. Judges and kings led nation Israel; but prophets had God's authority and they had authority over judges and kings.</p>	<p>The early spiritual gifts were designed for the building up of the church. The current spiritual gifts are given to local churches. Although some men with the gift of evangelism or pastor-teacher have had close relationships with presidents; this is never their primary function.</p>

Israel and the Church

Israel	The Church
These authorities were only for ancient Israel. The modern nation Israel has a different set of authorities. The sons of Jacob (Israel), scattered throughout the world, are subject to the governmental authorities where they live. Even nation Israel today is essentially a secular government.	Properly and doctrinally, the authority in post-Apostolic church is the Bible. The authority in a local church is the pastor-teacher. In modern practice, there are other authorities, but these are not found in the Bible.
Israel is associated with the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets.	The church is associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the epistles of the New Testament.
During the era or dispensation of Israel, people were saved by believing in the Revealed God (that is, God, as He revealed Himself to Israel). Today, we know Him as Jesus.	People are saved by believing in Jesus. Every person who believes in Jesus has very limited information about Him at the point of faith in Him

It makes very little sense to try to jumble together ancient Israel with the church begun at Pentecost, and try to make them into the same entity. What they have in common is, God worked (and works) through these two separate entities.

Jesus lived during the time of the Mosaic Law; He lived in the Age of Israel. However, there are some unique aspects to the time during which He lived. Probably the two things which stand out are (1) Jesus test-drove the Christian way of life for us; that is, He lived by the guidance and power of God the Holy Spirit (which required Jesus to know the Old Testament); and (2) Jesus' disciples could have, at any time, asked for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

What makes the time of Jesus separate from the Age of Israel and the Church Age is, God was on earth as a Person. Jesus was the only authority at that time. The Bible was the Old Testament, but Jesus was able to properly interpret them, apart from the wrong-headed religious views of His day.

During the life of Jesus, the priests of Israel had totally corrupted their authority; the church did not exist; and the future Apostles were, at this time, under the training and teaching of Jesus. This period of time is sometimes called the Age (or dispensation) of the Hypostatic Union.

The term *hypostatic union* refers to the two natures of Christ (divine and human) being united in One Person. This was not to original meaning or use of the word hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) [pronounced *hoop-OSS-tas-is*]. Hypostasis was Greek term later taken and

used to represent the two natures of Christ in the 4th or 5th centuries. Originally, hupostasis meant (concretely) *essence*, (or abstractly) *assurance*. Strong's #5287. At some point in the future, we will cover this doctrine; but it can be found [here](#). One of the first times this term is used in this technical sense is by Athanasius (298–373 A.D.), a bishop of Alexandria (Egypt), in the fourth century.

It is key to understand that, in the Church Age, the Holy Spirit alone is not very helpful. The Holy Spirit requires some of the believer: Bible doctrine in their soul. Think of the Holy Spirit as the gas for your car. If you don't have a car, the gas is not going to get you anywhere. The better vehicle that you have, the more bang that you will get for your buck, so to speak, regarding the gas. Think of our vehicle as being the Bible doctrine in our souls. A person with no Bible doctrine is like a man with a 5 gallon pail of gas who expects to go somewhere. You can't go anywhere without a car.

Lessons 011–013: The Book of Luke

Summary Chart of the Book of Luke

The person who wrote the most of the New Testament is not Paul, who wrote 13 epistles; nor it is John, who wrote the Gospel of John, the Revelation and 3 epistles; but it is Luke, the only Gentile to write any portion of the Bible—with the possible exceptions of whoever wrote the first 10 chapters of Genesis and possibly the book of Job, books which were written before God distinguished between Jews and Gentile (or so, we think about Job).

Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptic gospels, which means that they cover many similar events in roughly the same order. However, there are many sections and chapters of the book of Luke which are unique.

Although the historical biography of Jesus, as laid out by Luke, is for the most part, chronological, it is not perfectly so. There are at least two chronological Bibles that I am aware of: F. LaGard Smith's *The Narrated Bible* and *The Reese Chronology Bible*. These two books present similar chronologies, but they are not in complete agreement.

References will be made below to other significant events not recorded by Luke.

Luke's presentation is quite interesting. He gives the early history of Jesus, the details on his public ministry; and then Luke just packs a few chapters with what Jesus taught; mostly without reference to place or circumstance. Then, at the end, Luke resumes the narrative of the final days of the Lord's public ministry; and His final entry into Jerusalem, followed by the last Passover, the betrayal, the trials, the crucifixion, the resurrection and finally, the ascension. The middle section of teaching may or may not be in some sort of order.

If at any time you feel as if you are getting lost in the details of a passage, you may return to this chart in order to have an overall (or bird's eye) view of what is taking place.

If two passages are similar or the content of Jesus' teaching is similar, but the circumstances are probably different, then I placed the parallel passage in parentheses.

Unless otherwise noted, passages quoted are from the ESV; capitalized.

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
1a	Luke 1:1–4	Introduction to the book of Luke
1b	Luke 1:5–25	Before Jesus’ birth: The angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias in the Temple and tells him that he and his wife Elisabeth will have a son in their old age—John the Baptizer (better, <i>John the herald</i>). Zacharias seems to doubt the vision/experience and is struck dumb.
1c	Luke 1:26–38	This same angel also appears to Mary and tells her that she will have a Son Whom she will name Jesus. The angel also tells her about Elisabeth.
1d	Luke 1:39–56	Mary goes to visit Elisabeth, a relative. While she is there, Mary composes a song about the Son she will bear. She returns to her home after sharing this song with Elisabeth.
There is a greater focus upon Mary in these early years in the book of Luke whereas Joseph’s pre-birth experiences will be found in Matthew. The genealogies in Matthew and Luke also reflect their respective emphases.		
1e	Luke 1:57–66	John the Baptizer is born and circumcised. That his name would be <i>John</i> (not a family name) is confirmed by his mute father.
1f	Luke 1:67–80	Zacharias, after declaring (on a tablet) that his son would be called <i>John</i> , can speak again, and he prophesies concerning the Savior to be born; and his son would go before the Savior and prepare the way.
Because John heralds the arrival of Jesus, he is better called <i>John the Herald</i> .		
The entire narrative of Luke 1 is unique; it is not found in the other gospels.		
The narrative about an angel of God which appears to Joseph and tells him to continue with his marriage to Mary, despite her being pregnant (Matt. 1:18–25a)—is not found in Luke. Matthew focuses on Joseph, the legal father of Jesus; Luke focuses on Mary, the actual mother of Jesus.		
2a	Luke 2:1–7	The Birth of Jesus: Jesus is born to Mary while they are in Bethlehem. Because there was no room for them in the Inn (many had come there to be taxed), she gave birth to the Lord in the stables. A feeding trough was the Child’s bed.

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
2b	Luke 2:8–20	An angel came to some shepherds in a field and told them of the Christ child being born that day. They go to find the Christ Child and to worship Him.
2c	Luke 2:21–24	Jesus is circumcised and then presented at the Temple to be dedicated to God as the child who opens the womb. Matt. 1:25
2d	Luke 2:25–38	The Witness of Simeon and Anna: A devout man, Simeon, knows by the Holy Spirit that he will see the Lord's Messiah before his death. He is there when Mary and Joseph bring their child to the Temple to be dedicated. Simeon recognizes the Child and prophesies. Anna, a prophetess, also bears witness to the Child at the Temple.
Joseph and Mary first go to Egypt to escape the decree of Herod the Great to slaughter all Jewish male children 2 years or younger. Because of this, there would be few (if any) Jewish males in Judah of Jesus' age. Matt. 2:1–18		
2e	Luke 2:39–40	Joseph and Mary return to Nazareth, their home. The Child grows, strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and God's grace is upon Him.
2f	Luke 2:41–52	At age 12, Jesus amazes the religious scholars of Jerusalem. Jesus continues to advance in wisdom and stature.
The narrative of Luke 2 is unique, with the exception of the naming of the Christ Child.		
3a	Luke 3:1–22	The Ministry of John the baptizer: At a very specific time in history, John the baptizer (aka, John the Herald) begins his public ministry in the desert-wilderness at the Jordan River. Luke speaks of the prophecy in Isaiah of John's ministry and gives us exactly what John proclaimed to the people who came to him. John baptizes Jesus, which marked the beginning of the Lord's public ministry. Eventually, Herod the tetrarch would put John in jail. Matt. 3:1–17 Mark 1:2–11
This small portion of text is not completely in chronological order. John's ministry is followed to the point of being arrested by Herod the Tetrarch; but then we go back to when John baptized Jesus (which leads into the genealogy of Jesus).		
3b	Luke 3:23–38	The genealogy of Mary is traced back to Adam (and to God).

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
The genealogy in Matthew is Joseph's. He is traced back to Abraham, as Matthew emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy of the Jewish Messiah. Matthew's line is traced back to David through Solomon; and Mary's line is traced back to David through Nathan (David's son). There is a very important theological reason for this.		
4a	Luke 4:1–13	The Temptation of Jesus: After Jesus has fasted for 40 days, Satan tempts Him. Jesus answers each temptation with the Word of God. Matt. 4:1–11 Mark 1:12–13
4b	Luke 4:14–15	Jesus Early Galilean Ministry. Matt. 4:23–25 Mark 1:28
4c	Luke 4:16–30	Jesus Rejected at Nazareth. Jesus does an amazing reading of Scripture in a Nazarene synagogue, where every eye is upon Him. The people respond to His words with great anger (He added a brief explanatory comment after sitting down). They took Him to a hill to cast Him off to kill Him. He escaped, passing through their midst.
4d	Luke 4:31–37	Jesus casts out the demons from a man in Capernaum. Mark 1:21–28
4e	Luke 4:38–39	Jesus heals Simon-Peter's mother-in-law. Matt. 8:14–15 Mark 1:29–31
4f	Luke 4:40–41	Jesus heals many who are sick, and also casts out demons. Matt. 8:16–17 Mark 1:32–34
4g	Luke 4:42–44	When Jesus goes out to the desert-wilderness, people find Him and come to Him. Mark 1:35–39
5a	Luke 5:1–11	Jesus calls Simon-Peter, James and John to follow Him. Matt. 4:18–22 Mark 1:16–20
John writes of Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael being called in John 1:35–51. Luke writes of Simon, James and John being called in Luke 5. These do not sound like the same series of events, suggesting that Simon-Peter may have been called twice.		
5b	Luke 5:12–16	Still in the Galilean area, Jesus cleanses a leper. Matt. 8:2–4 Mark 1:40–45
5c	Luke 5:17–26	Jesus forgives and heals a paralytic. This is a man carried on a cot onto a roof and then lowered down before the Lord. Jesus forgiving the paralytic causes a great deal of consternation among those who witness this. Matt. 9:2–8 Mark 2:1–12

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
		<p>The incidents in Mark, Luke and Matthew are very similar with so many overlapping details as to appear to be the same incident. In Luke, Jesus appears to be in the Galilee area; and in Matthew, He is in Nazareth specifically (which is in the Galilee region) (Matt. 9:1). Mark undoubtedly records the same incident, as the paralytic is lowered down on a cot to Jesus because of a crowd (Mark 2:3–4). However, in Mark, He is said to be in Capernaum (Mark 2:1).</p> <p>The problem is, in Matt. 9:1, Jesus is said to be entering into His Own city (which we would assume is Nazareth). If we weave together the text from Matthew and Mark, this problem appears to resolve itself.</p> <p>Matt. 9:1 <i>And getting into a boat He crossed over and came to His Own city.</i> We read in Mark 2:1 <i>And when He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home.</i> Capernaum is right on the shore of the Sea of Galilee; Nazareth is inland a significant ways from the sea. So what appears to be the resolution to this problem is, Jesus had a home in Capernaum and this was considered His Own city. Another explanation is, He was in Capernaum and he crossed over the Sea of Galilee, and then traveled to His family home in Nazareth, <i>after some days</i> of traveling.¹⁷</p>
5d	Luke 5:27–32	Matthew is called. Jesus calls Levi (Matthew), the tax collector, who then throws a great banquet to honor Jesus. Matt. 9:9–13 Mark 2:13–17
5e	Luke 5:33–39	Jesus is questioned about His disciples eating and drinking, while John’s disciples fast. Jesus explains to them the difference between His and John’s ministries. Matt. 9:14–17 Mark 2:18–22
6a	Luke 6:1–5	The Pharisees Take Notice of the Lord’s Ministry and They Question Him: The Pharisees are aware of Jesus’ ministry, and they begin to question His lawless behavior (in their eyes) of eating grain which they had harvested themselves from a field on a Sabbath day. Matt. 12:1–8 Mark 2:23–28
6b	Luke 6:6–11	The Pharisees begin to try to trap Jesus. Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath (placed before Him by the scribes and Pharisees to see if He would heal on the Sabbath). The plotting of the religious hierarchy against Jesus begins. Matt. 12:9–14 Mark 3:1–6

¹⁷ I will try to avoid solving every problem with parallel passages.

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
6c	Luke 6:12–16	Jesus' disciples are chosen and named. Matt. 10:1–4 Mark 3:13–19
6d	Luke 6:17–19	On the plain, Jesus heals a great multitude of people from Judæa, Jerusalem, Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed.
6e	Luke 6:20–49	Jesus teaches the beatitudes and pronounces woes upon certain sets of people. He explains that they should love their enemies, that they should not judge others, and that a tree is known by its fruit. They are to build upon the foundation of a rock and not upon sand. Many of these things were taught using parables. (Matt. 5:1–12, 38–48 7:1–5, 15–27)
Even though the content of the sermon on the plain (Luke 6:20–49) and the sermon on the mount (Matt. 5–7) are very similar, there is no reason to assume that these took place at the same time and place. The book of Matthew includes more teaching than Luke does (significant portions of Matt. 5–7 are not found in Luke).		
7a	Luke 7:1–10	Significant miracle #1: Healing the Centurion's servant while in Capernaum. Both the Centurion and his servant would have been gentiles. Matt. 8:5–13
7b	Luke 7:11–17	Significant miracle #2: Jesus raised the son of a widow from the dead.
7c	Luke 7:18–35	John the baptizer sends messengers to Jesus, asking if He is the true Messiah. Jesus speaks to John's ministry. Matt. 11:2–19
7d	Luke 7:36–50	Jesus gives the parable of the debtor and then forgives a woman who is washing His feet for her sins.
There appear to be 2 or 3 occasions when Jesus' feet are washed and perfumed. This occurs in the house of Simon the Leper, possibly towards the end of the Lord's public ministry (Matt. 26:6–13 Mark 14:3–9). We have a similar event which takes place at the home of Simon, the pharisee (Luke 7:36–50). Even though Jesus has a similar message, it is much different in Luke 7; and this appears to have occurred early on in His ministry (it is less likely that a pharisee would have entertained Jesus in His home near the end of His ministry).		

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
Mary washes and perfumes the Lord's feet in John 12:1–8, which is specifically said to take place 6 days prior to the Passover. The narrative in John has certain elements which substantially add to the telling of the ones in Matthew and Mark. I believe that the Matthew, Mark and John events can be seen as the same event. Given their locations in those books, this incident clearly occurs near the end of the Lord's public ministry.		
8a	Luke 8:1–3	Teaching and healing in all the cities and villages: A list of the women who were with Jesus.
Luke apparently put much of his biography together using the eyewitness testimony of many of the Lord's female disciples.		
8b	Luke 8:4–18	Jesus gives two parables: the parable of the sower and the revealed light. Jesus explains why He uses parables and then explains one of the parables. Matt. 13:1–23 Mark 4:1–25
There is no doubt that Jesus re-taught some information, as the crowds of people before whom He spoke were not always the same (although His core disciples were probably fairly consistent). Therefore, we may have the same teachings found in several gospels, but they do not necessarily represent the same event—just the same material.		
8c	Luke 8:19–21	Jesus' mother and brothers come to see Him, but are unable to get close to Him for the crowd. Matt. 12:46–50 Mark 3:31–35 4:21–25
8d	Luke 8:22–25	When in a boat in the water, the wind and waves obey the commands of Jesus. Matt. 8:23–27 Mark 4:35–41
8e	Luke 8:26–39	Jesus casts out a legion of demons from a man who lives naked among the tombs. Mark 8:28–34 Mark 5:1–20
8f	Luke 8:40–56	The dying daughter of Jairus; the woman who touches Him, and is healed; the daughter of Jairus dies, but is raised up from the dead by Jesus. Matt. 9:18–26 Mark 5:21–43
9a	Luke 9:1–6	Jesus sends forth the 12 disciples out to cast out demons and to cure diseases. Matt. 10:1–15 11:1 Mark 6:7–13
9b	Luke 9:7–9	Herod the tetrarch seeks to speak with Jesus, given the odd rumors that he has been hearing. Matt. 14:1–2 Mark 6:14–16
9c	Luke 9:10–17	Jesus feeds the 5000. Matt. 14:12b–21 Mark 6:30–44

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
9d	Luke 9:18–26	Jesus with the disciples. Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah; Jesus predicts His death; Jesus tells them to take up their cross and follow Him. Matt. 16:13–27 Mark 8:27–38
9e	Luke 9:27–36	The Mount of Transfiguration. 3 disciples see this and they hear the voice of God. They were told to keep this quiet and to not mention it. Matt. 16:28 17:1–13 Mark 9:1–13
9f	Luke 9:37–43a	Jesus heals a boy, casting out an unclean spirit. Matt. 17:14–21 Mark 9:14–29
9g	Luke 9:43b–45	Jesus speaking to His disciples. He tells them again that he will be delivered into the hands of man. Matt. 17:22–23 Mark 9:30–32
9h	Luke 9:46–48	Jesus settles a dispute between the disciples concerning who is the greatest. Matt. 18:1–4 Mark 9:33–35
9i	Luke 9:49–50	John tells of a person casting out spirits in Jesus' name. Mark 9:38–41
9j	Luke 9:51–56	Jesus wants to go into a Samaritan village and He sent some messengers as an advance team, but the people of the village would not receive Jesus into their village. Matt. 19:1–2 Mark 10:1
9k	Luke 9:57–62	Jesus speaks to His disciples about the cost of discipleship. Matt. 8:18–22
10a	Luke 10:1–12	The 70 are sent out. Possible parallels found in Matt. 10:1–16 Mark 6:7–13
10b	Luke 10:13–16	Woes to Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon; as well as Capernaum. Matt. 11:20–24
10c	Luke 10:17–20	The 70 return and they are jazzed over their power.
10d	Luke 10:21–24	Jesus rejoices and prays at this same time, apparently as a response to the reports given by the 70. Matt. 11:25–27

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
At this point in Luke's biography, Luke emphasizes the teaching of Jesus more than anything else. Some individual incidents are recalled, but very often, in such a way that they lead to the teaching of a particular principle or parable. It is unclear whether these teachings and parables are presented in any sort of an order. Luke 10–18 is nearly all teaching.		
Allow me to reiterate that Jesus, no doubt, taught similar material in different places. As a clear example of this, He told His disciples on several occasions that He would suffer and die at the hands of the pharisees and Romans.		
10e	Luke 10:25–28	The Teachings of Jesus: The greatest commandment. Matt. 22:34–40 Mark 12:28–34
10f	Luke 10:29–37	The parable of the good Samaritan.
10g	Luke 10:38–42	Mary and Martha.
11a	Luke 11:1–4	Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. Matt. 6:9-15 appears to be the same prayer, but said on a different occasion.
11b	Luke 11:5–8	A parable of the friend who comes to midnight.
11c	Luke 11:9–13	A second and third parable: Keep on knocking; keep on asking. What about a son who asks his father for a fish? Matthew 7:7-11
F. LaGard Smith places the rest of this chapter earlier in the Lord's ministry. We should note that Jesus likely taught the same material at different times. So some <i>parallel passages</i> may not have actually occurred at the same time.		
11d	Luke 11:14–20	When Jesus was accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul; Jesus explains that a house divided cannot stand. Matt. 12:22–28 Mark 3:20–26
11e	Luke 11:21–23	The parable of the strong man. Matt. 12:29–30 Mark 3:27
11f	Luke 11:24–26	The unclean spirit returns. Matt. 12:43–45
11g	Luke 11:27–28	The impolite, interrupting woman.
11h	Luke 11:29–32	This generation seeks a sign; the story of Jonah will be a sign for them. Matt. 12:38–42 Mark 8:11–12
11i	Luke 11:33	Do not hide your light under a bushel. Matt. 5:15–16 Mark 4:21–22
11j	Luke 11:34–36	The light of the body comes in through the eye. Matt. 6:22

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
11k	Luke 11:37–54	Jesus pronounces woes on the Pharisees and lawyers.
Large portions of Luke 12–18 are not found elsewhere in the other gospels.		
12a	Luke 12:1–3	Jesus teaches the multitude that everything that has been done will be revealed. Matthew 10:26-27 16:5–6 Mark 8:14–15
12b	Luke 12:4–7	Jesus teaches fear of God. Matthew 10:28-33
12c	Luke 12:8–10	Jesus tells them to confess Him before men; and warns against blaspheming against the Holy Spirit. Matt. 12:31–32 Mark 3:28–30
12d	Luke 12:11–12	The Holy Spirit helps guide us in what we speak when we have been persecuted. Matthew 10:17–20 Mark 13:9–11
12e	Luke 12:13–21	The parable of the rich fool.
12f	Luke 12:22–34	God takes care of the most insignificant things; and therefore, He will look after us. The disciples were not to depend upon earth's treasures. (Matt. 6:19–21, 25–34)
12g	Luke 12:35–48	The servants of the Lord are to watch and wait for the Lord. The faithful and the unfaithful servant. Matt. 24:45–51
12h	Luke 12:49–53	Jesus has come to bring division on earth. (Matt. 10:34–39 may represent similar teaching at another time.)
12i	Luke 12:54–56	People are able to see the signs of the weather; why are they unable to see the signs of the time? Matt. 16:2–3
12j	Luke 12:57–59	We are told to settle our debts and make things right, even with our adversaries. Matt. 5:25–26
13a	Luke 13:1–5	Jesus calls His audience to repentance.
13b	Luke 13:6–9	Parable of the barren fig tree.
13c	Luke 13:10–17	Jesus heals a woman of an unclean, indwelling spirit on the Sabbath. He is challenged for working on the Sabbath and He provides a stiff retort.
13d	Luke 13:18–19	Parable of the mustard seed and the Kingdom of God. Matt. 13:31–32 Mark 4:30–32
13e	Luke 13:20–21	Parable of leaven and the Kingdom of God. Matt. 13:33

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
13f	Luke 13:22–33	Entering in by the narrow gate to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt. 7:13–14, 22–23 8:11–12 19:30 Mark 10:31)
13g	Luke 13:34–35	Jesus laments over Jerusalem. Matt. 23:37–39
14a	Luke 14:1–6	Jesus heals a man with dropsy on the Sabbath.
14b	Luke 14:7–11	Sitting at the less-conspicuous place during an event.
14c	Luke 14:12–14	Making a dinner and then calling the lame, the blind and the poor to attend.
14d	Luke 14:15–24	The parable of the great supper. Matt. 22:1–14
14e	Luke 14:25–27	Leaving all to follow Christ. (Matthew 10:37–38)
14f	Luke 14:28–30	Considering the cost or the work involved before proceeding forward with a project.
Jesus ends this discourse saying, “ And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last. ” He also ends his parable of the laborers in the field with those words. Matt. 20:1–16 Mark 10:31		
14g	Luke 14:31–33	Jesus is warned by a pharisee about Herod the Fox.
14h	Luke 14:34–35	Salt which has lost its savor. (Matt. 5:13) Mark 9:49–50
15a	Luke 15:1–7	Parable of the lost sheep. Matt. 18:12–14
15b	Luke 15:8–10	Parable of the lost coin.
15c	Luke 15:11–32	Parable of the prodigal son.
16a	Luke 16:1–13	Parable of the dishonest servant.
16b	Luke 16:14–17	The law, the prophets and the kingdom.
16c	Luke 16:18	Regarding marriage and divorce. Matt. 19:3–12 Mark 10:2–12 ¹⁸
16d	Luke 16:19–31	The rich man and Lazarus.
17a	Luke 17:1–4	Offenses, a millstone and a brother who trespasses against you. Matt. 18:6–7, 15 Mark 9:42

¹⁸ [Bible resource](#) suggests Matt. 19:9 and Mark 10:11–12 only.

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
17b	Luke 17:5–10	Jesus offers practical applications. Matt. 17:19–21 Mark 9:28–29
17c	Luke 17:11–19	Jesus cleanses 10 lepers.
17d	Luke 17:20–37	The coming of the Kingdom; and the baptism of fire. Matt. 24:15–28, 37–44, 35 Mark 13:14–23 ¹⁹
18a	Luke 18:1–8	The persistent widow and the unjust judge.
18b	Luke 18:9–14	The prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector.
18c	Luke 18:15–17	Jesus allows the little children to come to Him. Matt. 19:13–15 Mark 10:13–16
18d	Luke 18:18–23	Jesus speaks with the rich young ruler. Matt. 19:16–22 Mark 10:17–22
18e	Luke 18:24–27	Can a rich man find salvation? Matt. 19:23–24 Mark 10:23–25
18f	Luke 18:28–30	Forsaking all to follow Jesus. Matt. 19:25–30 Mark 10:26–31
Although Jesus continues to teach, the narrative of His life becomes more prominent in the rest of the book of Luke. The emphasis of the remainder of Luke appears to begin with His final week in Jerusalem.		
18g	Luke 18:31–34	A return to narrative. Jesus tells His disciples of His coming death and resurrection. Matt. 20:17–19 Mark 10:32–34
18h	Luke 18:35–43	The blind man receives his sight. Matt. 20:29–34 Mark 10:46–52
Matt. 9:27–31 appears to be a different event.		
19a	Luke 19:1–10	Jesus comes to the home of Zacchaeus, the short man.
19b	Luke 19:11–27	The parable of the investments (the talents). Matt. 25:13–30 Mark 13:33–37
19c	Luke 19:28–40	Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Matt. 21:1–9 Mark 11:1–10 John 12:12–19

¹⁹ The [Bible Researcher](#) has Matt. 24:17–18, 23, 26–28, 37–41 and 10:39; and Mark 14–16, 19–23.

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
19d	Luke 19:41–44	Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.
19e	Luke 19:45–46	Jesus cleanses the Temple. Matt. 21:12–13 Mark 11:15–17
The Lord cleansed the Temple near the beginning of His public ministry and then again at the end. John 2:13–17 represents the first time that Jesus did this.		
Most of the Lord's teaching which follows focuses on 3 sets of topics: the failure of the scribes and pharisees to preserve the teachings of Scripture; the end times; the final persecution of Jesus and His suffering of the cross.		
19f	Luke 19:47–48	The animus of the religious crowd: The scribes and chief priests conspire against the Lord. Mark 11:18–19
20a	Luke 20:1–8	Jesus teaches in the Temple and His authority is questioned. Matt. 21:23–27 Mark 11:27–33
20b	Luke 20:9–19	The parable of the wicked tenant farmers. Matt. 21:33–46 Mark 12:1–12
It should be apparent just how closely tied Jesus' teaching here is to the narrative of the animus of the religious hierarchy.		
20c	Luke 20:20–26	Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees, asking if it is lawful to pay taxes the Cæsar. Matt. 22:15–22 Mark 12:13–17
20d	Luke 20:27–40	The Sadducees ask about the resurrection (which they do not believe in). Matt. 22:23–33 Mark 12:18–27
20e	Luke 20:41–44	Jesus asks why David would call his son <i>Lord</i> . Matt. 22:41–46 Mark 12:35–37a
20f	Luke 20:45–47	Jesus warns about the scribes. Matt. 23:1–36 Mark 12:37b–40
21a	Luke 21:1–4	The widow's gift of two mites. She stands in stark contrast to the religious crowd, who think nothing of her. Mark 12:41–44
21b	Luke 21:5–6	Jesus predicts that the Temple will be destroyed. Matt. 24:1–2 Mark 13:1–2
21c	Luke 21:7–19	Jesus teaches about the signs of the end times. Matt. 24:3–14 Mark 13:3–13
21d	Luke 21:20–24	Jesus teaches about the destruction of Jerusalem. Matt. 24.15–22 Mark 13.14–20

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
21e	Luke 21:25–28	The Son of Man will return in judgment. Matt. 24:29–31 Mark 13:24–27
21f	Luke 21:29–33	The parable of the fig tree (and other trees) and recognizing the changing of the seasons by watching them. Matt. 24:32–36 Mark 13:28–32
21g	Luke 21:34–38	Watching for the end times.
22a	Luke 22:1–2	The Passover is near; and there is a plot afoot to kill Jesus. Matt. 26:1–5 Mark 14:1–2
22b	Luke 22:3–6	The Last Passover: Judas betrays Jesus. Matt. 26:14–16 Mark 14:10–11
22c	Luke 22:7–13	The Passover: Jesus and His disciples prepare for the Passover meal. Matt. 26:17–19 Mark 14:12–16
22d	Luke 22:14–20	The Passover meal and the institution of the Eucharist. Matt. 26:26–29 Mark 14:22–25
22e	Luke 22:21–23	The Passover meal: Jesus speaks of the man who would betray Him. Matt. 26:21–25 Mark 14:18–21 John 13:21–30
22f	Luke 22:24–30	The Passover meal: the disciples argue about their relative greatness. Matt. 19:28 20:24–28 Mark 10:41–45
The passages in Matthew and Mark seem to be preceded by the mother of James and John coming in and requesting a place of honor in heaven for her two sons. Matt. 20:20–23 Mark 10:35–40. There appear to have been arguments and disagreements about who was the greatest disciple on several occasions.		
22g	Luke 22:31–34	The Passover, on the Mount of Olives: Jesus predicts Peter's denials. Matt. 26:30–35 Mark 14:26–31 John 13:36–38
22h	Luke 22:35–38	The Passover: preparation for the future.
22i	Luke 22:39–46	The Passover: Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matt. 26:36–46 Mark 14:32–42 John 18:1
22j	Luke 22:47–54a	The Passover: Jesus is betrayed and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Matt. 26:47–56 Mark 14:43–52 John 18:2–12

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
22k	Luke 22:54b–62	The Passover: Peter denies Jesus and weeps bitterly. Matt. 26:69–75 Mark 14:66–72 John 18:15–18, 25–27
22l	Luke 22:63–65	Jesus is arrested. Jesus is mocked and beaten. Matt. 27:67–68 Mark 14:65
22m	Luke 22:66–71	The trials of Jesus: Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin. Matt. 26:57–66 Mark 14:53–64 John 18:13–14, 19–24
23a	Luke 23:1–5	Jesus is delivered to Pilate and then tried. Matt. 27:1–2, 11–14 Mark 15:1–5 John 18:28–38
23b	Luke 23:6–12	Pilate sends Jesus to Herod. Herod sends Jesus back. This interaction between Pilate and Herod is only found in the book of Luke.
John 19:5 mentions the magnificent robe that Herod placed upon Jesus, making fun of Him. John does not speak of its origin.		
23c	Luke 23:13–16	Pilate assembles the chief priests and rulers and pronounces Jesus innocent.
23d	Luke 23:17–23	Pilate offers to free either Jesus or Barabbas. The crowd calls for Barabbas to be freed. Matt. 27:15–23 Mark 15:6–14 Luke 18:39–40
23e	Luke 23:24–25	Jesus is sentenced to be crucified. Matt. 27:24–26 Mark 15:15 John 19:16
23f	Luke 23:26–32	Jesus is led away to be crucified (the road to Golgotha). Jesus teaches about the horrors which will befall Jerusalem (which is not found in the parallel passages). Matt. 27:31b–32 Mark 15:20b–21 John 19:17
23g	Luke 23:33–34	Jesus is crucified. Matt. 27:33–37 Mark 15:22–26 Luke 19:17b–27
23h	Luke 23:35–38	Jesus is derided while on the cross. Matt. 27:38–43 Mark 15:27–32a
23i	Luke 23:39–43	The two thieves on the cross. Matt. 27:44 Mark 15:32b
23j	Luke 23:44–48	Jesus dies upon the cross. Matt. 27:45–54 Mark 15:33–39 John 19:28–30
23k	Luke 23:49	Witnesses to the crucifixion. Matt. 27:55–56 Mark 15:40–41 John 19:25–27

Passage-by-Passage Summary of the Book of Luke		
Chapter	Passage	Title and/or Description. Parallel Scriptures.
23l	Luke 23:50–56	Jesus is buried in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. Matt. 27:57–61 Mark 15:42–47 John 19:38–42
24a	Luke 24:1–12	Christ is risen ; various disciples visit the tomb. Matt. 28:1–10 Mark 16:1–11 John 20:1–18
24b	Luke 24:13–32	The risen Christ teaches two on the road to Emmaus.
24c	Luke 24:33–43	Jesus appears to the disciples, who are gathered together. John 20:19–23
24d	Luke 24:44–49	Jesus explains some of the Scriptures to them.
24e	Luke 24:50–53	The Ascension: Jesus ascends into heaven. Mark 16:15, 19

Bibliography

I used many of the [Niobi Study Bible](#) divisions and headings above.

Similarly helpful: *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword. They were one of my sources for parallel passages.

The Narrated Bible In Chronological Order; narrated by F. LaGard Smith; ©1984 by Harvest House Publishers; Eugene, Oregon; (NIV ©1984 by the International Bible Society); p. 1353–1484.

Bible Research [Parallels](#), [Parallels 2](#); and [Parallels 3](#); accessed September 29, 2018. These pages link, quite conveniently, to Bible gateway parallel passages in each instance.

Lesson 014: The Book of Luke

Focusing on the Gospel of Luke/Charts

This will be the final introductory lesson before we actually begin the book of Luke. However, we should take just a little time to discuss the Person Whom we will study, Jesus of Nazareth. Based upon biographical facts of His life that we know about, we should not even know Who this Man is.

He was born to a working class family. His father was a carpenter. Although sometimes their pooriness is overemphasized, in my opinion, they were certainly not a rich couple; nor were they a family of note. When they went to pay their taxes, which required them to leave their home in Nazareth, and go to a centralized area, they ended up in Bethlehem, where the wife gave birth to Jesus. It would make sense that they owned some property and/or made some amount of money; which would explain why they had to pay taxes. Obviously, there were no exemptions granted for a pregnant wife.

When Jesus was born, they traveled to Egypt, believing their Son to be in danger of being killed by Herod. Later, this small family returned to Judæa when they believed it to be safe. Jesus grew up in Nazareth, apparently trained as a carpenter by His father.

Jesus apparently had a great interest in the Old Testament Scriptures (simply known as the *Scriptures*); and, at some point, Jesus began teaching. His public ministry only lasted for 3 or 4 years. He never wrote anything down, He did not write an autobiography. He did not write down a set of His teachings to distribute to those who might be interested. He simply went from synagogue to synagogue to teach; and many times, He was not well-received. On occasion, His life was threatened, even though no one appeared to be able to present a credible theological argument against what Jesus was teaching.

Most of His teaching was about the Scriptures; and most of the time, anything that He taught could be found elsewhere in the Word of God. Very often, He found Himself in opposition to the scribes, pharisees and lawyers of that day, primarily because their teachings were based upon traditions and extra-Scriptural regulations and not upon the accepted Scriptures. Based upon the biographical material that we have, the so-called experts in the Mosaic Law had trouble opposing Him if arguing from the Scriptures alone.

Jesus was not a man of distinction by birth; He was rejected by the religious scholars of His day—in fact, they saw to it that He was executed. Although He apparently taught for lengthy periods of time, all of his teaching took place over a period of 3 or 4 years; and He traveled perhaps a 100 miles or so. In fact, most of His public ministry occurred within a 30 mile radius of His hometown or of His birthplace.

Given these few details, it is a wonder that we have any idea Who this Man was. Remarkably, 4 men wrote about Him. 2 men who knew Him intimately (they were among His followers) and 2 men who apparently did not know Jesus personally, but became followers of Him after His death and subsequent resurrection and ascension.

It is because of these 4 men and His other followers that we know Who Jesus is. Although there are 4 gospel writers, there are also 6 different men who wrote the epistles (letters) (I am assuming that the writer of Hebrews is different from the other 5 men). This gives us at least 8 and possibly 9 different men who testified to the Person and teachings of Jesus. At the same time, we have no one from this same era disputing their biographies or letters (Josephus, a Jewish historian in this era, would have been the most likely person to cast aspersions on the Person of Jesus, but he does not).

The opposition to Him was so fierce that they killed Jesus; but none of these scholars, insofar as we know, produced any writings to contradict Jesus' biographies, His teachings, His miracles; or the teachings of His followers (which teachings were clearly not exactly the same as the Lord's).

Josephus is not the only historian to mention Jesus. However, he is certainly the most well-known historian of that era.

Josephus's mentions of Jesus the Christ

Jesus is called the Christ by Josephus and mentioned once in [Antiquities, Book XX 9.1](#) (this is more of an aside than a direct reference).

Josephus's mentions of Jesus the Christ

CONCERNING ALBINUS UNDER WHOSE PROCURATORSHIP JAMES WAS SLAIN;
AS ALSO WHAT EDIFICES WERE BUILT BY AGRIPPA.

1. AND now Caesar, upon hearing the death of Festus, sent Albinus into Judea, as procurator. But the king deprived Joseph of the high priesthood, and bestowed the succession to that dignity on the son of Ananus, who was also himself called Ananus. Now the report goes that this eldest Ananus proved a most fortunate man; for he had five sons who had all performed the office of a high priest to God, and who had himself enjoyed that dignity a long time formerly, which had never happened to any other of our high priests. But this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees,^[23] who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews, as we have already observed; when, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority].

Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them **the brother of Jesus**, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned: but as for those who seemed the most equitable of the citizens, and such as were the most uneasy at the breach of the laws, they disliked what was done; they also sent to the king [Agrippa], desiring him to send to Ananus that he should act so no more, for that what he had already done was not to be justified; nay, some of them went also to meet Albinus, as he was upon his journey from Alexandria, and informed him that it was not lawful for Ananus to assemble a sanhedrim without his consent.^[24] Whereupon Albinus complied with what they said, and wrote in anger to Ananus, and threatened that he would bring him to punishment for what he had done; on which king Agrippa took the high priesthood from him, when he had ruled but three months, and made Jesus, the son of Damneus, high priest.

^[23] It hence evidently appears that Sadducees might be high priests in the days of Josephus, and that these Sadducees were usually very severe and inexorable judges, while the Pharisees were much milder, and more merciful, as appears by Reland's instances in his note on this place, and on Josephus's Life, sect. 31, and those taken from the New Testament, from Josephus himself, and from the Rabbins; nor do we meet with any Sadducees later than this high priest in all Josephus

^[24] Of this condemnation of James the Just, and its causes, as also that he did not die till long afterwards, see Prim. Christ. Revived, vol. III. ch. 43-46. The sanhedrim condemned our Savior, but could not put him to death without the approbation of the Roman procurator; nor could therefore Ananias and his sanhedrim do more here, since they never had Albinus's approbation for the putting this James to death.

Emphasis mine. As you can see, this reference to Jesus is an aside, where the focus is on the execution of his half brother, James. Quite frankly, given Jesus' very limited ministry, this is the sort of historical mention that we would expect.

Josephus's mentions of Jesus the Christ

There is also an account given by Josephus of Jesus and Pilate, which includes this quotation: *Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross,^[9] those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day;^[10] as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.* [Antiquities Book XVIII 3.3](#)

[9] A.D. 33, April 3.

[10] April 5.

I have also read accusations that Christians got a hold of Josephus's writings and corrupted them. I clearly could not say with certainty one way or the other.

What appears to be the case is, the first reference is not disputed, but the second one is. But again, what is most important is, Josephus, if anyone, would have disputed the stories of Jesus if (1) there was a big movement concerning Him (there was) and (2) if there was evidence that these recollections were false. But, we do not have that.

Could Christians have edited Josephus? Possibly. Could they have removed any disparaging material? Possibly. However, this would have been unlikely early on, at the beginning of the church, as so much energy and effort was expended upon spreading the name of Jesus (even the disciples did not begin writing biographies of Jesus until 20–30 years after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension). There was a considerable length of time before the church grew to a point of being a strong force in the Roman world (100–300 years).

The longer that those of the church waited to corrupt Josephus' works (assuming that they did), the more difficult this task would have been, as there were certainly copies of Josephus' history scattered throughout the Roman empire.

In addition, if you read and reread the second passage from Josephus, the information is still quite limited and not written necessarily in such a way as to present Jesus Christ as the Savior of all mankind.

These words of Josephus, although they do not confirm that Jesus is the Christ, they clearly attest to His historicity, in such a way that, we should not be surprised that this is a movement.

We may reasonably ask ourselves 2 questions when it comes to the possible corruption of Josephus' manuscripts with information about Jesus: (1) how were the Christians able to get a hold of every Josephus manuscript and change it; or how did they insure that, only manuscripts that they approved of survived? Why don't we find contradictory manuscripts? (2) Why is the recording of the information about Jesus so reserved? Why aren't there more enthusiastic references? How could they know that, these subtle and limited references to Jesus would seem more believable 2000 years later than resurrection to eyewitness accounts of His ministry?

Despite His Own limited ministry, Jesus is the most well-known Person in human history. He is known by name in virtually every country on earth. Man's history is divided, roughly, by His birth (what occurs before is *before Christ*; and what occurs after is *in the year of our Lord*). Even when people reject Him, many of them cannot seem to help themselves when it comes to using His name in a trite and exclamatory way—often on a daily basis.

Dr. J. Francis expressed this much better than I have:

The Influence of the Man Jesus (Dr. James Allan Francis)

It was Dr. James Allan Francis who penned the following words that aptly describe the influence of Jesus through the history of mankind:

"Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

"He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put His foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. . . .

"While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth—His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

"Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is a centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

"I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life."

From [quora.com](https://www.quora.com); accessed January 17, 2019.

What we will study is one of the biographies of Jesus. Although we will bring in other information from His other biographies, we will primarily concentrate on what Luke said about the Lord.

Luke focuses more upon the humanity of Jesus than any of the other gospels, but without setting aside His Kingship or Deity. The biological mother of Jesus and Jesus' childhood are given a great deal of attention by Luke as compared the Lord's other biographers. Various ceremonies applied to Jesus the infant are also found here, but nowhere else. Also, the line Jesus, through Mary, is documented all the way back to Adam (actually, all the way back to God). Luke 3:23–38

Every gospel has its own personality, if you will; and its own emphases.

Themes in the Book of Luke (Dr. Stephen Bramer)

- An emphasis upon prayer, especially Jesus' emphasis upon praying before important occasions (3:21 5:16 6:12 9:18, 28-29 10:21 11:1 22:39-46 23:34, 46)
- The prominent place given to women (chapters. 1-2 7:11-13, 36-50 8:1-3 10:38-42 21:1-4 23:27-31, 49 23:55-24:11)
- A particular interest in poverty and wealth (1:52-53 4:16-22 6:20, 24-25 12:13-21 14:12-13 19:19-31) [some wealthy are noted among Jesus' followers; however, He seems closest to the poor]
- Concern for individuals, especially "sinners" (e.g. the "good Samaritan" – 10:29-37; the prodigal son – 15:11-32; the thankful leper – 17:11-19; the penitent tax collector – 18:9-14; Zacchaeus – 19:1-10; the penitent thief – 23:39-43)
- An emphasis upon the family circle whereby Jesus' activity included men, women and children, with the setting frequently in the home
- Repeated use of the title "Son of Man" (e.g. 19:10)
- Emphasis on joy (1:14) and the Holy Spirit (4:1)

Dr. Stephen Bramer, "Gospel of Luke," 1-2; I took this from [Steve Ellis](#); accessed October 24, 2018.

I have been quite impressed with the Greek of Luke; and sometimes think that I should have gone with the simpler Greek of John.

Literary Features of Particular Note (Stephen Ellis)

Luke's Gospel account is a unique Gospel account in several ways –

- ❑ Luke's language reflects an outstanding command of the Greek language. His vocabulary is extensive and his style sometimes approximates that of classical Greek (e.g. 1:1-4), yet at other times it is Semitic (1:5-2:52) – often in a style similar to the Septuagint. Luke even reflects a cultural sensitivity by adapting his

Literary Features of Particular Note (Stephen Ellis)

language to the people and setting described, e.g. when he refers to Peter in a Jewish setting, he uses more Semitic language than when he refers to Paul in a Hellenistic setting.³

- ❑ The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched and documented writing with a comprehensive scope that extends from Jesus' birth to His ascension. The arrangement is orderly, appeals to both Jews and Gentiles and is characterized by literary excellence.
- ❑ It is the only Gospel that has a sequel, i.e. the book of Acts.
- ❑ Only the Gospel of Luke includes an account of the Ascension (also included in the Book of Acts)
- ❑ Luke is the longest of the four Gospels
- ❑ Luke records a wide variety of miracles, teaching, and parables resulting in the fullest portrait of Jesus' ministry.
- ❑ Luke is the only Gospel addressed to an individual.
- ❑ Much of the material in chapters 9-19 appear only in Luke and in all, about one-third of the Gospel of Luke is unique.
- ❑ As a physician, Luke shows a particular interest in medical matters (4:38; 7:15; 8:55; 14:2; 18:15; 22:50)
- ❑ Four beautiful hymns (the four original Christmas carols) are found at the beginning of Luke's gospel:
 - o The Magnificat of Mary (1:46-55)
 - o The Benedictus of Zachariah (1:68-79)
 - o Gloria in Excelsis Deo of the angels (2:14)
 - o Nunc Dimittis [permission to depart] of Simeon (2:29-32)

I should point out that there are significant portions of the book of Luke which are not found in any of the gospels. This would be all of chapter 1; most of chapter 2; all of chapters 9–10.

From [Steve Ellis](#); accessed October 24, 2018.

Many have composed one-page overviews of the book of Luke. Two of them can be found below:

The Gospel of Luke Chart #1								
Focus	Appearance		Activity				Affliction	
Divisions	Childhood of the Son of Man	Companions of the Son of Man	Confrontations of the Son of Man	Conduct of the Son of Man	Comparisons by the Son of Man	Counsel from the Son of Man	Conflicts over the Son of Man	Crucifixion of the Son of Man
Chapts	1–2	3–6	7–9	10–12	13–15	16–18	19–21	22–24
Topics	Miracles				Parables		Plots	
	Seeking and Teaching						Suffering and Saving	
Time	5 B.C. – A.D. 33							
Author	Luke the Physician							

Copied from [Conforming to Jesus](#); accessed November 21, 2018.

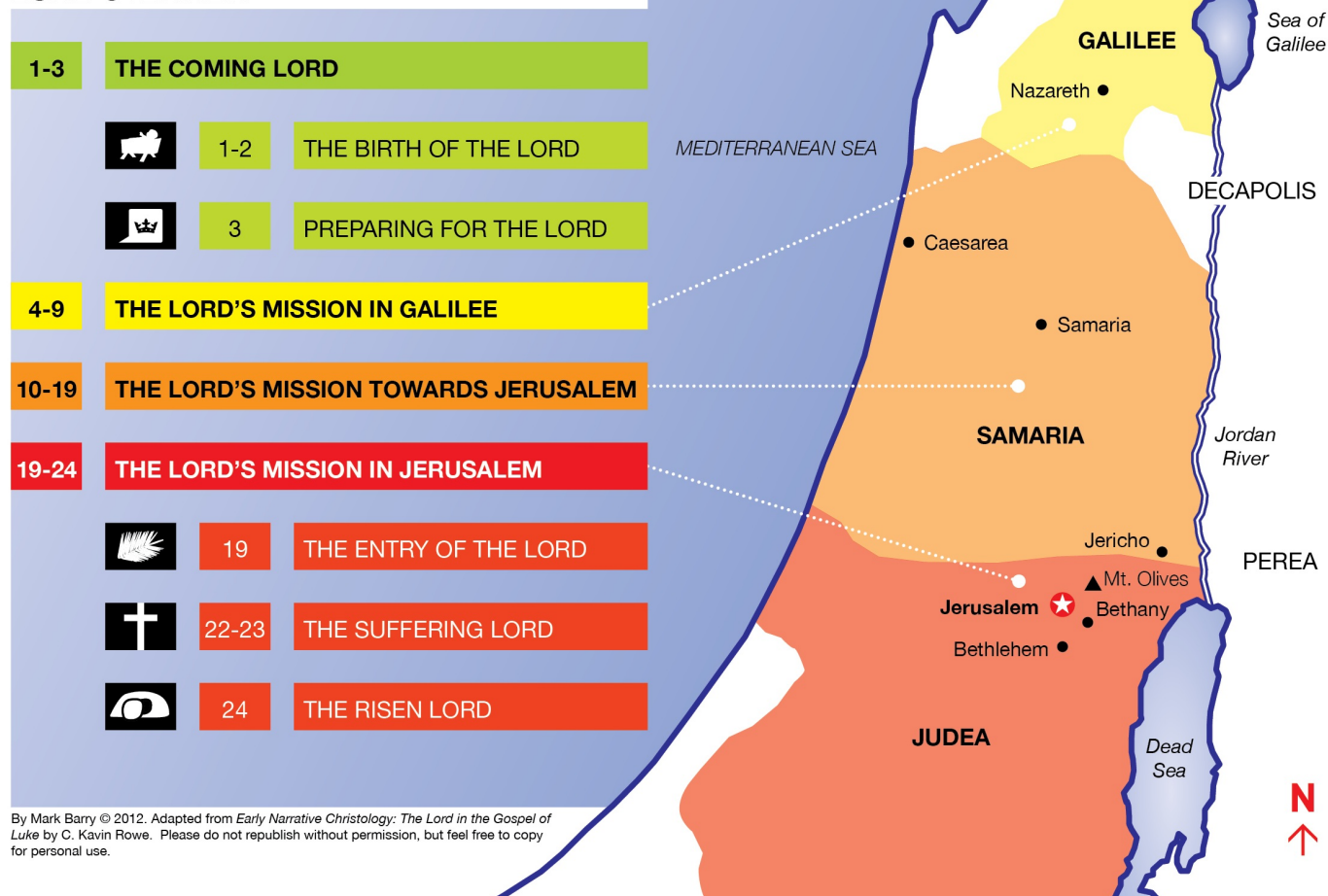
Luke Chart #2						
Presenting Jesus as the Son of Man						
	Preface	Announced and Appearing	Ministering and Serving	Instructing and Submitting	Resurrected and Commissioning	
Description		"Jesus, the Nazarene...a prophet..."	"...mighty in deed..."	...mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." (24:19)		
Passage	Luke 1:1–4	Luke 1:5–4:13	Luke 4:14–9:50	Luke 9:51–23:56	Luke 24	
Uniqueness	Unique	About 90% unique to Luke		About 60% unique to Luke		
Activity	Coming		Seeking		Saving	
Location	Bethlehem, Nazareth and Judæa		Galilee	Judæa and Perea	Jerusalem	
Time	About 30 years		1½ years	6 months	8 days	40 days
Theme	Jesus is the ideal Man, Who comes to save all humankind—Jew and Gentile alike.					
Key verse	Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (ESV; capitalized)					
Christ in Luke	Jesus is the Perfect God-man, who comes to offer salvation to all mankind.					

Copied from [Insight for Living](#); accessed November 21, 2018 (edited).

Most people believe the public ministry to take place over a period of 3–4 years (trips to Jerusalem are mentioned at least three times). This chart has that ministry squeezed down to 2 years. At this point, I am agnostic as to the time frame. 3 or 4 years is a very short amount of time, when Jesus public ministry is compared to that of any religious figure. The brevity of His public ministry is remarkable, and from a human standpoint, it is a wonder we know anything about Him at all. Two years would be even more remarkable.

Luke Overview Map (a graphic); from <https://visualunit.me/2012/02/06/luke-overview/> ; accessed November 21, 2018.

LUKE OVERVIEW



Having a map as a reference is very important. One of the amazing things about the ministry of our Lord is, He proclaimed His message to a very small population over a relatively small region.

The area that Jesus walked in and ministered to was somewhat smaller than the state of New Jersey, the 5th smallest state in the United States.

Lesson 015: Luke 1:1 Luke Introduces His Biography of Jesus

His intention was to devise a calendar to begin with Jesus' birth as A.D. 1. Using both the Gregorian and the adjusted Julian calendars, Dionysius calculated backwards to the birth of Jesus, placing His birth at A.D. 1 (there is no year 0²⁰). No one apparently seems to know how exactly he calculated his calendar, but he appears to have established the consulship of Probius Junior as A.D. 525. This particular dating method was later

²⁰ A.D. and B.C. do not look like the number line which we learned in school.

popularized by the Venerable Bede of Durham, England in the 8th century. At some point in time, it became clear that Dionysus' reasoning was defective (or, perhaps the fault is with the historical documents upon which he depended); but, by that time, the calendar had been accepted.²¹ Even though there are other calendars established in the world with different start dates, this calendar appears to be almost universally used (I would think that the influence of the Catholic church, followed by the increase and power of the British Empire probably had a lot to do with that).

The abbreviation B.C. stands for *before Christ*; and A.D. means *anno Domini*, which means *in the year of the Lord*. Apparently those abbreviations/designations can be attributed to Dionysus.

At the time that the book of Luke opens, the people of Israel are back in the land, but they are no longer an autonomous nation. At the time that the birth of Jesus, Rome is the sovereign power, and Herod the Great, an Iduemaeen (Idumea is south of Judæa), is the governor/administrator/local ruler over Judæa. The people of Israel are quite upset that they no longer have sovereignty over themselves and the land (even though that had been the case for hundreds of years), and they often expressed their opposition to Herod and to Rome. Quite often, the Jews of that era were unreasonable in their opposition; and Rome and Herod could be unforgiving in their response to either.

Throughout the history of man, Scripture was being recorded. I believe that the book of Genesis was passed along orally—and with perfect accuracy—up to the time of Joseph or Moses. The people of Israel living in Egypt knew the book of Genesis and possibly the book of Job. However, their depth of knowledge is hard to ascertain. In any case, when someone in Exodus mentions the name of Abraham (or someone else whose history is found in Genesis), no one raises their hands and asks, “Now, this Abraham character, who is he again?” Now, in case you think, “Well, everyone knows their ancestors;” tell me again how many of your ancestors do you know from 400 years ago?

When Moses came on the scene, there were writing materials common and in use, and God required Moses to record their interactions and His words (as we read several times in the 4 books of Moses). From that point on, Scripture was recorded with whatever writing materials were available at the time; and the words of Scripture were thereafter preserved, generation after generation.

A class of people known as scribes came about. They were dedicated to the preservation of God's words. One thing which occurred immediately is, manuscripts which were completed were not simply preserved, but copies made and those copies distributed. So, from the earliest time, the text for these manuscripts became fixed. That is, someone could not come along, 300 years later and decide, “I really don't like Psalm 2, so I am going to make some changes in it so that it better reflects my philosophy.” The problem is, there

²¹ From [Biblical Archeology.org](http://BiblicalArcheology.org); Monte Shanks, Ph.D. on WordPress; and [NC Register.com](http://NCRegister.com); both accessed January 18, 2019. However, quite a number of other web pages were accessed which presented the same essential information.

are dozens—and perhaps hundreds—of manuscripts out there of Psalm 2, so even if someone believed that they needed to change to text in some way, there were too many witnesses available to the original text so that no one could make wholesale changes to existing manuscripts. The manuscripts were respected that much, as to keep multiple copies throughout the Jewish world.

There were other kinds of checks on the text of existing Scripture which we may discuss in the future.

We begin with Luke 1:1. I will be using the ESV; capitalized (which is simply the ESV where I have capitalized the pronominal references to God). Sometimes I will insert explanatory information into these verses, placed in brackets.

Luke wrote long complex sentences which often continued for many verses (many translators present vv. 1–4 as a single sentence). He is a man with long, complex thoughts.

Luke 1:1 **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= *to arrange in order*] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...**

In the first verse, we find that Luke is an intellectual with a writing style that is the polar opposite of John's (whose Greek is deceptively simple). For instance, in the Book of John it takes 3 verses until you come upon a 3-syllable word. The first word in Luke 1:1 is a 4 syllable word, and in this first verse, there are 2 5-syllable words and 1 7-syllable word. So we know that we are dealing with an accomplished intellect here.

Whereas, the first 4 verses of Luke make up a single sentence; each verse in John is a single sentence.

The second verb in this verse is the aorist middle (deponent) infinitive of *anatassomai* (ἀνατάσσομαι) [pronounced *an-at-AS-som-ahee*], which means, *to put together, to arrange [in order], to compose*. Strong's #392. The aorist tense can refer to a point in time or to several points of time put together. The infinitive is often used to refer to purpose. A deponent middle voice is middle in form but it might be active in meaning. Luke took information from a variety of sources and attempted to weave all of that into a coherent, cohesive narrative which is *arranged in order*. He did this over a period of time in successive intervals.

Twice in this passage, Luke will make a reference to order; and I believe that he is referring to chronological order. Luke is a Greek, and I believe that the Greek culture emphasizes order and chronology more than the Hebrew culture did (the other writers of the New Testament are all Hebrew men). I am not saying that the Hebrew writers of Scripture ignored chronology, but there are many sections in the first third of Exodus where the organization is not always chronological. In fact, I can think of two instances off the top of

my head where Moses goes back and writes more about an incident already recorded, providing additional information on that incident along with a different perspective.²²

In this first verse, Luke says that many have already attempted to record an historic narrative. It is my thought that Luke had copies of Matthew and Mark, and that he drew upon those historical narratives when compiling his own. However, he says that *many* have attempted to write such a biography already. So, my guess is, he has some additional written material from others—perhaps incomplete or poorly written. No one could really put together a good narrative on his own unless he was a disciple with Jesus from the beginning; so, this would seem to limit the number of eyewitness biographers to 11 men. Jesus had other followers besides the 12 disciples, but we do not know how many of those were with Jesus for most of His public ministry. The term *disciple* means *student, follower*.

But, instead of being a follower of the Lord, Luke probably never met Him. Nevertheless, Luke was motivated to write a biography of Jesus. Now, Luke does not present himself as an eyewitness to these events (not in his gospel, anyways). Being a Greek, he may have knowledge of our Lord's ministry, but it is likely that he never actually saw Jesus Christ. Luke probably believed in Him after His death, resurrection and ascension.

Luke only mentions himself a few times in the book of Acts, and does not make himself the focal point of any of the recorded history.

Luke, because of his relationship with Paul and with the early disciples of Jesus, was able to *pick the brains* of those who were eyewitnesses or men who knew eyewitnesses of the life of Christ.

Luke 1:1 **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...**

I believe by these words that Luke is acknowledging that a number of people have put together narratives already—complete and partial—of the life of Christ. We have access to 4 such narratives, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Luke had the biographies written by Matthew and Mark; but John wrote his gospel many years later—possibly after A.D. 90. It is my guess, based upon these introductory words that Luke had other manuscripts as well.

What people observed at the feet of our LORD was no doubt amazing; and some must have realized just how incredible His short ministry was. As a result, I think that there may have been several other biographies, or partial biographies, that were begun, but never completed.

²² His first meeting with Pharaoh appears to be written about in two separate chapters; and his final meeting with Pharaoh also appears to have been written about in two separate chapters.

The word *many* implies that Luke has access to more written material than Matthew and Mark's gospels. What these many people have done is the aorist active indicative of *epicheireō* (ἐπιχειρέω) [pronounced *ehp-ee-khi-REH-oh*], which means, *to put the hand to; to take in hand, undertake, attempt; to go about*. Strong's #2021. The aorist tense can refer to a point in time or to several points in time. Someone reflects upon their interaction with Jesus, or something that they saw Him do, and they write about it—they know that it is important and that nothing like this has ever happened before. However, they just are not writers; they do not do research. They write 12 pages over a week's time, and then are never able to pick it up again.

Then one day, this Gentile Luke, who is traveling with Paul, is interviewing people who knew Jesus. So, these unfinished accounts written during this period of time, are also handed to him. This is most likely the way that we should understand *many have attempted to compose a narrative of...*

The concept of research in order to compile a historical narrative of anything was not a brand new concept. Titus Flavius Josephus (A.D. 37–100) was an historian of this same era, and the history which he wrote was also researched and compiled (however, he copied a great deal of the Jewish history right out of the Old Testament Bible).

Is Luke the first person to write an historical narrative by gathering information from eyewitnesses? I doubt it; but the best history is written by an historian who makes every effort to secure the testimony of those who were there. This is what Luke did.

Lesson 016: Luke 1:1–2

Luke Introduces His Biography of Jesus 2

We are just completing Luke 1:1; there are a few more things to be said about this verse:

Luke 1:1 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...*

We are told that many have undertaken to arrange in order a narrative of the life of Jesus (interestingly enough, that Luke does not use the Lord's name until v. 31). In fact, the first 4 verses are the preface of Luke's book.

Luke refers to *us*, which would be the people with whom he is associated at the time of this writing. I would suggest that this is Luke and Paul but also people who actually were closely associated with Jesus (I would include in this group both Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene).

The final verb in v. 1 is *plêrophoreō* (πληροφορέω) [pronounced *play-rof-or-EH-oh*], which means 1) *to bear or bring full, to make full; 1a) to cause a thing to be shown to the full; 1a1) to fulfil the ministry in every part; 1b) to carry through to the end, accomplish; 1b1) things that have been accomplished; 1c) to fill one with any thought, conviction, or*

inclination; 1c1) to make one certain, to persuade, convince one; 1c2) to be persuaded, persuaded, fully convinced or assured; 1c3) to render inclined or bent on. Strong's #4135.

This verb is a perfect passive participle. Unlike the Hebrew, where there are essentially two verb tenses (perfect and imperfect), the Greek has more than a half dozen tenses. The perfect tense in the Greek is something which has occurred in the past, but with results which continue on forever (this is *not* the same as the perfect tense in Hebrew). The passive voice means that God worked out His divine good from within His people.

We have three primary meanings for this verb which are applicable here: *to have been accomplished, to have been fulfilled* and *to have been fully persuaded*. It appears to be just about impossible to find an English word which conveys all that is being said here. Luke is recording the things which were *accomplished* [by God] amongst his group (the other apostles); but these are things wherein Jesus Christ *fulfilled* the Law and the prophecies about Him (which was observed by many eyewitnesses); and these are things of which Luke and his associates *have been fully convinced, fully persuaded*. That is, he and his associates are certain that these events took place just as described. They have no doubts about that.

So that you are fully convinced of this understanding of the verb, let me give you 3 translations of this verse, bolding the translation of this particular verb:

Luke 1:1 (Concordant Literal Version): **Since, in fact, even many take in hand to compose a narrative concerning the matters of which we are fully assured among ourselves,...**

Luke and the other disciples (= students) and Apostles (= ultimate leaders in the first century) were certain of all the events which took place; and the accuracy of the historical narrative and the teaching of Jesus are both found in this book.

Luke 1:1 (A Voice in the Wilderness) **Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us,...**

Jesus was more than a teacher. The Old Testament was filled with things predicted about the Messiah to come, and He fulfilled these Old Testament prophecies (most, but not all of them; the Lord fulfilled 1st Advent prophecies but not 2nd Advent prophecies²³).

Luke 1:1 (English Majority Text Version) **Since many have attempted to arrange a narrative about the matters which have taken place among us,...**

The information recorded in the book of Luke were things which actually took place, and Luke has spoken to many eyewitnesses who have assured him of the accuracy of this biography. Luke is assuring his reader that all of this really happened.

²³ Jesus' 1st Advent is His life on earth as Luke will describe. His 2nd Advent is when He will return in the future (described in Rev. 4–22).

For all we know, Luke may have used this verb purposely, as it laid out 3 things which he wanted to say; and he only needed one verb to say these 3 things. If this is the case, we know that we are dealing with a wonderful intellect here.

So Luke is endeavoring here to compose in chronological order an historical narrative. Of the 4 gospels, his is the book to look to if you want to know what happened when (at least for the first and final thirds of the book). In the other 3 gospels, although the general order is there (our Lord's life, public ministry, death, burial, resurrection and ascension); when it comes to His public ministry, we cannot assume the events of, say, John 4 immediately follows John 3, and immediately precedes John 5 (nor do any of the other gospels make this claim).

On the other hand, there are clear deviations from a precise chronology in Luke's gospel (*gospel* means *good news*, by the way). The account of John the baptizer in Luke 2 is not entirely in chronological order with regards to Luke 3. We end this narrative about John; Luke looks ahead to what happens to John in the future (beyond the time of Luke 3), before we begin following Jesus. So, the narrative about John the baptizer is in order, chronologically; but only with regards to itself. Luke, when writing, simply wanted to take the events in John's life out to a certain point (that point being, when John was arrested).

Also, the middle of the book of Luke emphasizes teaching far more than it emphasizes a series of chronological events. Placing the Lord's teaching into some sort of chronological order would be quite difficult, as He appears to have taught the same concepts on different occasions (compare Matthew's sermon on the mount with Luke's sermon on the plain).

Bearing these things in mind, the book of Luke breaks down into three parts: the first third of Luke will begin in the days of Herod before the birth of Christ, and follow a series of chronological events, from before the Lord's birth into His public ministry; the middle third will be the Lord's teachings, almost separated from time; and the final third of Luke's book will resume a chronological approach to the end of the Lord's public ministry. The Lord's teachings in the first and third portions of Luke seem to be more tied to specific events.

So far, we have covered the first verse of Luke:

Luke 1:1 **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile [= to arrange in order] a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,...**

Others in the past have attempted to develop narratives of what has taken place in the lives of Luke and the people with whom he is associated. These accomplishments are all related to the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the subject of this book (one might argue that Jesus is the subject of every book of the Bible).

Luke 1:2 **...just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers [= servants, subordinates, attendants] of the word have delivered them to us,**

There were eyewitnesses to these events, which would have included the Apostles, but also other disciples who followed the LORD (perhaps not full time); and many who were positive towards His ministry. No doubt, there were those who gravitated towards the Lord at various times; and, perhaps when He was ministering in their region.

There were others who are called ministers or servants of the Word here. They began as disciples and they *became* servants of the Word, who spoke of these things from the very beginning. Unlike every other religious figure in history, Jesus had a *very* short public ministry and He never wrote a religious treatise, a religious philosophy, or an autobiography. It is the testimony of the Lord's followers which we study, which testimony includes the words of Jesus.

As a result of his association with Paul, Luke had found himself in touch with many firsthand and secondhand witnesses (a secondhand witness knows and speaks to someone who saw the Lord's ministry with their own eyes).

There were those who became servants of the Word, indicating that they dedicated themselves to the teaching of the LORD's words. At that period of time, there would have been thousands of people acquainted with Jesus, either directly or through their own associations.

Throughout the Roman empire, I would guess that a considerable number of people either knew or had interacted with an eyewitness to a portion of the public ministry of Jesus; or, at the very least, had an associate who knew eyewitnesses to the LORD's ministry. The testimony of these eyewitnesses appears to be quite consistent.

Now, by the time the Luke writes his gospel, Jesus' earthly ministry is long over with. Most estimate that Luke wrote his gospel after the late 60's, and Jesus would have been executed around A.D. 33. So, at minimum, 2 or 3 decades had passed since the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. A great deal takes place during those decades (some of which, Luke will record in the book of Acts).

We do not really know *when* exactly Luke decided upon this undertaking. Luke is specifically named thrice in the Bible, each time by Paul (Col. 4:14 2Tim. 4:11 Philemon 24), which are letters written around A.D. 60. Interestingly enough, he does not speak of himself in the book of Acts, but that does not mean that he was not in attendance to the events recorded. If Paul speaks of Luke in 60 A.D., then I would guess that their association had to go back at least a decade or so. The book of Acts takes us from 33–62 A.D. Luke uses the word *we* in Acts 16:10, (see also vv. 11–13, 16) which places him in the time frame which I had suggested earlier (that is, with Paul circa 50 A.D.).

Given that time frame, most or all of the disciples would still be alive while Luke and Paul are traveling about. Jesus's disciples had spread out into the world and no doubt, some were in far off places. But, during Luke's time, he no doubt came into contact with many who sat under the LORD's ministry and who personally viewed His life.

Skeptics have accused the gospels of being fantasies, being made up, or exaggerated. There are at least 5 fundamental problems with this: (1) People do not become *legends* after a few decades, where a false biography outshines the true events. This generally requires several centuries. (2) The biographers of Jesus not only saw or knew someone who saw the events of the life of Jesus; but the gospels are in general agreement on most everything (there are a few times when their accounts must be reconciled). (3) There are 4 different biographies of Jesus, written at different time, under different circumstances and in different places. Each of these biographies has its own flavor. Nevertheless, these biographies are in agreement about Who Jesus is and what He did. (4) The disciples who wrote these biographies of Jesus did not receive wealth or fame or a better life for writing them; the disciples were persecuted and eventually, all of them were killed for their faith (except for John the Apostle, who was banished). (5) The 1st century was a time when many books and letters were written. There are historians who are alive during this era. However, what we do not have are books written at this time entitled *Contra Luke* (or, *Contra Matthew*). That is, no one wrote a book which provided a contrary view to the 4 biographies of Jesus. Such a book could easily be written by an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the author could write, "I attended many of Jesus' sermons, but I never saw Him do any miracles of healings. That is a clear exaggeration." But no one wrote any books or pamphlets with this message (a message which would have received full-throated support from Rome, which tried for a long time to tamp down Christianity).

After having all of these contacts in his life, Luke must have decided, at some point, *I should write this down*. We have no idea how much time passed from the idea of writing a history to the completion of his gospel (and later, the book of Acts).

Luke 1:2 ...just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers [= servants, subordinates, attendants] of the word have delivered them to us,

The end of v. 2 is somewhat confusing—who or what is being delivered to Luke and his associates? Let's look at a different translation:

Luke 1:1–2 Your Excellency Theophilus: Since so many people have undertaken the task of compiling a narrative of events that have happened among us, [that is, people] who were ministers of the word and original eyewitnesses [of these events], and who passed them on to us;... (AUV)

Luke 1:1–2 Since many have undertaken to set in order a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word delivered them to us,... (WEB)

What was delivered to Luke and others were these narratives which others had written down. This suggests how Luke became involved in writing his gospel. He is traveling about with Paul, and they are interacting with a variety of believers; and, from time to time they meet people who actually heard the Lord teach, and they wrote some things down. But, they were not sure what to do with these writings, so, when Paul and Luke and others came to their city, they would share these things with them. At some point in time, Paul

and Luke had become such a repository of information, that Luke decided that he needed to organize this material and to write it all down in an organized fashion. No doubt, both Luke and Paul have heard a variety of stories about the Lord; and saw writings about Him. At some point, Luke thought, “I really ought to organize this information.”

Luke reveals that he uses both primary and secondary sources in order to compile his gospel. A primary source is a person who was there and saw the events take place. A secondary source did not see the events, but he spoke to someone who did. Generally speaking, you will have a more accurate historical narrative if you talk to someone who saw the events take place; as opposed to interviewing someone who talked to someone, who talked to someone else, who saw these things occur. An *eyewitness* is someone who saw the actual events take place. A *minister (servant, subordinate, attendant) of the Word* is someone who is involved in teaching the truth of God. Such a one may have witnessed the events and maybe he did not. However, he is closely associated with those who saw the events unfold before their own eyes. These two sets of people transmitted this information to Luke or to those with whom he was closely associated. Therefore, this even allows for tertiary sources to have contributed to Luke’s gospel.

Bear in mind, there are two factors at work when writing Scripture. There is the human side, where Luke, using his vocabulary, his experiences, his thoughts, his memories, his literary style, records his gospel. However, Luke is *moved along* by the Holy Spirit. The function of the Holy Spirit in the writings of Luke assures us that what Luke writes is accurate information, and his words, while being fully his, are inspired by God.

As a new believer, I must admit, I had a lot of difficulty trusting in the power of the Word of God. I continually wanted to prove to those who would listen to me that the Word of God was the Word of God. However, as I have aged spiritually, I have come to realize that, the Word of God is able to reach into the soul of a person and touch them far better than my clever arguments. Now, if someone needs some logical convincing, I can do that; but I rarely lead with that. The greater power is God’s Word.

Lesson 017: Luke 1:1–3

Luke Writes the Biography of Jesus

This is what we have studied so far:

Luke 1:1–2 **Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word have delivered them to us,...**

Many people have taken it upon themselves to record a history of the early church, which has its foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Apparently, these accounts were actually brought to Paul and Luke and, apparently at some point, Luke assumed responsibility for these writings.

You will note that I have made one slight change in the ESV—can you see it and can you see how it changes your understanding of this passage? The little change that I made was, I capitalized the word *Word*.

Keeping that in mind, let me change it again:

Luke 1:1–2 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of Jesus the Christ [= the Word = Messiah] have delivered them [their writings, their accounts, their recollections] to us,...*

What were people eyewitnesses of? They were eyewitnesses to the Living Word of God; they were eyewitnesses to the public ministry of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is the Living Word of God (John 1:1–3, 14).

“He came into my city. He healed a man there that I know had been lame for all of his life. Let me describe this incident to you...” And such a written account was given to Luke as he traveled about with the Apostle Paul. Luke was not actually a witness to any of these events which he describes in his gospel; but he has talked to perhaps dozens of people who were. There were believers who came up to him and handed him a recollection of what they experienced; or they came up to him and said, “I am so glad you guys are telling everyone about Jesus. Please let me tell you what I saw with my very own eyes.”

Luke 1:3a *...it seemed good to me also,...*

Hearing the stories of all the people that they met; reading their accounts; confirming what they knew about Jesus. It seemed good to Luke to compile an account or a narrative of these events. Such an act—the creation of the gospel of Luke—would be divine good.

At some point in Luke’s life, while he is on the road with Paul; he had just finished speaking with some disciples who saw Jesus perform some miracles; or he had read yet another account of an event in the Lord’s life or a transcription of a sermon the Lord had given, and it suddenly strikes Luke—*I need to write all of this down in a cohesive coherent narrative; I need to compile a narration of the Lord’s life!*

Now, stop for a moment, and switch gears in your thinking: what was happening politically during Luke’s time? Had an emperor declared another anti-Christian edict? Had some ruler grabbed up a number of Christians and killed them? We don’t know, but whatever the political scene was during the time of Luke is unimportant to us. We are presently studying the Gospel of Jesus Christ as written by Luke the physician. What are the names of the politicians during the time of Luke and what things did they propose? Most of us would admit that we just don’t know. We might be able to find out some information today through googling; but, you know what is far more important than that? Luke’s biography of Jesus the Christ. This is how you can compare divine good to human good. What we need to know in the time that we live is Luke’s gospel. What we don’t need to know at this time? Who were the prominent leaders in Jerusalem, in Judæa, in Rome. We don’t need

to know what they thought, said or did. If and when we need to know that information, Luke will give it to us.

Hundreds of millions of people today know the book of Luke, the biography of Jesus written by Luke; and many of them have studied or read this book. How many people in the world today know about the politicians and what they did and said during Luke's life? Maybe 10,000 or so have some extra-Biblical knowledge of some of these men. Do you see the difference between divine good (the writing of the book of Luke) and human good (the things accomplished by politicians during the life of Luke)? Divine power is far more awesome than human power.

It is so easy to get wrapped up in today's political scene; and the current president is nothing if not interesting and a spectacle. But, what is more important than anything that he does or says? The Word of God; the study of the Word of God. What our current president does will help to preserve our freedom awhile longer; but either in the next election or the election after that, someone will come up through the ranks and reduce our freedoms. We can be guaranteed of that. What is more important than someone like that? The Word of God and the study of the Word of God.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that you should be apolitical or that you should not vote. We live in a country where we as citizens have been given a great deal of freedom; and with that comes responsibility. It is a good idea to be informed; it is a good idea to understand what the Bible teaches about the laws of divine establishment (those laws which apply to all mankind); it is a good idea to apply what you learn from the Bible to your life (which includes how you process current events, the media, and the words and deeds of politicians). So there is nothing wrong with being informed and voting; but this should not be your life. Your life should be the Word of God. Politics are temporal, and they may change in the near future in a way that we like or in a way that we don't like. But what does not change? Jesus Christ. **He is the same yesterday, today, or forever.** (Heb. 13:8) It is far better to be intimately related to what is eternal rather than to that which is temporal.

Luke 1:3a-b **...it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past,...**

Luke was quite interested in all of the events which had transpired. This is an important thing to understand when it comes to your spiritual gift. God did not give you a spiritual gift that you will hate. Luke is very interested in all that happened before he came onto the scene. Who Jesus was, what He said and what He did—these things are very interesting to Luke. In fact, he is so interested in these things that he wants to compile a biography of Jesus based upon his interaction with a dozen or so people. This is something that he wants to do.

Personally, I like getting up in the morning, turning on the computer, and focusing on whatever passage of Scripture is before me that day. That is what interests me; that is what animates me. You may not have the slightest interest in anything like that.

Nevertheless, you still have a spiritual gift (or two); and it will be something that you enjoy doing and will feel fulfilled doing.

There is no suggestion that Luke himself ever personally witnessed Jesus Christ during His ministry or saw the risen Lord. However, all that had transpired fascinated Luke. We do not know Luke's age or his previous associations. He was very likely alive during our Lord's public ministry, but we do not know where Luke was, whether he knew about Jesus at this time, or any other pertinent association or lack thereof.

It sounds very much as if Luke—wherever he lived—was aware of Jesus and of Jesus traveling about and of His teaching. He was likely aware of the miracles and signs that Jesus was said to have done. At some point, this became more than just an interest of Luke's; it became his passion. So, Luke has this life that he led; and, at the same time, Jesus is teaching in Galilee and in Judæa. Luke hears about this, and it interests him. And, at some point after the public ministry of Jesus, Luke is also taken into the inner circle of Paul and others.

I have been listening to an old series taught by the previous pastor of Berachah Church (R.B. Thieme, Jr.), and he talked about a Sacramento Bible conference during a period of time when I lived in Sacramento. This would have taken place around 1968 or 1969, when I was in college (Bob was in peak teaching form in that era). It is fascinating to hear his report of this conference, and what all occurred; as this all took place several years before I was saved and before I found out about Bob's ministry. I would have loved to have heard his conference, in retrospect; to piece together what was being taught at that time; and connect it to my life at that time, which was certainly going in a very different and decidedly wrong direction.

Luke may have possessed the same sort of curiosity, having been alive during our Lord's ministry, but possibly having a much different attitude about Jesus Christ at the time of His ministry (or, perhaps, no attitude, for that matter). We do not know what Luke thought about Jesus during the time of His public ministry. So far, I have not seen any clues.

And as we speak of Luke's thoughts of the Lord during His public ministry (if any), I would like you to think about the different aspects of the Lord's ministry. He performed many miracles and healings; but how do you think these things were perceived when spoken by a guy, who knew a guy, who knew a guy who was there? Jesus performed bona fide, miraculous healings; but this does not mean that someone who heard about those healings second-hand or third-hand was convinced of anything. So Luke probably heard about such things happening; but that does not mean that he heard these things and suddenly believed in the Lord. For all we know, he may have scoffed when hearing about an itinerant preacher who also healed people.

In any case, at the time of writing his gospel, Luke is likely a mature believer in Jesus Christ and he has a driving interest in our Lord's life and His ministry. With this new attitude and focus in his life, Luke would likely have a strong desire, at this point in time, to put together a careful account of all that took place in the life of Jesus. Similarly, I have

a strong desire to carefully examine Luke's account of what took place; and hopefully, you have a strong desire to understand it as well.

Luke 1:3c ...to write an accurate [and] consecutive [account] for you,...

What Luke would write would be both accurate and consecutive. The ESV treats these words as adjectives, but they are actually adverbs which describe the way that Luke would write this narrative.

The first adverb is *akribôs* (ἀκριβῶς) [pronounced *ak-ree-BOHÇ*], which means, *exactly, accurately, diligently*. Strong's #199. The second is *kathexês* (καθεξῆς) [pronounced *kath-ex-ACE*], which means, *one after another, successively, in order*. Strong's #2517.

So Luke's intent is to write accurately and diligently; and also to write successive and in order. In short, Luke wants to write an accurate biography of Jesus; and he wants it to be in order—which we would interpret as being in chronological order. As discussed earlier, Luke sometimes will follow out a set of events chronologically; but then, in the next chapter, double back to some things which happened earlier. To give you a specific example, Luke will tell us about the ministry of John the baptizer (or John the Herald). We will follow his ministry from the beginning and Luke will continue followed his ministry up to the point where John is arrested. At that point, Luke will stop and then go back a few months or a year and pick up events in the life of Jesus which took place before John's arrest.

By Luke's own hand, as carried along by God the Holy Spirit (2Peter 1:21), this historical narrative would be accurate and generally chronological. Many translated the descriptive words found here as adjectives, but v. 3b is properly ...to write accurately and chronologically to you...

Luke 1:3d ...most excellent Theophilus,...

Luke directs this gospel (and the book of Acts), to someone called Theophilus, whose name is found only here and in Acts 1:1. However, Theos is *God* and philos is *friend*; so Luke is addressing his two historical accounts to one who is a friend of God. Although there was, no doubt, a person by the name *Theophilus* (the Greek name is actually *Theophilos*), Luke's gospel is apparently meant for anyone who is a *friend of God*. We have this status positionally once we believe in Jesus Christ; and we have this status experientially when we grow and mature spiritually.

Because Luke addresses the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts to *Theophilus*, where means *friend of God*, let's examine a few possibilities: (1) There is an actual person with this name with whom Luke had a close relationship. (2) There is an actual person who has adopted this name, with whom Luke as a close relationship. Or (3) perhaps this is a biography written for anyone who sees himself as a *friend of God*. I lean toward the first or second option, that there was a man with the actual name *Theophilus*, whether that name be given to him at birth or at his second birth. Perhaps he was given that name and perhaps he, having believed in Jesus, took it upon himself.

Does this leave an opening for this letter to be for all those who love God? No doubt, even though this is in the singular (Luke does not address this to *friends of God*). Bear in mind that, when someone is teaching to a group, it is often quite effective to teach to a particular person in that group or to refer to them directly in some way.

In fact, let me suggest this: Luke is writing to a particular person who has this name; but God the Holy Spirit wants Luke's gospel to be available to anyone who is a friend of God.

It is Luke's description of *Theophilus* that suggests that he is a real person. He calls Theophilus *most excellent*. This is actually a single adjective *kratistos* (κράτιστος) [pronounced *KRAHT-ihs-toss*], which means, *most honorable; mightiest, strongest, noblest, most illustrious, best, most excellent*; used in addressing men of prominent rank or office. Strong's #2903. This seems hardly the right word to use when addressing a non-specific group of believers who might end up reading Luke's account of the Lord's life.

Lesson 018: Luke 1:1–4

A biography for Theophilus

So far, this is what we have studied:

Luke 1:1–3a *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past,...*

Luke's actual process here is fascinating to me. I sit down before a keyboard, and I can go back to what I wrote 2 months ago and revise it. Something can occur to me today, which affects what I wrote 6 months ago, and I can go back and insert a few paragraphs here or there; or correct an error of opinion or interpretation; or simply tweak something so that I express an idea more accurately. None of this is burdensome to me. I feel blessed that God has given me this time to study and examine His Word.

On the other hand, what Luke did, from a writer's perspective, is nothing less than amazing. He has talked to a dozen or so people, many of them disciples of Jesus Christ. He may have before him copies of the manuscripts of Matthew and Mark. Maybe a few men have written him a letter or two—or maybe he has 5 or 10 recollections or unfinished manuscripts sitting before him. Yet, somehow, Luke is going to sit down, and deftly integrate all he knows and all of the written material which he may have access to, and write, in probably a single draft, this book we have begun to study. Because of the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, we know what he writes will be accurate in all details; and we know by his own hand that this historical narrative is going to be laid out, more or less, chronologically.

Luke 1:3b-c *...to write an accurate [and] consecutive [account] to you, most excellent Theophilus,...*

Luke, at some point in his ministry, having followed the Lord's ministry for a period of time, and having received the accounts of many others in his travels, decided that it was time to try to put this information down into a cohesive, accurate and (mostly) chronological narrative and to deliver that narrative to Theophilus, who is likely an actual person. Theophilus was probably a fellow gentile believer, and these two narratives written by Luke (Luke and Acts) clearly establish the plan of God as extending to the gentiles.

Given that his name meant *friend of God*, I suspect that he may have named himself that rather than been born with it. Also, given the meaning of that name, it is reasonable to assume that God the Holy Spirit meant this narrative for us as well.

Luke's approach here is fascinating, as Luke appears to be writing this for the private viewing or private library of Theophilus. Did Luke realize that he was writing a biography which would stand for all time, or did he simply want a close friend to know what had happened between A.D. 30 and 60 (give or take)? 2000 years later, this first book of Luke would be called, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Luke 1:1–3 *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,...*

The beginning of the book of Luke follows the early history of Jesus and His early ministry. Around Luke 11, Luke then begins to list a plethora of teachings and parables. Perhaps they were tied still to a set of chronological events; but Jesus' teachings, in this second section of the book of Luke, overshadow the events taking place while Jesus is teaching. Those teachings really stand on their own. Then, at the very end of the book of Luke, the author picks back up with a chronological approach, following the final days of the Lord's public ministry. The first portion of Luke and the final portion are very likely presented in chronological order. In the middle of this, we might entitle this section *and the Lord taught this*.

When I put this information together myself, perhaps today, I painted the exterior of a house; perhaps on another day, I worked on my taxes; perhaps on another day, I went to the gym. All of that is irrelevant to the examination of Luke's biography of Jesus.

Similarly, there is going to be a great deal of Jesus' teaching recorded in the middle of this book, and the related events of His life at that time are, in many cases, irrelevant—that is, the teaching simply stands on its own. It is my opinion that, when Luke heard the Lord's teaching, that he was far more drawn to Jesus than when he heard about the Lord's miracles and healings (although, these are recorded as well).

Some of what Jesus taught had a clear and related context. We will study Luke 5, and there is an incident where Jesus forgives the sins of a paralyzed man. All of the events

surrounding that incident are very important, and lend themselves to what Jesus chose to teach at the time. However, this is not always the case.

Like many good teachers, Jesus often allowed a circumstance or a series of events about which everyone was aware guide His teaching. Consequently, the Lord would then begin teaching something, related to that circumstance or to those events. Because Jesus taught the truth, He could move towards the direction of that truth using things, events and customs around Him to get there.

However, there are many principles which Jesus taught which did not require a specific set of events as a setup.

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus taught the Mosaic Law, properly interpreting and applying it. Often Jesus would use the incorrect teachings of the pharisees as a kicking off point (the pharisees taught the Mosaic Law in a very legalistic way, and they often applied Jewish traditions). Jesus certainly taught about Himself as the Messiah, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies—although He was very careful in this regard. Sometimes when He taught about Himself, this was primarily to his chief disciples (to the 12 disciples). And, on rare occasions, Jesus taught some Church Age doctrines (this may be limited primarily to the Upper Room Discourse, which is only found in the book of John).

Luke has a purpose in writing Jesus' biography, which biography he addresses to Theophilus.

Luke 1:4 ...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.

To know here is the aorist active subjunctive of epignôskō (ἐπιγινώσκω) [pronounced *ehp-ihg-in-OHÇ-koh*], which means *to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly; to know accurately*. Strong's #1921. The aorist tense here surprises me. I would have expected a future tense here, as we are speaking of a point in the future when Theophilus will fully know with certainty the things which he has been taught. Or, perhaps the present tense, which indicates continuous action. But, the aorist tense refers to a point of time. Luke is assuming, from what I can tell, that Theophilus will receive this historical narrative and sit down and read it at successive points of time (this is known as the constative aorist). Each time Theophilus reads the words of Luke, he thoroughly understands that particular section.

The subjunctive mood is from whence we get the helping verb *may*. Theophilus' understanding will be dependent upon his volition. If he sits down with the Gospel According to Luke and carefully reads it, then he will have these knowledge gaps filled in. I used to be a math teacher and the biggest problem which I found were gaps in a person's knowledge of mathematics. Math is the sort of topic that one needs a thorough background in order to progress. When progressing logically through a mathematical concept or problem, if a child did not understand step #3, then that is where he remains stuck, even if I, as his teacher, am now explaining step #5. I might be doing a damn fine

job of explaining step #5, but if that student is back on step #3, my brilliant explanation is completely lost on him.

Bible doctrine is very similar. You must have a foundation upon which to build in order to progress in the Christian life. There are a number of topics which require a thorough treatment. Jesus Christ is our foundation, and we need to understand how we are saved (faith), why salvation is necessary (in order to satisfy the character of God), and what took place on the cross (Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins by taking these sins upon Himself and taking the punishment for them). These are fundamental to a believer, and soteriology—the study of salvation—fills up volumes of theological literature.

You may remember how you thought as a brand new believer; and you began to hear this, then you heard that, and already, you had 20 questions that you needed to have answered right then and there. And, if you studied further in the next few months, you might then have 40 unanswered questions (with only a handful of the original 20 questions actually answered).

At this point in my life, decades after I began to develop a long list of questions, I could not, for the life of me, tell you what any of my original questions were. But, I clearly remember having a truckload of such questions.

Luke 1:4 ...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.

Luke's purpose is so that Theophilus, friend of God, will fully and completely know with certainty the things which he has been taught. Luke's biography of Jesus will be a standard by which Theophilus can test whatever else he has heard.

Theophilus has been guided and taught accurate doctrine pertaining the Jesus Christ and the Church Age in which he finds himself. No doubt that Theophilus knew some things about the Lord; but, no doubt, Theophilus has some blanks in his knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Theophilus had certainly learned that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ and that, in order to have his fellowship restored with God, and to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he needed to name his sin (s) to God; and he knew the importance of Bible doctrine. However, when he have some questions about this or that portion of the Bible, we have a multitude of places where we can go to get our questions explained; but Theophilus did not have this. Jesus Christ lived, had a public ministry, died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again by God the Father and God the Holy Spirit; but Theophilus does not have a full history of His life and all the details pertaining thereto. Consequently, by this biography, Luke is going to fill in any blank spaces. This way, Theophilus would have a complete historical picture of the Lord.

Luke 1:4 ...that you may [fully] know with certainty the things you have been taught.

There is another important aspect of our foundation as growing believers: an understanding of the Bible—how we got it, why it is important, and why it is the Word of God. This is known theologically as Bibliology, another topic which fills volumes of literature. The more we know about the Bible, the greater is our confidence in God's Word. The more that I study the Bible, the more I am amazed that people do not believe in the Bible or who do not believe that it is the Word of God.

For most believers, and for some unbelievers, apologetics is an important study. *Why should we believe the Bible? Why is faith in Jesus Christ logical? How can God make sense?* Although there are many books on this topic, Josh McDowell writes one of the best, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*; a book so good that Josh has rewritten this same book a half-dozen times or more. I consider myself somewhat of an intellectual, and I do not have this inherent need to feel as if I am a part of a group or a movement. Therefore, after salvation, I approached Christianity with some skepticism, even though I had believed in Jesus Christ. If I was to believe this or that, I still wanted to be convinced. At the same time, I was not overly hard on Christian theology, because I also kept my mind active by continually asking, *okay, what makes more sense than this? What philosophy, science or religion can match Christianity?* So, along the way, I ran into some gaps and difficulties, but I could not point to another religion, philosophy or science which was superior or one that had more answers. In fact, the more I studied the Bible, including apologetics, the less the world had to offer me by way of an equivalent mode of thinking.

This historical narrative which Luke will lay down will allow Theophilus to fill in some of the blank spaces in his knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to have a full, complete knowledge, as well as confidence, in what he has been taught.

Here is what we have studied thus far:

Luke 1:1–4 **Your Excellency Theophilus: Since so many people have undertaken the task of compiling a narrative of events that have happened among us, [that is, people] who were ministers of the word and original eyewitnesses [of these events], and who passed them on to us; [and since] I have thoroughly investigated the entire series of events [myself], I felt it would be good for me also to write you an orderly account of them. Then you could know how reliable the information is that you have been told. (AUV)**

This translation puts Theophilus right up in front, as would be common for a letter today; or for the preface or dedication of a book. Luke is aware of many people who have started to compile a narrative of the events of the Lord's life—suggesting that he is speaking of more than Matthew and Mark. Some of these people are teachers of the Word; and some of them are actual eyewitnesses to the events that Luke will describe.

Many people have had momentous situations occurs in their lives, and, at one time, one might hear these words, "I ought to write a book." But, quite frankly, most people are not suited to write books. They are good starters, but they never finish. They have some good ideas about a series of incidents here, and some other things that happen elsewhere, but

they are unable to tie everything together into a cohesive whole. Some people are able to describe what happened, but when sitting down before a keyboard, nothing happens.

So Luke has taken these complete and incomplete written accounts, added them to the verbal testimony which others have given him, and he has personally investigated these matters—suggesting that, if anything seemed too farfetched, that Luke found other witnesses to confirm said story.

Luke has gone out of his way to combine all of these narratives into a single book, with the intent that it be accurate. Luke wants his friend Theophilus to be able to rely upon this information as being a true and accurate narrative of real events.

There is one more thing which I have left out, which is pertinent to Luke recording these events and providing a record of this to Theophilus: the revealing of divine information in such a way as to move those of the church away from the Jewish Age (and the distortions of the religious class) and towards the Church Age. The term for this is progressive revelation. The books of Luke and Acts will act as transitional books, where one begins in the Age of Israel, but, eventually finds himself in the midst of the Church Age. This takes place without Luke stopping to specifically define dispensational differences between the two ages.

God does not reveal Himself completely and fully all at once. In fact, some of His attributes and some of His thinking are developed over hundreds, if not, thousands of years. One of the most amazing things about Scripture is, there was not a complete systematic theology which could be written in A.D. 200 or 300. Once the text of the New Testament had become certain, a long time passed before every doctrine of Scripture was worked out.

This, in fact, is a marvelous conundrum for skeptics. Many skeptics believe that the church first had a set of doctrines to which they ascribed; and then they chose the books to canonize which were in line with their doctrines. But the canon of Scripture came first; and then came the development of systematic theologies.

Interestingly enough, the Catholic Church—which was, at the first, a marvelous institution—began to go awry, doctrinally speaking. Did they change the canon of Scripture to suit their new doctrines? No, not at all. The Catholic church began to make the Scriptures less and less assessable to the general public. As time progressed and the common language changed, the Scriptures were not brought up to date by the Catholic Church. In fact, the Catholic Church for all intents and purposes hid the Scriptures from their people. For centuries, the Catholic church kept using the Latin Scriptures, which only the clergy understood; the people did not.

What truly began the reformation is, more and more people got their hands on a Bible which was in their language (I have oversimplified this). Then they could read it for themselves and see where the Catholic Church had gone astray.

What's happening today in the Protestant churches? They are also straying from the truth of God, just as the Catholic Church did. In how many churches can you hear entire books taught from the pulpit? In how many churches, does the pastor propose to teach Systematic Theology over a period of 5 years? As we move further and further from the Word of God (despite having many dozens of excellent translations to use), our churches move further and further from the Word.

When man moved from the Age of the Gentiles to the Age of the Jews, this occurred virtually overnight. Nation Israel left Egypt, went into the desert, received the Law of God, and emerged from that desert to walk into the land of Canaan and to take it. In one or two generations, Israel went from being a nation of slaves to an independent nation with a very systematic approach to worship—and they had the complete Law of Moses as their nation's constitution.

During the time that Luke is writing, the very same thing is occurring. Over a period of less than 40 years, worship of the True God went from occurring quite naturally in Israel to occurring completely apart from nation Israel (even though many of the believers early on were Jews). What grew out of Paul's teachings (and the teachings of the other Apostles) was a whole new system of worship which was no longer centered in the Temple or upon meaningful symbolic rituals. Logically, there had to be a new system of worship because, before Jesus, the Scriptures all looked forward to Him; and after Jesus, the Scriptures and related worship looked back to Him.

The book of Luke puts us smack dab in the middle of these two great eras—the Age of Israel and the Church Age.

Lesson 019: Luke 1:5a

Herod the Great and his descendants

At this point, Luke ends his introduction, and launches us into the actual historical narrative. In modern literature, these first 4 verses would have been either the preface or the introduction to the book of Luke.

Luke 1:5a **In the days of Herod, king of Judea,...**

Before 586 B.C., Judah (the southern kingdom) was independently ruled by Jewish kings, descendants of David. But when Judah was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, that ended the independence of Israel. The Jewish people were eventually returned to the land—70 years later—but they were no longer an autonomous nation.

At least twice in the Lord's biography, Luke will set the secular historical stage for the events of His life.

There are about 6 different Herod's in history (all related) and as many as 5 of them are found in the Bible. The Herod of v. 5 is the *big dog*, so to speak, known as Herod the Great. The other Herod's are his sons and grandsons.

His life is a fascinating study. He rules over the Jews as a part of the Roman empire, although he is from Edom where his family was forcibly converted to Judaism. This makes Herod a Jew by religion, but he is not accepted as truly Jewish by the Hebrew people.

Edom, if you will recall, is at the southern tip of the Dead Sea, a region founded by Esau, Jacob's twin brother (recall that Jacob was a Jew and Esau was not; and that Esau was often a nicer person than Jacob).

Herod ruled over Palestine between 37–4 B.C., and actually did what he could to try to make things work with the Jews in Judah. He apparently built the Temple of Judea with his own money, where the Jews worshiped, yet they do not appear to give Herod any credit for this.

I have studied a variety of opinions on the Temple, and I have heard, over and over again, that the Temple was built twice: first by Solomon and then by Zerubbabel. I cannot tell you in how many places I have read about these two Temples. But Herod either built or fixed up the 2nd Temple; but it seems like Jewish historians refuse to give him any credit for this.

At the end of his life, Herod apparently suffered from mental problems (it is suggested that his body was riddled with venereal diseases), and the Herod whom most Christians view as a great villain (which he was at the end of his life) is not necessarily representative of Herod's entire life. However, as you may understand, there are things that you can do in your life—sometimes just one volitional choice—and you will be forever defined by that choice. I am not an apologist for Herod the Great; but it is important that you realize that there was more to him what we find in the Word of God.

For instance, we have had presidents in the past who are known for *Tear Down this wall*; one who admitted having lust in his heart, one who said, "Read my lips, no new taxes;" one who said, "The American people have a right to know if their president is a crook, and I am not a crook;" and one who said, "I did not have sex with that woman." For people who lived through those years, you know exactly who these presidents are (you may differ with me on what defined those men as president); but my point is, it can be a single quote, and that quote might be how almost everyone remembers the man. For some of you, those quotes virtually define the way that you remember that particular president—despite the fact that each of those presidents had a myriad of successes and failures, good and bad choices, which they made while in the oval office. The more you know about Richard Nixon, the more you might be angry about him being remembered for saying, "I am not a crook!" He was a very accomplished president, as were the others suggested (again, many of them had failures and successes throughout their lives). It should be obvious that the lives and presidency of these men can be dramatically colored by the quotes or incidents which I have suggested; whereas, the truth about their lives is far more complex.

The same is true of Herod. On the one hand, he will desire to kill Jesus as an infant, believing that this infant will take from Herod his kingdom. As a result of this paranoia, Herod will kill hundreds if not thousands of infants, hoping to protect his kingdom (by that

time, he is protecting his kingdom for his sons). What man, outside of a monster, could do such a thing?

However, earlier in his reign, Herod built/rebuilt the Temple for his people the Jews. He did not have to do that. He did not have to commit men and materials and time to such a massive project like that. He could have taken these same resources and made his own palace bigger and better. He could have told the Jewish people, "If you want to improve your Temple, then do it yourselves!" In fact, their opinion of him would like have not been any different.

It might be instructive to know a little about the history of Judæa at this time and how Herod the Great became ruler. Herod was born an Idumæan, which was an Arab group of people who were descendants of Esau, living in Edom, south of Judæa. However, not too long before Herod was born, the Hasmonæans, the nationalist party of the Jews, had conquered Idumæa and they made them all Jews—the males were circumcised, they were to follow Jewish customs and laws. So, Herod was brought up by religion a Jew. However, he was also the son of one of the smartest and wealthiest Idumæans, Antipater II. But, genetically speaking, Herod was descended from the wrong brother. Since he was descended from Esau, racially Herod was an Arab; had he been descended from Esau's twin brother Jacob, then Herod would have been Jewish by religion and by blood. Consequently, Herod would grow up conflicted; just as the Jews would have been conflicted about this group of Arabs.

Around 48 B.C., Julius Cæsar finds himself in Egypt, with too small an army, in somewhat of a jam. Herod, at 26 years old, raises an army and gets Cæsar and his small army safely out of Egypt, getting him out of this jam. Initially, it seemed like a smart move to be the friend of Julius Cæsar.

There continued to be civil unrest in the Rome (Cæsar was assassinated in 44 B.C.); while there was also civil unrest in Palestine. It appears that the family of Herod was in opposition to the Hasmonæans. Since Herod backing Cæsar did not work out well (given that Cæsar was assassinated), Herod financially backed Cassius, who allied himself with Brutus, and they fought against Octavius the grand nephew of Julius Cæsar (he adopted Octavius as his son), and Mark Anthony. Again, Herod had backed the wrong man. Roman leadership would fall to Octavius and Mark Anthony and not to Cassius or Brutus.

Despite backing the wrong man, Herod went boldly to Rome and spoke directly to Octavius, and said that he was a friend of Cassius and also a friend to the Roman empire; and he hoped to continue this friendship. Mark Anthony actually knew Herod as a youth and liked him. So Herod returned to Palestine, having solidified a friendship with Octavius and renewed his friendship with Mark Anthony. As a result, Herod again was a friend of the Roman empire (which was very important to his continued rulership of Palestine).

When Herod's returned to Palestine, another revolt broke out with the Hasmonæans, and Herod tried to fix this by marrying the last Hasmonæan woman, Mariamne. Herod is said

to have made two great mistakes at this time: (1) he married Mariamne and (2) he fell in love with her. She apparently did not feel the same way, and she betrayed him.

You have no doubt heard of Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, but Herod was in that mix as well. Anthony gave some of Herod's land to Cleopatra, Herod balked, and he got some of his land back. Furthermore, when Cleopatra tried to seduce Herod, he turned her down and she apparently hated him for it.

In case you do any independent reading on Herod, there is another Cleopatra in his life; different from the Queen of Egypt previously mentioned.

Anyway, soon after Cleopatra decided that she hated Herod, Octavius and Mark Anthony were at war with each other, and again, Herod backed the wrong horse. He helped Anthony raise money for his defense, but Octavius defeated Anthony and Cleopatra.

Again, Herod goes to Rome; he speaks directly to Octavius, and tells him exactly what he did. Octavius respected his honesty and his pledge of loyalty; and allowed Herod to continue as king over the Jews. In fact, Octavius is said to have two great friends in the world at this time: Agrippa, who handled all of the administration, and Herod.

Over and over again, Herod fought to maintain control over his kingdom in Palestine; and he managed to continue in this position, despite all of the unrest around him and despite backing the wrong man over and over again.

What made Herod quite valuable to Rome is, he established law and order throughout most of his land, despite the opposition of the Jews (they hated him because he was an Arab by race).

Not long before Jesus was born, Herod established peace and safety in the Galilean area, removing the bandits which plagued that area. As a result, Jesus was raised in an area where there was relative peace and safety—which apparently continued throughout His life—despite the great turmoil in the world. In the narratives of the gospels, Jesus moves about the land in relative safety, apart from the animosity of the Jewish religious class.

R. B. Thieme, Jr., based upon his extensive knowledge of ancient history, described some aspects of Herod's reign like this: *Herod never had a statue or a picture made and never had his face on coins, so there is no way of knowing what he looked like from the usual archaeological sources, simply for this reason: Herod knew that he would offend the Jews if an image was set up. He always catered to the Jews, to the nationalist party, and never did he allow his image to be on a coin or a statute to be put up, so our only descriptions come from people of the ancient world. He was tall, very handsome, athletic with a very strong body. He had great charm of address and he was one of the greatest conversationalists of the ancient world. He was a famous hunter and horseman and a championship wrestler. Being of Arab stock he had black hair and a golden skin, with brown eyes, a moulded*

*nose and small ears. He was never worth less than \$50,000,000, except when he went bankrupt twice. He went bankrupt once feeding the Jews in a time of economic decline. He spent his whole fortune feeding the Jews by buying grain in Egypt, and they repaid him very shortly thereafter by revolting against him. This all goes to show that the monster Herod that we know wasn't the monster in his early life.*²⁴

Most of us know the famous names of Julius Cæsar, Cassius, Brutus, Octavius, Mark Antony, and Cleopatra (especially if you have read Shakespear). Fewer people realize that Herod was right there in the midst of all of them, just as famous and probably far more consequential than some on that list. It is very likely that his refusal to put his visage on everything—in deference to the faith of the Jews—which kept him below the radar, historically speaking.

The actual history of these men is far more complex than the summaries provided below.

The Herods of Scripture

1. Herod the Great was famous for his many building projects, including that of the Jewish Temple (it appears that he restored and greatly improved upon the second Temple, which had been originally built by Zerubbabel, who was the Achaemenid-appointed governor over Judæa). Herod was also famous for his attempt to kill his rival king, the Messiah of Jerusalem, by killing all of the male children born at the time that Jesus was born (Matt. 2).
2. Herod II, also called Herod Philip I, was married to Herodias, who later divorced Herod II and married Herod Antipas, Herod II's half brother. John the baptizer condemned that was wrong (Matt. 14:3–4).
 - 1) Herod the Great executed his 2 sons by his Hasmonean wife Mariamne, which left Herodias an orphaned minor. Herod then engaged her to Herod II, her half-uncle.
 - 2) The union of Herod II and Herodias produced a daughter, Salome.
 - 3) At one time, Herod II was considered to be the natural heir to Herod the Great. However, he lived as a private citizen in Rome with Herodias, and thus survived Herod the Great's deathbed purges.
3. One of Herod's sons is Herod Antipas (or Antipater), who was also know as Herod the tetrarch (Matthew 14:1; Luke 3:1). Tetrarch means that he governed a fourth part of the kingdom.
 - 1) He reigned over Galilee and Perea.
 - 2) He ruled over this area 4 B.C.–39 A.D., throughout nearly the entire human life of Jesus.
 - 3) Herod Antipas reluctantly executed John the baptizer (Matt. 14:1–12).
 - 4) Because Jesus was from Galilee, during His trials, He was sent to Herod Antipas, when Pilate was trying to extricate himself from making a decision

²⁴ This came from the Matthew series that R. B. Thieme, Jr. taught, as did most of the material on Herod. From R. B. Thieme, Jr., Matthew, MP3 CD (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1965), 438-005.

The Herods of Scripture

- regarding Jesus. Luke 23:1–12
4. Herod Archelaus (23 B.C.–18 A.D.) was ruler over Samaria, Judea, and Idumea (or, Edom) between 4 B.C. and 6 A.D.
 - 1) Mary and Joseph temporarily moved to Egypt to escape Herod the Great's attacks upon the newborn males in his realm. When Herod died, they returned from Egypt, but moved up to the Galilee area rather than to Judæa, having been warned in a dream about Herod Archelaus reigning in his father's stead. Matt. 2:19–23
 - 2) He was given the title *Ethnarch* from Cæsar, which means that he was a non-king who ruled over an ethnic group (this would have limited his authority; apparently, he could not have people executed).
 - 3) He was deposed from his reign in A.D. 6, as a result of the Jewish people petitioning Cæsar Augustus for his removal. There was a great deal of animosity between the Jews and Herod Archelaus, which went both ways (near the end of his reign, Archelaus killed 3000 people at the Temple).
 - 4) There were 16 or 17 Roman administrators (governors) who followed Herod Archelaus until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.
 - 5) Herod Archelaus, although not officially recognized as governor of Judæa, Samaria and Idumea, his 10 year reign was among the top 3 reigns with regards to length of time over a period of 135 years.
 - 6) Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect in Judæa between 26–36 A.D.
 5. Philip the Tetrarch, also called Herod Philip II, was the son of Herod the Great and Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He ruled over the northeastern portion of his father's kingdom from 4 B.C. until he died in A.D. 34.
 - 1) His kingdom included Iturea and Trachonitis; and possibly Gaulanitis and Paneas.
 - 2) Philip is not mentioned in Scripture, as his kingdom is just east of Galilee.
 - 3) On the other hand, his wife (and niece), Salome, is.
 - 4) There seems to be some disagreement in this regard, and [Wikipedia](#) suggests that there may be some historic confusion here, as Philip would have been nearly 40 years older than Salome (I don't know that would really be a problem).
 - 5) Salome had asked her father (Herod Antipas) for the head of John the baptizer. Matt. 14:1–11 (she is simply called the daughter of Herodias in this passage, as Philip was not her actual father).
 6. *Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great (Acts 12). It was he who persecuted the church in Jerusalem and had the apostle James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, put to death by the sword. By the hand of Herod Agrippa I, James became the first apostle to be martyred. Two of Agrippa I's daughters were Bernice and Drusilla, mentioned in Acts 24 and Acts 25.*
 7. *Agrippa's son, Herod Agrippa II, was instrumental in saving Paul from being tried and imprisoned in Jerusalem by the Jews who hated his testimony of Jesus as the Messiah. King Agrippa, out of consideration for Paul being a Roman citizen, allowed Paul to defend himself, thereby giving Paul the opportunity to preach the*

The Herods of Scripture

gospel to all who were assembled (Acts 25—26). Agrippa II was the last of the line of Herods. After him, the family fell out of favor with Rome.

When we come across these men later on in Scripture, I will provide the background for them. But this is quite fascinating, as this is a period of nearly 200 years where the descendants of Esau ruled over the descendants of Jacob.

Quotations taken from [Got Questions?](#); accessed April 12, 2019.

Additional references:

[Wikipedia](#); [Wikipedia](#); [Wikipedia](#); [Wikipedia](#); [Reasonable Theology. Org](#); [Bible Study.org](#);

All of these accessed April 12, 2019

Kingdoms of the Herods
(a map); from [Bible Study.org](#); accessed April 12, 2019.

Like any map, we have an imprecise knowledge of history; and boundaries of countries and regions were often in flux.

The area within the black lines would be that ruled over by Herod the Great between 37–4 B.C.

Herod's sons ruled over the same area, which was divided up between them. However, their power was always subject to Roman Senate confirmation and Roman review. As you have read earlier, Herod Archelaus failed as a ruler over Judæa, but then, so did many others who followed him. The Hebrew people rejected the rule of an Idumæan and of anyone representing the Roman empire; and even of their own Messiah.



Luke begins his narrative of the Lord's life at the end of the reign of Herod the Great.

Luke 1:5a *In the days of Herod, king of Judea,...*

This helps us to put a time on these events. Herod the Great played a significant role during the time that Jesus was born. Also, Herod died in 4 B.C. (according to most sources; although some say later); so we know that these events of Luke 1–2 take place before 4 B.C.

Luke 1:5a-b *In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah.*

The priesthood of Israel was very well-defined in the books of Exodus and Numbers and the animal sacrifices which they oversaw are described in the book of Leviticus. However, it is good to have some fundamental understanding of the Jewish priesthood.

The concept of what a priest is has been thoroughly distorted—particularly by one particular branch of Christianity—so we need to touch upon the idea of what a priest in the Jewish era was:

The Old Testament Priesthood

1. Jacob had 12 sons, and one of them was Levi. Levi became the *spiritual* branch of the Jews. The Levites did not own land, as they were only in the world, but not of the world.
2. The Levites were involved with all the spiritual activities of the Jews.
3. Moses and Aaron (his brother) were both Levites. Aaron became the first High Priest and only those in his genealogical line were considered priests. Therefore, the common name, the Levitical Priesthood is somewhat of a misnomer; it should really be called the Aaronic Priesthood. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. However, since the priests are descendants of Levi, it is called the Levitical Priesthood, even in the Bible (Heb. 7:11).
4. Priests were in charge of the spiritual services first at the Tabernacle (a semi-permanent tent) and later at the Temple—a permanent edifice marking Israel's *permanent* control over the land of Palestine and, ideally speaking, indicating their submission to God in the land.
5. Their church service, so to speak, was quite a bit different than ours. Jews would bring their prize animals to the priests, and these animals would be slaughtered on the altar, blood spurting out in all directions. After a typical service, there would be blood everywhere—on the altar, all over the ground, all over the priest's clothing.
6. One man would be High Priest, who would be over all the other priests. *For every high priest taken from men is appointed in service to God for the people, to offer*

The Old Testament Priesthood

- both gifts and sacrifices for sins (Heb. 5:1).
7. The meat of the sacrificed animals was eaten by the people and by the priests, as this symbolized faith in the sacrifice and in the Revealed God.
 8. This priesthood was perpetuated by birth. There were no celibate priests in the Old Testament. Priests married, had children, and their male children were priests. The idea of some sort of specialized priesthood as being a bunch of guys who wear funny clothes and don't have sex is not anywhere close to a Biblical concept (except for, the High Priest did have a uniform).
 9. Old Testament priests were unable to forgive sins. The blood of the animal sacrifices covered the sins of Old Testament saints, but did not provide them with absolute forgiveness. If, then, perfection [a complete cleansing from sin] came through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another Priest [that is, Jesus] to arise in the order of Melchizedek, and not to be described as being in the order of Aaron? (Heb. 7:11). Now every priest stands day after day ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins (Heb. 10:11).
 10. The primary function of a priest was to represent man before God. In this way, the priest was a type of Christ. The High Priest in particular was an Old Testament picture of Jesus Christ.
 - a. The High Priest was the chief priest, and he went into the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, which was over the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant represented Jesus Christ, as did the High Priest. The blood sprinkled on the mercy seat was representative of Jesus' spiritual death for our sins.
 - b. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; therefore it was necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He wouldn't be a priest, since there are those offering the gifts prescribed by the law. These [the priesthood and the animal sacrifices] serve as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things [that is, they are types], as Moses was warned when he was about to complete the tabernacle, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern [= typos (type)] that was shown you on the mountain." (Heb. 8:3–5).
 - c. We get our technical term *type* (*typology*) from the Greek word tupos (τύπος) [pronounced TOO-poss], which means, *an archetype serving as a model, type, pattern, model* (among other things).
 11. The priest stood before God with the animal sacrifice of the sinner and asked for the blood of the animal to cover the sinner. Jesus Christ stands before God with His blood (i.e., His spiritual death) to cover our sins. Therefore He [Jesus Christ] had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, to make propitiation [= the act of placating or appeasing God; the act of conciliating ourselves to God] for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17). Therefore since we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to the confession

The Old Testament Priesthood

- [of our faith] (Heb. 4:14).
12. Believers today (in the Church Age) are called *priests*, as we are now able to represent ourselves before God, as our Intermediary, Jesus Christ, has paid for our sins in full. **But you** [believers in the Church Age, to whom Peter addressed his letter] **are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light** (1Peter 2:9; Ex. 19:5b–6a; emphasis mine).
 - a. In this verse, Peter is drawing parallels between believers of the Church Age and believers of the Age of Israel. Peter calls Church Age believers *a chosen race, a royal priesthood* and *a holy nation*.
 - b. He is teaching that, in this dispensation, *all believers* (including female believers) are priests; and we all represent ourselves directly to God because we are *in Christ* (one of the most important phrases found in the epistles (this phrase is found 93 times in the NT; and 89 times in the Pauline epistles)).
 - c. Similarly, believers in the Church Age are *a chosen race* and *a holy nation*.
 13. Therefore, all remaining *priestly functions* are done by believers in the Church Age; and not by people who have some special office of priesthood. You are a priest; and I am a priest. When I want to go to God, I go to Him directly, on all matters. The same is true for you.
 14. There is no such thing as a specialized priesthood today or an intermediary priesthood (someone you go to who has a special *in* with God). No one has an *in* with God. Now, if you want to gather with like-minded believers and pray together for something, that is great. But don't think that you can depend upon someone else to get through to God when you can't. If you are in fellowship, then God is listening. If you are not in fellowship, don't ask someone else to pray for you; just get back into fellowship (1John 1:9) and pray directly to God.
 15. Today, in the Church Age, there is no such thing as priests, nuns or monks as legitimate positions in the modern church. Those *specialized offices* do not exist in the Church Age. They are found nowhere in the Bible and there is no similar office defined in Scripture. In fact, most of the time, those offices are quite unnatural, due to their celibacy vows. As a result, over the years, some of them have done some very bad stuff.

As an addendum, because the Aaronic priesthood was a matter of biological lineage, Jesus Christ is called, on several occasions, **a priest after the order of Melchizedek**. This is because Melchizedek was chosen by God to be a priest; and this was not a matter of birthright (those descended from Aaron have a birthright claim to the priesthood; Jesus was not descended from Aaron). Jesus, instead, was descended from Judah, the ruling tribe. Therefore, Jesus was not a priest after the pattern of Aaron but after the order of Melchizedek.

Jesus has entered there [into the Holy of Holies] on our behalf as a forerunner, because He has become a "high priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." For this Melchizedek--King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham and

blessed him as he returned from defeating the kings, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything; first, his name means "king of righteousness," then also, "king of Salem," meaning "king of peace"; without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God--remains a priest forever (Heb. 6:20–7:3; Psalm 110:4 Gen. 14:18b, 20b). See also Heb. 7:1–17

Now, quite obviously, Melchizedek did have a mother and father and a genealogy, but these things are not recorded in Holy Writ, making him a better *type* of Christ. The key to the Levitical priesthood was their genetic link to Aaron. Since Jesus lacked this link, He was considered **a Priest after the order of Melchizedek**.

The weakness of the Levitical Priesthood is, these priests were unable to truly forgive sins, as they were just as human as those for whom they offered up animal sacrifices. Jesus is both our High Priest and our sufficient sacrifice. **So Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant. Now many have become Levitical priests, since they are prevented by death from remaining in office. But because He remains forever, He holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them. For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do--first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all when He offered Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever** (Heb. 7:22–28).

In the New Testament, every believer is a priest and may represent himself directly to God. We do not go to a special priest, no matter where he is or what kinds of clothes he wears, no matter what your religious dogma teaches. Jesus has purchased us with His blood, giving us direct access to God. Jesus is now our true intermediary. When you want forgiveness for whatever sin or sins you have committed, you go directly and immediately to God, and you name those sins aloud or silently *directly to God*. God will forgive you of those sins and then He will cleanse you of all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). As a result, you will be fit for service again.

Luke 1:5a-b **In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah.**

There are two basic forms of the name *Zechariah*: the Hebrew form is *Zechariah*, and this is what we find in most Bibles. However, there is no *h* in the Greek, not in the middle or at the end of a word, as we find in the English (or, as is found in the Hebrew). Because there is no actual letter *h* in the Greek, the Hebrew name *Zechariah* is transliterated into the Greek with *Zacharias*. So, if you have a Bible translation based upon the Greek, where they do not try to synch up Old Testament and New Testament names, you will have the name *Zacharias* instead. They are the same name and they refer to the same person in this passage.

Interestingly enough, even though there are several *Abijah*'s in the Bible, but only one of them can be identified with Zacharias's priestly line—he is mentioned but one time in 1Chron. 24:10. We only have two or three important lines in the priesthood which produce the high priest); the Abijah line does not appear to be among those lines (although, if memory serves, there are many priests with that particular name).

King David recognized 24 families of priests, one of them being the family of Abijah (1Chron. 24:6, 10). If this many families stretch back to the time of David, there were many who were descended from the priest line by the time of the Incarnation (Jesus Christ coming into this world). Zechariah was one such man.

As an aside, the Jews were overrun, thoroughly defeated, and taken out of the Land of Promise into captivity on two occasions: the northern kingdom in 721 B.C. and the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. The Babylonians removed most of the Jews from out of Palestine in 586 B.C., but, the Persians, who soon thereafter defeated the Babylonians, allowed the Jews to return to this land. Zechariah's family did not return immediately. However, Zechariah was still able to know his own ancestry and track this back at least 1000 years (or, at the very least, his family recognized what division of the priesthood they were descended from).

These details may or may not be interesting to you, but they indicate the precision and detail of Luke's historical narrative. They also suggest outstanding historical records were kept by the Jewish people, whether living in their land or not.

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Zechariah and Elizabeth, husband and wife, were both descended from Aaron. The text here indicates that the Jews kept very accurate birth records, even during the time that they were exiled (the family of Abijah did not immediately return from the Babylonian/Persian captivity²⁵—Ezra 2:36–39 Neh. 7:39–42 12:1).

So, there is no misunderstanding, Zechariah is a priest—he is a legitimate priest; and he has a wife. Both he and his wife would have been descended from Aaron. He could not have been a priest if he was not the result of conception between a male priest and that man's wife. There was no such thing as a celibate priesthood in Israel. They would be celibate before marriage, but priests searched out their right woman, they married, and they had children, if God so blessed them.

There are two common spellings for *Zechariah*. Similarly, *Elisabeth* is the Greek transliteration of *Elizabeth*. I will use these pairs of names interchangeably.

²⁵ Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon defeated the Hebrew people and they were removed from their land. The Persians later defeated Babylon and allowed the Hebrew people to return.

Both Zacharias and Elisabeth were ultimately descended from Aaron, which was the priestly line. Zacharias is further identified as coming from a particular line of Aaron, the line of Abijah.

Lesson 021: Luke 1:5–9

The Canon of Scripture Part One

In the previous lesson, we studied the Old Testament priesthood; and we found that there is no such thing as some exclusive, specialized priesthood in this age. Every person in the Church Age who believes in Jesus is a priest.

The early narrative in Luke begins to focus on Zechariah and Elizabeth—they are both Levites descended from Aaron. The preface has been completed and the historic stage set.

Luke 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

Herod, king of Judæa, is known in history as Herod the Great. As we have studied, he is as important to the history of this region as Julius Cæsar, Mark Anthony and Cleopatra, each of whom had a peripheral relationship with the Jews in Palestine.

Our focus for much of this chapter is going to be upon two Aaronic Levites who are married: Zechariah (also, Zacharias); and Elizabeth (also, Elisabeth). They are both descended from Aaron (Aaron was descended from Levi, who was a son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham).

Luke 1:6a And they were both righteous before God,...

Righteousness is a state imputed to believers in both the Old and New Testaments, which comes by faith in Jehovah Elohim, the Revealed Member of the Godhead (Christ Jesus in our age). Recall Gen. 15:6: Abram believed the Y^ehowah, and He [God] credited it to him as righteousness. This is a legal declaration. Abram's faith in Jehovah Elohim was credited to him as righteousness. This does not mean that Zechariah and Elisabeth do not sin; but it means that they are declared righteous before God, and, therefore, they have eternal life. They are not righteous because they do the right sort of things every day, but because God imputed righteousness to them because of their faith.

Luke 1:6b ...walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord.

Old Testament and New Testament spirituality are different. In all dispensations, we are saved by faith in the Revealed Member of the Trinity, Whom we know as Jesus Christ (this is how God reveals Himself to us). In the Old Testament, He was known as Y^ehowah. (a personal name which could be applied to any Member of the Godhead). Salvation is free to us; but it came as a result of the greatest cost to our Lord. In all dispensations, there

is a period of life after salvation during which we live on this earth as believers in Jesus Christ. God does not take us out of this life immediately after believing in Jesus Christ (apart from the exception of deathbed conversions). Therefore, there must be some particular prescribed lifestyle or some protocol by which we must live. During the Jewish Age (this portion of the book of Luke takes place in the Jewish Age), this was the Law, here, called the commandments and statutes of the Lord. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth followed what the Law prescribed for them to do. Walking *blamelessly* does not mean that they lived without sin in their lives; nor does this mean that neither person ever violated the Law. The Law provided actions which they must take when they sin, and Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth followed all of the necessary provisions of the Law.

Luke 1:7 **But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.**

Just as with Abram and Sarai, 2000 years previous, Elizabeth was barren and they were both old. Because of this, neither one expected a child. They had simply come to the understanding—perhaps when they entered into their 50's—that this was a blessing that God would withhold from them.

Had Elizabeth gone through menopause? I would guess not (although God is able to do whatever). The Bible calls Elizabeth barren, which suggests that there is some sort of physical anomaly making it difficult or impossible for her to have children.

Luke 1:8 **Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty,...**

Zechariah belonged to the Abijah division of priests, and he came to Jerusalem for two weeks out of the year to serve in the Holy Temple. There were rituals which were done over and over again—rituals which were revealed in the Bible, in the books of Moses. However, these rituals were not actually observed by the general public. No one other than other priests actually saw what Zechariah did (and it is most likely that the priests did their duties as required, without hanging around to watch one another²⁶).

For the various rituals of the Temple, there was probably a strict regimen of what got done when (given the legalism of that day), and it is very possible that Zechariah performed his duties alone in the Temple.

As discussed earlier, there were 24 divisions of priests, so each division was responsible for the Temple duties 2 weeks out of the year.

Luke 1:9 **...according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.**

Unlike our churches, people did not just wander in and out of the Temple. The priests carried out specific functions within the Temple, but the general public did not go into the

²⁶ An older or experienced priest might teach a young priest what is necessary for their particular ritual.

Temple—not ever. There was no special day of the year when the public was invited in; there were no tours given to the public.

In some places in the gospels, it will appear as if people are *in the Temple* gathering; but these passages are actually referring to places outside the Temple where people gathered (some of these places appear to be covered). Herod saw to it that there were a variety of open areas that the Jews could utilize as they saw fit. For example: Matt. 21:12, 14, 15, 23 24:1 26:55 27:5.

Priests and Levites had duties which could involve things in the Temple, but even they did not just wander in and out willy nilly. If they went into the Temple, then they had a specific reason to do so. The Temple was not a place for priests or people to go and hang out. What occurred in the Temple was a set of specific ceremonies and duties, performed by those of the priesthood, as prescribed in the Mosaic Law. For the most part, no one else observed the following of these rituals unless two priests entered into the Temple at the same time to perform separate functions. All of these rituals had meanings; they all meant something, even if the participants did not really understand the meaning of what they did.

Zacharias was to burn incense in the Temple, and this responsibility was determined by lot. My guess is, so many people from the Abijah line showed up during their appointed times, and then they drew lots to determine which individuals would do what and when. This determining by lot was simply a custom that the priests engaged in; there is no specific set up in the Mosaic Law for priests to do this. There were just a great many priests, so the rituals at the Temple were split up between these priests. Because there were these 24 families of priests, and many in each of these families, they had some system by which they determined which persons would serve in the Temple. Again, notice the details here: each division of the family had a different time period during which they served in the Temple, and his family, the division of Abijah, was serving during this time.

Drawing lots would have determined which persons from that particular branch of Levites would participate in the sacred duties.

We don't know if Zacharias has done this before—I would assume that he had. All that we find here appears to be routine; and nothing in the text suggests that this is Zacharias's first time or that anything appears to be out of the ordinary.

These are historical details that, 100–200 years later, would not have been known, because 100 years from now, this Temple will not be standing and these organized rituals would no longer be taking place. Even if a person had access to the Old Testament, not everything described here comes out of the Old Testament. This means that Luke wrote his biography of Jesus during the proper time period—and, no doubt, before A.D. 70, at which time the Temple would be destroyed).

Establishing the Canon of Scripture: Let me go off on a tangent here: you may know that there are several *gospels* not found in the Bible, along with many epistles and several apocalyptic stories. How did someone know to include the Book of Luke, but to exclude

the Gospel of Saint Thomas? The canon of Scripture was closed before 100 A.D. when John the Apostle engraved the final words of Revelation while on the Isle of Patmos. Prior to that time, the gospels and epistles [letters] had been written, and then circulated from church to church.

For instance, Paul would write a letter to the local church at Corinth, and the elders of Corinth recognized that it was from Paul (in many cases, these epistles were hand-delivered by someone close to Paul and trusted in the church). At some point, these letters and gospels were copied and recopied, and circulated to other local churches in other cities. "Paul wrote a letter to you? We would love to have a copy of that so that we can read it in our church." The various local churches in the first century, (at least informally) recognized the authority of the writings which they received. These gospels and letters were copied and they found their way from church to church. These writings were then preserved from century to century.

Did any of these early churches (in operation prior to A.D. 100) begin to develop a registry of authoritative writings? That is, did various people begin making a record of which letters Paul had written? Did they add to this list the biographies of Jesus which had been written? If they did, we are unaware of it. I suspect that many of them did develop such lists, if only informally.

I have been a collector of things for much of my life. One thing that collectors often strive for is having complete sets. In order to have a complete set of anything, you must first know, what is in that set. It would make sense that various local churches were aware of the gospels and epistles circulating, and that many, desiring more divine information, would seek out manuscripts of books and letters which they did not already have. The Apostles and those associated with the Apostles traveled about frequently, as did many people in that era; and it would become known that, for instance, Paul sent out an epistle to the Philippians, a letter which he wrote while in prison. Or, they would find out that Paul wrote a couple of letters to Timothy. When people in other churches became aware of such a letter, they would want their own copy, so that their own pastor might read it and explain it to them.

It is my contention that many local churches began to develop a list of the books and letters which were authoritative; and that they would begin to search out those letters or books. When Paul or Peter or Apollos traveled through town, they would often ask about letters that they lacked. "Do you happen to be carrying with you the letter written to the Ephesians?" a church leader might ask them. "Or 2Timothy?" This is conjecture on my part, but I am reasonably certain that I have described accurately what happened in the early local church.

We have the gospels and the letters from this era; but we do not have any local church registry as such from the 1st century. We logically know that registries had to have existed, whether formally committed to writing or not. (Who knows, maybe one day, one will be discovered?)

There were several well-known teachers from the 2nd century who cited specific books as authoritative, meaning: they believed these books or letters to have been written in the 1st century by either one of the 12 Apostles or by men closely associated with them. Some of the clues which we have studied—such as the drawing lots in order to perform Temple services—would be strong indicators that a book had been written in the 1st century.

Of 10 church fathers of the 2nd century, the only book of the New Testament which was not cited as authoritative was 3John. To my knowledge, none of them cited works not found in the Bible today. That is, by this 2nd century, no respected church father quoted from the Gospel of Saint Thomas.

By the 3rd century, the most well-known church fathers (Cyril of Jerusalem, Eusebius, Jerome and Augustine) recognized almost exactly the same set of books as authoritative. Cyril did not quote from Revelation and Eusebius named 5 of the general epistles as disputed. However, Jerome and Augustine held to the same New Testament as we do.

In the first few hundred years of the church, at least 6 individuals specified what the New Testament canon was, which we might understand to be a complete set of the writings which had been accepted as authoritative. Athanasius (367) agrees with our New Testament canon, and Barococcio (circa 206) and Apostolic (circa 300) also have the same canon, except that they leave out the book of Revelation. 2 others leave out some of the general epistles (those letters not written by Paul).

At least 3 early translations were made, and 2 of them were very similar to our canon. These translations left out a few of the general epistles and the Old Syriac translation left out the book of Revelation as well. However, when making a translation of these various books and letters from the 1st century, there was clearly concern to choose the correct books and letters. No one wanted to pick a *gospel* from the 2nd century, for instance, and throw that into the mix. Anything written in the 2nd century would be automatically rejected, as being from the wrong era.

There were also 4 church councils (there were very likely many others, but we know of these 4): in Nicea, Hippo, Carthage and a second in Carthage (these councils took place between 325–419). 3 of these councils agreed completely on the books which we use today. One listed a few of the general epistles as disputed. A church council would have involved a number of men who would gather and they would discuss the various books and letters; and they would discuss their era, their authors, their origin and their contents.

Whether making a list of authoritative books, making a translation, or holding a meeting of recognized teachers, there were 2 considerations which were a part of this process: (1) was the book historically seen as authentic and authoritative; and (2) was the book associated either with an Apostle or someone closely associated with an Apostle? If there were further concerns, no doubt the actual content of the book was up for discussion as well.

You may recall that the passage which set off this discussion is:

Luke 1:8–9 **Now while he [Zechariah] was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.**

Because this passage refers to a tradition of the Jewish priesthood not found in the Pentateuch, and because this tradition would have disappeared after the Temple was destroyed, this historical reference helps to authenticate the book of Luke as having been written in the 1st century prior to A.D. 70. This leads us into a discussion of canonicity of the New Testament books.

Noncanonical books: Now, what about books like the Acts of Peter, the Apocryphon of James, the Gospel of Saint Thomas, the Epistle to the Laodiceans, etc? Many of these non-canonical books had not been written, even by the 2nd century A.D. Many of them we know by name, but are no longer extant (e.g., the Gospel of the Egyptians). If something was not recognized by any church as authoritative, then there was no reason to make many copies of it and to pass it around. Some individual collectors may have wanted some apocryphal books, but churches, as a whole, did not. A church might have to pay for a manuscript to be copied and they would use this manuscript to teach from; so they would not be purchasing unimportant and non-authoritative books. Therefore, such writings simply died out, apart from a mention here or there in literature from that era.

There are maybe a half-dozen books which come out of the 1st century: the Passion Narrative, the Lost Sayings Gospel Q, the Signs Gospel; and a few books which *may* have been written in the 1st century: the Didache, the Gospel of Thomas, Oxyrhynchus 1224 Gospel, the Sophia (wisdom) of Jesus Christ, the Egerton Gospel, the Gospel of Peter and Secret Mark, although the range of dates takes most of these outside of the 1st century.

Among these non-canonical books, there are about 10 which are mentioned in ancient literature or referred to by an ancient *father* (some of whom are portrayed historically as heretical). What we do *not* have is, 3 or 4 individuals, translations or canons recognizing any of these books as authoritative or canonical. None of these books are among the complete set of authoritative writings from the 1st century.

Do not ever think that some church council came along hundreds of years later and made the ultimate decision based on this sort of evaluation: "These books should be in the canon because we like them; these books should not because we don't like them." We have over 2 dozen witnesses from the first few centuries, and not one of them says, "I think that *the Sophia of Jesus Christ* deserves to be considered as an authoritative book." (And these

are witnesses whom we can document from this era; there would have been many more whose writings disappeared.)

Many of these noncanonical books can be found online, and when you read them, you will notice something which distinguishes them from, say, the Book of Luke. Luke is filled with historical citations and serious history. There are things found in the Book of Luke, which, had it been written a hundred or so years later, would simply have not been found (for instance, how the work was distributed among the priests). You do not find this same historical precision in these apocryphal books.

There are a host of problems. The dialogue, if any, is often weird. There are doctrines not found or supported by canonical books. Sometimes, we know that there are specific inaccuracies.

If you have a good working knowledge of the New Testament, and then you read a passage from New Testament apocryphal literature, the contrast between the accepted New Testament and the apocryphal literature is stark. Often, you can read a few paragraphs into the noncanonical book and you will conclude, “No way anyone would think that this belongs in Scripture.”

Interesting enough, none of these individuals or groups had a complete and thorough understanding of what it meant to be canonical; or what it meant for canonical books to be inspired. The books which were a part of this complete collection were determined first; and later, exactly what canonicity meant was determined. Similarly, the correct understanding of the inspiration of Scriptures was developed long after the canon was determined (the books in the canon are the inspired Word of God). More importantly, many of the fundamental doctrines of the faith were developed *after* the canon was determined.

Even the doctrines of the Catholic church were not fully developed until hundreds of years after Saint Jerome (he translated the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures into Latin; and his translation is used as the basis for many authorized translations (authorized by the Catholic Church). Because nearly all of the specifically Catholic doctrines were developed hundreds of years after Jerome, there was no well-organized Catholic Church then as we have today which pronounced from on high which books were canonical. There was no *on high* authority in the Catholic Church at the time that the canon was determined and confirmed.

Unless otherwise noted, the ESV; capitalized is used below.

Miscellaneous Principles Regarding the Canon of Scripture

1. When it comes to the canon of Scripture, there is actually a selection process which is involved. We have already studied that in Luke 1:1–4. There have been **many who have undertaken to compile a narrative**; and there were many

Miscellaneous Principles Regarding the Canon of Scripture

eyewitnesses—obviously, eyewitnesses who were willing and eager to share what they remember. Luke was speaking specifically of gospel material; but it is certainly applicable to all of the written material from believers that was available. Luke himself, rather than collect all of this material into an anthology, took it upon himself to compile these narratives into a single biography, one which he himself had been careful to verify the material (Luke 1:3).

2. This may help us to understand why, even though Paul clearly wrote more letters to the various local churches—and sometimes multiple letters to the same church—not all of those letters were preserved. This was *not by accident but by design*.
3. The letters written by Paul (and later, by others) were designed to be read within the local churches. John was told to write down what he saw and circulate that to the seven specified churches. Rev. 1:10–11 *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*
4. The letters (epistles) written were to have a wider audience than just the church to which it had been written. Paul, near the end of his letter to the Colossians, writes: *And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.* (Col. 4:16; ESV) This tells us that, even though Paul wrote this letter specifically to the Colossians, they were to share it with the local church at Laodicea.
5. There is also Peter's witness to Paul's writings. *And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the **other Scriptures**.* (2Peter 3:15–16; ESV; emphasis mine). Peter, in this passage, has elevated Paul's writings to the status of being *Scriptures*. This is a milestone. Writers in the 1st century may or may not have realized that they were writing Scriptures, but Peter clearly does.
6. The Apostles themselves verified the authority of the available writings. Paul writes: *For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages."* (1Tim. 5:18; Deut. 25:4 Luke 10:7) So Paul quotes Old Testament and from Luke's biography of Jesus, calling them both Scripture.

You will note that all of these principles come directly from the New Testament writers.

These points were taken from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 184–186 (highly edited).

Geisler and Nix: *In summary, the first hundred years of the existence of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament reveal that virtually every one of*

*them was quoted as authoritative and recognized as canonical by men who were themselves the younger contemporaries of the Apostolic Age.*²⁷

A similar recognition of authority occurred in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries—which witnesses have already been studied back in the introductory lessons.

There were a lot of writings to come out of the first few centuries of the church. Historically, they fall into 4 different classifications.

Classification of the Early Writings (Geisler and Nix)

1. The books accepted by all are called the Homologoumena.
2. There are a list of books questioned or disputed by some—the Antilegomena.
3. There are the books which are rejected by everyone, known as the Pseudopigrapha.
4. Finally, there are a set of books accepted by some as canonical or semi-canonical, called the Apocrypha.

Eusebius of Caesarea (also known as Eusebius Pamphili) was an historian of Christianity, an exegete, and a Christian polemicist, writing at the end of the 3rd century and into the 4th century A.D. specifically on the topic of the NT canon.²⁸ He classified the available writings as acknowledged books, disputed books, spurious books and heretical books (the latter of which he called *absurd and impious*). Geisler and Nix essentially use his same categorization, giving them different names (they are also in a slightly different order).

1. The Homologoumena.
 - 1) 20 of the 27 books of the New Testament were accepted from the beginning and almost universally. These would be the books of Matthew through Philemon, along with 1Peter and 1John.
 - 2) Some might place Philemon, 1Peter and 1John in the category below. However, according to Geisler and Nix, *there is almost no evidence that those who possessed these three books did not consider them authentic and apostolic*. This quotation reveals to us the organic nature of the development of the canon of Scripture. When we buy a Bible today, we think of it as a singular book (which it is); but for 4 centuries, most Christians—even the most pious and learned—did not have a full set of New Testament Scriptures. Completing this set was not a very easy thing to do. However, for many believers, this was a very important thing to achieve.
2. The Antilegomena.
 - 1) These books did not have uniform or universal acceptance.
 - 2) This would be the general epistles, apart from 1Peter and 1John; and the

²⁷ Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, p. 190.

²⁸ From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius> and accessed April 13, 2019.

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- book of Revelation.
- 3) These books were carefully examined—some of them for centuries. *Hebrews* had no named author even by tradition; *Revelation* was weird; *Jude*, *2John* and *3John* were all very short. *2Peter* is one of the most thoroughly discussed books with regards to canonicity. The chief problem is, it is a much different style of writing than *1Peter*. Although Saint Jerome suggested that there was a different amanuensis (an amanuensis is a person employed to write or type what another dictates) employed, that has never been a universally accepted explanation.
- 4) On the other hand, it is very difficult to dispute the content of *Hebrews* and *2Peter*; but even Calvin (from the 16th century) expressed reservations about *2Peter*.
- 5) I would commend Geisler and Nix's discussion of each of these books.
- 3. The Pseudepigrapha.
 - 1) These are the books called *totally absurd and impious* by Eusebius.
 - 2) These books certainly have some historic value, containing within them the teachings of Gnosticism, asceticism and docetism, as people of those leanings sometimes tried to duplicate the authority of the Scriptures.
 - (1) Gnosticism is a prominent heretical movement of the 2nd century Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit.
 - (2) Asceticism is severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence, typically for religious reasons.
 - (3) Docetism is the doctrine that the phenomenon of Jesus, his historical and bodily existence, and above all the human form of Jesus, was mere semblance without any true reality. Broadly it is taken as the belief that Jesus only seemed to be human, and that his human form was an illusion. Whereas, today, there are some groups and individuals who have a difficult time accepting Jesus as divine; there were apparently many in the early era who could not accept Jesus as human.
 - 3) By the 9th century, Photius listed 280 such books; and more have been discovered since then.
 - 4) These would include *the Gospel of Thomas*, *the Gospel of the Egyptians*; *the Acts of Peter*, *the Acts of John*; *the lost epistle to the Corinthians*, *the epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans*; *the Apocalypse of Peter*, *the Apocalypse of Paul*, etc.
 - 5) The various councils, church fathers, and canonical listings never listed any of these books as being possibly canonical.
- 4. The Apocrypha.
 - 1) Differentiating these books from those in the previous category can be

Classification of the Early Writings (Geisler and Nix)

- both nuanced and arbitrary.
- 2) Generally speaking, these books were rejected by respected early church fathers, translations and councils; they do occasionally appear in local ecclesiastical canons and Bible translations. There were even some church fathers who accepted some of these books.
 - 3) As an example, there is the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas, circa A.D. 70–79 (this date is in dispute and some believe it to be a 2nd century document). It is found in the Sinaitic manuscript (Aleph) and it is mentioned in the table of contents of Bezae (circa 550). It is quoted as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria and by Origen.
 - 4) Geisler and Nix discuss 10 more books, including the Second Epistle of Clement, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Acts of Paul and Thecla.
 - 5) It is interesting that these are listed as apocrypha, as nearly all of them were written in the 2nd century.

This information was taken from Norman Geisler and William Nix; *A General Introduction to the Bible*; Chicago; Moody Press, ©1968, pp. 195–205. They go into much more detail than I do. Definitions of Gnosticism, asceticism and docetism pulled off the internet in a google search.

For me, this is one of the most interesting topics regarding the Bible. If you are of the same mind, then I strongly recommend Geisler and Nix's "A General Introduction to the Bible." I was lucky enough to be exposed to this book early on in my Christian life, which book I still have and still refer to today. You should be able to [find this book](#) for less than \$10 (which includes shipping). Geisler and Nix go through each book of the New Testament and show how, from the very beginning, they were recognized as being authoritative.

Lesson 023: Luke 1:5–14

An Angel Announces the Birth of John the Herald

In our study of the first chapter of Luke, so far, you may have wondered how many decades would it take to complete this book. We will move more quickly when the passage allows.

Luke 1:5–7 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

The narrative of chapter 1 focuses on a married Levite couple, Zechariah and Elizabeth, two mature believers.

Luke 1:8–9 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

Zechariah, as a priest, had responsibilities once or twice a year at the Temple. He would burn the incense at this point in his service. We are told that his service is determined by lot, something that was a custom, but not set forth in the Law of Moses.

Luke 1:10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense.

Luke is setting the scene for what is happening; and it is unclear whether their prayers are related to what is about to happen. Were they similar to a prayer meeting today? Were they praying for the coming of the Messiah? We do not know, but, there are many people outside during this time when Zacharias (Zechariah) was in the Temple lighting the incense, as it was his turn to do that.

Priests are attending to their duties in and around the Temple, and Zacharias is burning incense; and a large multitude of people are outside of the Temple praying. Something is about to take place, and it appears that Zacharias is alone in the Temple at this moment.

During the time of the Mosaic Law, there is a separation of the priests from the people. They were two separate classes of people. The priests who have a function within the Temple are able to enter into the Temple. The people cannot do this. The people generally knew what the priests did in the Temple, by means of the writings of Moses, but this was not something that they could actually observe. They knew about these things from the Scriptures; but there were no tours of the Temple. No one got to watch the lighting of the candles or of the incense, etc.

Also, the priests did not simply wander into the Temple to hang out. The Temple was not some sort of *members only* club. They only went into the Temple for their specific functions. They did not complete their tasks and then hang around to see what else would happen after. They went into the Temple, performed their duties, and then exited.

In the future, we will study passages which sound as if there are people going into the Temple. That is never the case. Although the Temple was first built as a two-room building, with some storage buildings around the outside, this Temple structure by Herod had many more public areas around the Temple. So, the people never actually enter into the Temple proper, but they go into one of the public areas around the Temple. Sometimes when we read the word *Temple*, it really means, *Temple grounds*.

We should never confuse the Temple with a modern-day church. No one, apart from the priests, ever goes into the Temple proper. All that was done inside of the Temple was representative and forward looking (that is, Temple rituals were *typical*). When Zacharias burned incense, for example, this was the sweet savor of our Lord's sacrifice wafting up into heaven.

Our Lord's sacrifice is portrayed as sweet smelling to God. This is because, before God, we stink. If you have ever been near a days-old dead carcass (a dog, armadillo, or whatever that has been run over), there is a nearly indescribable and unbearable odor which exudes from this once living creature. This is how we smell to God (I am speaking metaphorically). Our sinfulness makes us totally unable to have fellowship with God. God can only, as the Holy Being, judge our sins. Apart from Jesus, there is no recourse that we have in life. Apart from Him, we would always be unbearably putrid before a holy God.

Let me set up an analogy. Let's say you had the opportunity to live in a house littered with dead animal carcasses piled up in every room. Does that sound like a pleasant life? This is what we are like to God. God no more wants to live with us forever than we want to live in a house filled with rotting animal carcasses.

What is key here is, Jesus Christ dies for our sins. All of our sins are placed on Him and judged. Therefore, God is able to fellowship with us because we are in His Son (those of us who have believed in Him). God no longer smells the rotting carcass of our sins, but He smells the sweet incense that is burned in the Temple; He smells the sweet savor of the animal sacrifices. Now, literally, God the Father accepts the offering of Christ Jesus in place of our judgment. God loves the Son and we are in Christ Jesus so God loves us.

There is a second understanding of the incense, that it represents the prayers of the priest going up to God. This could be how the people at this time understood the burning of the incense and they may have prayed at that time, thinking that it was the best time to pray to God. If this was the thinking, then this would be a misconception. God accepts prayers at anytime from those who believe in Him. We understand this today as having access to the Father through His Son. In that era, they would not have realized that.

All of the things which took place in the Temple were representative analogies which looked forward in time (theologically, we say that these are *typical* or *types*). People of the Old Testament did not understand typology. They did not know, for instance, that the Ark within the Temple represented Jesus Christ. The gold represented His Deity; the acacia wood represented His humanity. The blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat (which was over the Ark) once a year by the High Priest represents the spiritual death of our Lord for our sins. No one in the Old Testament would have understood this at all. In fact, it took awhile—perhaps hundreds of years—before we in the New Testament had a handle on the numerous types found in the Old Testament. Some were revealed to us—particularly in the book of Hebrews—but I don't believe that anyone in the early church fully appreciated just how pervasive and numerous these types are.

In our narrative, Zacharias is in the Temple burning incense; his priestly duty at this particular time.

Luke 1:11 **And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.**

Zechariah is at the altar of incense, which is his responsibility that day, and an angel appears to him. This is way out of the ordinary.

In the Bible, there are some fantastical things which occur, because much of the Bible records God's interaction with man on earth. Therefore, there are miracles, signs and very unusual events (like seeing an angel). One must not think that the Bible talks about such things happening on a regular basis—like things which happen every few days or every few weeks. Historically, these are very rare events.

Interestingly enough, the last time (historically speaking from this point in Luke's gospel) that an angel appeared to man is in the book of Zechariah, whose ministry took place between 520–518 B.C. (the ministry that we are aware of). So, right now, in our narrative, an angel has appeared to Zacharias, the Levitical priest; and, about 500 years previously, an angel appeared to Zechariah the prophet, the man who Zacharias is probably ultimately named after.²⁹

Zechariah Sees the Angel in the Temple (a graphic); from the [National Catholic Register](#) accessed May 3, 2019.

Luke 1:12a **And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him,...**

I primarily use the ESV; capitalized throughout; which uses the name *Zechariah* (in order to maintain some congruity with the Old Testament). Translators Green, Haweis, Niobi, Pickering, Charles Thompson, Young, and Webster all try to maintain consistency between the testaments by using *Zechariah*. The translations AUV, ALT, AOB, AS, BSV, BV, CGV, EMTV, FAA, HRB, LONT, MLV, NTVR, RHB6r, RNT, TDB, UTV, VW, WB, WEB all use the Greek form, *Zacharias* (this is not a definitive list³⁰).



The word *troubled* is the aorist passive indicative of a verb which means *to cause one inward commotion, take away his calmness of mind, disturb his equanimity; to disquiet, make restless; to stir up; to trouble; to strike one's spirit with fear and dread; to render*

²⁹ More than likely, *Zechariah* is a family name; but possibly taken originally from the prophet.

³⁰ These are the translations which I have in my e-sword.

anxious or distressed; to perplex the mind of one by suggesting scruples or doubts. Seeing an angel would be a very disconcerting experience for anyone.

The aorist tense means, right when Zechariah saw the angel, he was disturbed; the passive voice indicates that Zechariah was suddenly troubled; he did not think about it and then become troubled. The indicative mood is the mood of reality—this is exactly how he felt at this moment.

Zechariah is shook up by what he sees.

Luke 1:12b ...and fear fell upon him.

Seeing an angel is so outside the range of normalcy that Zacharias is upset, troubled and afraid. Any normal person would react with some fear and trepidation.

This suggests to us that Zacharias recognized that this was an other than earthly being. However, people rarely spend any amount of time in the Bible describing what an angel actually looks like—and there are certainly times when angels do not look much different from man (that seems to be the indication of the text). In some instances, we are informed that angels appear to be made of light.

The Temple was not a place that priests went into to hang out. They had specific duties that they performed; they went in, performed those duties, and then exited. So, whatever time was needed to light the candlesticks or to burn the incense was the amount of time that a priest remained in the Temple. When a priest completed his task, then he exited. So Zechariah is mostly likely in the Temple alone with the angel. Because the angel is there, speaking to him, Zechariah is going to be delayed.

Exactly how Zechariah recognizes that this being is other worldly is not told to us. Again, that would require a description, which he has not given us.

Luke 1:13a But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah,...

There is no indication that angels can look into our skulls and figure out what we are thinking. However, angels are geniuses and they understand body language and micro facial expressions. Therefore, the angel could see the Zechariah was obviously afraid (I would not be surprised if Zechariah jumped). So the angel seeks to calm Zechariah, and with good reason. The angel is going to communicate some important information to him. A soul filled with fear cannot take in information. A person who is afraid cannot think.

Luke 1:13b ...for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

First of all, here is Zechariah standing by the altar of incense, which altar represents believers praying to God; and there are people praying outside the Temple; so the angel

tells Zechariah that his prayer (petition) has been heard. We do not know how many times Zechariah has prayed to have a son, but it is presented here as a single prayer.

The angel tells Zechariah to name his son *John*, which means *Jehovah is a gracious giver* or *Jehovah's gift*, which is the proper way to see a child. However, in this case, the gift of John was not simply for Zechariah and his wife, but for all the Jewish people.

This son would become John the Baptizer (better named *John the Herald*). He is not to be confounded with the Apostle John, who wrote the book of John, the epistles which bear the name John, and the book of Revelation. These are two very different men.

Lesson 024: Luke 1:13–15

John the Herald as a Nazarite

Zechariah is a priest and he is doing his duty in the Temple. Suddenly, an angel appears to him while he is apparently alone, in the Temple, attending to the priestly duty of lighting the incense. .

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

Both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth believe in the Revealed God, the God of the Old Testament. They are mature believers and they are a mature couple who are without children. They have apparently been praying for a child (a prayer which they may not have uttered for a decade or two now), God heard that prayer and He is answering it in the affirmative. The angel has just promised Zechariah that his wife would bear them a son, and that he is to name the son John.

Luke 1:14a And you will have joy and gladness,...

Zechariah would have both an inner joy and an overt, expressed joy. The first noun is the feminine singular noun *chara* (χαρά) [pronounced *khahr-AH*], which means, *joy, rejoicing, gladness; the joy received from you*. Strong's #5479. The word translated *gladness* is the feminine singular noun *agalliasis* (ἀγαλλίασις) [pronounced *ag-al-LEE-as-is*], which means, *exultation, extreme joy, gladness*. Strong's #20. Literally, this reads **There will be** [or, *he will be*] **joy and gladness to you**.

Throughout the Bible, there have been several births which come to a couple later in life: Isaac was born to Abraham when Abraham was 100. Jacob and Esau were born to Isaac when he was 60. There is a right time for a person to come onto the scene, and these were the right times.

If you have seen a play or have been involved in a play, you have a number of characters, and they walk out onto the stage at specific times to deliver their lines and to interact with those already in view. There is a right time for them to come into a scene and a wrong time. An actor who walks onto the stage at the wrong time confuses the flow of the play

and the action. If he walks out at the wrong time, then what can he say or who can he say it to?

God's plan on this earth is extremely detailed and we have a particular time when we are to come into this world and interact with those around us. There was a right time for Elizabeth and Zechariah to give birth; there was a right time for their son John to enter human history. Part of John's entrance into this world will be the way that he enters the world.

Luke 1:14b ...and many will rejoice at his birth,...

Zechariah and Elizabeth had prayed for many years for a child, and, given their ages, it is my guess that they have not prayed this prayer for over a decade or two. But the angel tells Zechariah that not only would they have a child and be filled with joy as a result, but others would rejoice at John's birth as well. His birth would not be a private, family affair. There will be enough unusual things occur associated with John's birth, so that, many people—perhaps thousands—will be thinking about his birth. Many would understand that John is born by divine fiat, and therefore, they would realize that his birth was significant.

If you are reading this, you may already be aware that John will go out into the desert-wilderness and people will come to him; they will come to be baptized by him and to hear what he has to say (something that we will study in the book of Luke). Now, on what basis will people come out to John while he is at the Jordan River baptizing? For people to come to see him, they have to find him and be willing to take a trip of 2 or 3 hours. There will not be any signs with arrows on them saying, *this way to John's baptism*. How did they know about him? How did they know he was there? Let me suggest to you that, his birth will be so significant that it will impact thousands of people. They will all know about it and they will all understand that his birth has divine significance. So, when they hear about this same man, as an adult, being out in the desert-wilderness, proclaiming the Messiah—they have to go out and hear him.

As a man, John would be Herald to the True King, which would cause many to rejoice. If the herald has arrived, then the King is not far behind.

Luke 1:14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,...

John would be the herald of the Lord; he would announce the Lord's coming. Therefore, he has an important part to play in the overall scheme of things.

That we might understand this better, if you have ever seen a state of the union speech, right before the President appears, a man comes out and announces, in a clear and loud voice, *the President of the United States!* That man is a herald. This would be John's job.

The Lord is far more important than anyone and so, John coming on the scene is the prelude to the coming of the Messiah—the greatest event in human history. It is only

logical that the most important Person in human history be formally announced. John would announce the Lord's arrival.

Luke 1:15a ...for he will be great before the Lord.

John is going to be great before God. John will go out into the desert-wilderness and begin proclaiming the coming of the Messiah and he will offer men the baptism of repentance (that is, *a baptism which proclaims a change of mind*). Men who come out to see John will be inspired. Religious types will be somewhat angry at him. But, the Bible tells us that John will be great before the LORD.

What does it mean for John to be great before the Lord? It means that God has a very important purpose for John, and that John will fulfill that purpose. There is a place where God wants John to be; and there are things that God wants John to do. John will fulfill these things expected by God. Even today, John the herald is one of the most well-known characters from the Bible, despite the fact that he had a ministry that was very limited in scope.

Now, at this point in the narrative, we are still inside of the Temple and John has not yet been born. Zechariah, a priest, has lit his incense, as was his duty, and an angel has appeared to him. The angel makes this announcement to him:

Luke 1:13–15a But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord.

The angel tells Zechariah that his prayer has been heard and that he and his wife would bear a son—having a son would be the answer to their prayer. They were to name their son *John*. He would become *John the herald* (more popularly known as *John the baptizer*).

As an aside, John the Herald is not the same man as John the Apostle. John the Herald will have a very limited ministry, much of which takes place out in the desert wilderness. I don't know that we have any clues as to the length of time that John will publically minister, telling of the Messiah-King to come; but let me suggest that this occurs over a period of a few weeks or a few months. It would make little sense for John's public ministry to be longer than the Lord's public ministry (John will be executed during the Lord's public ministry).

Luke 1:15b And he must not drink wine or strong drink,...

The angel tells Zechariah that John is not to drink wine or strong drink. There are two possible reasons for this: (1) John could be genetically predisposed to alcoholism, in which case, a few periods of time when he is drunk will result in his becoming an alcoholic; or (2) John will be a Nazarite (also, *Nazirite*), which is described in Num. 6. What is possible

is, the angel read to Zechariah that passage of Num. 6, but only a portion of it is recorded here. I lean towards the second explanation; so what does that mean?

What does it mean to be a Nazarite?

The Nazarite and the Nazarite Vows

The Nazarite is a very unusual office or calling. They are not to be confused with Nazarenes, which is simply a designation for someone who comes from Nazareth (Jesus is raised in Nazareth so He will be called a Nazarene).

A person becomes a Nazarite through a vow which he takes. This vow is described in Num 6:1–4 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink and shall not drink any juice of grapes or eat grapes, fresh or dried. All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, not even the seeds or the skins.*

Few things are more closely associated with the earth and with the world than the grape vine; and the Nazirite is not to partake of it. This is symbolic of him having a heavenly calling.

You will notice that the Nazarite is separated for a limited amount of time (here called, *the days of his separation*).

Num. 6:5 *"All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long."* (ESV; capitalized)

This is a very unusual vow, one that we might expect to come across more often than we do. Many identify Samson, Samuel and John the Herald as Nazarites. Samson clearly is, as the portion of Scripture where he is found actually speaks of him as being a Nazarite. Samuel is not called a Nazarite and I don't believe that John is either. This word is only found in Num. 6 Judges 13:5, 7 16:17 Amos 2:11–12.

In his life, John will seem very much like a Nazarite, but that word will not be applied to him in the gospels.

Luke 1:15c *...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*

Or: *And God would fill him with the Holy Spirit out from his mother's womb.* So God would empower John from birth by God the Holy Spirit. The preposition found here is ek (ἐκ) [pronounced *ehk*], which means, *out of, out from, from, by, of*. Strong's #1537.

Luke 1:15 *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*

Twice in Scripture, we have a contrast between being filled with alcohol and being filled with the Spirit. In Eph. 5:22, Paul admonishes his reader, **Do not be drunk on wine, which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.** In Luke, there is no mention of drunkenness, but on complete abstinence from alcohol. I believe that this contrast is one of control; we can choose to be controlled by alcohol or by the Holy Spirit (the believer can make such a choice). There is the implication that it cannot be both. You are either controlled by one or the other; but never by both.

It seems reasonable that this is true of any intoxicant. You cannot be controlled by the intoxicant (whether it be marijuana, oxycontin, fentanyl, amphetamines, etc). and the Spirit at the same time.

In the Old Testament, only a few people are said to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit, and many times, this was when they had a particular task to do. Here is a rare instance where this appears to begin at birth filled with the Holy Spirit—in fact, I don't know that there is another instance of this in human history. This is a very unusual situation, and I don't know that I can explain it. God respects our volition; we are created with free will. God does not intrude upon our free will, and He does not save us unless we desire to be saved. We express this desire by faith in Jesus Christ. At that moment, we are saved; and, at that moment, we are filled by God the Holy Spirit. We lose this filling when we sin and it is restored to us when we name our sins to God (1John 1:9). That is a Church Age doctrine, but it seems to be consistent with past dispensations, apart from the filling of the Spirit. In the previous dispensation, men enjoyed fellowship with God if they believed in the Revealed God and had no unconfessed sin in their lives.

The key might certainly just be the text. Just as accurately, half of this verse could read: **...and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even out from his mother's womb.** So, these words do not demand that John is filled with the Holy Spirit immediately upon exiting his mother's womb, but very possibly as a child (this can occur by means of a volitional choice). John, from a very young age, believed in the Revealed God. Therefore, he enjoyed this filling of the Holy Spirit, which meant that he was guided and taught by the Spirit throughout most of his life.

So that there is no misunderstanding, being taught by God the Holy Spirit does not mean that John meditated for hours on end, emptying his mind of all thought. The Holy Spirit teaches specific content, and that content would be the contents of Scripture. By way of illustration, let's say that you sat in the same room with one of the greatest teachers of all time, but that teacher did not say anything, would you benefit by his teaching? Of course not; you do not benefit by being in proximity with a good teacher, but by hearing words from his mouth.

So, even though John's actual training is not described beyond what we read here, it would be reasonable to assume that he exposed himself to the Word of God, whether it be taught in the synagogues or at the Temple during the holy holidays. John had the added benefit of being taught by God the Holy Spirit as he heard the Scriptures read. Although the Bible does not spend a lengthy period of time with John's teaching, we hear enough of it to know

that he often peppered his teaching with passages from the Old Testament (which was the Bible of the Hebrew people in the first century). Therefore, he clearly knew Scripture.

Lesson 025: Luke 1:13–16

Life in the US/Life in Israel Under Roman Rule

We have millions of people in the United States who think that we are in a ship about to crash into an iceberg because Donald Trump is president (I write this in 2018–2019); and previously, the other half of the country believed this to be the case when Barack Obama was president. The key to the great prosperity and freedom that we enjoy here in the United States is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ followed by the intake of Bible doctrine. If there is a reasonable sized pivot of believers with maximum doctrine in their souls, then our nation will continue to enjoy great peace and prosperity. And, if we reject God, and His Word and His blessings, then, no matter who is president, it is going to be a very bumpy and unhappy ride, generally speaking (supergrace believers will always have God's grace overruling national disaster in their personal lives).

There are so many negative things which could happen to the United States, which God has been restraining for decades. One simple example; our debt. Why are we not Greece? Why is our country not falling apart because we are so far in debt? That is because the United States dollar is the preferred currency of the world. If that changes, then our lives change dramatically in the United States. We also have the slow moving disaster of added debt increasing the cost of servicing of that debt in our national budget (which has exploded in the past 10 years). This is a very disconcerting direction that our country is going in, but, because of God's grace, we still enjoy the greatest prosperity today of any nation in human history. But this is because of God's blessing, not for any other reason. Remove the spiritual pivot from the United States and that would remove all of God's blessing.

Do not doubt that the prosperity and blessing of the United States could change overnight; and the life that we have known and enjoyed in our country could change in ways that we could not imagine. There are many people who are still alive who suffered through the Great Depression, which was the last great national discipline that our nation was under. For the most part, very few of us have suffered under national divine discipline. There are several generations of people who would completely fall apart if God removed His blessing from our country. There are so many people who have no appreciation of how much God blesses this country. On the contrary, we have people living in the United States today who do not believe that the United States is even in the top 10 of best countries to live in (and they will readily point you to a website to substantiate their point of view).

The more people who believe in Jesus Christ and the more people who are growing to spiritual maturity by the intake of Bible doctrine, the better off our country is going to be, no matter who is president and no matter who controls Congress. Now, you may have a difficult time believing this, as one political party is clearly establishment oriented and the other party is as anti-establishment as a U.S. political party has ever been—but, the key

is not who is in charge, but Who is the God of our nation. This is the result of the spiritual choices made by millions of people.

One of the reasons that we studied Herod the Great, is so that you could see that he made an honest effort to serve the people that he ruled over. Near the end of his life, he was clearly a vicious evil tyrant; but he was not like that all of his life. And, as the ruler of Judæa, he did some great, positive things for the Jewish people. They obviously had little appreciation for any of what he did. Yet, interestingly enough, when Herod was at his worst, the Lord Jesus Christ was born, the greatest blessing to mankind in all of human history.

Because of what is happening in the United States, we have to be willing to look beyond our leaders and our political party and see God, Who is in all and over all. If our nation is due for some divine discipline, then, we as believers should not panic and think that it is the end of the world. It isn't. So far, the worst actual discipline that we have received as a nation has been a number of weather events. However, it is clear that there are many things on the horizon which potentially trouble the United States. There is a real possibility that the United States, 30 years from now, will be nothing like the God-blessed country that we enjoy today.

There is no question that our relationship to the Risen Christ is the source of our blessings.

Psalm 33:11–12 [The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom He has chosen as His heritage!](#)

Psalm 144:15 [Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD!](#) (ESV; capitalized)

Now, it is apparent that many people are turning away from God; and the most churches do not appear to be dedicated to the teaching of Bible doctrine. Nevertheless, even if our nation was to enter the 3rd or 4th stage of national discipline, there is still no reason to panic. God is in control. If you are rightly related to God—a believer taking in Bible doctrine—then you have nothing to fear and nothing to get worked up about.

What is quite amazing to me is just how relevant our study is to our day and time. The Bible is like that; and an excellent teacher is able to bring this into our time.

I can listen to messages delivered by R. B. Thieme, Jr. from 40 years ago, and it sounds as if he is speaking of today when he begins to make application. J. Vernon McGee predates R. B. Thieme, Jr. by a decade or so, and he also taught from the Bible. In fact, McGee went through the entire Bible for his radio ministry (which show is still on the radio in some areas). Now and again, he might stop and make a few comments on the politicians of his day (McGee never named them specifically), and I have heard McGee make application using politic back in perhaps from the 1960's or the 1970's; yet, since he did not name these men, he sounds as up to date as anything you will hear spoken from

the pulpit today. Both McGee and Thieme focused on the teaching of Scripture, which automatically made their topical messages pertinent and up to date.

We find it easy to get worked up over secular leaders, and there is nothing wrong with knowledge of the politics of your city, county, state or nation; and in a democracy, as voting for our preferred leaders is a great privilege. But we need to be careful of getting too worked up because, in our system of government, party control changes hands with some regularity.

Furthermore, we need to keep politics in perspective. During the time of the early church, most of the Roman emperors were viciously anti-Christian, to the point of jailing and executing believers who were too evangelical. Their acts and policies were so horrific, that there is no comparing them to whomever is in power right today as you read this, even if that leader is a fire-breathing socialist who wants the government to be in charge of everything. Despite the absolute evil of some Roman emperors, Christianity grew and thrived in the early centuries under the evangelism and teaching of the Apostles.

Throughout time, man is the same. We have a sin nature and we are motivated by our various lusts—power lust, materialism lust, sexual lust, approbation lust. This is true today just as much as it was true during the days of Luke's biography of the Lord. And God is the same as well. His control of things and His systems of authority are also the same. So, even though we are studying things which took place 2000 years ago, which involve customs and practices very different from our own, we are still able to understand these things and relate to them.

At this point in our study, Zechariah has gone to the Temple to perform his priestly duties, when, suddenly, an angel appears to him. The angel speaks to Zechariah about a son that he will have with his wife. This son, known as John the baptizer or John the Herald, would be the herald to the King.

Luke 1:13–15 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

As mentioned before, the appearance of an angel to this man is a very unusual event. The last time that we know that such a thing took place is 500 years previous. Zechariah is shaken up and fearful, but the angel calms him and tells him about the son that he will have (Zechariah and his wife are both old—too old to have children, in fact, if not for God).

Luke 1:16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,...

The angel continues to prophesy to Zechariah concerning his future son, John. In the Age of Israel, (and, strictly speaking, we are in the Age of Israel in this passage), men learned from prophets and priests. Prophets represented God to man and priests represented man

to God. Prophets spoke the Word of God; priests taught the written Word of God (and priests performed a number of rituals found in the writings of Moses).

In the Age of Israel, people were saved by believing in Jehovah Elohim, and enough of Him was revealed either in the teaching of the Old Testament, the words of the prophet, or through the animal sacrifices, for people to consider the Revealed God and believe in Him. However, John will be a herald of the Coming King, Christ Jesus, the Son of the Living God. Some people will believe in God and believe in His Son through of John's ministry.

As we will later study, Judaism had become corrupt at this time, and people were no longer learning to believe in Jehovah Elohim from their priests. The corrupt priests at that time were teaching a different god; an extremely legalistic god.

Much of Israel was turned against their God and for several reasons: (1) they were being taught lies and falsehoods by their religious leaders; and (2) the people were discouraged because they were under the thumb of Rome, and this lack of independence angered and frustrated them (despite the fact that this had been going on for hundreds of years). (3) However, most importantly, so many of the people had their own, natural, negative volition. That is, much of Israel had rejected the God of grace, Who is clearly taught in the Old Testament.

People today who are anti-God think that faith can only be imposed on indiscriminating children; but there are children today brought up by Christian parents who reject this faith. Similarly, there were people in this time that we are studying, who were exposed to all of the worship of the Jews, but they were unable to recognize their Savior when He came on the scene. Or, when they heard His message, they rejected Him.

I learned a great many things from my pastor-teacher, R. B. Thieme, Jr. However, I have noticed that there are people out there, even today, posting their testimony how they do not believe that Bob was a good teacher, and they most often cite his personality, his authoritarianism and his love of the military as supporting evidence. What I have noticed, for the most part, is these are people who were brought up in Berachah Church as young people (they were originally brought by their parents when they were children). Some may have spent 10–20 years in Berachah Church, much of that as a young person. These people have rejected the careful and accurate teaching of R. B. Thieme, Jr. There are many basic concepts of Christianity which, I have observed in their writings, that they object to as well. This is what negative volition is. So, even though they were exposed to excellent teaching from a young and impressionable age, they rejected that teaching. They may think that the problem was Bob's personality but it was the content of his teaching—accurate Bible doctrine—which they ultimately objected to. This is how many people react to accurate Biblical teaching. Negative volition is the underlying fundamental reason why so many people reject the truth.

Now, as an aside, this does not mean that a person who left Bob's church to go under the ministry of Robert Dean or Joe Griffin (or anyone else who carefully teaches Bible doctrine) is expressing negative volition. Such people are simply gravitating naturally to their right

pastor-teacher. That is a very different thing. I have heard both of these men teach, and they are outstanding teachers of the Word of God.

In this life, we live in a variety of circumstances. Yet God is in all and God is over all. Now, I might be the wrong person to say this, as God has given me great underserved grace in my life, being a baby boomer in the United States of America. My life has been greatly blessed. I had a wonderful childhood; and my life from my second birth to now has been wonderful. Like everyone else, I have faced difficulties and problems. However, with regards to almost every problem of my life, I have been the cause of that problem. So, I can say these things, but recognizing that God has given me great blessings to enjoy; and I realize that many other people have so much more to contend with. In any case, the principle is the same. If you want happiness and blessings in this life, then pursue God and His truth; and all of those things will be added to you (which is one of the things that Jesus taught).

These sons of Israel have lived through some difficult times—but certainly nothing to compare to the Exodus generation. Their lives were not that bad; nor was the Roman government unbearable. The Roman empire provided law and order throughout the land, and allowed them religious liberty, stopping short at giving the Jews the ability to execute their criminals. Herod the Great provided the Jewish people with a wonderful Temple and with law and order in their land, so that the Hebrew people could easily travel from point A to point B without fearing for their lives (we will see many examples of this in the New Testament). For a people who traveled en masse to some of their religious services, this was a great blessing (one which they appeared to take for granted). All of this ultimately had to be overseen by a higher power. But, other than their lack of complete autonomy, this was not a bad time for the Jewish people, despite many of them thinking that it was.

Lesson 026: Luke 1:13–17a

The Deity of Jesus Christ in the Book of Luke

So far, this is the passage that we have been studying:

Luke 1:13–15 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Zechariah is a priest who has gone to the Temple to perform his duty. For 2 weeks out of the year, he would go to the Temple and light the incense as one of his responsibilities as a priest. However, this time, while in the Temple, an angel appears to him and tells him about the son that his wife would bear.

In v. 16, we come to the fundamental ministry of John the herald, the son who will be born to Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth.

Luke 1:16 And he [John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,...

John is going to teach the people about the coming Messiah; and they will believe his words and they will look for this Messiah, Who is on the horizon. In this way, John will turn the people of Israel towards their God.

Much of Israel, as we will find out, has turned against their God. The religious hierarchy of Judaism will be, for the most part, very anti-grace and anti-Jesus. Legalism and hypocrisy will define their thinking. Some of the people will support them, some will not.

A significant issue even today is the conflict between grace and legalism. Many people in Israel will gravitate towards the Lord Jesus Christ, who will offer them grace; but many others will reject Him, despite that His blessing is free.

Luke 1:16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,...

This unborn son, of whom the angel speaks, will be the herald of Jesus Christ. He will inform that people that their Messiah is coming.

One of the very important principles of the Law of Moses is having more than one witness. The application in the Law is, of course, primarily related to civil and criminal law; but this principle has other applications as well.

Jesus will not suddenly appear on the scene and announce, "I am the Messiah. Get used to it!" He will depend upon many other witnesses to identify Him. Those who witness His miracles, those who sit under His teachings will all be witnesses to the Messiah. There will be the witness of the angels who identify Him to the shepherds, the witness of the shepherds who come to worship Him, the witness of the Scriptures, and the witness of John the Herald. There will be a plethora of groups and individuals who will know that Jesus is the Messiah, and they will proclaim that fact.

I find it quite fascinating—rarely did Jesus proclaim Himself the Messiah, the Greater Son of David, the Son of God—much more often, he allowed others to observe His works and His words for themselves and then to draw their own conclusions. Many times, these people would testify to their conclusions. During the ministry of our Lord, hundreds (if not thousands) will identify Him as the Messiah, the Son of God.

As historians will point out, there have been, in the past, quite a number of people who have presented themselves as a messiah, but they were nutcases then (just as so-called messianic figures of today are, such as David Koresh or Jim Jones). We don't know the names of ancient folk who claimed to be the Messiah; but we certainly know the name of Jesus.

Furthermore, the name of Jesus is known far and wide throughout this world. You can speak to any man or woman in Thailand—one who is brought up a Buddhist from birth—and they will know the name of Jesus. You can speak to an atheist in China or

Russia, and they will know the name of Jesus. There are some exceptions to this, of course; but Jesus' name is known far and wide throughout this world. Even in one of the most isolated countries in the world, North Korea, many know the Lord's name (Franklin Graham's ministry has seen to that).

In one of the most godless places on earth—Hollywood, California—where so many of those in the movie and tv trade proudly proclaim themselves as liberal, pro-abortion, and against fundamentalist Christianity, even they will pronounce the Name of our Lord many times in many of their shows and movies. This is a fascinating phenomenon found in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia, that some of those who see themselves as evolved human beings, who have gone beyond Christianity, still cannot help themselves but to speak the Lord's Name many times in their movies and television series. We don't see this done with the names of Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, or whomever—but as those in the movie and television business move further and further away from truth, they find it all the more necessary to speak the name of Jesus as often as they can.

There is one more thing that distinguishes Jesus from all of the imposters—whether this be David Koresh or Joseph Smith or some ancient claiming to be the messiah—will be this man about whom the angel speaks—John the Herald. None of these false messiahs had a herald coming before them, pointing towards them. Jesus would have the witness of John the herald.

In v. 17, we have a very short phrase, which is quite remarkable, and most people miss what is actually being said.

Luke 1:17a ...and he will go before Him in the Spirit and power of Elijah,...

Everyone who reads this verse understands immediately that John the herald will go before Jesus the Messiah; and that is, of course, what is being said. But, actually, this portion of v. 17a says much more than that. It is very easy to read this passage and to miss what is actually being said.

Vv. 16–17 is a common, compound sentence, which will have the same subject in all portions of the sentence. The angel is speaking prophetically. Read this carefully this time, taking note of the entire context: **And he [John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God and he [John] will go before Him [the Lord their God] in the Spirit and the power of Elijah,...**

Notice, we have the same subject in both halves of the sentence and the same indirect object as well.

In the original Greek manuscripts, all of the Greek letters are capitalized. In English, we show respect to God by capitalizing His name (as we do our own) and we also capitalize pronouns pertaining to His name. Since *John* is obviously the subject of the sentences found in vv. 15–17, we are left with determining who is the *Him* referred to in v. 17a. If you read this sentence by itself, your immediate answer is, “John will go before Jesus, the

Messiah. That is Who *Him* is.” Of course, you are right, but you are also missing something—something which is very significant.

Now read it more carefully. The second sentence has the indirect object, *Him*. Now, where is the nearest proper noun that we can match this pronoun to? The nearest proper noun is *the Lord their God*, so John the Baptizer (as he will be known) will go before the Lord their God (*their* refers to the children of Israel). John the herald would turn many people in Israel towards the Lord their God and John will go before the Lord their God in the Spirit and power of Elijah.

So, do you understand and fully appreciate what the angel is telling Zechariah?

Luke 1:16–17a *And he [John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before Him in the Spirit and power of Elijah,...*

If you read carefully, you can see that vv. 16–17 affirm the Deity of Jesus Christ. John will go before Jesus Christ, as His herald. Jesus is the king and He is preceded by a herald or heralds. The verb means *to go before, precede; to go in the advance of another*. In other words, John is out there first as herald to the King. John comes first, speaking of the Messiah to come; and then, when John’s mission has been fulfilled, then Jesus will come on the scene.

He, John, goes before Him—and we all know that John will go before Jesus as His herald. But, again, notice what Luke actually has written (Luke is quoting the angel): John will go before *the Lord their God*. John turns many of the sons of Israel towards *the Lord their God*—just like it says at the end of v. 16—and John goes before Him, *Jesus, the Lord their God*. So, in the very first chapter, Luke is affirming the Deity of Jesus Christ.

To clear up a minor point, the text reads, *...and he [John] will go before Him [Jesus]...* Generally speaking, when there are pronouns in any language, they should have an obvious antecedent. John is the subject of 5 verbs in Luke 1:15–17a. Therefore, we do not necessarily need to find his actual name in this passage. It is understood; it is clear who is doing the action of the verbs. In our style of writing, we would insert the name of John several times; but when the Greek or Hebrew establish a subject, then there can follow a dozen verbs before we see the subject specifically named again.

This verse clearly reads: *he will go before Him*. To whom does this other pronoun *Him* refer? It obviously refers to Jesus, but His Name is not found anywhere in this passage. Nowhere in this context of what the angel says do we have the name *Jesus* or the title *Messiah* (= *Christ*). The only other specific person named in this passage is, *the Lord* (v. 15), *the Lord their God* (v. 16) and *the Lord* (v. 17). Unless the reader has some kind of theological agenda, it is clear that the proper antecedent for *Him* is *the Lord their God*. In other words, *Jesus = the Lord their God*. *John will go before Jesus, the Lord their God*. If you need to, go back and look over this passage. Do you find the name of Jesus anywhere? Do you find the words *King*, *Messiah* or *Savior* anywhere?

Here is the entire passage: Luke 1:13–17 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared." (ESV; capitalized) John will be herald of the Lord and he will go before the Lord their God. In this passage, there is nowhere else to go to find the antecedent for *Him*.

The book of John, more than any other single book, affirms the Deity of Jesus Christ; however, that does not mean that the other gospels do not. All of the gospels, in one way or another, affirm that Jesus is the Christ (the Greek word for *Messiah*), the Son of God. They all affirm that *Jesus is God*.

God's power today is in His Word; not in His miracles. There is power in His miracles, but they are less remarkable to us, 2000 years later; and far less numerous. We have to recognize the importance of God's power and where His power comes from in this dispensation. The real power of Elijah was in his message. The Holy Spirit guided and empowered Elijah. John would be the same. The power would be in his message; and he is guided and empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of John the herald was quite unusual. Can you imagine God telling John, when he is a young man, "Now, I want you to go out in the middle of nowhere and begin proclaiming that the Messiah is coming"? Would we not think that it is better for John to post himself outside the Temple or next to a popular synagogue with this message? This way, there would be a maximum number of passers-by who give him a listen. But God, Who often does things much differently than we would, did not do it that way. God's approach is often different than ours. And better.

John's ministry would be primarily in the Jordan valley, in desolate areas, which was, more or less, located between the north and south.

Those who went to see John had to have strong positive volition. He was not to be found easily. But, his birth would be so unusual as to remain in the people's minds even to that point in his life. I believe that many people looked for and found John because of the strange circumstances surrounding his birth.

The Lord's ministry would also be in an unusual area. He will spend most of His public ministry up in the Galilean area rather than down in Jerusalem. This where the northern kingdom of Israel was, featuring, at least in past times, the most negative volition and the lesser tribes.

In the history of Israel, the two kingdoms split apart into a northern and southern kingdom, after the reign of Solomon. There were 10 tribes in the north, and 2 (more or less) in the

south (there were Levites spread throughout both territories). The northern tribes were the ones to peel off from God's Word originally and they never had a good king as a result. It is the northern kingdom (called Ephraim or Israel) which fell under the 5th stage of national discipline first. They got so far away from God that God removed them from the land. Yet, during the time of Jesus, these people (those who still remained in this area) would have the most positive volition.

During this time, there still remained differences between the north and the south; but they were all under the reign of Herod the Great in Luke 1–2.

Lesson 027: Luke 1:16–20

The Angel Speaks to Zechariah in the Temple

So far, we have studied this, where the is the angel speaking to Zechariah inside the Temple:

Luke 1:16–17a **And he [John] will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he [John] will go before Him [= the Lord their God = Jesus = the Messiah] in the Spirit and power of Elijah,...**

As we have studied, this is one more passage of Scripture which affirms the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only True Celebrity of human life.

Then we have another aspect of John's purpose:

Luke 1:17b **...to turn the hearts of the fathers toward the children,..."**

v 17b states the purpose of John preceding Jesus, coming before Him as a herald. The verb means *to turn to [to the worship of the true God]; to cause to return, to bring back; to the love and obedience of God; to the love for the children; to love wisdom and righteousness*. What John is turning, through the power of the Spirit, are the hearts of the fathers. He is turning their hearts *toward* or *upon* the children. What does this mean?

A child is quite simple; you tell a child something, and, at certain young ages, they simply believe you. They have no reason not to. Nearly everything a child knows comes from his faith, and what the child learns by faith comes from you, the parent. Our only approach to God is by faith in Him (this does not mean blind faith or irrational faith).

The *fathers* (i.e., the adult Jews) had been corrupted by Judaism, and they were trying to earn God's grace by works, by following legalistic traditions. John was to help cause their hearts (the immaterial part of man) to turn towards the worship of the true God, and this is achieved first by faith, the perception system of children.

There are 3 ways for man to amass knowledge: through faith, through rationalism and through empiricism. In faith, someone tells you something, and you believe it. This is the simplest form of knowledge, and it is estimated that 70–90% of everything we know is

based upon faith. People who think they do not operate from faith on most everything are completely lacking in self-awareness. Even if a person says, "I have no opinions apart from peer-reviewed scientific research," they still are operating by faith. (1) No one web-searches for peer-reviewed scientific research every time they state an opinion. (2) Believing a peer-reviewed study is an act of faith. You are believing that the study was honest to begin with and properly done, with the proper conclusions drawn; and that the *peers* actually did good and accurate reviews of the study. Simply put, not all peer-reviewed studies are 100% accurate. (3) Also, it is worth noting that peer-reviewed studies do not cover every aspect of every opinion that a person has.

The second form of perception is empiricism. Empiricism means that we observe something, and record that into our thinking. We may observe the same thing taking place 4 or 5 times, and then assume it will always take place under the same conditions.

The third form of perception is rationalism. Rationalism means we are able to take the things which we believe in and the things which we have seen, and logically develop from these things ideas, concepts and conclusions. No matter what conclusion that we come to, that conclusion was based on a great number of things which have been assumed to be true.

When developing a mathematical system (like arithmetic, algebra, calculus), the foundation is always a set of postulates, things which the developer of that mathematical science *must assume* in order to proceed. There is no such thing as mathematical science without making a considerable number of faith-assumptions. When you change these faith-assumptions, you change the mathematics (and yes, there are contradictory systems of mathematics, simply based upon choosing contradictory assumptions).

Societies change dramatically, depending upon the assumptions which are made by most of the people. We have seen a sea-change in American society in two significant areas; our thinking about homosexual acts and our thinking about drugs (I use these examples because our change in thinking is profound and has occurred during my lifetime). At one time, homosexual acts were almost universally understood to be sinful. From about 1990–2010, American society changed its view about homosexuality. Many people today *believe* that sexual preferences are innate and unchangeable (both of these things are demonstrably false); but our society has acted upon its faith or its belief that homosexual acts are normal and okay.

So that there is no misunderstanding, in the Bible, homosexual acts are not normal or okay; and they are condemned in both the Old and New Testaments. Our society however, has set the Bible aside in some matters, and has developed beliefs which are in opposition to Bible doctrine.

Another big change in American society has been with regards to drugs. This began in the 1960's, when a significant subculture began to use illegal drugs to get high. This desire to get high has continued for decades, to a point where even licensed doctors today are prescribing drugs to alter the state of one's consciousness. Our society had the

fundamental faith, at one time, that putting oneself under the control of a drug was wrong and personally destructive. However today, a considerable number of people believe that it is okay to be under the control of drugs, and the public continues to petition our government to make more and more drugs legal. At the same time, we are losing far more people to the use of drugs—legal and illegal—than we ever did in the Vietnam war. The same young people who marched against the killing in the war in Vietnam often support a very permissive attitude towards drugs, which drugs kill far more people than the Vietnam war did.³¹

My point here is, people and societies change, depending upon the fundamental things that they believe in. Yet, what we believe in is purely a choice. Obviously, we can be influenced in the things that we believe in, but ultimately, this is something that we choose. And dramatic things happen based upon what it is that we believe. People choose to believe that homosexual acts are right (or wrong); and that drug usage is okay (or not okay). Law and societal attitudes change to fit the beliefs of this society and very society changes, depending upon its fundamental beliefs. My point here is not to explore either of those two particular issues, but to note that societies change, and they change on the basis of free will and faith.

Allow me another tangent: one of the beliefs to come out of the 1960's is to do your own thing, as long as it did not hurt anyone else. Homosexual acts and the homosexual lifestyle have been shown to be unhealthy, which causes harm to a significant percentage of those who engage in these acts. Similarly, a permissive attitude towards drug usage has resulted in thousands of deaths in the United States. That old 1960's adage has evolved into *do your own thing and disregard the harm that it does*.

Let's return to our original topic, which is the exercise of faith. When it comes to God and our relationship with God, we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ; [Abram believed Jehovah and it was credited to him as righteousness](#) (Gen. 15:6). [The fear \[respect\] of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom](#) (Psalm 111:10a).

So, John will help to turn the hearts of the fathers towards the children, towards their primary way of perceiving things, which is by faith. This does not mean that adults need to adopt the norms and standards of their children; but that they need to return to the simplicity of thought, which is based upon faith and where one chooses to exercise faith. That faith needs to be directed towards their Savior, Christ Jesus.

Luke 1:17b-c *...to turn the hearts of the fathers toward the children, and [to turn] the disobedient toward the wisdom of the just [or justified, righteous, innocent],..."*

The verb is carried to the next phrase, so that John is to turn *the disobedient toward the wisdom of the just*. The word for disobedient means *unpersuadable, not compliant*,

³¹ I was concerned myself with the US involvement in the Vietnam war. Immediately after we pulled out of Indo-China, there was a great bloodbath which followed. Far more people died as a result of our leaving Vietnam.

disobedient. This can refer to a person who is very religious, but whose heart is turned against God (yes, you can be religious and turned against God). Previously, their faith has been bastardized into the legalistic religion of Judaism. However, John will cause their hearts to be turned toward the wisdom (knowledge, understanding) of the justified. The justified are those who have believed in Jesus Christ. The message of redemption will be carried along by the disciples of Jesus.

Luke 1:17 ...and he [John] will go before Him [the Lord their God (that is, Jesus)] in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and [to turn] the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."

John will also prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. What is about to happen is the central event of human history—God coming to this earth as a man—so first John is sent to prepare the people for this. John is preparing the people for their King, their Messiah, their Lord and their God.

The idea of the herald is, he proceeds the appearance of the king and calls attention to the entrance of the king. The angel is informing Zechariah that he and his wife would father a child who would become this man. Their child would become the herald for the True King.

Luke 1:18a And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this?"

What Zechariah is hearing here is quite surprising. His mind is a whirl. He asks for some sort of proof to know that these things are true. Remember, he is speaking to an angel in the midst of the Temple; the angel just appeared to him. "But," he says, "do you have any proof?" If you can imagine, Zechariah is looking at this angel, who has just given him all of this information, and he asks, "So, how do I know that any of this is true?"

Then Zechariah proceeds to give this angel his side of the story. Zechariah has an opinion on this matter. "Let me tell you what I think," Zechariah tells him, "now, here is where your prophecy breaks down..." Or, "What you have said is quite interesting, but, how exactly do I know that you are on the level. I get that you are an angel, and all, but, there are things which you are telling me just don't jive with reality."

Zechariah now explains what he knows. "This is a fact, Jack," Zechariah states. Zechariah states what he *knows* to be true to the angel:

Luke 1:18b For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

Zechariah notes that the angel seems to have missed the fact that he is no longer potent and his wife is too old to bear children. "So, based on the facts which I know to be true, how can I have this son that you speak of?" For all intents and purposes, Zechariah is saying, "You might be an angel and everything, and, maybe you are sent by God, but let me lay out some simple facts—I am too old to sire a child and my wife is too old to bear a child. Those are just the basic irrefutable scientific facts."

As a math teacher, what I taught was built upon what they learned the day before, which was built upon what they learned the day before that. If a math student does not understand step 2 in an explanation, then his mind stays right there at step 2 and it does not move, even if I, as the teacher, am already at step 6 of an outstanding explanation. The student's mind is still back on step 2.

So, this angel has been speaking for a few minutes (from vv. 13–17), and where is Zechariah's mind? He is back in v. 13, where the angel said, **"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John."** (ESV)

All of this other stuff? Zechariah might have half-heard it, but everything goes back to the idea of having a child, and Zechariah, quite frankly, just does not see that as happening. Zechariah sees that as crazy talk, even for an angel.

What does the angel do? He goes back to even before his first words to Zechariah, and says, "Listen, this is who I am. I come to you from God." This suggests to me that Zechariah's mind had not yet fully processed who this was standing in front of him.

Luke 1:19 **And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news."**

The angel has gone back to the beginning of this matter and he says, "Listen, I came here to you with good news for you and your woman. I regularly stand in the Presence of God, so I know what I am talking about! Listen," Gabriel says to him, "this is good news and it comes from God. I did not come here to argue with you. I did not come to debate with you whether this is possible or not."

Gabriel is an angel who shows up on 4 occasions: twice to explain to Daniel the 70 weeks prophecy (which tells us when the Messiah will come); and here, to tell Zechariah that he will sire a child who would pave the way for the coming of the Messiah, the most anticipated event for all ancient Jews. Also, Gabriel will speak to Mary, to tell her what was going to come to pass.

Then Gabriel does something unexpected. Essentially he has said, "Listen, I am Gabriel, and I actually spend time with God, and brought you this great news. However, you don't seem to be ready for it, so why don't you just shut the hell up, keep your human viewpoint opinions to yourself, and watch what happens? Your opinion on this matter is totally irrelevant."

Obviously, based upon the next verse, Gabriel is far more circumspect than I might have been. He continues speaking to Zechariah:

Luke 1:20 **And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."**

An angel cannot read your mind; however, Gabriel is able to tell by Zechariah's expression and by his words that he seriously doubts what he is hearing. God can read our minds but angels cannot. So, while Zechariah is standing before Gabriel, doubting what is being said, Gabriel tells Zechariah that he will not be able to speak. Furthermore, he would not be able to speak until Elizabeth gives birth to her child. "By that time, I think you might begin to get it," the angel essentially tells Zechariah. "Then, at that time, after the child is born, you can open your mouth and tell everyone what you think. At that point, everyone will be ready for you to give your opinion on this matter."

End conversation. Zechariah cannot speak. He has just seen an angel—a pretty amazing thing to see—and the angel has told him some really important stuff which he doubts. And now, he is unable to speak. He cannot tell anyone what he just saw; nor is he able to share his opinion with everyone about what he just saw.

Lesson 028: Luke 1:21–23

Zechariah Emerges from Herod's Temple

For some time, we have been studying the angel Gabriel and his interchange with the priest, Zechariah, in the Holy Temple of God. Zechariah is presumably in the Temple alone, the angel appears to him, and has told, "You are going to have a son who will be herald to the Messiah King." Zechariah then said, "Yes, but my wife and I are too old to have children." Then Gabriel says, "Okay, you can stop giving me your opinion on this matter. From this point on, you are mute. You may keep your opinions to yourself."

Luke 1:21 **And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple.**

I do not know exactly what Zechariah was supposed to do besides light the incense. It is possible that he is supposed to come out and read from the Old Testament. Perhaps he was to bring the candlesticks out into the foyer. However, whatever it was, his conversation with Gabriel took some time; and he may have stayed there for a few minutes longer, testing the lack of voice which he now lacked. He would try to speak, but he could not. Remember, he questioned the angel about what was about to take place; so surely, when the angel said, "And you will be unable to speak..." that Zechariah likely tested that out as well.

While this is happening, Zechariah's buddies are there waiting for him, ready to go out for coffee (or whatever), and he seems to be taking far too long. "What's up with Zechariah?" "Yeah, shouldn't he be done by now?" "What is he doing in there?" "How long does it take to burn incense?"

Zechariah realizes that he really cannot speak, no matter what he does. So he finally emerges from the Temple, trying to figure out, *how do I tell my associates what just happened?*

Luke 1:22a **And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them,....**

I am sure that Zechariah tried speaking when he was in the Temple; but he finally emerges, and it becomes clear, after a few minutes, that he does not have the ability to say anything. No doubt, he made several attempts to speak, and the people outside could tell that he was unable to.

Most likely, he was doing a considerable amount of gesticulating, not unlike some politicians I have recently seen.

Luke 1:22a-b **And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple.**

The people looked at Zechariah, they spoke to him, and he seemed quite normal, except that he was unable to speak and perhaps he was quite animated, attempting to communicate without having a voice. Interestingly enough, some of those waiting for him figured out that Zechariah had seen a vision (that does not mean that the angel was not real).

I would understand that this *vision* is not limited to seeing something that is not there; but it includes seeing what most people do not see—in this case, the angel Gabriel. Don't let this freak you out but, you are surrounded by both angels and demons; you are being observed. They are taking notes (it is my guess that they have total recall) and they may even be talking amongst themselves. I would guess that some believers—particularly, those who are growing and advancing in the faith—have more angels in attendance than others. But we don't see them. Zechariah is allowed to see Gabriel, who was sent specifically to speak to him.

God wanted Zechariah to be aware of what was about to happen, and God used an angel in order to inform him.

Luke 1:22c **And he kept making signs to them and remained mute.**

Finally, Zechariah comes out, and he tries to speak, but nothing comes out. Then he begins making signs, to try to explain what he has seen and what just happened. Since he is mute, he is unable, obviously, to say anything, so he makes all of these gestures, trying to convey the situation. When you have never used sign language before, what is the sign for, “I was in the Temple, an angel Gabriel came out of nowhere and began to speak to me. He told me that I would have a son by my wife Elisabeth. I think we are too old to have children” Hard to figure out the signs one would make in order to explain all of that. If given that to illustrate in Pictionary, you might lose that round.

Here is how I figure it: Zechariah keeps pointing into the Temple, then he tries to show that he was talking with an angel (perhaps he pantomimes talking, then stands opposite to where he was and pantomimes talking again). Maybe then, he points into the air, as if the angel floated away (Gabriel probably stopped being visible to Zechariah). Perhaps I could have done better than Zechariah did, because whatever he did, did not communicate very much.

Despite all the arm waving and the gestures, the one thing that Zechariah did not do is, talk. His friends figured out, however, that he had seen something in the Temple. They may not have been sure about what he saw, but he apparently saw something.

Although Zechariah had lost his voice, he was still able to perform his duties in the Temple, and he continued to do them until his time was up.

Luke 1:23 **And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.**

We do not know if we are speaking of a few hours, a few days; but whenever Zechariah's service in the Temple was completed, he returned home. This suggests that there was some sort of domicile available to those who were in service to the Temple.

Around the original Temple, there were 3 stories of rooms which wrapped about the sides and the back of the Temple. However, this is Herod's Temple, which had been built by Herod the Great (it is possible that he simply restored Zerubbabel's Temple). I would guess that it has more rooms and facilities than Solomon's Temple.

It is worth mentioning that this Temple was not yet complete. However, this is really not clear from history. In John 2:20, Jesus is challenged for saying, **"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** (John 2:19b). Not realizing that Jesus was speaking of His body, **the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"** (John 2:20). Bible History suggests³² that Herod began this building project in 19 B.C., so if it took 46 years to build, then it would have been completed in A.D. 26, right before Jesus began His public ministry. Apparently, some building continued even to A.D. 63; but, quite obviously, the Temple is completely functional right at the time of this narrative, which would have been around 6–5 B.C. (Some of this information about the Temple comes from Bible-history.com; and other sources offer a slightly different points of view.)

In any case, a great deal of thought appears to be given over to the practicality of the Temple, so there were more meeting areas around the Temple (not in the Temple); and there were very likely more outbuildings—including places for lodging for the priests who were on duty.

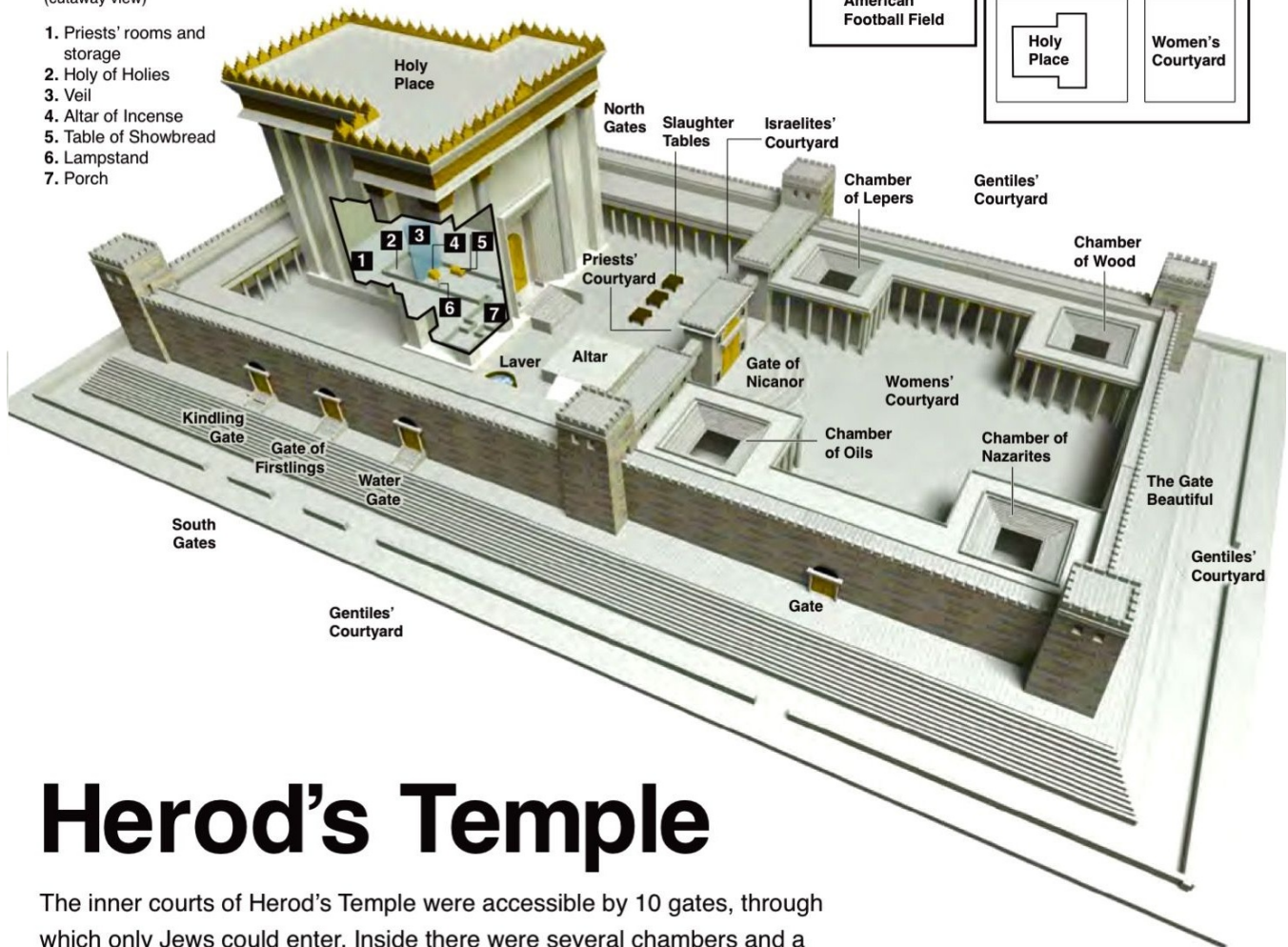
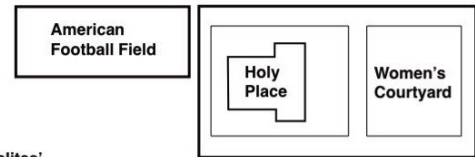
³² From https://www.bible-history.com/jewishtemple/JEWISH_TEMPLEHerods_Temple00000006.htm accessed March 1, 2019.

INSIDE THE HOLY PLACE

(cutaway view)

1. Priests' rooms and storage
2. Holy of Holies
3. Veil
4. Altar of Incense
5. Table of Showbread
6. Lampstand
7. Porch

Size comparison (approximate):



Herod's Temple

The inner courts of Herod's Temple were accessible by 10 gates, through which only Jews could enter. Inside there were several chambers and a courtyard where sacrifices were made. At one end was the holy place—a two-room sanctuary used by Jewish priests. The expansive building project of Herod's Second Temple and Temple Mount was completed in approximately AD 62–64, only to be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

Herod's Temple (a graphic); from [Pin Image](#); accessed February 22, 2019. It is not clear who first designed this graphic, but there appear to be several similar graphics from the same person or group. Herod's Temple footprint was considerably larger than Solomon's Temple.

According to this graphic, there are no buildings wrapped around 3 sides of the Temple, as appears to have been the case for Solomon's Temple.

The Temple proper, the large building which looks “T” shaped from above, was never casually entered into. Specific priests would go inside for specific duties and then exit. At the back of the Temple was the Holy of Holies, and in there was the Ark of the Covenant. The High Priest entered into this room but once a year to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat which was over the Ark of the Covenant.

In front of the Temple was where the priests would perform public ceremonies for the holy days. They would offer up animal sacrifices. At the very least, the smoke could be seen to rise over the walls. It is not clear how high the altar platform was. But, for the public, this is where the main event of offerings took place. People gathered around the Temple and they were both inside and outside of the Temple walls. It is not entirely clear to me which groups were allowed to come inside and which remained on the exterior.

The money changers, as they are called in John 2:13–16, would have been inside the walls of the Temple and they sold *Temple-approved* sacrifices there and apparently had an exclusive franchise deal with the religious hierarchy of Jesus’ time. They provided animals which were sufficiently spotless and without injury, and they sold these sacrifices to the people. This was not done as a convenience for those who forgot to bring their animal sacrifices, but these were the only animals which were supposed to have been used for offerings on the Temple grounds.

If you read the passages where animals were sold, these money changers even sold pigeons, which were the animal of choice for the poor to offer up. However, even the poorest people had to pay in order to have an animal for sacrifice.

Jesus cleansed the Temple of these people at least twice: at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:13–16) and during His final week before the crucifixion (Matt. 21:12–13 Mark 11:15–16 Luke 19:45–46).

The Temple was apparently quite high up—some [estimate](#) 180’—because this would be the place the Satan would carry the adult Jesus to, to the pinnacle of the Temple (Matt. 4:5 Luke 4:9), suggesting that He cast Himself down from there.

This was a grand Temple; and often, in Scriptures, when a group of people is said to be *in* the Temple, this means within the walls and in one of the courtyards, but not in the Temple proper. The public did not go into the Temple where Zechariah had been. Only priests entered the Temple and only for their specific duties.

Lesson 029: Luke 1:23–25**Elizabeth’s pregnancy**

Zechariah, a priest, is an older man who is childless. While fulfilling his Levitical duty in the Temple, Gabriel, an angel from God, appeared to him and promised that he and his wife would have a son. This son was to be named John, and he would help to turn the people of Israel towards the Lord their God; and that John would go before the Lord their God.

Zechariah indicated that he had some doubts about this all coming to pass, given that he and his wife have had no children and, at this point in time, they are past child-bearing years.

Because of his doubts, the angel announces that Zechariah would be unable to speak. Zechariah is to become an observer, to see how these things of God come to pass.

Luke 1:23 **And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.**

It is very logical that, if there were 24 priestly families, that priests from each family served at the Temple for 2 weeks each year. Zechariah's service had been completed, so he returned home.

There is no discussion of Zechariah walking in the front door of his house and not saying, "Honey, I'm home." However, there is enough information for us to realize that his voice has not come back to him.

Zechariah may have had a lot of opinions about meeting the angel, what the angel told him, and how it was impossible; but he was unable to share these studied opinions with his wife, Elizabeth. In fact, he was unable to even tell her what happened in the Temple.

Not too long after Zechariah returned home, the impossible happened (impossible, according to Zechariah):

Luke 1:24a **After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived,...**

Obviously, Zechariah enjoyed relations with his wife, but, this time, the inconceivable occurred—she conceived. She was with child, just as the angel had promised (I would assume that she, even living with Zechariah, did not know of the promises made by the angel). However, even at the conception of his first child, Zechariah could not speak. He was to continue to observe the series of events and to think about them. Whatever his opinion was on this matter, he had no choice but to keep it to himself.

Have you ever known of person that, whenever something happened, he was willing to give you his opinion on that event right away. He always knew what had happened; he knew what was behind it; and if there was some hidden thing about it, he has theories which he readily shares. Do you know anyone like that?

Let me suggest that Zechariah might be like that. When the angel spoke to him, he almost immediately began to give his own opinion, his own feedback, telling the angel what is and what is not possible. Remember, Zechariah is an older man; and, therefore, he might have some strong, nearly intractable opinions. Furthermore, Zechariah was on the ground, so to speak, with a better perspective (or so he may have thought). Therefore, the angel simply shut him up, as Zechariah's opinion at this time was unimportant (no matter how important Zechariah believed it to be). It was Zechariah's time to *watch and learn*.

Luke 1:24b ...and for five months she kept herself hidden,...

Women have different reactions to pregnancy. Zechariah and Elizabeth were an older couple and they have been married for a very long time, but she had never been pregnant before. Even after it became clear to her that she was pregnant, she kept this a secret. All we know is what Elizabeth says here. There is no other discussion of this conception and birth elsewhere in the Bible.

Zechariah could not go about and tell anyone, as he could not speak. Maybe it was his opinion that they tell everyone they know and then some. But, since he could not speak, this was a secret which they kept for a considerable amount of time.

Luke 1:24c–25a ...saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when He looked on me,...

Elizabeth gives her opinion on this matter, which seems to be somewhat inscrutable.

Perhaps she is explaining why she kept this a secret for 5 months and perhaps she is explaining her pregnancy here. However, what Elizabeth clearly understands is, God has done this in her. God has effected this change in her. She was unable to have children before; but now, she is able. She understands that this is the Lord's work. This is without her husband telling her that it was.

Her husband doubted the angel; but Elisabeth knew at her pregnancy that God had brought this to pass. Remember, the angel spoke to Zechariah; the angel revealed what was about to happen to him. The angel did not speak to Elizabeth.

Now, this does not mean that this is a virgin birth or anything; it is just that she has not gotten pregnant at all, but here she is, at age 50 or 60 (or, whatever); and suddenly, she is pregnant. That is an amazing event!

She knows that this is the work of God; and Zechariah is apparently learning this fact in silence.

It was always considered a blessing for a woman to have children; and when a couple went without children, some people wondered if there was a set of secret sins that kept them from having children. We are not to judge others; but people certainly do. Jewish society rightfully understood births and new life to be a good thing; a blessing from God. When a marriage did not produce children, some people wondered why; and some of them became judgmental.

Now, as an aside, the concept of *not judging others* has been terribly distorted in our day. Some of Elisabeth's friends, who perhaps have assumed that she has sinned against God and therefore had not been pregnant—are guilty of judging. This means that you are assigning a sin or wrongdoing to a person who may or may not have committed that particular sin (or set of sins).

This is quite different from the concept of having a moral code today and holding yourself and your family to that moral code. This is much different from the person today who does something, and then expects all of his friends and family members to accept what he has done. “Don’t judge me for this!” he might demand.

If you have children, and you decide to keep your child from hanging out with druggies; that is completely legitimate. If you are in human resources and you evaluate a person’s background and decide that they are not suitable for a particular job opening, that is completely legitimate. That is, in fact, *your job*. Similarly, if you have to evaluate someone’s job performance, making judgments in this realm—perhaps for a report, perhaps someone is calling you to get an evaluation of their work—that is legitimate. It is not judgmental to give an accurate appraisal of a person’s job performance, even if that performance is substandard.

Let’s take this to a different realm: if someone touts their drug usage, their alcoholism or their homosexuality; avoiding them, keeping your family away from them; or not participating in certain events with them—all of those are legitimate forms of judgment and action based upon your evaluation of the circumstances.

Listen, if someone believes that greatest thing in the world is smoking pot or drinking; then it is okay to avoid that person or that family. They are someone for whom Christ died and you should never be deterred from giving them the gospel. But you may not want your children around Uncle Louie because he smokes pot everyday (whether legal or not); and that is legitimate. Furthermore, it is completely reasonable for you to restrict the access your children have. You protect your children from things that are wrong (to some degree) until they come to a point where they are able to make their own decisions. Obviously, we live in a fallen world and we ourselves our sinners—so there is no failsafe moat that you can dig around them. As a believer in Jesus Christ and a parent, you make decisions which you believe are right for your own children. There is no sinful judgment in making such decisions to protect them.

Let me be even more specific: your brother is getting married to his gay lover. You do not have to attend his wedding or take your children to his wedding or pretend that everything is normal, except that your brother likes men rather than women. No matter what society tries to tell us, this is abnormal and it is against God’s design for mankind. On the other hand, this does not mean that you withhold the gospel of Jesus Christ from this brother. Or, perhaps you attend briefly, and explain to your children that this is abnormal (it is).

Let me offer another specific example: your school is teaching a variety of sexual information to your children in grammar school, and you oppose this. You may pull them out of school and home school them or put them in a private school, or you can raise holy hell at your school board meeting, in order to allow you to pull your kids out of such teaching (too often nowadays, sex education ends up normalizing perversion).

I have gone far afield from the context. We got here by speculating that perhaps some of Elizabeth's friends judged her because she was had no children. They would be wrong to do that; but that does not mean that all judgment is out of bounds.

Let's return to the narrative.

Luke 1:24–25 *After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."*

That Elizabeth was unable to have children was considered *her reproach among men*, suggesting that she was judged by friends and acquaintances for not having any children.

Several translators suggest within their translations why Elizabeth kept her pregnancy hidden. I believe that, in nearly every case, the translator was trying to answer a question by the way that they translated this verse.

Why Elizabeth Kept Her Pregnancy Hidden (various translators)

The NET Bible suggests that we have no idea why.

After some time his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and for five months she kept herself in seclusion. (NET Bible)

The NET Bible footnote: *The text does not state why Elizabeth withdrew into seclusion, nor is the reason entirely clear.*

Her humiliation of being childless was public, so she kept her pregnancy private (sort of suggested by the New Jerusalem Bible).

Some time later his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself, saying, 'The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered in public.' (NJB)

Translation for Translators suggests that people would laugh at her.

Some time later his wife Elizabeth became pregnant [EUP]. She did not go out of her house for five months, because she knew that people would laugh at her during that time if she told them that she was pregnant. But she said to herself, "God has enabled me to become pregnant. At this time he has pitied me and has caused that I will no longer be ashamed because I have no children!" (T for T)

The American English Bible suggests that Elisabeth said that this pregnancy was Jehovah's will; and kept herself hidden so that people would not laugh at her.

Well, when the period of his assigned [Temple] service was finished, he went back home, and that's when EliZabeth (his woman) became pregnant. However, she hid herself for five months, because she said: 'It is Jehovah's Will that I do this, so that people won't laugh at me.'

Why Elizabeth Kept Her Pregnancy Hidden (various translators)

The Easy English does not give a reason; it simply suggests that she remained within her own house.

Soon, a baby was growing inside his wife Elizabeth. She stayed in her house for 5 months. 'The Lord has now given me a baby', she said. 'He has been kind to me. He has helped me to feel good about myself. Because of this, other people cannot say bad things about me any longer.' (EE)

The Message suggests that she simply stayed at home to enjoy her pregnancy.

It wasn't long before his wife, Elizabeth, conceived. She went off by herself for five months, relishing her pregnancy. "So, this is how God acts to remedy my unfortunate condition!" she said. (The Message)

Most translations suggest that she suffered some humiliation because she was married and without children. That assumption seems warranted. These other things are, for the most part, guesses.

Possibly, because she has endured public disgrace before people; that she now will enjoy this private blessing with God. It is legitimate to enjoy private blessing within your own family.

Or the reason for her remaining secluded could be as simple as, recommendation from a doctor, midwife, or friend. There are occasions today where a woman who is pregnant is severely limited on her movement.

Taking all things into consideration: (1) her husband, Zechariah, is unable to speak; (2) friends in the past had judged her because she had no children (this is conjecture, but not unreasonable); (3) Elizabeth understands that her pregnancy is from God —so she decides to keep this a private matter for awhile.

Despite beginning her pregnancy as a private matter, Elizabeth's birth will become a very public matter.

Lesson 030: Luke 1:24–28b

The Birth of Jesus Predicted

So far, we have been studying the prophecy and then pregnancy of Elizabeth. She is pregnant with a son who would become John the Herald, more commonly known as John the baptizer.

Luke 1:24–25 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."

You may recall from Gen. 30:23, Rachel said the same thing when she gave birth to Joseph, her first son. **And she conceived and bore a son. And she said, God has taken away my reproach.** Having a child was considered to be a great blessing to Hebrew peoples (Ex. 23:20 Lev. 26:9 Psalm 127:3). Not having a child meant that the marriage was not completely fulfilled. This is a pattern of great blessing which God has designed for most families. Family is the basic building block of society. Whatever stands against the nuclear family unit or promotes alternative family units is anti-God.

Application: At one time in the United States, this was a given. The nuclear family was the basic social unit of society. Today, the number of alternative family groups—such as households which lack a father (this is the greatest problem in our country), or marriages between people of the same gender. There are certainly contributing factors which go against the nuclear family unit, such as public schools teaching anti-Christian and anti-establishment principles to the point of saturating the curriculum with such teaching.

Application: We should not be surprised by such attacks on divine establishment (= laws and principles which are applicable to all of society, not just to believers). We live in the devil's world (John 8:44–47 12:31–33 14:30 16:11³³ Ephesians 6:12-13). Satan is always attempting to undermine a society based upon establishment principles and divine viewpoint thinking. Whatever is good and right in society, Satan wants to replace. God designed man with two genders and with specific roles in society; with a permanent coupling between one man and one woman. The idea that there are 50+ genders is both absurd and philosophically Satanic.

The word translated *reproach* is *oneidos* (ὀνειδος) [pronounced *ON-i-dos*], which means, *a disgrace; a reproach; shame; a taunt*. Strong's #3681. Lacking children in one's marriage was viewed negatively by all those that you knew; almost as if you had done something wrong. It would not be unusual for one's friends and associates to wonder what your secret sin was, if your marriage had not been blessed with children.

As to why Elizabeth chose to keep her pregnancy a secret is at best hinted at. She understood that her pregnancy was of God and that her barrenness had been a reproach. I have suggested that friends and associates may have even imputed secret sins to her family to account for her barrenness. Therefore, her celebration of her pregnancy remains a private affair for 5 months, between her, her husband and God.

At the time that Elizabeth is pregnant, the angel Gabriel goes to speak to Mary.

Luke 1:26 **In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,...**

The angel Gabriel previously appeared to Zechariah in the Temple. Now he is going to Nazareth. The word *angel* means *messenger*; and Gabriel is delivering a message. We

³³ It surprises me just how many passages on this topic are found in the book of John.

have not the slightest clue why one angel is chosen for a job, over another; or why Gabriel here gets double duty. I would assume what he is doing is seen as a great honor.

The sixth month refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (Barnes, Benson, Pett, Utley). The Cambridge Bible and Whedon suggest that this is six months after Gabriel appeared to Zechariah. Either understanding makes John the Herald about 6 months older than Jesus (Gabriel will appear to Zechariah and then to Mary, and he tells them what is about to happen). Given the imprecision of the dates of conception and births, this could be a 7 or 8 month gap. In any case, this is the only passage which gives us this information, where the births of John and Jesus are covered in the same context. Luke, by his narrative, indicates that John is conceived and therefore born before Jesus.

This minor problem with the *sixth month* is cleared up by what the angel will tell Mary: "**And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.**" (Luke 1:36) So, the context tells us exactly which *sixth month* is being referred to. So there should be no disagreements.

Dr. John Gill: *[This] same angel...five hundred years before gave Daniel an exact account of the time of the Messiah's coming.*³⁴

Elizabeth is in the hill country of Judæa (v. 39); and Mary is living in Nazareth (v. 26).

The Galilee Region in Northern Israel (a map); from [Bible History](#); accessed February 22, 2019.

³⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Luke 1:26.

Galilee was the northern part of Israel; it was the region north, west and southwest around the Sea of Galilee. Despite Jerusalem having been the capital city of Israel for 1000 years (since the time of David), most of the Lord's ministry will take place in the north, an area once associated with negative volition and divine discipline.

It is this northern kingdom which would split off from Judah, after the death of King Solomon, and go its own way. As a result, the northern kingdom

would become so negative toward the God of Israel that they would suffer the 5th stage of national discipline.³⁵

Galilee is the small sea north of the Jordan River, and Galilee is also the name of a district in northern Israel. One of the cities within the Galilee region is Nazareth.

Nazareth was not considered a very important city by the Jewish people. No prophet is said to come from Nazareth (John 7:52); and Nathanael will later ask, "**can any good thing come out of Nazareth?**" (John 1:46).

Nevertheless, the angel was sent to Nazareth, where Mary is living. It is she who would bear the LORD.



³⁵ God warned Israel of a possible 5 stages (or cycles) of discipline which they would face as a nation. The 5th stage is the worst and final stage, where the people are forcibly removed from the land.

Luke 1:27a ...to a virgin betrothed to a man....

This time, the angel went to a woman—a virgin who was to be married. The word here is *parthenon* (παρθένης) [pronounced *par-THEN-oss*], and it means, *a virgin, a marriageable maiden*. Strong's #3933. Unlike American society today, the Jewish people were not sexually active outside of marriage. American society in the 1950's and earlier was also much more conservative regarding sex and marriage. As a result, there were far more rock solid marriages than not. Since the sexual revolution, the divorce rate and the bearing of children out of wedlock, and abortions have all increased dramatically. There's God's way and there is man's way; and the sexual revolution of the 1960's (and beyond) is certainly an example of man's way.

It was not unusual in that era for marriages to be arranged far in advance of the actual marriage. Some couples might be matched up before age 10; and some couples may not meet until the time of their marriage. Mary is a virgin who was engaged to the man Joseph. I don't know that we are aware of any of the particulars concerning their engagement.

Portions of the Mosaic Law speak to this very thing. There were laws on the books, so to speak, about women engaged to be married, but who were taken and lost their virginity prior to the marriage. If this occurred off in some deserted area, it was assumed that she was raped and the man would be executed. If this occurred in a populated area, both the woman and the man could be executed (if the woman did not call out for help, the relations are considered consensual).

In any case, the Bible clearly discourages promiscuity prior to marriage (sex within the confines of marriage is never discouraged, except for a short length of time). Those who violated this Law of Moses against promiscuous behavior could be stoned to death. As a result, marriage in Jewish society was strong and stable. Since their families were stable, nation Israel was stable and strong as well.

Luke 1:27b ...whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

This virgin is engaged to be married to a man named Joseph who is from the house of David. This means that he is descended from David the most famous of Israel's kings, who is written about in the books of Samuel. We will later find out that this virgin is also a descendant of David's (both Joseph and Mary are descended from David).

Luke 1:27c And the virgin's name was Mary.

The name of the virgin that Gabriel went to see is Mary.

Despite anything that you have heard about Mary, such as, she was not really a virgin, contradicts Scripture and the common morality of that day. In that era, it was not unusual for a man and a woman to have one and only one intimate relationship in all of their lives. In fact, in the United States, prior to the 1960's, this was not unusual either.

Whereas our culture today allows for all kinds of promiscuous and deviant behavior, this was not true of the Jewish culture nor did the Law of Moses allow for it.

The angel Gabriel comes to Mary—the surrounding circumstances are not noted.

Luke 1:28a **And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored [or, *graced-out*] one,..."**

This is the same Gabriel who went and spoke to Zechariah in the Temple. Whereas, we knew all about the surroundings of his meeting with Zechariah, we are told nothing of the circumstances Mary was in when he spoke to her.

Gabriel describes her with the feminine singular, perfect passive participle of the verb *charitoō* (χαριτόω) [pronounced *khar-ee-TOW-oh*], which means, *graced [with, out] [one], honored [one], being indued with a special honor; being given special blessings*. Strong's #5487. The perfect tense refers to a person who has been given grace in the past with results that continue on. All of this was in the mind of God and therefore the plan of God from eternity past. The passive voice means that she receives this grace or honor. The participle here is a vocative, so Mary is being called by this name. The angel addresses her as *favored one, graced-out one, honored one*.

Luke 1:28b **...the Lord is with you!"**

The angel also tells her the God is with her. It should seem obvious that she is to understand this in more than just a general sense. *God being with her* indicates a very important relationship.

Lesson 031: Luke 1:26–31

The Birth of Jesus Predicted

The angel Gabriel has come to Mary to inform her that she will give birth to the Savior.

Luke 1:26–27 **In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.**

When Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant, the angel Gabriel went to speak to Mary, a woman engaged to Joseph. Both of them are from the house of David.

Luke 1:28a-b **And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored [or, *graced-out*] one, the Lord is with you!"**

Then, at the end of v. 28, some ancient Greek manuscripts add the phrase, *Blessed [are] you among women*.

Luke 1:28c **"...blessed are you among women!"** (BSV, KJV, WEB, WPNT)

This final phrase is not found in some manuscripts. Some of the best translations leave it out: ANT, AUV, ESV, NKJV, VW.

This exact same phrase is found in v. 42. It has been theorized that a copyist looked down at the original manuscript which he is copying and fixed his eyes on the wrong place; and then, a few seconds later, looked down at the correct place. Meanwhile, he has inserted a phrase from elsewhere. There is an actual name for this kind of textual error, but I do not recall at this time.

Pickering writes: *Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit 'blessed are you among women' (to be followed by NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).*³⁶

This appears to be quite a strong argument from Pickering to leave these words in.

When it comes to small phrases like this, the number of people who appear to weigh in on one side or the other does not necessarily indicate who is probably right. The King James Version of the Bible carries a great deal of weight, even today, over 400 years later. Despite whatever manuscript evidence that we have, if the KJV inserts the phrase (or leaves it out), many follow suit. This phrase is no exception. The KJV has this phrase in it, and so do many other translations. At the same time, a considerable number of translations leave the phrase out.

Since this phrase is found elsewhere in this verse (spoken by Elizabeth rather than by the angel Gabriel), whether it belongs here or not is a moot issue. Personally, I would lean toward this phrase not being found here, but only in v. 42.

When it comes to manuscript differences, whether in the Old or New Testaments, this is very much what the typical level of problem is. Although there are manuscript differences throughout the entire Bible, there are almost no circumstances where the differing texts are of any theological significance (one of the few exceptions to this is the end of the book of Mark, which material appears to have been added by charismatics).

Luke 1:28 *And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!"*

I use the ESV for the translation throughout this study, and they leave out this final phrase.

Bear in mind that Mary is quite young at this time. I would place her somewhere between the ages of 15 and 21. I am unaware of any passage which actually fixes her age. In fact, even determining the typical age for marriage in that era is difficult. According to one [source](#), Rabbis set the age of 18 as being the ideal age for a woman to marry; but that some, when physically developed, might marry as early as age 13. Another [source](#) said that young men could get married as young as 14 (12 for girls) with parental permission (which was required until they reached the age of 21).

³⁶ Translation and the notes are from Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD; from e-sword; Luke 1:28

According to Scripture, men might be considerably older when first married, as in the case of Isaac (40) and Jacob (over 40). On the other hand, King David married Saul's daughter around age 20 or so.

We know that Gabriel appeared to Zechariah when he was quite old; and Gabriel is appearing to Mary at a fairly young age (presumably).

Luke 1:29a **But she was greatly troubled at [or, over] the saying,...**

She is troubled over the saying, "**Greetings, O favored [= graced-out] one, the Lord is with you!**" The verb used is the aorist passive indicative of *diatarassô* (διαταράσσω) [pronounced *dee-at-ar-AHS-sow*], which means, *to agitate greatly, to trouble greatly, to disturb; to perplex*. Strong's #1298.

Gabriel speaks to the woman, and it does not appear that she either discerns that this is an angel or, she is more concerned with what he says than with who he is. Mary focuses upon the content of Gabriel's words.

My thinking is, she does not know how to understand this greeting. This seems to be much more than, "Hi, how are you? God be with you."

Meeting the angel troubled Zechariah (v. 12). Here, we have a different verb. It means *to agitate greatly, to trouble greatly*. It appears here that Mary is more agitated or perplexed over the saying, than the fact that she is speaking to an angel here. It is not even clear that she realizes that this is an angel.

She seems to accept the angel; but it is what he says is what concerns her. No doubt, she is wondering, *who am I for an angel to appear to me and call me graced out, and tell me that God is with me?*

The meeting between Gabriel and Zechariah began with Zechariah clearly being afraid. Zechariah was troubled and fear fell upon him. Mary is simply troubled or confused. The Greek words are quite different, but the words appear to be synonyms.

Luke 1:29b **...and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.**

Mary, although she is *shaken* by the sudden visit (a good definition for the Greek word translated *troubled*; which could also have been translated *perplexed*), her real concern is determining what sort of greeting this is. Her focus is on the content of the message, despite being initially shaken up.

The word translated *discern* is the imperfect indicative verb *dialogizomai* (διαλογίζομαι) [pronounced *dee-al-og-IHD-zohm-ī*], which means, *to deliberate (by reflection or discussion); to cast in mind, to consider, to dispute, to muse, to reason, to think; to revolve in one's mind, to bring together different reasons*. Strong's #1260. You will note that the verb meaning *to be troubled, perplexed* is in the aorist tense, which is a point of time. So,

she is momentarily thrown off her game, so to speak, but when she considers what was said to her, that she thinks about in the imperfect tense, meaning that she began to think about it and she is still thinking about it.

From the very beginning, Mary's mind is at work. She is thinking about the meaning and implication of these words from Gabriel. Her mind is fully engaged with the import of this unexpected meeting.

Zechariah's response seems to have been more emotional than cerebral; but Mary's response seems to have been just the opposite.

Mary has been greeted by an angel—this has never happened to her before—and the angel has said, "Greetings, O **graced-out one, the Lord is with you! [You are blessed among women!]**" She is taking the situation that she finds herself in, along with the words spoken to her, and she is trying to make sense of it all. Whereas, Zechariah in the Temple was having a hard time getting past the fact that an angel has appeared to him and suggested something he believed to be impossible. No doubt that Mary is concerned that she is speaking to an angel; but she is also trying to determine the meaning of what Gabriel says to her. Her mind is clearly engaged.

Her mind is also engaged in a different way than Zechariah's. Zechariah immediately shared with the angel his opinion as to why he and his wife could not bear children ("We're just too old," he explained). What Zechariah implied was, "You might be an angel and all, but I live here in the real world and I know the facts on the ground." Mary is not going to be so argumentative. Zechariah reacts negatively to the message of the angel; and Mary, although she is questioning the meaning of what Gabriel is saying, she does not dismiss what he says as impossible.

Luke 1:30a **And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary,...**

Although we have Mary described with a verb that means *agitated, troubled, disturbed; perplexed*; there is apparently some fear as well. She is perplexed at the message; but also fearful, because this is an angel speaking to her. Even though Mary is not specifically said to be afraid, the angel saying this suggests that she is. A mental attitude sin might make it more difficult for Mary to discern what she is being told.

It is certainly possible and very normal to experience two emotions at once, and for one of those emotions to be dominant. She is somewhat afraid of the angel; but she is even more perplexed by his message. More of her thinking appears to be directed towards figuring out just what the angel means by what he said to her; but emotionally, she is experiencing some level of fear.

The fear she feels appears to be a sin; however, the fact that she is confused by these words is not a sin.

Luke 1:30b **...for you have found grace** [the ESV has *favor* here instead] **with God.**

Find here is the aorist active indicative of *heuriskô* (εὕρισκω) [pronounced *hyoo-RIHS-koh*], which means, *to find (literally or figuratively); to discover, to get, to obtain; to perceive, to see*. Strong's #2147. The aorist tense is interesting, and I would suggest that this is the iterative aorist tense. The aorist tense usually refers to a point in time, but the iterative aorist refers to several points of time. The iterative aorist expresses repeated or customary past action. These would be the points of time when she was in fellowship and growing spiritually. During those times, she was discovering grace with God (although she may not have realized this).

What she has found (or, *discovered*) is the feminine noun *charis* (χάρις) [pronounced *KHAHR-ic*], one of the most important words in the Bible. This word means *grace, graciousness; acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, joy*. Strong's #5485. The verb which I translated *graced out* is the cognate of this noun. The noun is one of the most important words found in the New Testament, occurring over 150 times. I believe the only epistles lacking this word are Jude and 1 and 3 John. Some understand this word to mean *undeserved love, unfailing love*. Personally, I like the word *grace*.

Grace is all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the cross. Without the cross, God is restricted by His Own essence. God is holy and we are not. Because of our fallen state, God is unable to have any contact or relationship with us. However, because Jesus died on the cross for our sins, we are placed *in Christ* when we believe, and can therefore enjoy a relationship with God, despite our sins and sinful nature. Jesus removed these barriers between us and God by taking upon Himself the penalty for our sins; so that God is able to give us grace (which God will do, far more than we deserve).

Luke 1:30 *And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found grace with God.*

The angel first speaks of God's relationship to Mary. She is not to be afraid and she has found grace with God.

I should add here that Mary is not some 2nd tier deity; she is not a little bit better than the rest of us; and maybe or maybe not as good as God. Mary is just like anyone of us—she is a recipient of God's grace. Did she think doctrine? Did she believe in the Revealed God? Yes and yes. But, does she occupy some space outside of or above the human realm? No. Should we worship her or pray to her? No and no.

Luke 1:31a *And behold, you will conceive in your womb....*

In the New Testament alone, we come across the word *behold* over 200 times. A few modern translations render this word *listen, look, observe*. We may want to even go with a more informal *listen up* or *listen here*. However, this particle (Strong's #2400), commonly translated *behold, listen, lo* or *see*, is the 2nd person, aorist middle imperative of *horaô* (ὁράω) [pronounced *ho-RAH-oh*], which means *to see*. Strong's #1492. The Brits used to have almost an exact colloquialism which would properly translate this word: *see here*. The idea is to get the other person to focus in on what you are about to say.

The famous talk show host Rush Limbaugh will, on occasion, on the radio, say, "Now look at me..." when he is about to make a point. Obviously, you cannot look at him if he is on the radio. This is said to focus attention on what he is about to say. *Behold* here is used in much the same way, despite that being an archaic translation.

The angel tells Mary that she will conceive in her womb. What is important is, there is no man involved. She is a virgin. She understands by the way that the angel is speaking, that this will be a conception apart from and prior to her future marriage.

Luke 1:31b ...and bear a Son,...

She will conceive and she will give birth to a Son.

Luke 1:31c ...and you shall call His name Jesus.

She is told to give her Son the name *Jesus*. *Jesus* means *Savior*.

Lesson 032: Luke 1:28–34

The Virgin Birth

The angel Gabriel has come to Mary and is speaking with her.

Luke 1:28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one [= *graced-out one*], the Lord is with you!"

Gabriel, an angel, appears to Mary, suddenly, out of the blue; much as he appeared to Zechariah.

Luke 1:29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Interestingly enough, Mary, from the beginning, is focused upon what this angel is saying to her. Unlike Zechariah, Mary was not argumentative, despite having some misgivings. She was listening, despite being confused by what the angel was telling her.

Luke 1:30–31 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor [or, *grace*] with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus.

Right now, the angel is speaking to Mary about the son Who would be born to her. Mary understands this to refer to her having a son apart from interaction with a man. She understands that the angel is not talking about what will happen after consummating her marriage with Joseph.

He continues by saying:

Luke 1:32a **He will be great...**

Great is the masculine singular adjective *megas* (μέγας, μεγάλη, μέγα) [pronounced *MEH-gas*], which means, *large, great; wide, spacious; rich; loud [i.e., a greater intensity]; high [position], more prominent, important*. Strong's #3173. Jesus is the most prominent figure of all time; more people know about Jesus than any other person in human history. Even those who do not believe in Jesus, and speak English, will use His name in order to swear.

Hollywood, which rejects almost all that is in the Bible, almost cannot develop a script for a movie or a series without using Jesus' name. In the work which I have done (as a teacher, realtor and landlord), I interact with quite a number of people. In any Hollywood movie or series, there might be two or three characters who speak with profanities throughout (using the Lord's name in vain). In my life, I can remember specific people—pretty much just a handful of them—who often spoke with profanities—these people stand out in my mind because there are so few of them. And, at the same time, I have known hundreds of people in school and real estate who do not resort to using Jesus' name in a trivial way. In Hollywood, it appears to be characteristic of every other person, based upon their portrayal of people in their movies and series.

My point is, Hollywood appears to be incapable of producing a script without using the name of Jesus. In fact, I would suggest that, if you took all of the television or movie output, the proper name that we would find spoken most often is *Jesus* (or, *Jesus Christ*). Let me suggest that you will find His name more often than the names *John*, *George* or *Liam*. Even when cursing, Hollywood cannot set Jesus aside. They *must* use His name.

Luke 1:32b **...and will be called the Son of the Most High.**

Jesus will be called *the Son of the Most High*. *Most High* is a name for God the Father. For the second time in this first chapter, Jesus Christ is spoken of as Deity. Jesus is called the *Son of God* 40 times in the New Testament and *Son of the Most High [God]* 4 times (3 times in the book of Luke). This is different than being a generic *son of God*, as in being born *of God*, as in being saved. Such titles indicate Deity; Jesus is not a *god* (whatever the means), but *the God*.

No one else in the Bible is called *Son of the Most High*.

There are only a few passages which use the phrase, *sons of God*, where this is not a direct reference to the Lord. However, there is no other person in the Bible called the *son of God* as Jesus is.

Luke 1:32c **And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David,...**

The title *the Lord God* in the New Testament is equivalent to *Jehovah Elohim* in the Old. It refers to one particular member of the Godhead. You will recall that back in vv. 16–17 of this chapter, *the Lord their God* referred to Jesus Christ, and John the Baptizer would act as the herald for Jesus Christ (in that context, John was specifically called the herald

for the *Lord their God*). Here, *Lord God* refers to *God the Father*, Who will give Jesus the throne of His human father David.

Now, we, as believers, are sons of God, because we have exercised faith in Jesus Christ. As a result, we are placed *into Christ*, and *in Christ*, we share His Sonship. **For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith** (Gal. 3:26). This does not make us Deity, however, but we do share Jesus' sonship.

The angel also refers to Jesus as *the Son of David*; as he calls David the father of Jesus. Having both a Divine Father (Jesus is the Son of God) and a human father (King David) is known as the hypostatic union. Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is undiminished Deity and true humanity in One Person forever.³⁷

Quite obviously, when you speak to some other person, you do not reveal your every character trait to him with everything that you say. Similarly, when God speaks, we do not necessarily recognize or appreciate every facet of His essence in the words which He speaks at any give point in time. When Jesus speaks 5 or 10 words, we cannot pull from such a short phrase or sentence the entire concept of the Hypostatic Union. We understand Who Jesus is on the basis of many things which He has said.

When it comes to our Lord Jesus Christ, understanding Him is more complex than understanding any other person. This is because Jesus has two natures—He is fully human and fully divine. However, when He speaks, we do not necessarily perceive every aspect of every facet of His being. Sometimes, He speaks strictly from His humanity (**"I thirst"** or **"The Father is greater than I"**); sometimes He speaks specifically from His Deity (**"Before Abraham was, I am"**—which means, *before Abraham, I existed eternally*); and sometimes He speaks from His hypostatic union (which is the combined nature or the union of his humanity and His Deity) (**"I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me."**).

Luke 1:33a **...and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,..."**

Every person born of Jacob is considered an Hebrew. Jacob, also called Israel, sired 12 sons by 4 different mothers, and each of those sons is considered to be a tribe of Israel (actually, Jacob's son Joseph received the double-portion, so his two sons—Ephraim and Manasseh—are considered as two separate tribes³⁸).

Jesus will have a specific relationship with Israel; He will rule over Israel (regenerate Israel) forever. Every son of Jacob who has believed in the Revealed God (that is, has believed in God as He has revealed Himself) is true Israel (**for, not all Israel is Israel**—Rom. 9:6b).

The angel Gabriel continues to describe Who Jesus will become:

³⁷ I believe that this is a quote from R. B. Thieme, Jr.; and it may have originated from someone else before him.

³⁸ And if you are counting, this gives us 13 tribes in all, not 12.

Luke 1:33b ...and of His kingdom there will be no end."

We know much about the Lord's thousand year reign called the Millennium, but the Lord will rule over all of us after that as well. We know very little about the eternal kingdom, apart from it being a new heavens and a new earth.

Luke 1:33 ...and He [*Jesus*, the Son to be born to Mary] will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

This prophecy, made by the angel to Mary, will be a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. God promised David that he would have a Son Who would rule forever over Israel (1Chron. 17:11–14 Psalm 89:26–29). Psalm 89:34–37 (God is speaking, making these promises to King David) *I will not profane My covenant, nor change what goes from My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His Seed shall be forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. Like the moon, it shall be forever; and a faithful witness in the sky. Selah.* (Green's literal translation) This promise can only be fulfilled if there is a powerful nation Israel ruled by a king again. That King would be the Son that Mary gives birth to; the Child Who is virgin-born, the Child Who will be called both the Son of David and the Son of God.

What we are discussing is both the first and second advents of our Lord. His first advent is when Jesus is born in a manger in Bethlehem and walked this earth as a man, healing the sick, and then going to the cross to die for our sins. Jesus, at His second advent (also known as, His 2nd coming), will rule over all the earth, from Jerusalem, for 1000 years (also called the Millennium). Understanding these different advents will be fundamental to understanding the Lord's first public pronouncement as the Messiah of the Old Testament.

After the 2nd advent and the Millennium, then Satan and the fallen angels will be freed for a little while, and they will wreak havoc on this earth, because they are ruled by their hatred and rejection of God (Rev. 20:1–10). After this rebellion is put down, then there will be a new heavens and a new earth, and Jesus will rule over that new creation forever.

Now, angel Gabriel has given a full picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, from His birth to His eternal rule. But Mary has a question.

Luke 1:34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

As I have mentioned before, when some people are confused by something that was said, it is hard to move them forward from that point until it is explained to them. Mary heard some of what the angel said, but she keeps thinking about what the angel told her back in v. 31. In Luke 1:31, the angel tells Mary that she will have a Son. So, Mary is back there, mentally speaking, thinking out loud, "Wait just a minute...let's go back to this part where you say I will have a Son."

Mary understood that the angel said, she was to be pregnant with a child as a virgin. This was not something which she understood would occur after her marriage to Joseph. She

understood that she would become pregnant prior to her marriage to Joseph. This suggests to me that there was possibly more to their conversation than what is recorded here. I would suggest that the angel cited Isa. 7:14: *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [= God (is) with us]*. Luke has put together what he could of this conversation, possibly from a secondary source (someone who spoke to Mary directly, like John or Peter) and possibly from the primary source of Mary herself.

When it comes to critics of the Bible, there is a great deal of dishonesty out there. You may have heard of those who make the claim that Jesus was not born of a virgin, but that these words were mistranslated, and they should simply read *young woman*, and some go to great lengths of “scholarship” to make their point (it is amazing how studied some of these critics sound, people who have never taken a single course in Greek or Hebrew). It should be clear that Mary is *not* saying, “How is it possible for me to have a child? After all, I am a *young woman*! That is unheard of!” She is a virgin—she has not had sex with any man—and she understands that, as a virgin, she will give birth to this Descendant of David. She clearly understands what Gabriel is telling her. She also knows enough to know that women do not give birth apart from a husband (or, a man).

In the next 2 verses, the angel will explain how, saying, *“Nothing is impossible with God.”* None of this exchange makes any sense—her question or the angel’s answer—if Mary is a fertile young woman who will conceive a child in the normal way with her new husband, Joseph. That is not a feat which requires the angel to say, “Nothing is impossible with God.” *Having a child* as a young, married woman is *not* a sign; it is the normal course of events.

There is no way that one can read this passage and understand it in any other way—Mary is a virgin and she will conceive a child as a virgin, not having known a man. Much of the Scripture concerning Mary, as a virgin, giving birth to a child, is clear and unequivocal. The other passages are similar in this same way—they make sense if Mary is a virgin when giving birth to Jesus; they do not make sense if we simply assume that she gives birth as a young woman.

Lesson 033: Luke 1:28–34

The Virgin Birth/the Sin Nature

We have just read and studied a passage where an angel tells Mary that she will have a Son, but that this son will be born to her as a virgin. This concept of the Virgin-born Savior is integral to Scripture. This is far more complex than being a simple trick or sign by God.

Let’s look at the virgin birth, approaching it from 4 different angles:

Four Approaches to the Virgin Birth

The Prophetical Approach:

When we go back to the Old Testament, where this was prophesied, God the Holy Spirit,

Four Approaches to the Virgin Birth

through Isaiah, says, “So the Lord Himself will give you this sign: A virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a Son, and she will name Him Immanuel [= God Is With Us].” (Isa. 7:14). Although, some go to great lengths to try to prove that this does not refer to a virgin, but simply to a young woman, they intentionally ignore the first portion of this verse which tells us that this is a *sign*. It is not a *sign* when a young woman gives birth. Young women give birth all of the time. If a virgin gives birth, that is a sign.

The Theological Approach:

Furthermore, there is much more to the virgin birth than it being simply a sign from God. Every person born is conceived by the sperm of a man and the egg of a woman. Adam’s sin nature is passed down by the man. Rom 5:12 **Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—...** (ESV; emphasis mine) (This will be explained by the doctrine to follow.)

Throughout Scripture, Adam always receives the *blame* for sin to have entered the world and to be passed along to all mankind. There is not passage that says that Eve is 50% to blame for this.

In original sin, Adam is blamed because he sinned out of his cognizance. He unequivocally knew that eating the fruit was a violation of God’s one command to them. The woman sinned as well, but she had been deceived by the serpent. So it is logical that, when the sin nature is passed down, it is passed down from Adam (and from all subsequent males) and not from the woman.

Because of the difference of their sins, the woman has the one thing which is not permeated by the sin nature—her egg. Whenever the egg is combined with the male sperm, the beginnings of a child is the result, but the child is already biologically corrupted with Adam’s sin nature. At birth, Adam’s original sin will be imputed to this sin nature. There is a natural affinity between the Adam’s original sin and the indwelling sin nature, and both are full-blown in all infants (but One).

On the other hand, in a virgin birth, there is no sin nature passed down by the man; so such a child, conceived by the Holy Spirit, has both the nature of God and of man; but lacks a sin nature. There is no natural affinity in this new human soul for Adam’s original sin, so Adam’s sin is not imputed to such a Child.

Whatever sort of connection Jesus has with sin would have to be the result of his free will. He will choose to be associated with our sins on the cross.

The Prophetical Approach combined with the Theological Approach:

This concept of the woman alone bearing the Christ child goes all the way back to the third chapter of Genesis. Gen. 3:14a, 15 **And Jehovah God said to the serpent,...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.** (Green’s literal translation) God

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contrasts the seed (or, *offspring*) of the serpent with the Seed of the woman. The offspring of Satan refers to those who are unregenerate, who choose Satan over God; the Seed of the woman is Jesus.

What is unusual in this passage is, God is speaking of *the Seed of the woman*. This is a very unusual thing to say. When speaking of *seed* or *seeds*, everywhere else in the Bible, this refers to a man, and never to a woman (except in this one instance and all of its parallels in Scripture).

The serpent bruising the Seed's heel refers to the cross. The thing we are to imagine is a serpent biting the heel of Jesus (this is the cross). It is a painful but not a deadly blow. However, He (referring to *the Seed*) will crush the serpent's head—that is a deadly blow.

The Typical Approach:

The passing down of the sin nature is illustrated by the Coniah curse. The Coniah curse is illustrative of the imputation of Adam's original sin; and of the sin nature.

The line of Adam will go through David, through Solomon, and to Jeconiah (also known as *Coniah* and as *Jehoiachin*), a very evil King of Judah. God pronounced a curse upon Jeconiah through Jeremiah in Jer. 22:24—"As I live," says the LORD, "though you, Coniah son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, were a signet ring on My right hand, I would tear you from it." The signet ring on the right hand of God guarantees that the promises which God made to David (the Davidic Covenant). However, these promises would not be passed down through Jeconiah's line. Jeconiah was cut off from that signet ring.

This is the *Coniah curse*. Jeconiah is treated, in essence, like the old sin nature. His evil nature attaches itself to the line of David and prevents God's promises from being fulfilled in his particular branch of the Davidic line, just as the sin nature that is within each one of us (which we receive from Adam) makes it impossible for us to have fellowship with God.

The Messiah cannot come from this man's line, because he is the man to whom the curse is given. Coniah represents the sin nature which is passed down. The Messiah cannot be born in the line of Jeconiah because his line is cursed (again, Coniah is typical of the sin nature). This is the exact opposite of being the line of promise.

Coniah illustrates the passing along of the sin nature in Scripture. We find these real-life situations which illustrate spiritual realities over and over again in the Bible. Jeconiah was a real king; he was a real person; God really cursed him for his evil actions. However, he *illustrates* (or he *typifies*) the passing down of the sin nature and the passing down of Adam's original sin to all mankind.

Joseph, the man to whom Mary is engaged, is in the line of David, Solomon and Coniah. But, Joseph contributes nothing to the genetics of Jesus. Joseph will be Jesus' legal father, but he not the Lord's biological father. Mary is born in the line of David and

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Nathan; so she is not in the line of the Coniah curse. Coniah represents the passing along of the sin nature; and Mary is not in that line. She contributes her DNA, minus the sin nature, to Jesus.

Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, is in the line of David, Solomon and Jeconiah (Matt. 1:1, 6–7, 12); but his seed was not used to impregnate Mary (Matt. 1:18–25). Therefore, the Jeconiah curse—the curse of the old sin nature—is not passed down to our Lord. The line which was not corrupted—the line which was not cursed—goes from David to Nathan to Mary (Luke 1:26–35 3:23, 31). The line through Nathan bypasses the Coniah curse. The result of the line of Mary is Jesus, the Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:14–15).

So there is no misunderstanding, every male in the line of David to Nathan to Mary has a sin nature. However, this is the line of promise, as opposed to the line of Coniah, which is the line of cursing (we have such a delineation throughout all of Scripture; the word *holy* means *set apart*; and the people of God are set apart from all others).

It *should* be the desire of every person to be in the line of promise rather than the line of cursing. We become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). *That* is the line of regeneration; *that* is the line of promise.

The virgin birth was real, and the sin nature was not passed down to Jesus through the man, because there was no man involved in His conception. The *curse of Coniah* (which is a real curse that *represents* the sin nature) is thereby bypassed.

Most Christians do not realize just how complex certain Biblical doctrines are.

Adam's Sin and the Sin Nature Come to Us Through Adam

1. There was a difference in the quality of sins between the man and the woman in Gen. 3. The woman was deceived by the serpent when she sinned, but Adam was fully cognizant of his choice to sin against God. Adam may not have known the many consequences from his choice to sin, but he knew it was wrong, he knew this was the single thing that God forbade, and yet, he went ahead and did it anyway.
2. Therefore, Adam is the responsible party—not Eve—when it comes to sin. Both Adam and the woman sinned; but Adam consciously and intentionally sinned against God. He may not have fully appreciated all of the consequences, but he fully understood that he was doing exactly the one thing that God told him not to do.
3. The woman, on the other hand, had been confused and deceived by the serpent. Although her sin is not ignored or set aside, it is a different quality of sin than Adam's. The consequences for the woman will be different than the

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- consequences for Adam (which consequences continue to this day).
4. Because of the difference of the quality of their sins, there were different outcomes. In conception and childbirth, the woman would give birth to children and the man would pass along the sin nature.
 5. It is possible that the traditional roles for men and women in society are related to original sin.
 6. Whereas, Adam was created in the image of God; man now is descended from Adam and all men born of Adam and Eve are born in the image of Adam. Genesis 1:26–27 5:3 9:6
 7. Adam, not the woman, passed along the sin nature to his sons and daughters; and his sons continue to pass along the sin nature to their sons and daughters. (All males in the human race are sons of Adam.)
 8. Psalm 51:5 (David is the author) **Point of doctrine: I was born in iniquity and my mother conceived me in sin.**
 - a. David begins this verse with a word often translated *Lo!* or *Behold!* in the old English. What this word does is focus the reader on what is being said. We might better translated the first word, *listen, listen up, look here, point of doctrine.*
 - b. David is conceived in sin. *Conceived* is just the word that we would expect it to be; it generally refers back to the act of conception.
 - c. The realm in which David is conceived is *sin*, which is the masculine singular noun *chêṭ*^{ez} (חַטָּה) [pronounced *khayt*], which means, *sin, offense, fault; penalty for sin, guilt for sin*. Strong's #2399 BDB #307. Sometimes when we find the word *sin* in the singular, it can refer to the sin nature. The very act of conception passes along the sin nature to the person created by that act of conception.
 - d. Through the act of conception, the sin nature is genetically attached to the child who is being made.
 - e. David is also born or brought forth in the realm of *ʾāwōn* (אָוֶן) [pronounced *gaw-VOHN*], which means, *iniquity, crime, offense, transgression, depraved action, guilt*. Strong's #5771 BDB #730. When David was born, he was born guilty, he was born into iniquity. No matter how cute little David was as an infant, in his soul was his old sin nature. And imputed to that soul was the guilt or iniquity of Adam's original sin.
 - f. Because David was born with a sin nature, there was a natural receptacle in his person for this imputation of Adam's original sin. Adam's sin was imputed to David's sin nature (Adam's sin is imputed to our sin natures as well).
 - g. As R. B. Thieme, Jr. so marvelously explained this, *God hates babies; right from the womb, God hates babies because they have Adam's original sin imputed to them.* (Not an exact quote.)
 - h. Therefore, at birth, Adam's original sin is imputed to David and he has a sin nature. This is true of every human being, save one.
 9. The progression and responsibility is described by Romans 5:12–13 **Therefore,**

Adam's Sin and the Sin Nature Come to Us Through Adam

just as sin came into the world through one man [= Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. (ESV)

- a. Sin enters the world through one man—that would be Adam. Adam intentionally, purposefully and knowingly sinned. As the federal head of the human race, he made this decision for all of us. The responsibility of his sin would belong to all men (and women).
 - b. Bear in mind that this is very different from the angels. God created angels as discrete beings. Some of them sinned and some did not. Those who sinned are called fallen angels or demons; those who did not are called elect angels.
 - c. At birth, I had no choice. I was born into sin. I would become a sinner. And I personally would choose to sin many, many times.
 - d. With angels, there was not the same domino affect where, one angel sinned, and so they all sinned. But with man, because we are not created individually, but are, in part, the result of conception and volition of our fallen parents, we are born into sin because Adam is our (ultimate) father.
 - e. With Adam, he is the first domino to fall, and all dominos after him fell. With angels, each angel chooses for himself.
 - f. Therefore, with Adam, **death spread to all men** and **all men sinned**.
 - g. Sin was obviously in the world before the Mosaic Law was given to man.
 - h. Although the final phrase is outside of the confines of our study, it does require some explanation:
 - i. It is clear that all men are subject to sin and to death (Rom. 5:12, 14).
 - ii. These are two related concepts; because all men have sinned, all men die.
 - iii. If there are specific transgressions described in the Law that men were not aware of, God does not count that against them as sin. However, all men in all eras have an understanding of sin and wrongdoing (this is known as our conscience), and all men choose to violate their conscience and sin.
 - iv. All men will die because they are subject to their sin nature and Adam's original sin is imputed to them (Rom. 5:12–13a), even if they have not committed a similar sin to Adam's (Rom. 5:14).
10. You may think, *it is unfair that I was born with a sin nature and with the imputation of Adam's sin*; but, as a result, we can all be redeemed. Rom. 5:18–19 **Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.** The disobedience of one man is Adam; the obedience of one man refers to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ first lived a sinless life, empowered by God the Holy Spirit; and then He agreed to go to the cross and to

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- die for our sins. He was qualified to take our sins upon Him because He Himself had not sinned.
11. Through the simple exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, we gain so much more than Adam lost in the fall. Furthermore, we have the experience of having been born into sin. We get to see our relationship to sin and to God from both sides. In addition to this, elect angels have observed us and have seen our lives from both sides of sin as well.
 12. We will have a complete understanding of sin, God, and our relationship to God; as we have been on both sides of God (we are born condemned; but we will be raised incorruptible). Angels learn all of these things by watching us.

See also <https://www.gotquestions.org/inherit-sin.html>

In looking over this doctrine, it strikes me as a fundamental objection of fallen angels to their eternal judgment would be, "You made me to sin. I had no choice but to sin against You." Similarly, there are quite a number of people who seem to think that they have no free will. However, there should be nothing more real in your life than your free will.

Lesson 034: Luke 1:34–35

The Virgin Birth

Let us return to narrative. The angel Gabriel is speaking to Mary. The angel has already explained to Mary just how she will become pregnant with the Savior (Luke 1:26–33). Now Mary has a very specific question.

Luke 1:34 **And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"**

I do not mean to beat a dead horse here, but Mary is *not* saying, "How can I become pregnant if I am a young woman of a marriageable age?" She means, *how can this happen if I am a virgin?*

Mary understands enough biology to know that, apart from conception, which occurs only when there have been relations between a man and a woman, she cannot have a child, which is what the angel has just assured Mary that she would have. She also understands from the angel that he is speaking of her giving birth to a child apart from normal, human conception. The angel addresses this question specifically.

Luke 1:35a **And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you,...**

First thing that would occur is the Holy Spirit would come upon her. What the Holy Spirit would do is the future deponent middle indicative of the verb *eperchomai* (ἐπέρχομαι) [pronounced *ehp-EHR-khom-ahee*], which means, *to supervene, to arrive, to occur, to attack, (figuratively) to influence; to come (in, upon)*. Strong's #1904. This is a word *never* used for anything remotely sexual. When the Holy Spirit is promised to the Apostles in

Acts 1:8, the exact same verb is used. The future tense means future from the time that the angel says this to Mary. The deponent middle means that the verb is middle in form, but active in meaning. The indicative mood is the mood of reality. The Holy Spirit will arrive at some time in the future *to influence or to come upon* Mary, causing her to become pregnant—but completely apart from any sort of sexual relations.

Is this something that she would necessarily know or feel? There is nothing in Scripture which indicates that this would be an experience that she would feel. There is no physical act involved or implied here; Mary will remain a virgin until all respects until *after* the birth of the Lord.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit in the Church Age, there are no supernatural effects. We are not suddenly happier, more clever, faster; there are no accompanying emotions. We understand that we are filled with the Holy Spirit based upon the Word of God. The testimony of the Word of God is our evidence. In eternity, we will see the actual dividends of a Spirit-filled life. However, at this point in our lives, we take that on faith. Let's say you had a grandmother who put \$50 a month into a bank account or into a mutual fund for you. When she does that, you do not feel anything, but when the bank account is given over to you, then you realize that it was all very real.

As an aside, the believer takes a great deal by faith; but, as time progresses, we become more assured of our righteous path. The believer who is growing spiritually becomes more stable, happier, and more at peace with himself and with life. For the believer who grows spiritually and trusts the Word of God, and trusts that he is being filled with the Holy Spirit when he rebounds—that same believer will *always* end up in a much better place in life.

I kept a journal when I was younger; and when I go back and read it, I can see a lot of anger, spite and rebellion. And combined with all of that was also a healthy dose of unhappiness. I did enjoy periods of time when I was stimulated in my youth; but I also spent a significant amount of time in depression and unhappiness. In moments of clarity, I could see how I was screwing up my own life. Through my own negative volition and rebellion against authority, I continually caused trouble for myself and others.

After believing in Jesus Christ, and getting on doctrine, all of that changed. I did not turn into a perfect person; not overnight, and definitely not now. I still do some really boneheaded and wrong things. But I serve a forgiving God, and He deals with me *graciously*. God does not deal with me *appropriately*, for if God dealt with me appropriately, I would have been taken out of this life by divine discipline a long time ago.

Throughout my life as a believer, I noticed very little by way of day-to-day change; and the filling of the Holy Spirit has never been an experience that I could feel in any way. You do not feel as if you have physically grown after eating a meal³⁹—particularly as a teenager eating almost everything in sight (which is what I did). But, did I measure myself each day

³⁹ As I grow older, I can see my stomach expand noticeably after a meal; but the actual growth of more height and muscle—that is simply unobservable in the short term.

after a meal to see if I had grown? Did I feel as if I had grown? Of course not. But, as imperceptibly we grow physically, the same is true of growing spiritually. We may walk out after a few dozen Bible classes and feel no different whatsoever; but, if we consider where we are today and compare that to a year ago or to 5 years ago, then we can reasonably recognize that spiritual growth has taken place (just like, if you measure the height of your kids at the same place in the garage, every six months, there will be definite strides made).

As time progressed, I fell into my spiritual gift; and am in a place where it seems clear to me, given the time, my abilities and weaknesses, and every other factor. I know that I am in the right place at the right time, and sometimes even doing the right thing.

One additional thing: I have been blessed far beyond anything that I deserve. I don't know anyone that is happier than I am (no doubt, there are). This is a result of spiritual growth, which comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of Bible doctrine.

When I am out in the world, I can think of many examples of interactions with people, where I can tell that they are angry, unhappy, frustrated and unfulfilled—and some of them are Christians! But what the unbelievers lack is Jesus and what the believers lack is peace, which comes through the intake of Bible doctrine.

In short, this is a life that I would recommend to any person at any point in their lives. If you are an unbeliever, you need to believe in Jesus Christ; and if you are a believer, then you need to be under the direction of a well-qualified pastor-teacher (and I don't mean one-on-one direction; but impersonal, auditorium or classroom-style teaching).

Back to our narrative:

Luke 1:34 *And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

Mary fully understands what the angel is saying, and she asks the most reasonable question, *how can this happen? Virgins do not become pregnant.*

Luke 1:35a *And answering, the messenger [or, angel] said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you..."*

We take the Trinity for granted in our day and age. It is unclear whether any of the Jewish people appreciated this. How did she understand this to be?

Again, there is no physical contact of any sort; but something is changed inside of Mary, so that her egg is fertilized by God the Holy Spirit. No woman ever feels the exact instant that she becomes pregnant; a woman does not feel her egg being fertilized. This certainly would have been true of Mary at this time.

Luke 1:35b *...and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;...*

Mary would have understood *the Most High* to be God.

What God would do also involves an unusual verb. The verb is the future active indicative of *episkiazô* (ἐπισκιάζω) [pronounced *ehp-ee-skee-AD-zoh*], which means, *to throw a shadow upon, to envelop in a shadow, to overshadow; to envelop in a haze of brilliancy; figuratively, to invest with preternatural influence*. Strong's #1982.

The future tense indicates that this has not happened yet; the active voice indicates that the Holy Spirit would perform the action of the main verb (He would Himself *cast the shadow*). The indicative mood is the mood of reality; this would definitely take place. One thing that does not appear to be an issue? Mary's volition. This is going to happen.

There would be some kind of close interaction between two Members of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit and the Most High—and Mary. There is no reason to be crass here or to imagine some sort of sexual union. God used modified cloning to make Eve (the mother of all living); and God could certainly start up Mary's reproductive system without the intrusion of a male sperm.

How do we know that this is not something that Mary will feel or be aware of? God's power casts a shadow over her. Now, what does a shadow feel like? Nothing, right?

Now, once Mary is pregnant, she will go through all of the various things that pregnant women go through. So, there will be a point at which she has the normal physical traits of a woman who is pregnant.

The angel explains how this will happen. The Holy Spirit would *come upon* Mary, which is a future indicative. The same verb is used for sleep *coming upon* a person, or a disease *coming upon* a person or even of calamities *overtaking* a person. The power of the Most High will *cast a shadow upon Mary* or *envelop Mary with a shadow*, and a Child will be born; which Child will be called holy, the Son of God.

Luke 1:35c ...therefore the Child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God.

What does this mean that this child will be called *holy*? This is just the opposite of the way that you or I (or King David) were born. As we recently studied, David wrote: *Point of doctrine: I was born in iniquity and my mother conceived me in sin*. (Psalm 51:5) Paul writes in the book of Romans: *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*. (Rom. 5:12) All men (and women) are conceived in sin, which is the opposite of holy. We are born with a sin nature and with Adam's original sin imputed to that sin nature. Jesus is born *holy*.

Adam was born and called the son of God. This is because God created Adam without a sin nature. However, we are all sons of Adam, as we carry his mark, his sin nature (which he acquired when he chose to act against God).

What the angel is telling Mary is some pretty heady stuff; and, no doubt, Mary is taken aback by all of this. As if speaking with an angel is not enough, she has just been told things that no one has ever heard before (except prophetically).

Lesson 035: Luke 1:34–35 Trinity Passages/the Relationship of Mary & Elizabeth

The angel Gabriel is telling Mary about what God has planned for her. So Mary, who is listening very carefully, asks the angel Gabriel a very pertinent question:

Luke 1:34 **And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"**

Gabriel's answer will include every Member of the Trinity. This is the first time in the book of Luke where each Member of the Trinity is found in the same passage.

Luke 1:35 **And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born [to you] will be called holy—the Son of God. (Emphasis mine.)"**

Interestingly enough, not only does every Member of the Trinity appear in this passage, but each one has some sort of interaction with Mary.

Quotation marks were added; as many of these passages were quotations (many times, a Member of the Godhead is speaking). This is not necessarily true of every passage.

The ESV; capitalized (emphasis mine) is used below:

Passages Featuring all 3 Members of the Trinity

Psalms 104:30–32 **When You send forth Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the ground. May the Glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works, Who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke!**

The *Glory of the Lord* is Jesus Christ; the *LORD* is God the Father.

Isa. 11:1–3a **There shall come forth a Shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.**

The 3 references to *Lord* is God the Father. The One spoken of, the *Shoot* and the *Branch*, is Jesus. This passage describes the relationship of Jesus to the other two Members of the Trinity during the 1st Advent.

Isa. 42:1 **"Behold My Servant, whom I uphold, My Chosen, in Whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations."**

Passages Featuring all 3 Members of the Trinity

God the Father is speaking (Isa. 42:5); and He is speaking of Jesus, *His Chosen One*. God the Father is describing God the Son. Each possessive pronoun *My* refers to God the Father.

Isa. 48:16–17 “Draw near to **Me**, hear this: from the beginning **I** have not spoken in secret, from the time it came to be **I** have been there. And now the **Lord GOD** has sent **Me**, and **His Spirit**.” Thus says the **LORD**, your **Redeemer**, the **Holy One of Israel**: “**I am the LORD your God**, who teaches you to profit, **Who** leads you in the way you should go.”

The first *Lord God* is God the Father, Who sent (along with His Spirit) God the Son (the Person speaking), identifies Himself as *the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel*.

Isa. 59:20–21 “And a **Redeemer** will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the **LORD**. “And as for **Me**, this is **My** covenant with them,” says the **LORD**: “**My Spirit** that is upon you, and **My** words that I have put in **Your** mouth, shall not depart out of **Your** mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring,” says the **LORD**, “from this time forth and forevermore.”

God the Father is speaking; the personal pronouns therefore refer back to God the Father. The *Redeemer* sent by God is Jesus.

Isa. 61:1–2a “The **Spirit of the Lord GOD** is upon **Me**, because the **LORD** has anointed **Me** to bring good news to the poor; **He** has sent **Me** to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the **LORD's** favor.”

The *Lord God* and two references to the *Lord* are references to God the Father. The Person speaking is the Revealed God (Who is Jesus). Jesus is the One sent by God the Father. Jesus quotes this very short passage near the beginning of His ministry in order to announce Who He is.

It is quite amazing, the number of times that we find all 3 members of the Godhead in the book of Isaiah. However, this is quite logical as Isaiah, more than any other prophet, gives very specific prophecies about the 1st advent of the Lord Jesus.

We have all 3 members of the Trinity mentioned in Matt. 3:16–17 **And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, with Whom I am well pleased.”** (ESV; capitalized; emphasis mine)

The *voice from heaven* is the voice of God the Father.

Of course, we have the passage from Luke:

Passages Featuring all 3 Members of the Trinity

Luke 1:35 And the angel answered her, "The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the power of **the Most High** will overshadow you; therefore the **Child** to be born will be called holy—the **Son of God**."

John 1:32–34 And John bore witness: "I saw the **Spirit** descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on **Him**. I myself did not know **Him**, but **He Who** sent me to baptize with water said to me, '**He on Whom** you see the **Spirit** descend and remain, this is **He Who** baptizes with the **Holy Spirit**.' And I have seen and have borne witness that **This** is the **Son of God**."

John the baptizer is giving his witness, explaining that he saw Jesus and that he baptized Him, and the Spirit came upon Him. The Person Who sent John and spoke to him is God the Father.

John 3:34–35 "For **He Whom God** has sent utters the words of **God**, for **He** gives the **Spirit** without measure. The **Father** loves the **Son** and has given all things into **His** hand."

Jesus is speaking and the One Who sent Him is God the Father.

Some of Jesus' final words given to the Disciples, outlining their mission:

Matt. 28:18–20 And **Jesus** came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to **Me**. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all that **I** have commanded you. And behold, **I am** with you always, to the end of the age."

Acts 1:4–5 And while staying with them **He** ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the **Father**, which, **He** said, "you heard from **Me**; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the **Holy Spirit** not many days from now."

The disciples also testified as to all 3 Members of the Trinity:

Acts 2:32–35 (Peter is speaking a powerful sermon on the Day of Pentecost) "**This Jesus God** raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of **God**, and having received from the **Father** the promise of the **Holy Spirit**, **He** has poured out **This** that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, '**The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool.**' " (Psalm 110:1)

This refers to God the Holy Spirit. *The Lord* is God the Father; *my Lord* is God the Son (*my* refers back to David, who wrote Psalm 110).

Passages Featuring all 3 Members of the Trinity

At the very end of Saint Stephen's sermon, we read: Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, full of the **Holy Spirit**, gazed into heaven and saw **the glory of God**, and **Jesus** standing at the right hand of **God**. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the **Son of Man** standing at the right hand of **God**." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. (Acts 7:54–58)

At the end of Stephen's sermon, the antagonistic religious crowd rushed him and killed him. He saw all 3 members of the Trinity (or manifestations of them) prior to His death.

Acts 10:36–38 (Peter is speaking in another sermon) "As for the word that **He** sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through **Jesus Christ** (he is **Lord** of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how **God** anointed **Jesus of Nazareth** with the **Holy Spirit** and with power. **He** went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for **God** was with **Him**."

Paul in his epistles speaks of the Trinity:

Rom. 1:1–4 Paul, a servant of **Christ Jesus**, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of **God**, which **He** promised beforehand through **His** prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning **His Son**, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the **Son of God** in power according to the **Spirit of holiness** by **His** resurrection from the dead, **Jesus Christ our Lord**,...

Gal. 4:6 And because you are sons, **God** has sent the **Spirit of His Son** into our hearts, crying, "**Abba! Father!**"

The Trinity is found in the book of Hebrews (author unknown):

Heb. 9:13–14 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of **Christ**, who through the eternal **Spirit** offered **Himself** without blemish to **God**, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living **God**.

Peter speaks of all 3 Members of the Trinity when writing his first words in 1Peter:

1Peter 1:1–2 Peter, an apostle of **Jesus Christ**, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, in the sanctification of the **Spirit**, for obedience to **Jesus Christ** and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

I admit to being surprised the many times that we find all 3 Members of the Trinity named together in Scripture.

See also Isa. 59:20–21 Ezek. 3:11–12 22–24 11:22–24 Matt. 12:28 Luke 3:22 4:15–20 John 14:26 Rom. 8:8–14 1Cor. 6:11–15 2Cor. 13:14 Eph. 1:16–17 2:13,18, 22 Titus 3:4–7. This is likely not a full list of Trinity passages. There are many more passages where only 2 members of the Trinity are mentioned together.

Although I mostly used Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge in e-sword, there are also passages given in the [Overview Bible](#) which I used. I also came across or knew others already.

At this point, the angel Gabriel moves on to a different topic, a topic which might help Mary ease into all that will happen to her. Gabriel is going to tell Mary about Elisabeth's pregnancy. Bear in mind that Mary is very young, she is about to be married, and all of this no doubt seems crazy to her. Sometimes, pairing a young person with an older one gives the young person some confidence about what is happening.

The angel Gabriel tells Mary:

Luke 1:36a **And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son,...**

Some translations call Mary and Elisabeth cousins; Jesus and John the baptizer are sometimes called cousins. However, Mary is from the family of Judah while Elisabeth is from the clan of Aaron (who is a Levite). How can this be explained?

How Were Mary and Elizabeth Related? (Apologetics Press)

Question: The New Testament contains two genealogies of Christ. Matthew recorded the genealogy of Christ from Abraham to Jesus (1:1-16), while Luke recorded Christ's genealogy from Jesus all the way back to Adam (3:23-38). The differences in the genealogies result from the fact that Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, while Luke presents the genealogy of Jesus through Mary (see Miller, 2003; cf. Luke 1:30-32). [NOTE: Luke followed the strict Hebrew tradition of mentioning only the names of males. Therefore, in Luke 3, Mary is designated by her husband's name (see Lyons, 2003, pp. 157-159).] Still, some wonder how Mary could be a descendant of David. Skeptic Dennis McKinsey, for example, asked in his journal, Biblical Errancy, "If, using the genealogy in Luke, Jesus's claim to descent [sic] from David, of the tribe of Judah, is through Mary rather than Joseph, then how can it be that Mary's cousin, Elizabeth, was descended from the house of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi?" (1998, emphasis added). Does Luke 1:5,36 imply that Mary could not have been a blood descendant of King David?

Answer: First, the King James translation of the term syngenis as "cousin" (Luke 1:36) is unwarranted and somewhat misleading to those who normally interpret the word to mean "first cousin." The Greek term syngenis simply means "relative" (NKJV, NASB, NIV) or "kinswoman" (ASV, RSV). It is "a general term, meaning 'of the same family'" (Vincent, 1997). Thus, Mary and Elizabeth may have been first cousins, or they may have been fourth cousins. All we know for sure is that they were kin.

How Were Mary and Elizabeth Related? (Apologetics Press)

Second, Mary and Elizabeth could have been from different tribes and still have been first cousins. It may be that their mothers were sisters. Their mothers could have been from the tribe of Judah or Levi. As commentator Matthew Henry noted: "Though Elisabeth was, on the father's side, of the daughters of Aaron (v. 5), yet on the mother's side she might be of the house of David, for those two families often intermarried, as an earnest of the uniting of the royalty and the priesthood of the Messiah" (1997).

However Mary and Elizabeth were related, tribal heritage among the descendants of Jacob was passed down through fathers, not mothers (cf. Ruth 4:18-22); children were always of their father's tribe, not their mother's. Thus, Elizabeth and Mary were descendants of Aaron and David, respectively, by way of their fathers' ancestry, and not necessarily of their mothers'.

[In other words, they are related to one another on their mothers' sides. Their official heritage comes from their fathers.]

Their References

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We have already seen that Elizabeth is a Levite. This does not mean that her mother *and* father were Levites; just her father would need to have been descended from Levi. Similarly, in the line of Jesus, in Luke 3, we are studying the line to Mary (even though Joseph will be named in that line). Mary is clearly and unequivocally in the tribe of Judah. However, this does not preclude her mother from being from the tribe of Levi. So the mothers of Mary and Elizabeth could be sisters (or cousins or otherwise related), and, therefore, from the same tribe (which is not necessarily Levi or Judah). The tribe (s) of the mothers of Mary and Elizabeth is unknown; however, the tribe of Mary and Elizabeth is known and given to us. Their tribes are determined by their respective fathers.

Lesson 036: Luke 1:36–38

The Birth of Jesus is Foretold

The angel Gabriel is speaking to Mary. Mary asks how can she have a son if she is a virgin, and Gabriel helps to explain how such a thing is possible.

Luke 1:36a **And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son,...**

The point that Gabriel is making is, Mary has an older relative named Elizabeth. Elizabeth is long past the time of giving birth, and she had no children to this point in time. Yet, now she is pregnant! Gabriel's point is, God is able to do what He chooses to do.

Luke 1:36 **And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.**

The angel then explains how God is able to do marvelous things, and tells Mary about her relative Elizabeth, who is well past the age of giving birth, and yet she is 6 months pregnant. It was assumed by everyone that, to this point in time, Elizabeth was barren, and so she would every be. However, she is pregnant at an age not usually associated with pregnancy. I don't believe that we have any idea as to her age, but I would guess that she is 60 or older (when John the Herald becomes an adult, there are no references to either of his parents, which could suggest that they are both deceased by then).

Luke 1:37 **For nothing will be impossible with God."**

God is able to do anything that He wills to do, which is consistent with His character. This is known as omnipotence. God is able to take a barren women and allow her to conceive; God is able to take a virgin and allow her egg to become fertilized completely apart from any contribution from a man.

God's omnipotence can be somewhat tricky to understand, because it is our natural inclination to confine God to the universe in which we live and to the laws of that universe. However, God created the universe; therefore, He is not subject to the universe or to any of the laws of the universe. Therefore, there are no physical or scientific laws which confine God in any way.

Unlike Moses, Mary is not going to say, "Do you think you could find someone else? I don't believe that I am really up for this." She will give an unequivocal positive response (in v. 38), so God treats Zacharias different from Mary. Zacharias, when Gabriel spoke to him, said, "Now, wait just a minute—we need to discuss all this. What you suggest just cannot happen!" (What Zacharias actually said was, **"How shall I know this [is true]? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."**) For all we know, Zacharias may have been presenting this information to the angel Gabriel, so that he is, in essence, saying, "You may want to rethink these promises, Mr. Gabriel, as there appear to be a few facts to which you are not privy."

Luke 1:35–37 **And answering, the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you; even the power of the Most High, Who will cast a shadow over you. Consequently, the Born-One will be holy and called the Son of God. Also, think about Elisabeth, your cousin—she has conceived in her old age and is in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Remember, everyone believed her to be barren. Therefore, you should recognize that there is nothing impossible for the Word of God." (Kukis translation)**

In mythology and even in Genesis 6, there are sexual unions presented between gods and women. In fact, all mythology is based upon the real history presented in **Genesis 6** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). That is *not* what is being described here. There is no sexual contact, sexual union, or sexual penetration described by Gabriel here. Mary was not raped in any sense of the word. Mary cannot be a virgin if any of that takes place.

This is described as the Holy Spirit coming to Mary and the power of God casting a shadow over her. The words used here and elsewhere clearly describe a non-sexual pregnancy. If there is any sex of any sort involved, then Mary is no longer a virgin and there is no virgin pregnancy. This is described as God casting a shadow over her, which is a description that indicates that there was no sexual contact between God and Mary.

I mention these things simply based upon many posts and memes which I have seen online posted by skeptics and atheists who attempt to superimpose their own perverted thinking over the immaculate conception.

Mary's response will be much different than Zacharias':

Luke 1:38a **And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."**

Mary accepts her divinely appointed destiny. She is a believer in Jehovah Elohim (the Revealed God), and she calls herself a slave of the Lord. She responds in faith. "You said this is going to happen; therefore, let it happen just as you said."

We need to understand Mary for who she is. She is a marvelous believer and she is a saint (all believers are saints); but, beyond that, she is *not* a member of the Godhead; she is not some sort of super saint being, and she is not the mother of God. Both Mary and Joseph were chosen for a great honor; and they are no doubt devout people; but they are not people that we should worship or revere in any special way. We are not to pray to either of them. Neither Mary nor Joseph have the ability to answer our prayers.

Mary has a sin nature. Mary has sinned. Adam's original sin has been imputed to Mary. There is nothing divine about her. But, even though she has a sin nature, she does not pass along through childbirth the sin nature (all women possess a sin nature; but no woman transmits the sin nature to her children; it is the man who passes along the sin nature to his children).

This is not unlike dominant and recessive genes. A man may have brown eyes and his wife blue eyes. Unless the man has the recessive blue eye gene, their children will have brown eyes, which comes to the children by way of the father.⁴⁰ All children born where a man is involved will inherit his sin nature.

⁴⁰ This is not my area of expertise; I hope that I have described this correctly.

Luke 1:38a-b **And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."** (Kukis translation)

Mary here is expressing positive volition toward God's plan. She is giving consent to being a part of God's plan in this way. She is expressing her willingness to an immaculate conception.

I have seen online memes and posts which suggest that Mary was somehow raped by God. She was not! Nothing of the sort is presented in Scripture. Mary herein agrees to an immaculate conception (which means that there was not any sexual contact involved); and she is agreeing to a virgin pregnancy (Mary cannot be a virgin who is pregnant if there has been any sex of any sort involved).

The virgin pregnancy and the virgin birth is much more than a sign or wonder; and much more than some demonstration of God's power. Because of the difference between the sins of Adam and the woman (Adam's original sin was one of cognizance, but the woman had been deceived), the hope of mankind would come through the woman. From the very beginning, the promise of God centered around the *seed of the woman* (even though no woman has the seed necessary for pregnancy). See **Genesis 3** for more information. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

The sin nature is passed down through the male in conception. All of us, male and female alike, inherit the sin nature which we have from our fathers. The sin nature of the woman is not passed down to us, even though our mothers all had sin natures. If the egg of the woman is somehow fertilized apart from a man (and apart from a fallen angel), then the result would be a child born without a sin nature.

This concept is illustrated by the Coniah curse, which will be described in **Luke 3** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Coniah, also known as Jeconiah, was a king in Judah, and the royal line of David through Solomon was cut off at Coniah. This is despite God's promise to David that his Greater Son would reign forever on the Davidic Throne. It is this line, from David through Solomon and through Coniah that takes us to Joseph, husband of Mary. The genealogy of Joseph is found in Matthew 1. He could not be the father of Jesus because of the Coniah curse. David's Greater Son cannot come through this line. This parallels the concept of the sin nature, which can only come through the human father (like the Coniah curse). The *Coniah curse* of any father is, he will pass down his sin nature to every one of his children.

The line which is not cursed (the genealogy given in Luke 3) is through Adam to Abraham to David to Nathan to Mary. Mary will be the actual humanity to which Jesus is born without the seed of Joseph being involved. This line bypasses the Coniah curse; this line bypasses the sin nature. This is the importance of the virgin birth. Jesus must be born without a sin nature; and therefore, without Adam's original sin being imputed to Him.

Luke 1:38b **And the angel departed from her.**

The angel has done everything that he needs to do. No further instructions are needed by Mary; no further explanation of her future. She is given all that she needs to know (and later, Joseph will be given some additional information⁴¹).

For mankind in general, they will be introduced to Jesus by John the Herald, a man who is actually related to Jesus' humanity.

The being which spoke to Mary and to Zechariah (Elisabeth's husband) is an angel, a spirit servant of God. Angels were created before us, and about the only thing that we have in common with angels is, they have volition as we do. All angels at some point in the past either chose for or against God; and it appears that they are all in that same position forever. Yet, all of the angels watch us on the earth, as if some great morality play for their benefit. Sometimes, as we have seen in this chapter, some angels are invited to step into human history and participate.

If we compare this passage to its parallel passage in Matthew, we observe one of the chief differences between Luke and Matthew. Matthew took every opportunity to point out where God was fulfilling prophecy, and he quotes Isa. 7:14b (**Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and she will call His name Immanuel.**) in the parallel passage. Matthew, who was a Jewish tax collector, had an extensive knowledge of the Old Testament; Luke, a saved Gentile, did not have this same extensive background (that is not to say that Luke was ignorant of Old Testament Scriptures; he also quotes from the OT). So Matthew knew the Scriptures extensively due to his Jewish background; Luke likely learned many Old Testament Scriptures post-salvation.

Furthermore, Matthew saw this event from Joseph's perspective, rather than from Mary's. Joseph was to be married to Mary, but it turns out that she is pregnant. Obviously, this concerns Matthew greatly. Under the Law, unless Mary has some proof that she was raped, Matthew can demand her execution.

The ESV; capitalized will be used below:

The Birth of Jesus is Foretold in Matthew (Matt. 1:18–25)

Matt. 1:18 **Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.**

Joseph and Mary are about to be officially married; but it turns out that she is pregnant. We know this to be the work of the Holy Spirit, but Joseph does not know this.

The verb *come together* is not a verb that we would generally associate with marriage (or with the consummation of a marriage). It is aorist active infinitive of *sunérchomai* (συνέρχομαι) [pronounced *soon-EHR-khoh-my*], which means *to come together, to*

⁴¹ Found in the book of Matthew, not the book of Luke.

The Birth of Jesus is Foretold in Matthew (Matt. 1:18–25)

gather together, to convene, to assemble. Strong's #4905. I would understand this to mean, in this context, all that is involved with two people initially marrying.

The idea that, the woman you are about to marry is pregnant is certainly problematic, even today.

Matt. 1:19 **And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.**

In Matthew, we see this set of events from Joseph's perspective.

Joseph apparently loves Mary, but, like most men, could not marry a woman who is pregnant by another man (he does not know what has happened). However, he is not going to open up her life to ridicule and shame; he would quietly divorce her. This suggests that there were various options open to ending a promise of marriage; and one of those options apparently exposed the woman to great shame (something that Joseph was not going to do).

Under current circumstances, the Jews could not execute a woman who is pregnant before marriage, because they were not allowed to execute anyone apart from Roman authority. However, a woman who has willingly had relations with another man other than her betrothed, was, under the Mosaic Law, to be executed.

Joseph did not find out his wife is pregnant and then instantly make a decision; this is something which he apparently thought about for awhile—whether it be a few hours or a few days. Apparently, he had decided what to do about his engagement, and then this happened:

Matt. 1:20 **But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.**

While Joseph is pondering these things, an angel comes to him in a dream. It is interesting to me that an angel apparently speaks directly to both Zechariah and to Mary, but it comes to Joseph in a dream. I would understand this to indicate that, Zechariah and Mary are both directly involved in the pregnancies; but Joseph is not. He will be the legal father of Jesus, but not His real father.

The angel tells Joseph, "Do not fear to take Mary as your wife." The fear Joseph may have felt was that of ridicule.

The angel encourages Joseph to go forward with their marriage; and that her Son is from the Holy Spirit—not from an illicit affair. This is a virgin birth.

The Birth of Jesus is Foretold in Matthew (Matt. 1:18–25)

Matt. 1:21 *She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."*

Joseph is told by the angel to accept this situation as is with Mary; and to name this son *Jesus*. *Jesus* means *Savior*, and *Jesus* would save His people from their sins.

Matt. 1:22–23 *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). Isa. 7:14*

Matthew quotes the pertinent verse of Scripture and also gives us the meaning of *Immanuel*. Matthew here indicates by this quotation that *Jesus* is Divine (that is, equal to God).

Every now and again, *an expert in the Hebrew language* will point out, "*Virgin, here, can also mean young woman.*" And, although this is true, it is also true that, when a *young woman* gives birth, then that birth is decidedly *not* a sign. The only way Isa. 7:14 is a sign is if the woman is a *virgin*. For this reason, we know the underlying Hebrew and Greek words mean *virgin* in their respective contexts and not *woman of a marriageable age*.

Matt. 1:24–25 *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.*

Joseph accepts the situation and does exactly as instructed by the angel of God.

Both Joseph and Mary accept the situation as is, at face value; believing the words of the angel.

The big difference in the accounts is, Matthew looks at this from Joseph's experience and Luke presents these events from Mary's life.

Luke 1:38 *So Mary said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let this take place in me exactly as you have said." Then the angel departed from her.* (Kukis translation)

By these words, Mary is giving full and complete consent to the immaculate conception and to the virgin birth. She is not forced into taking part in the plan of God. She willingly assents to what the angel Gabriel has herein described.

Summarizing Luke 1:26–38: Mary has just been told that the Holy Spirit will come upon her and that the Most High would overshadow her, and that she would become pregnant, as a virgin, with the Savior of mankind. She has also been told that her cousin (that is, *relative*) Elizabeth is 6 months pregnant, despite the fact that she is way beyond the period of time when a woman can normally become pregnant.

Mary thinks about what has just happened and then she acts.

Luke 1:39a *In those days Mary arose...*

Mary decides to go visit her relative Elizabeth, who lived in the hill country (this will become clear in v. 40).

In these days could also be translated *at that time*. Everything in this passage suggests that Mary went almost immediately to visit her *cousin* Elisabeth (we do not know their exact relationship). Nearly every translation understood this to indicate Mary traveling quickly.

The verb *arose* does not indicate that she is literally laying down and then she gets up; but that she has made a decision to do something, and then she does it. She makes a decision within the volition of her soul and then she acts on that decision.

However, let me suggest that, since it reads that she rises up; perhaps she thought about her next move that night; and by the time it was morning, she had decided her next move is to contact Elisabeth directly. Elisabeth is older and possibly wiser; and she is pregnant before Mary.

I reject that idea that Gabriel entered into Mary's dreams to speak to her, even though angels can do that (and God certainly can as well). So, the way I understand this is, on one day, the angel appeared to Mary. She thought about it, slept on it, and woke up the next day (or very soon thereafter) with the intent to travel.

Mary understood that whatever was happening was extremely important. She has been told that she will give birth to the Son of God. That is some very heady stuff.

People, when great historical events take place, often do not have any true appreciation for these events. My generation was defined by the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and many thought that this signaled our government being taken over by evil forces in some great conspiracy. However, in retrospect, this event was merely a blip in American history. Far more impactful in the general era were the Billy Graham crusades or the rise of the hippie and the increased drug use. I think in many ways, our nation is still preserved today based upon those crusades and the millions of people who believed in Jesus Christ as a result.

Mary recognizes, at least to some extent, the importance of this event and this time in history. Therefore, Mary can see no reason to stop and think for an extended period of time about this. Elisabeth is much older, but probably well respected by Mary; and I would

assume that Mary is quite young here—say 20 years old or younger? No doubt, Mary will look to Elisabeth for some guidance or reassurance. After all, the same angel spoke to Mary about Elisabeth, so Mary no doubt wants to find out if these things are true about Elisabeth.

We should bear in mind that this was not an insignificant trip for Mary. She would spend a few days in travel each way. We are given not the slightest clue about this. Is she living with her parents? Probably. Did anyone go with her? We have no idea. Unlike some saints in the book of Genesis, Mary probably did not have a personal servant (I do not rule this out; but she and Joseph appear to be of modest means throughout the gospels⁴²). In any case, we do not know enough to know for a certainty that she went alone or with someone. However, only Mary is spoken of.

It is an interesting commentary that she does make this trip. It appears that rule by the Roman empire provided her with some measure of safety. According to the reading that I did on Herod the Great, one of the things that he provided for the people of his kingdom was a marked improvement in safety and security. He broke up a ring of thieves who preyed on travelers in the Galilean region. This allowed free and safe travel for at least a generation.

When does Mary actually conceive? We are never given a specific point in time when Mary becomes pregnant. All of this is given to us in general terms with a general time line (sometime in the future *after* speaking to the angel Gabriel). Based upon what is coming, sometime between the angel's announcement and Mary's arrival at Elisabeth's front door is when this takes place (I will justify this statement later).

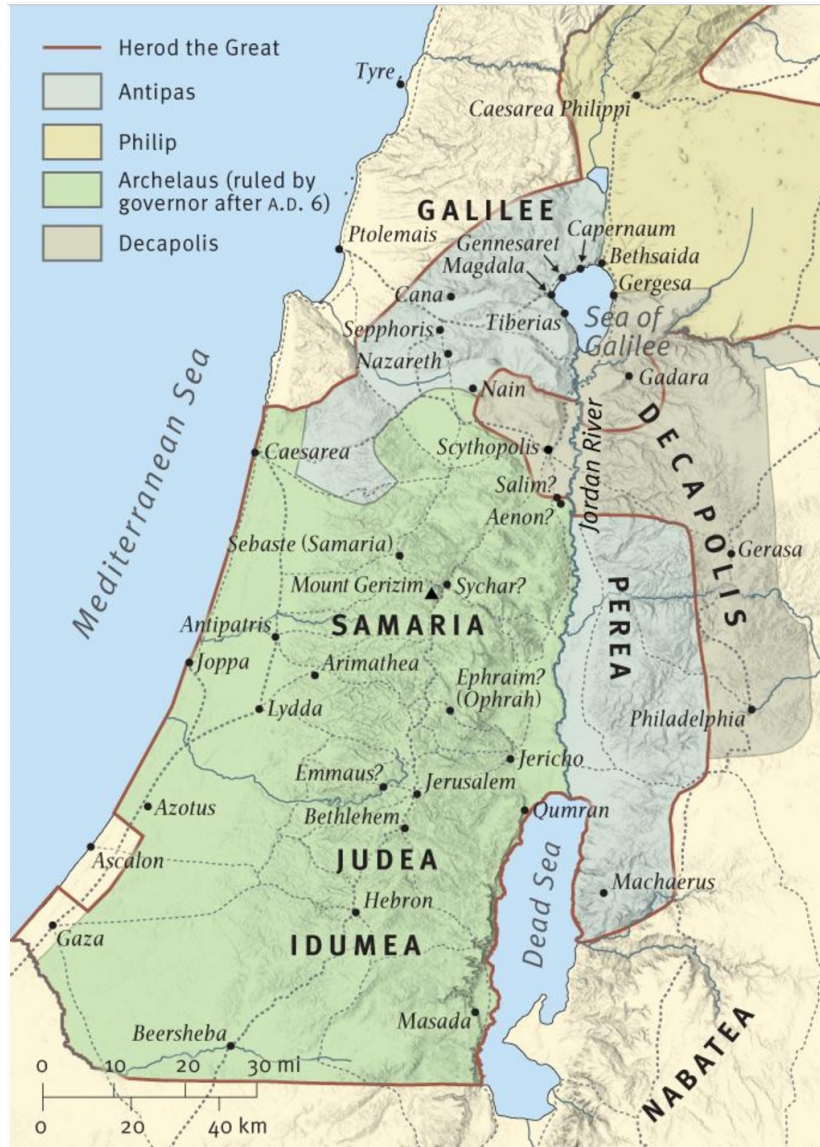
Luke 1:39b ...and went with haste into the hill country,...

⁴² Their *poverty* is often over-emphasized.

Mary decides that she needs to speak to Elisabeth, her relative, the person that the angel Gabriel spoke of. Based upon what we know about Elisabeth, let me suggest that she is spiritually mature and that Mary is aware of that fact. I base this proposition upon 3 facts: (1) God chooses Zacharias and Elisabeth to bear John the baptizer. (2) God shut Zacharias up for awhile, but He did not do that to Elisabeth. (3) It appears almost immediately upon hearing about Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary heads over to speak to Elisabeth.

Galilee, Samaria, Judea and Idumæa (a map); from [the Gospel Coalition](#); accessed March 15, 2019.

Herod the Great is still ruling over this area; and everything within the black line is his kingdom (which kingdom he would later split it up between his sons, as this map shows).



The hill country of Judæa would be south of where Mary lived. Mary lived in Nazareth, a city between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee, in what was formerly Northern Israel (also called Ephraim, also called Samaria). She travels south through her present-day Samaria into Judah. Elizabeth probably lives north of Jerusalem (but she may be south of Jerusalem as well; we really don't know).

These movements and who Mary and Joseph are indicate to us that a considerable number of Jews lived in northern Israel (the Galilee region) and in southern Israel (Judea). Judea was officially a Jewish area; Samaria and Galilee seem to be unofficially Jewish—or they both have a significant Jewish population. Jesus' public ministry will take place primarily in the Galilean region; and we know that He will go to the Jewish people first. His

ministry in Jerusalem will be limited, as He faces a great deal of active opposition from the religious class in Jerusalem.

If you examine the map above and look at the cities around the Sea of Galilee, you may recognize their names.

Luke 1:39c ...to a town in Judah,...

This city/town is not named here.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: *This [city] was most probably Hebron, a city of the priests, and situated in the hill country of Judea – Joshua 11:21, Joshua 21:11, Joshua 21:13, about 25 miles south of Jerusalem, and nearly 100 from Nazareth.*⁴³ The only problem with Treasury's theory here is, Hebron is a major city and it seems that it would have been named.

Although we do not know for certain, the logic here makes sense. The biggest problem, mentioned by Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge, is the long distance that Mary would have had to have traveled. It would make more sense to me that she go to a city north of Jerusalem. But, we really do not know where Elisabeth lives. We do know that a trip down to Hebron (or to a small city in that region) would have been quite a long trip for Mary.

Galilee, Samaria and Judea (a relief map); from Bible-history.com; accessed May 31, 2019.

Jerusalem would possibly fall in the midst of the *Hill Country of Judah*; and north of that would probably have been considered the *Hill Country of Samaria* (it is so identified on [other maps](#)).

Now, if I were to guess, it would be that Zechariah and Elizabeth live in a city north of Jerusalem, in the Hill country north of Jerusalem but not too far from the Jordan River valley (which is certainly *not* what is traditionally known as the hill country).

In any case, wherever Elizabeth lives, this would have been a considerable trip for a very young Mary. She is not walking across the street or to the next village over. Mary would have lived in Nazareth in the Galilean region, which would have been a significant distance from Elisabeth, who lived in Judæa. Mary made whatever normal preparations she needed to make, and then went to the hill country of Judah (which is southern Israel, the portion of Palestine which remained a possession of the Jews).

This would have been an unusual trip for a young woman to make. It does not appear that she went with Joseph. Did she have a servant or a friend to go with? Nothing is said in

⁴³ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Luke 1:39.

the text about this; and there is no indication that Joseph or Mary are anything but working class.

The poverty of Mary and Joseph is often emphasized; but there is nothing to suggest that they are poverty-stricken or without means. Joseph has a profession and he teaches his profession to Jesus. Later, Joseph will be summoned to Bethlehem, where he is likely to either pay taxes or to have his finances assessed for the purpose of collecting taxes. Rarely are the indigent called upon to pay taxes.



It is not out of the question that Joseph actually owns property—possibly a piece of property that is in his family—given that he had to go to Bethlehem to be registered and evaluated for paying taxes. My guess is, Joseph will be called down to Bethlehem because he is a property owner (this is my deduction; but I am unaware of any verse which tells us that Joseph owns property).

Luke 1:39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,...

Mary, after being visited by the angel Gabriel, decides to go and speak to her relative Elisabeth in the hill country, to a city in Judæa. No matter what Elisabeth lives in Judæa, this was a considerable trip for anyone to make.

Lesson 038: Luke 1:30–42

Mary Arrives at Elizabeth's Home

A review of Luke 1:30–39: Mary has just been told by the angel Gabriel that she is going to give birth to the Son of God.

Luke 1:30–33 *And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

The angel Gabriel has come to Mary in the 6th month (the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy) and has told her that she will conceive and bear a Son; and that He would be the Son of the Most High.

Luke 1:34 *And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

Mary fully understands that she is not having a son by normal means after she is married to Joseph. Apart from Joseph, she knows that she cannot bear children. Therefore, she asks, *how can this be?*

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."*

The angel tells her that she will be overshadowed by the Most High when the Holy Spirit comes upon her. Again, none of this suggests any sort of physical contact—physical, ethereal, or whatever—that we would associate with a child being conceived.

The angel cites as proof that God can do as He wills, the pregnancy of Elizabeth.

Luke 1:38 *And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

Unlike Zechariah, who suggested that the angel may not be aware of enough details when he says that his wife Elizabeth will have a son; Mary accepts what the angel has told her.

She accepts her place in the plan of God. Zechariah was somewhat skeptical, since he knew the *facts* (so he thought).

Luke 1:39 *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,...*

Within a few days of this meeting, Mary goes to the hill country, to the town where Zechariah and Elizabeth live. We have discussed the location of this place; and whether north or south of Jerusalem, the trip for Mary was a considerable one.

Luke 1:40 *...and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

After being visited by the angel Gabriel, Mary goes to see Elisabeth. Mary is quite young, and Elisabeth is past the normal age for bearing a child. The angel has told Mary that she will bear a son as a virgin; and also tells her that her relative Elisabeth will bear a son at a very old age. After thinking about this, Mary has decided to go and see Elisabeth, to see if this is true, and to see if she has any insight on these matters.



Exactly how far away they lived; how Mary knew how to get there; had Mary visited Elisabeth before—these are questions not addressed in the text.

We only know that Mary is able to make this trip and is able to find Elisabeth, a relative of hers. Given the extensive nature of the genealogical records kept by the Jewish people, they were well-aware (for the most part) of those related to them.

Literally, this reads: *She entered into the house of Zacharias and she greeted Elisabeth.*

One of the many details to which we are not privy is, does Zechariah answer the door and Mary calls to Elisabeth? Or does Elisabeth answer the door, and Mary enthusiastically greets her, telling Elisabeth just exactly who she is? It sounds as if Mary just walks into the house *through* the front door and calls out for Elisabeth.

Four Room House in Israel (a graphic); from [Biblical Israel Tours](http://biblicalisrael.com); accessed May 31, 2019.

What actually takes place is, Mary enters into the courtyard, possibly through some sort of a gate or door, and then calls for Elizabeth. When she enters into the courtyard, she is considered to be *in the house*, even though there may not actually be a roof over her head. There will be many times in the gospels when people are spoken of as being in the Temple, but they are really in one of the courtyard sections of the Temple, as people did not just walk in and out of the Temple building itself. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that, being in the courtyard is recorded in Scripture as *being in the house*.

You may find the following quotation to be more instructive if you view the graphic above.

From Biblical Israel Tours: The typical Israelite four-room house in the Iron Age I & II Periods (1200 BC- 586 BC) consisted of three elongated spaces running parallel each other and a fourth one perpendicular to the other three. These types of houses can be seen throughout Israel, even at Avaris in Egypt centuries before where prototypes were uncovered. The rooms of the houses were often subdivided into smaller rooms. The central room was often open, with no roof covering. The other three usually had a roof to protect against the hot sun for most of the year and rain during the winter months. Pottery jars were stored here, providing both food (grains) and water. Oil lamps were normally kept in niches made in the wall. Furnishings were minimal in ancient Israel.

The bottom two outside rooms sometimes had an open wall between it and the central courtyard. The cooking stove (called a taboon) was often located in the roofed courtyard. It was in the courtyard where most daily activities took place. Also, it is suggested that animals were often stabled here. It seems that the house sometimes had a second floor (supported by stone monolithic columns). House members often slept on the roof.⁴⁴

We know how these houses were set up in the time of Jesus because of excavations which have been done in the region. Therefore, Mary did not barge through the front door and call for Elizabeth. *Mary entered into the house of Zechariah and Elizabeth* means that she stepped into their courtyard and from there called for Elizabeth.

Luke 1:39–40 *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

Since Zechariah and Elizabeth are an older couple, without children, and Zechariah is a Levite with specific responsibilities, we may assume that, by this time in their lives, they are

⁴⁴ From <http://biblicalisrael.com/2016/03/the-four-room-house/> accessed May 31, 2019.

doing well, financially speaking (when it comes to economic matters, it is all relative⁴⁵). They may not be rich, but they probably own a home with a courtyard, as pictured above. When Mary enters the courtyard, she is said to have entered the house, and she would call for Elizabeth from the courtyard.

Luke 1:41a **And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb,**

When Mary called out to Elizabeth, the child dramatically moved inside of Elizabeth.

Even to this point in time, we believe that babies in the womb are subject to some degree to stimuli from the outside world. We don't know exactly how or to what degree. It is Elizabeth who is said to hear the greeting of Mary; and the baby moved inside of her considerably—but the text does not clearly indicate that the baby moved because Elisabeth hears Mary or perhaps it is because she suddenly stands up. Hearing Mary's voice may have even caused a chemical reaction in Elizabeth's body, and that is somehow related to the baby shifting or moving in the womb.

Luke 1:41c **And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,...**

Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. This was an historic meeting. Elizabeth had John the Baptizer in her womb, and he would be herald to the King. Mary would bear Jesus, the Son of God; she would be a virgin giving birth. Based upon what Elizabeth will say, Mary is probably pregnant at this time (pay close attention to what Elisabeth says).

Since Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, we may assume that what she says is inspired.

Luke 1:42a **...and she exclaimed with a loud cry,...**

The NKJV text here is somewhat misleading. Mary and Elisabeth are not yelling at one another. The child has shifted in Elisabeth's womb, Elisabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, and she calls out with a loud cry (which is not necessarily the words which follow). I would understand this as a sudden outburst of sound—not necessarily words. If an infant makes a sudden shift in the womb, I am certain that the mother might say something about it. Whatever surprised expression that Elisabeth exclaims, I believe that is different from what is recorded below.

Exactly what occurs next is not recorded here. Either Elisabeth came out to greet Mary or Mary came into where Elisabeth was (or, given the size of the dwellings, they may have been nearly instantly face to face when Elisabeth moved from a sitting or laying position to standing up). She likely takes just a few steps in order to see Mary.

⁴⁵ For instance, if I had to choose between having the wealth of Solomon in his time or the material items I have enjoyed during my life, I would choose the latter in a heartbeat.

We do not know exactly the small amount of movement which takes place, but since Elisabeth *hears* Mary's greeting, it sounds as if Mary first enters the courtyard, calls out to Elisabeth; suggesting that Elisabeth is in one of the rooms shown in the picture.

These women were not face to face before; and now they are; and however that came about, is left out of the text.

Elisabeth will begin speaking to Mary, as inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:42b ...[and Elisabeth said, having been filled with the Spirit] "Blessed are you among women,...

I added the bracketed words to the NKJV text, the words *and she said* are actually found in the Greek text.

Elisabeth recognizes just how blessed Mary is. Somehow, Elisabeth knows that Mary is pregnant with the Son of God, as she will address Mary as the *mother of my Lord*. By this, Elisabeth recognizes Jesus' human authority; and Mary as His human mother.

You will note that there is no inordinate competition here. She does not say, "Well, I am carrying the baby John, revealed to me by the angel!" Elisabeth's focus is upon Mary and what she is inspired by God the Holy Spirit to say. The focus is certainly upon the Lord Jesus Christ; which translates here to a focus upon Mary.

Luke 1:42c ...and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Immediately, the words of Elisabeth shift from Mary to the Lord Jesus in her womb.

The verb which Elisabeth uses is eulogeô (εὐλογέω) [pronounced *you-lohg-EH-oh*]; and when speaking of people, it means *blessed, happy, recipient of God's grace*. When it is used of God, it means *praised, spoken well of*. The man in Mary's womb will be the central figure of human history, the only true celebrity of human history, the One to be praised throughout eternity.

When the angel Gabriel spoke with Mary, a few days previous or a week previous, that she would be pregnant was a future promise. Elisabeth appears to be speaking of Mary as pregnant at this time. So, sometime between the message of the angel Gabriel and this point, Mary is with child.

Elisabeth is no doubt animated and speaking with great excitement. It is reasonable to understand that she is speaking emphatically and prophetically.

Elisabeth is speaking to Mary. She speaks of the fruit of Mary's womb here, which suggests that, during this past week, Mary had become pregnant as a virgin. I am not aware of any other passage in Scripture which lays out the timing of Mary becoming

pregnant (only Luke describes these specific events in his first chapter⁴⁶). Given that Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaking, and given that these words are recorded in the Word of God, it makes little sense for her to speak of the fruit of Mary's womb unless she is, in fact, pregnant with Jesus. There is no other information elsewhere which suggests that Mary conceived at a different time.

So, somewhere between the angel speaking to her (v. 35) and these words of Elisabeth (v. 42), Mary had become pregnant. Whether it had occurred that very night that Gabriel spoke to her, or during the trip, or the moment that she arrived at Elisabeth's front door—at some point, Mary was carrying the Son of God in her womb.

Mary and Elizabeth (a portrait by Carl Heinrich Bloch); from Carlbloch.org; accessed August 16, 2019. Obviously, Bloch envisions a much more marvelous house for Elizabeth than I do.

Luke 1:41–42 **And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"**

So that there is no confusion, the fact that Mary is greatly blessed does not mean that we worship her or pray to her. Personally, I live a very blessed life. My life is far better than I deserve. In no way should you worship me or pray to me. Same goes for Mary (I realize that is a bad illustration, but nowhere in the Bible is it suggested that we should worship Mary—in fact, even though this Mary will be among the Lord's disciples, she is given more time here in this chapter of Luke than anywhere else in the Bible). This is the only lengthy portion of Scripture which is an extended narrative featuring Mary as a key character.



In the pre-canon period, the filling of the Holy Spirit often could result in the revelation of new information. That Mary is blessed among all women is new information. This first was revealed to Mary by Gabriel. Elisabeth—who likely does not know anything about angel Gabriel⁴⁷—is confirming what the angel told Mary.

⁴⁶ Luke approaches the birth of Jesus from Mary's point of view; Matthew from Joseph's.

⁴⁷ We do not know if there was some way by which her husband revealed to her that he saw an angel.

I don't think that Mary was expecting this. I don't believe that she knew that Elizabeth was going to suddenly begin to prophesy. We do not know exactly what she expected, apart from some guidance (that is an educated guess on my part).

Did the angel speak to Elisabeth and tell her these things beforehand? Although that is possible, it is not recorded; and there is a great deal of information spoken by the angel which is recorded in Scripture. We do not know exactly the mechanics of Elizabeth's speech, apart from her being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 039: Luke 1:41b–44

Elizabeth's Inspired Words to Mary

Mary, who will become the mother of Jesus, has come to the home of Elisabeth, who will become the mother of John the Herald. Elisabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and she is speaking the words of God:

Luke 1:41b–42 **And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"**

Despite her own miraculous pregnancy, Elizabeth focuses upon Mary and Mary being pregnant. This is because Jesus is the only true celebrity of human history. Therefore, Elizabeth does not engage in *dueling pregnancies*. Similarly, Elizabeth's future son, John will announce the Person of Jesus; he will not be in some sort of spiritual competition with Him.

Elizabeth's words here, guided by the Holy Spirit, tell us that Mary, at this point in time, is pregnant.

Luke 1:43 **And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?**

Luke 1:43 is quite difficult to translate. Literally, this verse reads, **"And how [or, from where] this one that has come to me the mother of my Lord face to face with me?"**

The first four words, *and how this that* must mean something along the lines of, *and how is it that*; this would give us, **"And how [is] it that the mother of my Lord would come to me, [to be] face to face with me?"**

I know that I am not the only person who struggled with this translation. Several of these translators took the phrase *with me* or *to me* and placed it with the first 4 words.

Some Reasonably Literal Translations of Luke 1:43

Tree of Life Version

Who am I, that the mother of my Master should come to me?

Unlocked Literal Bible

And why has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Some Reasonably Literal Translations of Luke 1:43

Wilbur Pickering's New T.	Why am I so favored that the mother of my Lord ³⁴ should come to me?
Complete Jewish Bible	"But who am I, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
The Expanded Bible	[¹ But] Why ·has this good thing happened to me [am I so honored], that the mother of my Lord comes to me?
Modern English Version	But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
New American Standard B.	And how has it happened to me [Lit <i>from where this to me</i>], that the mother of my Lord would come to me?
Kukis slavishly literal translation	And how [is] it that I [am a part of] this [event], [that] the mother of my Lord enters [my home to be] face to face with me?

Some translations insert *blessed*, *favored*, *good thing*. Although there is a no single word in this verse which means *thing*, it is reasonable to understand this as a *blessed event* or as a *gracious act* of God in history.

⁽³⁴⁾ What Elizabeth is saying, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is that the Messiah is already in Mary's womb, as witnessed by baby John's reaction. There was no human way that Elizabeth could know of the angel's conversation with Mary. Her prophecy served as a tremendous confirmation and encouragement to Mary—I imagine that the Holy Spirit fertilized her as soon as she said, "Yes".

There seems to be the general agreement that Elisabeth is exclaiming, "**How is this happening to me, that you, the mother of the Lord, has come here to my house to be face to face with me?**" Despite some difference in details, I believe that this is the gist of what is being said. We know what Elisabeth is saying is accurate, because she is filled with God the Holy Spirit and because her words are being preserved in the Word of God.

This is interesting that Elisabeth knows the Mary is the mother of the Lord. This indicates that either the Holy Spirit just revealed this to Elisabeth (or, in the alternative, that Gabriel had spoken to her husband at greater length or to her at some point⁴⁸—this is a highly unlikely alternative). It seems most logical to me that this is revealed by God the Holy Spirit, right here at this time. In any case, Elisabeth seems to be suddenly well informed about Mary, this revelation taking place suddenly, right before our eyes, as it were. In fact, she may know more about Mary's pregnancy than Mary does (by means of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit).

Whatever relationship there is between Mary and Elisabeth, whether they simply knew about one another as relatives or whether they have known each other for much of their lives, meeting once or twice a year at festivals, we don't know. Based upon what I have

⁴⁸ This alternative seems unlikely to me, as it would seem to be a part of Scripture had it occurred.

read, it appears that they have more than a simple passing knowledge of one another; furthermore, it was quite common for extended families to reunite during the various holy days in Jerusalem.

Despite her own very unusual pregnancy, Elisabeth recognizes that it is far more important that Mary will bear Jesus. Elisabeth, at this point in time, only knows that she is pregnant, and no one saw that coming. However, she would not know that her son would become John the Herald, the prophet to introduce Jesus to the world (some of that information was revealed to her husband, who is mute at this time).

There are two things which Elisabeth says which suggests that Mary be pregnant at this time. Elisabeth calls her *the mother of the Lord* in v. 43 and she speaks of the fruit of Mary's womb in v. 42 ("**Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!**"). We may certainly understand these words to be prophetic; however, it sounds more like Mary is pregnant at this point, during the here and now of this narrative.

When Mary is spoken to by the angel, she is not pregnant; but before she comes face to face with Elisabeth, she is.

Looking for more clues, we read in v. 39: **In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,...** Why did she, suddenly, go in haste to see Elisabeth? The angel prophesied that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and the power of God would overshadow Mary (v. 35). This event is yet future from the angel speaking to Mary.

However, at some point after the angel spoke with Mary, *in those days*, Mary goes with haste to Elisabeth. It is not *the very next day*; but it is *around that time or a short time later*.

So, my understanding is, at some point between the angel speaking to Mary and her *deciding* to go to see Elisabeth (whom the Holy Spirit spoke about), she became pregnant with the Lord, without the involvement of any man nor is there is reason to think that her becoming pregnant with Jesus is anything like the human conception process. We know this because, the entire time of her pregnancy, Mary is a virgin.

Let me suggest that this is what happened: Mary very likely experienced some physical things which have suggested to her that there has been a change in her body (that is, she begins to manifest some signs of pregnancy⁴⁹). Some women experiences some signs of pregnancy within [the first week of pregnancy](#); and this could account for Mary not leaving the next day to see Elisabeth; but leaving a week or so later. No doubt, the words of the angel could have planted a seed in Mary's mind about pregnancy, so that she might be more attuned to the signs. So, it is possible that Mary had some physical symptoms, thus confirming what the angel said. And so, as a result of those physical signs, she goes with haste to meet Elisabeth. Let me quickly add, I am simply taking the information which we

⁴⁹ Morning sickness, an acute awareness of something being different, her not having a period.

are given and speculating somewhat (the speculative part is, Mary became pregnant *before* she left to visit Elizabeth).

Elizabeth will explain how she knows about Mary.

Luke 1:44a **For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears,...**

It is Elizabeth who hears the greeting of Mary. Mary calling out *hello* resulted in more than Elizabeth simply hearing here and thinking, “That sounds like Mary.”

Luke 1:44b **...the baby in my womb leaped for joy.**

The exact way that this triggers the child in her womb is unknown to us. Elizabeth’s sudden movement may have caused some shifting about in the womb. This could have been quite a simple explanation, like, Elizabeth hears Mary’s voice, and she stands up or she moves, and the baby moves at the same time.

Or hearing Mary’s voice may have triggered an endorphin release in Elizabeth which also affected her child.

Luke 1:44 **For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.**

This causes us to consider a number of things—can an unborn child feel pleasure? We know that unborn children can feel pain and that they will shrink from something which is painful. We also know that the mother can experience an endorphin rush—so can these endorphins affect the fetus? Let me suggest that they can; and let me suggest that this can cause movement in the womb. What exactly is being stimulated and what sort of existence is it for the fetus in the womb, we do not know. So far, no one has been born to tell us what it was like.

Believe it or not, it is the standard Christian and Jewish position that a baby is not fully human until they take their first breath of air and are given soul-life by God (many believe that the first gulp of air that the baby takes is God breathing soul-life into the child). Biologically, insofar as I know, there is no difference between the baby in the womb 5 minutes before birth and 5 minutes after, apart from the use of air by the lungs. But quite a number of theologians believe that right in between those two periods of time, ensoulment occurs (this is where I lean; with the important qualifier that, this does not mean that the fetus in the womb should be treated as a non-entity).

Can the fetus hear Mary? This is more difficult to determine. Certainly, there is a sense of hearing in a 6 month old fetus. Will it respond to music or sounds from the outside? There is certainly a body of thought that they do. Let me suggest that the endorphin rush above is certain; and I suspect that the child in the womb is able to hear some sounds or vibrations from the outside. What exactly does that mean, if there is no ensoulment in the womb? I could not tell you.

Luke 1:44 **For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.**

Elizabeth is simply saying that, when she heard Mary call out to her, Elizabeth's baby moved dramatically in her womb. This apparently informs Elizabeth, who is filled with the Holy Spirit, that Mary is the mother of the Lord. How exactly Elizabeth knew this, is unclear to us, but what she says clearly indicates that she knows that Mary is pregnant with the Lord.

Now, was Elizabeth considering the Scriptures at this point? Was she remembering Scriptures which she had heard?

We do not know exactly how prophetic inspiration and utterance works, but both Elizabeth and Mary will apparently speak prophetically at this time (we do not know how this works exactly because there are no legitimate modern-day prophets). Somehow they have truth in their souls and they speak this truth.

Let me suggest this about Mary and Elizabeth, as well as about all prophets: their knowledge does not occur in a vacuum. That is, these are not empty vessels which are suddenly filled with truth. Any prophet or prophetess in Scripture is likely a mature believer at the point of their public ministry. We have all known about people who are saved one week, and are making lengthy public statements in front of people the next. No one in the Christian life goes from 0 to 100 in a week. Your spiritual growth is not unlike your physical growth. Your physical growth is the result of your body taking in nutrients in the food that you eat; and your spiritual growth is a result of your soul taking in Bible doctrine, the food of the soul. Your physical growth and your spiritual growth are both imperceptible, but real. Mary and Elizabeth are reasonably mature women, spiritually speaking (Elizabeth more than young Mary).

In addition to their knowledge of spiritual things (which comes to them through the study of the Word of God and/or the hearing of the Word of God); they have additional knowledge. Elizabeth clearly knows about the Lord and she knows that Mary is carrying Him. It is this additional knowledge and its origins which is fairly elusive. Somehow, this is additional knowledge which is in their souls which did not get there through hearing the Word of God. Yesterday, that knowledge was not there; today it is. Elizabeth, at hearing Mary's voice and then seeing her, suddenly has some knowledge that she did not have 10 minutes earlier. However, this knowledge in her soul is not sitting there in an empty vacuum. Elizabeth is a mature believer and she already has spiritual information in her soul (about God, about God's plan, about the Messiah, about Israel) which is consistent with the new information which is suddenly there.

In any case, this does not happen to us as believers in this dispensation. The divine knowledge in our souls is a result of hearing the Word of God taught. In a few instances, like that of a pastor-teacher, that knowledge comes from study, wherein a dozen sources may be employed besides an English translation of the Bible (when I complete a chapter

of Scripture, it is not unusual for me to have read and/or used 200 separate sources⁵⁰). Ideally, my focus throughout is, *what does this chapter say, what does it mean, and what spiritual information and benefits may be found therein?*

Lesson 040: Luke 1:41–45

Elizabeth Speaks to Mary

So here we are in this narrative: it is about 5 B.C.; young Mary has come to the home of her relative Elizabeth; and Elizabeth knows that Mary is the mother of the Lord. Mary's Son would be the focal point of human history; and Elisabeth's son would announce His coming. Elizabeth is still speaking:

Luke 1:45 **And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."**

Elizabeth continues speaking, and she is speaking about Mary. She is testifying to Mary's faith (Mary believes that she will give birth to the Lord). However, again, we do not know exactly how Elizabeth knows these things. My first guess is, this is revealed to her by means of the Spirit; and she speaks as this information is revealed to her. How that would work—the exact mechanics—is something that we are completely unaware of. I would suggest that, suddenly, bam, that information is a part of her soul. She hears Mary's voice or she looks at Mary and she automatically knows, "She is going to give birth to the Lord."

There are other possibilities—perhaps Mary sent a message to Elizabeth (which was delivered before Mary arrived); perhaps Elizabeth has this information revealed to her at an earlier time. We really do not know. Based upon the text before us, it appears that this is information suddenly implanted in her soul, and it is something that she knows and she believes.

Based upon the narrative that we are studying, there is no necessity for any sort of direct contact between the women up until this point in time. Mary hears what she is about to experience from the angel; she hears about Elisabeth; and so she goes to discuss this with her. Given the distance between their homes, there would have been limited contact at best between these two women prior to this time. I believe that they have known each other from gathering as a family at the various festivals in Jerusalem.

Elizabeth knows—again, probably by means of the filling of the Spirit—that Mary has believed what the angel has told her. Remember, the angel has not spoken to Elizabeth, only to her husband Zechariah; and then the angel spoke to Mary, 6 months later. It is not even clear that Elizabeth knows that an angel spoke to Zechariah previously, because he is unable to speak. At best, he can gesticulate at this time (which is why he appears to play no part in this narrative of Mary and Elizabeth). Besides, what would be the hand signs that say, "When I was in the Temple, and angel appeared to me and told me that you would become pregnant; but then he made me mute"?

⁵⁰ A serious pastor may have hundreds of relevant books, both on computer and on his bookshelves.

Elizabeth knows enough to say this:

Luke 1:45 *And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

Does she know how exactly Mary knows this? We don't know. Although it appears that Mary arrives and suddenly, Elizabeth launches into this spiritual dissertation, there may have been more going on than that. The two women may have spoken with one another, Mary might have said, "Listen, this is what has happened to me. Am I crazy? Is this real?" So, Elizabeth may have some concrete information from Mary already.

However, it is more likely that Mary shows up and immediately, Elizabeth begins speaking, inspired by God the Holy Spirit.

This is how all of this began:

Luke 1:41–45 *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

So, it sounds as if Elizabeth simply began speaking from the moment that she greets Mary, and that her words indicate that she has knowledge of who Mary is and that she will bear the Lord.

As an aside, it is also fascinating that well over half of the first chapter of Luke is given over the narrative of Elisabeth and Mary. Apart from the angel and the sons that they are carrying in their wombs, there are no male characters between vv. 24 and 56. This sort of thing is highly irregular in ancient literature.

I made a superficial search for women in ancient literature. One which jumped out at me was a list of the women in the Odyssey:

Penelope: the faithful wife

Circe: the seductress

Kalypso: the lonely

*Sirens: seductive and thus dangerous.*⁵¹

Does this not sound like a Hollywood movie? Although Mary and Elisabeth were, no doubt, faithful women; their place in history (and in Scripture) is quite remarkable and stands a

⁵¹ From <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/kapparis/WomeninLiterature.html> accessed July 26, 2019.

world apart from [women in literature](#) up to that point in time (however, let us not forget the books of Ruth and Esther).

Luke 1:45 *And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

Elizabeth is saying a great deal here. Somehow, Elizabeth knows that God has spoken to Mary. This does not mean that God spoke directly to Mary, but through the angel Gabriel. Whether Elizabeth was aware of this detail or not, we don't know. But she knows that Mary is the recipient of divine knowledge that was spoken to her and has believed it.

What Mary has heard and has believed is that, she would become the mother of the Lord. Mary knows this because Gabriel said to her, *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."* (Luke 1:31–33; ESV; capitalized) Then Gabriel confirmed this, saying, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."* (Luke 1:35b; ESV; capitalized)

And now, Elizabeth has confirmed the words of the angel: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the Fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"* (Luke 1:42b–43; ESV; capitalized)

Finally, Elizabeth suggests that Mary is blessed (happy) because she has believed the Lord. She believes that these promises will be fulfilled. Who is more trustworthy than God?

Since we took a rather long time discussing what Elizabeth said, let's go back and see it all at once:

Reviewing the Inspired Speaking of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41–45)

Scripture	Commentary
Luke 1:41–42 <i>And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"</i>	<p>Mary has traveled a considerable distance to be with Elizabeth. It appears that she has simply shown up unannounced. Elizabeth hears her voice, and the child shifts dramatically in her womb, and Elizabeth is filled with the Spirit.</p> <p>Elizabeth calls Mary <i>blessed among women</i> and says that, that the production of her womb is blessed as well. By this, we know that Mary is pregnant at this time.</p>

Reviewing the Inspired Speaking of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41–45)

Scripture	Commentary
Luke 1:43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?	Elizabeth asks the rhetorical question, “Why has it been given to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” So Elizabeth not only knows that Mary is pregnant, but that she is pregnant with the Lord. For Mary to come to her is a great privilege.
Luke 1:44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.	She tells Mary that, at hearing her voice, her own child in the womb leaped for joy. We speculated that Elizabeth may have had a rush of endorphins in her system, when she heard Mary’s voice, and this affected the child in her womb.
Luke 1:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."	Again, Elizabeth speaks of Mary as being blessed, for what was promised her would be fulfilled from the Lord. We do not know if Elizabeth is aware that Mary was visited by the angel, giving her this promise; of if Elizabeth simply says this, giving voice to what the Holy Spirit has revealed to her.

What appears to be the case is, both Mary and Elizabeth are filled with the Holy Spirit; and we may reasonably understand that they are prophesying accurate information as it is revealed to them. The exact mechanics of how this information is placed in their souls, we do not know (and it is not important, as we take in doctrine by means of a well-qualified pastor-teacher).

The focus continues to be upon Mary’s child and not on Elizabeth’s pregnancy or child.

With this in our minds, we can move forward to hear what Mary has to say.

Lesson 041: Luke 1:46–48a

The Elizabeth Speaks then Mary

The Magnificat of Mary (this subtitle is not found in the NKJV; but it needs to be here)

Beginning with v. 46, Mary speaks, but in poetry or song. This second inspired utterance is often called *the Magnificat*, as it magnifies (glorifies) God (it does not glorify Mary). Elisabeth spoke in vv. 42–45, clearly inspired by God the Holy Spirit. Mary will now speak in vv. 46–55, also inspired by God the Holy Spirit, but what she says will be clearly grounded in existing Scripture. That is, Mary appears to take her place in history and set it beside Scripture which she knows. Unlike Elizabeth, who clearly breaks new ground with what she says, Mary will confirm various truths already found in Scripture.

I believe that Mary is also filled with the Holy Spirit, even though there is no verse which states that outright. We can come to this conclusion based upon the fact that, what Mary says is recorded in Scripture and what she says conforms to truths taught in the Old Testament (there is no New Testament at this point in time⁵²).

In vv. 42–45, Elizabeth has said some nice things about Mary, calling her the *mother of the Lord*. Is Mary going to turn around and say nice things about Elizabeth and/or about the child in her womb? No; it does not work that way. The One to be glorified is Jesus Christ, the only celebrity of human history. That is who Mary will glorify. The Son in Mary's womb is the Lord of Mary and the Lord of Elizabeth. Therefore, both women will glorify Him.

Elizabeth's pregnancy and John the baptizer are not the issues before us; we know about them, but Who and What Jesus is—that is what is foremost.

In circumstances where Elizabeth speaks for a few verses inspired words of God and now, Mary will begin to speak the inspired words of God, it is reasonable to ask, did their brains just go blank and God spoke through them, or are their minds engaged, thinking doctrine, and the Holy Spirit guided them to speak these inspired words? I lean towards the latter explanation; and I would suggest that Mary is both filled with the Holy Spirit and with the words of God, which she has heard and learned over the years (I would allege that the same thing is true about Elizabeth).

These women are not blank slates through whom God speaks; they are both normal and real women who have grown spiritually over the years (we may reasonably assume the Elizabeth is more spiritually mature than Mary, which is why Mary travels to speak to her).

Luke 1:46 **And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,...**

The soul is what we are. It is our mentality, emotion, volition, norms and standards, self consciousness, memory, conscience, and vocabulary. The immaterial part of man is the soul; and every person has those things. What Mary is thinking magnifies God (in this case, God the Son). All of this section is about God the Son, the Son she will bear.

She says to Elisabeth, **"My soul magnifies/praises the Lord."** Mary's soul is made up of her volition, her thinking, her conscience, her norms and standards, and her emotions. Her soul is what she thinks. She praises the Lord with what she thinks. Various truths fill her soul, and Mary speaks this aloud. This is because she has Bible doctrine circulating throughout her human soul.

Mary uses the present active indicative of *megalúnō* (μεγαλύνω) [pronounced *meh-gah-LOO-noh*], which means, *to make great, to enlarge, to magnify, to praise*. Strong's #3170. The present tense suggests continuous action, that Mary continues to magnify and praise the Lord; and active voice suggests that Mary does this from her own soul; and the

⁵² Interestingly enough, the first New Testament book actually written down was probably Galatians.

indicative mood is the mood of reality. This is really happening; and it is a result of divine will.

In the Latin, this phrase is: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum*. It is from the Latin that we get the term *Magnificat*, which is a reference to this song/psalm/words of praise uttered by a very young Mary.

I believe that Mary has been involved in the reading/study of Scriptures. We do not know exactly how that would take place as people of the era did not possess Bibles (for the most part) as we do today. In our era, any person who wants to can have a Bible. There are a myriad of Scriptural programs for our computers and cell phones—many of them [free](#). However, in Mary's era, her access to Scriptures would have been quite limited. I don't know if synagogues would have allowed women; or what function the synagogues served during off-hours (did some of them function like a reading room?).

In any case, what Mary says throughout her dissertation is not too different from what is found in Scripture: virtually, all of what she says can be found somewhere else in the Old Testament (maybe not the exact same words, but close to the same words).

Luke 1:46 **And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,...**

Psalm 104:35b **Bless the LORD, O my soul! Praise the LORD!**

Psalm 119:175a **Let my soul live and praise you...**

Psalm 146:1 **Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!** (ESV; capitalized)

We do not know how Mary would have gained access to any portion of the Scriptures. It was not that the scribes and copyists did not allow them to be read by the common man—the Scriptures were read in the synagogues all of the time. That Mary was able to read these Scriptures or hear them read, appears certain, given the words that she speaks. The question I have is, *were synagogues male only at all times?* I don't know. However, there is nothing more important to a growing believer than the Word of God; so, in whatever way Mary was able to hear the Word of God, I believe that she did.

According to [Shmuel Safrai](#), there were far fewer restrictions on women in the ancient synagogues than today. He writes: *In the time of Jesus there was no separation of the sexes in the synagogue and women could be counted as part of the ten individuals needed for a religious quorum. This allowed women to be much more active in the religious life of the community than they are today...In the first century, women were the equals of men religiously and frequently visited the synagogue. This can easily be documented from literary sources.*⁵³

From the Jerusalem Perspective: *Did women play a passive role in the synagogue congregations of antiquity? Were they separated from male*

⁵³ From the [Priscilla Papers](#), accessed July 26, 2019.

members of the congregation during prayer and study, as is the case today? According to Professor Shmuel Safrai, the answer to both questions is a resounding “No.”

The Jerusalem Perspective continues: The sources reveal that women regularly attended the synagogue and took part in its services, listening to sermons and to the reading of the Torah. Women also studied in the bet midrash.⁵⁴

In the New Testament, there is a hint that both husband and wife attended the local synagogue in John 9:22. Also, there is someone who spoke about Jesus in the synagogue, and both Priscilla and Aquila heard him in Acts 18:26. Furthermore, Mary will encounter both men and women at the Temple (Luke 2:27–38). Therefore, there is enough Scriptural justification for women having the ability to go into the synagogues and to the Temple in order to hear the words of God spoken, standing (or sitting) side-by-side with the men there.

Therefore, that Mary knew the Word of God is not a great mystery. Because Mary knew Scripture, her soul circulated doctrine, and it was a part of her interaction with people (it is our soul which interacts with people and the world at large, not our bodies).

Furthermore, what Mary says is so closely aligned with some Scriptures; clearly, she had some familiarity with God’s words.

Furthermore, it should be clear that Mary is not just some random woman chosen by God for this privilege. It was no doubt her love of the Word of God which played a large part in God choosing both her and Joseph. One of the stories that we will study in Luke, is Jesus, at age 12, being taken to Jerusalem for the Passover by his parents in a large group. In fact, they went every year (Luke 2:41). This indicates that both parents saw to His spiritual teaching. God knew that He could depend upon them, as Jesus needed to grow spiritually in His humanity (Luke 2:40, 52).

Luke 1:47 *...and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,...*

Mary’s spirit is where she stores information about God (just as our human soul stores information about life and other people). Her human spirit is a repository for Bible doctrine; and her human soul circulated divine viewpoint as it applied to life. So she thought and spoke in accordance with the truth which was in her human spirit.

In v. 47, Mary uses the aorist active indicative of the verb *agalliaō* (ἀγαλλιάω) [pronounced *ag-al-lee-AH-oh*], which means, *to jump for joy; to exult, to rejoice [greatly, exceedingly], to be exceeding glad*. Strong’s #21. The aorist sees the action of the verb as singular in nature, even though it may take place over a long period of time. Here, Mary is using the

⁵⁴ From the [Jerusalem Perspective](#); accessed March 15, 2019.

dramatic aorist, which describes an action happening in the present, usually to emphasize its reality or certainty.⁵⁵

At various times, Mary is quite happy and excited about what is happening to her. Given that she is pregnant woman, she has probably experienced a variety of emotions and thoughts. However, her happiness and rejoicing continue; but she states this as a certain fact or as an established reality.

Interestingly enough, Mary uses the active voice, which suggests that her soul and spirit are constantly thinking doctrine, which is the source of her happiness and rejoicing. She has pursued the Word of God.

Mary recognizes that it is God Who is her Savior; not her good works.

Now, let's again note similarities to Old Testament texts:

Luke 1:47 *...and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,...*

Isa. 25:9 *It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation."*

Isa. 43:3a *For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.*

Isa. 45:21b *And there is no other god besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides Me.*

Isa. 61:10 *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

Hosea 13:4 *But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but Me, and besides Me there is no savior. (ESV; capitalized)*

Old Testament believers did have a human spirit, and Mary had a human spirit which appears to be filled with doctrine. Women of that era had means by which they could learn the Word of God; and young Mary apparently took advantage of those means.

Luke 1:48a *...for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.*

To anyone in her periphery—with the possible exception of Joseph—Mary is a nobody, a person of no great importance. She speaks of herself as God's servant or slave; but I think part of what she is saying is, she is no better than any servant or slave. She is *not* saying, "You have recognized me, God, for being your great and faithful servant." It is more that she is saying, "I am but a servant in an humble state."

Mary clearly recognizes that she is not a celebrity by any human standard.

⁵⁵ From <https://www.ezraproject.com/aorist-tense-a-closer-look> accessed July 26, 2019.

Again, there are very similar thoughts from the Old Testament:

Luke 1:48a ...for He [God] has looked on the humble estate of His servant.

1Sam. 2:8a He raises up the poor from the dust; He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor.

2Sam. 7:8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people Israel.'

Psalms 102:17 He regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

Psalms 113:7-8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of His people.

Psalms 136:23 It is He Who remembered us in our low estate, for His steadfast love endures forever;... (ESV; capitalized)

God does not consider the human view of celebrity. Mary would be considered a very unimportant person by most. She has no clear connection to the Temple or to any well-known teacher of the Law; or to any man with political or religious power. Yet, God has chosen her out from all other women in the world.

As an aside, this is a great theme throughout Scripture. Consider the times that you live in and think of the names of people that you see as influential and important. Would you be shocked to know that God has a completely different list of people than you do? We in the United States immediately think of current and past presidents and other world leaders; and people that we consider to be *movers and shakers*. We believe that the lives of such men make a real difference.

God does not have this same scale of values. This is very well illustrated by the person of Abraham, who was a shepherd who moved from point A to point B, at the direction of God. There were a plethora of kings and mighty warriors from that era, but who is the most well-known person from that time period? Abraham. And not just in *Christian* nations, but throughout the world. He is remembered as the most important person of that era *because* he was the most important person of that era, being the recipient of God's matchless grace. There is no man of that era as well known as Abraham. No one else comes close. In fact, apart from people named in the Bible, how many could answer the question, "Can you name someone who lived around 2000 B.C., a contemporary of Abraham?" Not 1 person out of a 1000 could give you a name of a person not in the Bible.

But, would *People Magazine* have done a story on Abraham at that time? Of course not! They would have no idea who this man was. Would *Entertainment Tonight* have done a 5 minute segment on Abraham?⁵⁶ No way! In Abraham's day, for the most part, he was unrecognized and uncelebrated (Gen. 14 being an exception to that). He was not a well-known human celebrity in his era (apart from Gen. 14); but he was the man of greatest

⁵⁶ Is this show still on? Apparently it is called *ET* now. Perhaps I should have used the example of *TMZ*.

consequence of his day and time. He was God's man acting in accordance with God's plan in that era.

We all know the names *Trump* and *Obama*; there are many celebrities of various sorts that we know the names of—but are these the true important figures of the early 21st century? They are not. There are well-known sport figures, movie and television stars—and many from those categories do what they can to influence human opinion and behavior. But these are people that we consider to be celebrities. Who does God see as the most important people of this time period? I could not tell you. We probably have never heard their names before. But the impact of their spiritual lives is what has moved this nation and other nations. There might be a handful of names; there may be a few thousand. But, to be sure, the direction that our nation takes is far more dependent upon these people whose names we do not know than upon anyone with the name *Trump* or *Obama*.

In the period of time that we are studying, two of the pivotal names in human history are Mary and Elizabeth. People with the names of *Herod* and *Cæsar* do not even come close to the impact of these two women. And who recognizes their impact on human history? The gentile Christian Luke does. Luke mentions at least two different Cæsar's in his era; and there are 5 references to the office of Cæsar in his book. Luke mentions at least 2 different Herod's in his book. So he is not indifferent to their impact on history; but the importance of Mary and Elizabeth far outweighs all of the Cæsar's and all of the Herod's.

What illustrates this point even more is, in the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, all written within 30 years of the events of that era, there are 25 mentions of Herod (I believe these mentions refer to 3 or 4 different men with that name); and 15 references to Cæsar. John write his gospel 60+ years after these events take place, and he has no references to Herod and 3 to Cæsar (quotes from other people). So when John writes his gospel, the names of Herod and Cæsar do not loom large in his world. The name which is above all other names is the one still spoken today, the name of Jesus.

Lesson 042: Luke 1:48b–51

The Magnificat of Mary II

Mary continues to speak her inspired thoughts, to what is quite probably an audience of one (maybe two)—I am referring to her human audience. However, guaranteed that there was a massive audience of angels, both fallen and elect, witnessing these words being said.

Furthermore, Mary recognizes the importance of this time, and she remembers these words, perhaps 50 or 60 years later (as someone needed to convey them to Luke, and this audience of 1 or 2 would have passed on by the time Luke was on the scene).

Mary continues speaking, and for a short while, she speaks of herself:

Luke 1:48b **For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;...**

God has chosen Mary for a distinct and important blessing. He will use Mary to produce the Son of God, through whom God will become flesh. I believe that she realizes that this is what is occurring. Based upon what Gabriel has told her, I think that she gets this. And she knows that she is nobody special in the eyes of the world.

From this point forward, Mary is going to be seen as blessed to have this position and to have this honor. Now, she is not using a word for *exalted*; nor is she calling herself *praiseworthy*; nor is she suggesting in any way that she is deserving of this honor. God has made her blessed by what He is doing in her. God has bestowed undeserved blessing upon her. This has come about by God's grace.

If you understand God's plan and your place in it, then you are blessed. That is automatic. Does this mean you have a brand new car or a brand new 3000 sq. ft. house? Of course not! Blessings in life come in many different forms and not all of them are material; but clearly, the God of blessings knows how to bless us.

What does it take? We can look at Mary, who says that she is blessed and that many generations of people will call her blessed. What do we know about her? She understands her place in the plan of God; and she apparently knows Scripture.

Now, we are not to go off the deep end, at this point, and worship Mary or to think, somehow, she is a 4th member of the Godhead; or that, she is as close to being God but without actually being God. Nothing like that is being said here. Her words are very carefully chosen, and guided by God the Holy Spirit.

Unlike much of the rest of Mary's poetic statement, this is specifically about her and what God has done for her. Therefore, we do not have parallels to v. 48b in the OT.

Mary is blessed because she is the recipient of the grace of God. She did not deserve this or earn any of this. Being called blessed is not the same as being worshiped. Many people are called blessed in Scripture. Mary worship is no different than heathen religion. God has never called upon us to revere or to worship Mary. Hell, I'm very blessed, and you would be out of your nut to worship me.

Luke 1:49a ...for He Who is mighty has done great things for me,...

The Powerful One (= *He Who is mighty*) is God the Father; and He is creating a work in her or by means of her, which will result in the Great One, the Lord Jesus Christ, being born. Mary is being used of God, Who is making all of this happen. There is nothing that Mary can do to help out. Mary cannot speed up or slow down the plan of God. She can participate in it and that is what she is doing. She recognizes that God is doing great things through her and for her.

You will note that, nowhere in Scripture does Mary then begin a special health regimen to help out God, to see to it that His Son is born healthy and strong. There is nothing that Mary can do to help out this process. She is blessed because she has been chosen; but

she is not blessed because of anything that she has done (that is the very concept of grace).

What likely differentiates her from most other women is, she has the Word of God in her soul and she thinks Bible doctrine.

There are some parallels to what she has said:

Luke 1:49a ...for He Who is mighty has done great things for me,...

Psalm 126:2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

Psalm 126:3 The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad. (ESV; capitalized)

Again, see how her thinking parallels so many Old Testament passages and the thinking and actions of God in previous times.

The One Who is Mighty is God, Who has obviously blessed Mary in her life.

Luke 1:49b ...and holy is His name.

It is not Mary who is set apart; it is not her womb that is set apart as holy and undefiled; it is His Name which God has made holy. God's name is His character, His reputation, His essence; and God is set apart from all other things. God speaks of *His holy name* in Lev. 20:3 22:2, 32 1Chron. 16:10 etc. God, being Who He is, is set apart from all things.

Again, we have parallel Scriptures:

Psalm 103:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Psalm 111:9b Holy and awesome is His name!

Psalm 145:21 My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

Isa. 47:4 Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is His name—is the Holy One of Israel.

Isa. 54:5 For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called. (ESV; capitalized)

There is no reason to think that Mary suddenly has a boatload of doctrine somehow magically infused with her soul. It is not unreasonable to assume that she had positive volition towards the Old Testament Scriptures and that she heard the words of God spoken on many occasions. She may have gone to great lengths to remember God's Word when

she was given the opportunity to hear Scripture read. What I am saying is, Mary appears to have experienced some real spiritual growth, even though she is quite young.

Again, I do not believe that Mary emptied her mind, tilted her head backwards, and then allowed words to escape from her lips that she did not think about or understand. I believe that these words came from her own thinking and from her own understanding of Scripture. I believe that she is putting together some seemingly random OT Scriptures in such a way as to describe what is happening right now, at this point in time.

Luke 1:50 **And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.**

Fear refers to *fear/respect*. Next to God, we are nothing. Those who fear God (1) think about Him; (2) have a healthy respect for Him; and (3) recognize when they do wrong, they are subject to divine discipline. God's grace goes to these people in every age; in every dispensation. God pours out blessing upon people who fear Him.

No matter what time period, no matter what dispensation, God will give His grace to anyone who fears Him.

Again, we have a plethora of Scriptures which testify to these words of Mary:

Exodus 20:6	[I the LORD your God am] showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments.
Exodus 34:6–7	The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."
Psalms 31:19	Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!
Psalms 85:9a	Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him...
Psalms 147:10–11	His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love. (ESV; capitalized)

There are many verses which connect God's grace and unfailing love to believers who fear/respect Him.

Mary continues to speak, saying things which reflect a soul filled with Bible doctrine.

Luke 1:51a **He has shown strength with His arm;...**

God is able to do as He wants. He has the power and strength to bring anything to pass. The word *arm* is a word which refers to the Lord's power and strength. His arm indicates

both His willingness and ability to intervene in human history. When God takes part in human history, that is *the strength of His arm*.

Even today, during a time when there are few if any signs and wonders; God is still deeply involved in human history. The grace our nation has received testifies to that.

God, speaking to Moses, said, “I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.” (Exodus 6:6)

When singing about the Lord’s power as shown in Egypt, Moses sang, “Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of Your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.” (Exodus 15:16)

Moses, when explaining to the people of Israel all that God had done on their behalf, said, “Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ” (Deut. 4:34)

Exodus 15:6–7 Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.

Exodus 15:12a, 13 You stretched out Your right hand...You have led in Your steadfast love the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them by Your strength to Your holy abode.

God’s shoulder often refers to his power and strength; His right hand is a reference to God’s volition or sovereignty in His actions.

Psalms 89:13–14 You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, high Your right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before You.

There is more to God than His power and His sovereignty; He acts according to His righteousness and justice; and He leads with His grace and faithfulness.

Psalms 98:1 Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him. (ESV; capitalized)

God’s power and His sovereignty have provided for us our salvation.

These are only a few of the relevant passages.

Mary continues to speak:

Luke 1:51b ...He has dispersed [or, *winnowed*] the arrogant in the thoughts of their hearts;...

We can take this literally; as God took those who gathered at the Tower of Babel, and He scattered them, along with their one-world thinking (yes, *one-world* thinking—the idea of uniting all countries into one—is anti-God thinking). Whenever there is a gathering of human viewpoint and anti-God thinking, this gathering will be smashed and dispersed.

Their arrogance and their pride is based upon the arrogant thinking in their hearts. Have you ever seen so much self-righteousness as is in one of the political parties in the United States? It is no longer confined to a small minority; but this is the direction of most of that party.

When a political party continually touts its own righteousness, and, at the same time compares those of the other party to the worst people in recent human history, that is a great example of self-righteous thinking.

Psalm 2:1–6 Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us burst Their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then He will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in His fury, saying, "As for Me, I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill." (ESV; capitalized)

Lesson 043: Luke 1:52–54

The Magnificat of Mary III

Mary continues speaking. What she says continues from vv. 46–55 (we will go back and review what she says in total at the very end).

Luke 1:52a He [= God] has brought down the mighty from their thrones...

Sometimes, God removes mighty men from their thrones; sometimes He allows them to sabotage themselves. In the end, their power and glory may be nothing more than human good to be burned at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Furthermore, at the very end, only those who have believed in His Son will be accepted. In the worst case scenario, these might and powerful men might have their memory burned in hell forever.

There is a great contrast between the people of God and the people who have human fame and/or power. Mary is speaking eloquently to that great gap, very much as she may have read or heard read from the Old Testament.

1Sam. 2:4	The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble bind on strength.
Job 5:12	He [God] frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.
Job 34:24–25	He shatters the mighty without investigation and sets others in their place. Thus, knowing their works, He overturns them in the night, and they are crushed.
Psalms 107:40	He pours contempt on princes and makes them wander in trackless wastes;... (ESV; capitalized; and there are many more parallels than just these)

Do not become confused by this. The idea is not, rich and powerful people bad; poor and impotent people are great. The key is always a person's relationship to Jesus Christ; and then, having believed, his relationship with Bible doctrine (just as we need food to grow and develop, we need spiritual food to spiritually grow and develop). Throughout Scripture, we have men of every station who are portrayed in Scripture as great spiritual warriors; and men of every station who prove themselves to be anti-God in every way.

Luke 1:52b ...and exalted those of humble estate;...

In this world, we each have a scale of values and we assign different importance to various people. We see various people as high up, if they have money, good looks and power. We see those who work at menial jobs, or barely have enough to get by on, who have a dozen layers of authority over them, as being less important and influential. We may not look down on them, per se, but we give them very little thought at all. God does not see things in the same way; God does not operate under the same scale of values that we do. A person's value or worth, to God, has little to do with what is on the outside (although, interestingly enough, the Scripture does refer to some men as handsome and some women as beautiful).

1Sam. 2:8a	He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. This verse come from that marvelous prayer of Hannah, who would become the mother of Samuel the priest/prophet.
Job 5:11	He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.
Psalms 107:41	...but He raises up the needy out of affliction and makes their families like flocks. (ESV; capitalized)

Do you see how Mary's words are so aligned with those of Hannah, spoken 1200 years previous; or with the great wisdom found in the book of Job? Mary is thinking with divine viewpoint, indicating that she has doctrine in her soul.

Around the year 2000 B.C., who is the most well-known person from that general era. Whose name is greater than any other name? There were all these great nations at this time, all of these great kings; and many great and renown warriors. But whose name is known all over the globe? Abraham's. People know who Abraham is. They may not know

much about him, but if we were to submit a list of names of the greatest men of that era, and include Abraham's, and asked 1000 random people to select the people whose names they recognize from that list, somewhere between 950–1000 people would know Abraham's name. Not nearly the same number of people will know the name of this or that king or noble or warrior, and that would be only because he is mentioned in the book of Genesis. But if their name is not found in the Word of God, who knows anything about them? Not even a handful.

And who is Abraham? He is a shepherd who moved from the region of current day Iraq to Canaan. He had limited power and limited authority. He owned only a small portion of land in Canaan (a gravesite) and commanded a small contingent of men (men who became an army on at least one occasion when it was necessary).

Yet, he is known above all others of that era because he was God's man in God's geographical will (most of the time⁵⁷). He was a man to whom God spoke.

Even more well-known is the name of Jesus, the most well-known name throughout the world. Even in countries which claim to be godless, in Hollywood where so many have repudiated Christianity, or even in Buddhist or Islamic countries, the name of Jesus is known. In fact, many times His name is more well-known than any other name. Although I have never done a study of this, I imagine that if you took the dialogue from all of the Showtime and HBO series, the proper name that you might hear more than any other proper name is that of *Jesus*.

Mary continues:

Luke 1:53a ...He has filled the hungry with good things,...

This can be understood in two ways: there is the completely literal understanding, where God the Son actually feeds the hungry with good food. We have at least three instances of this recorded in the New Testament (and I would assume that this occurred many more times than that). However, there is also the understanding that those hungering for His Word will be given the opportunity to learn it. Jesus would make divine truth available to anyone who wanted to know it.

There are, again, parallels found in the Old Testament:

1Sam. 2:5a	Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger. (Again, Mary's thoughts appear to go to the marvelous prayer/song of Hannah).
Psalms 34:10b	...but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
Psalms 107:9	For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. This is almost exactly what Mary said.

⁵⁷ There was a period of time when Moses stopped halfway to Canaan, and stayed there with family. This was not God's geographical will for Abraham to stop there with family.

Psalm 146:7 ...Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;... (ESV; capitalized; again, there are many more passages than these)

God looks after His people. The original population of Hebrew who spent 40 years in the desert-wilderness were looked after by God. They did not starve; they did not run out of water. In fact, their shoes and clothing did not even wear out. **God fills the needy with good things.**

Luke 1:53b ...and the rich He has sent away empty.

There are certainly people in this world who have great material wealth; but, if they lack Jesus Christ in their lives, they lack reality and depth. God will send them away empty at the end of their lives. They will have no good thing to take them into the next life.

We should not understand this to mean that God withholds all spiritual benefits from those who are rich. Believers can be found in all strata of society and throughout the world. God does not simply dismiss a person because they work hard or because they have chosen a profession that pays well. The key is positive volition towards the Word of God.

Now, quite obviously if a rich person is only after riches and he has no interest in Jesus Christ; and no interest in eternal things, then, at the very end, he will be sent away empty.

I found fewer parallel passages in the Old Testament (there are a great many passages in the New Testament on this topic).

Proverbs 23:4-5 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.

Psalm 34:10a The young lions suffer want and hunger;... (ESV; capitalized)

There is a certain emptiness for the man who pursues riches, because these cannot follow you to the grave. Again, this does not mean the rich are bad and the poor are good; it is simply a matter of emphasis in one's life. Some professions and some kinds of work will yield money; and this is not a bad thing. Some churches are actually blessed because there are people who attend that church (or support that ministry) who are rich (I do not mean to diminish giving by those of lesser means).

Perhaps you have had the dream where you acquire something—perhaps it is a single item, perhaps it is a house, perhaps it is wealth—and then you wake up the next morning and it is all gone. That is what death will be like. For the unbeliever, an eternity of great misery will follow; for the immature believer, all that they worked for throughout their lives will just be gone. For the mature believer, he will enjoy eternal wealth and reward.

Luke 1:53 ...He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty.

We are not to understand this to mean *the poor are good and the rich are bad; and God will even that out*. Remember, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were all very wealthy men (wealth *always* being a comparative status). King David was quite wealthy; and Solomon was one of the richest men in all of human history. Guaranteed, they are not in heaven right now sharing a one-room shack.

There are the rich who either depend upon their wealth; or see their wealth as proof that they are better people. Or their life's focus is upon their wealth. God evens out disparity in that realm; but if God has given an advancing believer material wealth as a part of his supergrace package, God is not going to necessarily take his wealth away and give it to some arrogant poor person.

This is no class envy here; God rewards on the basis of what is in our souls, not according to our bank accounts. What this means is, those who have an intense desire to know God, God will satisfy or satiate their desire. Those who pursue God and His Word will see themselves as being rich and needing nothing, He sends away empty.

Luke 1:54a He has helped His servant Israel,...

When God refers to Israel as *His servant*, then that is Israel doing what God had called upon Israel to do. Jesus Christ will go to the people of Israel and many would be saved, healed, and greatly blessed. Israel as a whole will be blessed in the Millennium, as Jesus will rule over Israel.

Isa. 63:8–9	For He said, "Surely they are My people, children who will not deal falsely." And He became their Savior. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.
Micah 7:19–20	He will again have compassion on us [the people of Israel]; He will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham, as You have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.
Zep. 3:14–15	Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil. (ESV; capitalized)

Throughout history, God has been with nation Israel, when Israel was spiritually strong and when Israel rebelled against Him. Consequently, because of the rebellion of the Hebrew people against God, there are Jewish people scattered throughout the world today.

One way that God has helped Israel in modern time is, God has made the strongest nation in the world today (actually, in human history), the friend of Israel. The bond between modern Israel and the United States is a great blessing to both nations. God has not forgotten His people, despite this being the Church Age dispensation.

God first worked through the nation Israel, which was a nation begun with believers only. God worked great things in their lives.

Luke 1:54 **He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy,...**

Jesus forever has His hand outstretched to His people. Even if they believe He has cast them aside, He has not; God will remember His people, Israel.

Psalms 98:3	He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
Isa. 44:21	Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant; I formed you; you are My servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.
Isa. 49:14–16	But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. (ESV; capitalized)

Lesson 044: Luke 1:46–57

The Magnificat of Mary IV

The final words of the Magnificat of Mary are found in v. 55 of Luke 1.

Luke 1:55 **...as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."**

God made many promises to Abraham, which He doubled-down on with Isaac and Jacob. These promises are about the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; which are the Jewish people.

Gen 12:3 [God is speaking to Abraham] **"I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

Gen. 22:17–18 [God speaking to Abraham after he showed that he was willing to offer up his son Isaac to God] **"I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."**

Isa. 40:8 **The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.**

The words which God spoke to Abraham and his spiritual progeny have been recorded for us in the Bible.

Jesus is the promise which God had made to Abraham and to his seed forever. In two senses, Abraham would have a son. He would have a son of promise in Isaac—a literal son from Sarah's womb. But Isaac represented the Son of Promise Who would be descended from Abraham. This Son would be born to Mary; and He would fulfill God's promises to Abraham—and this fulfillment would be forever. What a fitting conclusion for the Magnificat of Mary!

God's Word lives and abides forever.

I believe that it would be a good idea to view all of the Magnificat at once.

Mary, who has been called by Elizabeth, *the mother of the Lord*, now speaks. I believe that she is both led by the Spirit, but that what she said has its foundation in many Old Testament passages.

The Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46–55)		
Scripture	Text	Commentary
Luke 1:46	And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,	Mary speaks from her human soul, which, even at her young age ⁵⁸ , has been inculcated with Bible doctrine. From her soul, she magnifies the Lord.
Luke 1:47	and My spirit rejoices in God my Savior,	Mary's human spirit rejoices in God, Who is also her Savior.
Luke 1:48	for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant.	God has noticed Mary, despite her lack of property or power. She has nothing beyond her soul and spirit to offer God.
Luke 1:48	For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;	Nevertheless, generations from this point forward will recognize that Mary has been greatly blessed by her place in God's plan.
Luke 1:49	for He Who is mighty has done great things for me,	The God Who is great has done great things for Mary. This is remarkable to Mary, as Israel often recognized that God dealt with them as a nation.
Luke 1:49	and holy is His name.	God is set-apart from all else.

⁵⁸ We do not really know how old Mary is. I see her as being 18 or 20, but I don't know that I can back this up with any particular passage.

The Magnificat of Mary (Luke 1:46–55)

Scripture	Text	Commentary
Luke 1:50	And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation.	God gives grace to those who fear and respect Him, who are occupied with Him, in every generation. One generation may be filled with losers; but the next may have many great men under God's direction.
Luke 1:51	He has shown strength with His arm;	God reveals His omniscience and His power with what He does (the arm representing God's volition and His strength).
Luke 1:51	He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;	God has dispersed or scatted the arrogant, despite the way that they see themselves in this world.
Luke 1:52	He has brought down the mighty from their thrones	Even great men who have great positions of power, God has brought these men down off their thrones. Men throughout history would give anything and everything for power; and that power is often so transitory.
Luke 1:52	and exalted those of humble estate;	Men who appear to be nothing, who have very little in life, God is able to exalt.
Luke 1:53	He has filled the hungry with good things,	God feeds the hungry; and He give Bible doctrine to those who desire it.
Luke 1:53	and the rich He has sent away empty	God sends away the rich with nothing; meaning those who go after money alone, to the exclusion of God, die, and they cannot take their wealth with them.
Luke 1:54	He has helped His servant Israel,	Israel, despite its low estate at this time in history, has been guided and prospered by God.
Luke 1:54	in remembrance of His mercy,	God making a nation from the descendants of Jacob is an act of grace. This should be in the minds of all Israel.
Luke 1:55	as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."	God reveals Himself and His plan to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants. The Old Testament, accepted Scripture at that time, is God speaking to Mary's ancestors.

Do you see how Mary's proclamation deal with God's promises to Abraham and His faithfulness to nation Israel? Jesus is the fulfillment of all these things.

Again, I want to point out that what Elizabeth and Mary both said, centered on the person of Jesus. Elizabeth did not say 5 nice things about Mary's child (in the oven), and the Mary says 5 nice things about Elizabeth's baby. Both women glorified the Lord. There is no indication of inordinate competition or jealousy. I believe that Mary is clearly helped and guided by being able to spend time with Elizabeth.

Luke 1:56a **And Mary remained with her about three months...**

When the angel spoke to Mary, Elizabeth was in her 6th month of pregnancy (vv. 26, 36), so Mary went to her and stayed for about 3 months.

The timing here is odd, from a human perspective, because Mary comes to Elisabeth when Elisabeth is 6 months pregnant; but Mary appears to be leaving before Elisabeth actually gives birth. *In for a penny, in for a pound*, as they say; but Mary did not see it that way.

Wilbur Pickering brought up an interesting point—what did they do for 3 months? He suggests that Zacharias sermonized them for 3 months, but writing everything down rather than saying it aloud (as he is mute). Let me reject that simply on the basis that he has to ask for a *pad and pencil* when naming his son (Luke 1:63). For this reason, it appears that Zacharias did not have quick and easy access to writing material. However, as a priest, he would have had some options and privileges that others did not have. I would think that it is far more likely that Mary and Elisabeth regularly attended the synagogue—daily, in fact; and they recalled passages of Scripture to one another. Perhaps they heard the Scriptures spoken aloud; perhaps they read through the manuscripts themselves (because Zacharias is privileged as a priest, he may have been able to swing that).

So, although I disagree with Pickering as to exactly what happened during this time that Mary is with Zacharias and Elisabeth; I concur that there was spiritual growth taking place, as well as fellowship and a recognition of their places in the plan of God. I do not think that they simply hung out and reminisced. In fact, they may have both searched the Scriptures for some sort of clue about their particular situation. Now, so there is no mistaking, you or I don't search back in the Old Testament thinking that there will be some sort of prophecy about us or our lives—that just is not going to happen. But, Mary knows that she will become the mother of the Lord. It is not quite clear to these women who Elisabeth's son would be (although John can be found prophesied in the Old Testament).

It is my opinion that these women were successful in their quest to better understand what was happening in their lives. Although the Scripture does not clearly tell us this nor does it tell us what these women did for 3 months, I believe that God chose Mary and Elisabeth because they were devout women. What they have said so far indicates on the part of Mary a depth of analysis that we might not generally associate with an 18 year old woman (or, however old she is).

No doubt, these women heard many more passages from the Old Testament:

Psalm 25:8–9 Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble [= *grace oriented*] in what is right, and teaches the humble His way.

I believe that both Mary and Elisabeth were seriously interested in God's plan for them; and therefore, I believe that they would have investigated this in the Scriptures.

When a person believes in Jesus Christ, they may or may not be open to spiritual growth. I have known a great many people who are saved—they are clearly saved—but they are not as interested in spiritual growth. However, with these two women, I would assume, given their great responsibilities, that both women were open to the reading and exposition of the Word of God.

Luke 1:56b ...and returned to her home.

Based upon the order of events in this chapter and the lack of referent material to Mary and the baby John, I would have to guess that Mary returned to her home before John the herald was born. It is my thought that Mary was pregnant at this time (which is implied by what Elizabeth said to her in Luke 1:42–43). Both of those statements are reasonable, educated guesses, and likely true. Mary does not appear to have remained for the birth of John, as she is not a part of the scenes which follow.

Although Mary did not remain there for the birth of John, I believe that she was there so that both women could encourage one another in the Lord regarding their unusual pregnancies.

Luke 1:56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

At 3 months, Mary was no doubt having clear signs of pregnancy; and she chooses to return to her home.

Despite the closeness in ages of the two sons (Elizabeth's and Mary's), there is no indication that their sons met as infants or as children; or even that Mary and Elizabeth saw one another ever again. As discussed earlier, this was not a short trip to go from Nazareth to the hill country of Judæa.

On the other hand, did they continue to meet for the festivals in Jerusalem? We do not know any of this information. It would seem logical that they would; but, how was Elisabeth *after* giving birth at her advanced age? Although we know a little bit about Jesus as an infant and as a youth; we are given no information about a young John beyond this chapter. After all, John is not the central Person of History; Jesus is, and John will be His herald. Therefore, we jump from this chapter to John's public ministry when next we see him.

So far, in our narrative, John has not yet been born, so let's go to v. 57 where he is born:

Luke 1:57 **Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.**



The Birth of John the Baptist (a painting by Tintoretto circa 1554); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed September 27, 2019.

At 9 months—perhaps only a few days after Mary left—Elizabeth gives birth to a son. Her son would become John the Herald (or John the baptizer).

Luke 1:58a **And her neighbors and relatives heard...**

You will recall that, for at least 5 months, Elizabeth kept her pregnancy a secret; but at this point, many people know that she has given birth. We do not know Elizabeth's age, but let me suggest that she is 60 or 70 years old. That she is pregnant and that she gives birth is quite an amazing thing.

Literally, v. 58a reads: **Her neighbors and relatives heard about her,...** There are many things which occur in Scripture and we have no idea as to the backstory. How did her neighbors and relatives hear? What did they hear? Obviously, all of them would have known that she and Zacharias are an older couple, and having a child was a pretty big deal. That would have caused a lot of talk. As a priest, Zechariah would have been a minor celebrity of that era. He would have been relatively well-known. Having no children

for a long time in their marriage and then, when they are old, to have a child—that would have been a very big deal and people around would have known about them, even if they had never met the older couple.

Many would have known that Zechariah was struck dumb in the Temple. Priests would have been very important people in ancient Israel; and when something unusual happens to one of them, this would have had a lot of people talking. A priest being struck dumb when carrying out his priestly duties would have caused a great deal of talk.

It is interesting to try to determine, in human terms, how this information about Zechariah's meeting with the angel was known, being that we are studying it right now. Obviously he had to tell it to someone at some point (which is why we are able to read about it here in the book of Luke). However, Zechariah could not speak until after his son was born; and, by that time, Mary had returned to Nazareth. At this point in our narrative, it does not even appear that Elizabeth knows about the angel.

Logically, at some point, Zechariah and Elizabeth had to tell someone about the angel, because we find this information recorded here in the book of Luke. Perhaps at a subsequent holy day in Jerusalem, they told this information to Mary, who later told it to Luke. However, bear in mind that the angel spoke to Zechariah and not to Elizabeth; so who knew this? Perhaps this was known by correspondence between Mary and Elizabeth (Elizabeth would have known about the angel *after* Zechariah was able to speak).

There is the possible explanation that, when Zechariah got his voice back, he told several people what had happened. Logically, the priests at the Temple when he was struck dumb would have peppered him with questions when he voice returned. How this information actually came to Luke would be interesting for a *behind the scenes* book, but, at best, we can only speculate.

In any case, God made the birth of John a very public event. People far outside of Zechariah and Elizabeth's sphere would have known about them. Zechariah is the priest who had been struck dumb; they were having a child when Elizabeth is 60 or 70 years old (and Zechariah might be 70 or 80⁵⁹).

Luke 1:58a-b **And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy [or, *grace*] to her,...**

Where we read the word *mercy* in the KJV and the NKJV, the Greek word behind it is *eleos* (ἐλεος) [pronounced *EHL-eh-os*], which means, *grace, mercy, kindness; clemency*. Strong's #1656. God has shown great grace to Elizabeth.

I would suggest that many people knew about Zacharias becoming mute suddenly; and many others would have known about Elizabeth's unusual pregnancy late in life. All of this

⁵⁹ The ages are speculation on my part, based solely upon Zechariah and Elizabeth being an older couple.

would have been very big news being noised about. In fact, in this region, this might have been the biggest news around.

There was already a focus upon this older couple. Zechariah returned home from the Temple and he could not speak. Those with him at the time believe him to have had a vision of some sort—a supernatural spiritual experience.

Then, not too much later, this couple too old to have children will apparently have a child. There would have been people all over that region talking about Elizabeth and Zechariah.

In this era, movie stars and sports stars are the great celebrities. People are so crazy about the former that many movie and television celebrities avoid going out in public or they wear disguises when they go out, to avoid the recognition and hassles of celebrityship.

However, at this time in our narrative, there was no *People* magazine; there were no Hollywood events on the red carpet. But, in Jewish culture, the celebrities were often their priests or their local Levites or their religious teachers. The relationship of the Jewish people to God was far more important to the daily life of the Jews than is our faith in American society. To the Jew, this had been central to their existence for 2000 years.

Previously, Zechariah was a minor celebrity. He was a part of the priesthood and he took part in spiritual ceremonies at the Temple (99.9% of Israelites had never been inside of the Temple and would never go into the Temple sanctuary ever in their lifetimes—the Temple is nothing like the present-day church).

Suddenly, based upon recent events, both Zechariah and Elizabeth were minor celebrities, known by a great number of people in Israel. The people who heard about the Temple incident may have numbered in the thousands. It is my opinion that knowledge of this birth and the surrounding events was known by far more people than those who lived on their block. I believe that they may have been known throughout the Judæan hills. These two things would have made Zechariah and Elizabeth that *talk of the town*, as it were. That thousands of other Jews knew about them is not an exaggeration, in my opinion.

Luke 1:58c ...and they rejoiced with her.

In the ancient world, there was nothing more wonderful than bringing a new life into the world. The Hebrew people were a people who valued and respected life and correctly understood new life to be a gift from God. (Do you see how different that is from American culture today?)

One of the changes in many societies today, all over the world, is that perhaps half of the households do not see the birth of a child as being a wonderful and celebrated event. Many women who have abortions are mothers who are married and having a child at that point in time is simply inconvenient to them. When God blesses a woman with a child—regardless of the circumstances—then it is the right time for that woman and the

right time for that family (you can trust God's timing far more than you can trust your own future plans).

Luke 1:58 **And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.**

By the time of the birth of their child, Zechariah and Elizabeth had become minor celebrities. People from their city and from all the towns around knew of them.

Given their ages, this was an unexpected event for Zechariah and Elizabeth to have a son, so their friends and family celebrated this birth with them.

Luke 1:59a **And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child.**

So the child has survived to his eighth day, and it is time for the boy to be circumcised. All Jewish males would be circumcised.

Apparently, neighbors and relatives were also in attendance (v. 58). What was happening was known throughout the Judæan hills, given the ages of the parents and Zechariah's standing as an honored priest. Furthermore, the circumstances of Zechariah's emergence from the Temple, unable to speak, would have been widely known. How could his inability to speak not be a major topic of conversation?

Zacharias would have had a larger than normal circle of acquaintances, being that he was a priest—and what happened to him would have been known and talked about. However, interestingly enough, *although family and neighbors* are specifically named (v. 59); the religious crowd of that era is not.

Then we have the unlikely circumstance of this much older, childless couple having a child. That would have been talked about as well.

Luke 1:59b **And they would have called him Zechariah after his father,...**

They refers to many of the men who are there. There would be other priests there, particularly from Zechariah's branch of Levites. It seems likely that one of them would do the circumcision.

Up to this point, Zechariah has been unable to speak; and I would suggest that there was a priestly contingent there—whether 2 or 3 or as many as a dozen. There were a group of men from *records*, as it were, also there. For most births, someone from records might come, record the pertinent information and leave, but let me suggest, based upon the circumstances, that several men from records would have been there (my guess is, these are also priests and/or Levites). It seemed to be the consensus among these people that the boy's name should also be *Zechariah*. After all, the father could not name him; Zechariah himself remained mute on the subject.

There are a number of people in attendance at the circumcision of John. There would have been some curious neighbors, priests, and people from *records*. This being an unusual birth drew people there; and there was a consensus of opinion: this boy should be named Zacharias.

Luke 1:59 *And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father,...*



Circumcision and Birth of John the Baptist with Annunciation to Zechariah, by Teramo Piaggio; from [Wikimedia](#); accessed September 27, 2019.

Zechariah was still unable to speak. The men there felt it appropriate to name the child after his father—particularly since there would be no second child anticipated from this elderly couple. Circumstances and logic dictated that the child’s name be *Zechariah*. And certainly, the people there would have expected that such a name would be pleasing to both Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had a different thought, however.

Luke 1:60 *...but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John."*

Elizabeth overrules the men who are there, many of them who spoke with great authority as priests.⁶⁰ The people there thought *Zechariah* is the right name for the son; but the mother, Elizabeth, said, “He’ll be called *John*.”

⁶⁰ This is an assumption that I am making here, that there are priests there. Since this is the day of the child’s circumcision, such a conclusion seems reasonable to me.

John means *Jehovah is a gracious giver*. Now, where did she come up with this name?

Remember, the angel spoke to Zechariah, not to Elizabeth, and told him, “**And you will call his name John.**” (Luke 1:13)

So, how does Elisabeth, unable to hear Zacharias, decide on the name *John*? How did this pop into her head? There need not be anything supernatural about all of this. Zacharias is a priest, so he would have been able to read and write. Having the implements with which to read and write would have been less casual than they are today. So, Zacharias, unable to speak, is not necessarily without the means to *communicate*. Now, I don’t necessarily see him bothering to communicate a great deal to the outside world, but certainly to his wife, with whom he lived. Therefore, in some way—likely through writing (even if in the dirt)—Zacharias communicates to his wife that they would name the child *John*.

Another alternative is—and I believe that this is entirely reasonable—Elizabeth simply chose that name. *Jehovah is a gracious giver* seems an excellent name for a child given to them under these circumstances. When the angel told Zacharias, “**And you will call his name John,**” the verb is in the future active indicative. This is not necessarily an order being given to Zacharias. The angel is simply telling him what would happen in his future.

A third alternative is, in the weeks prior to the birth (or even, after the birth), Elizabeth could have been suggesting names to Zechariah. There are many nonverbal ways to indicate affirmation or rejection. When she said *John*, Zechariah would confirm this name.

Luke 1:59–60 **And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John."**

It was not unusual to call a child after his father; and given at the circumstances that this might be their only son, Zechariah’s name would have been expected. However, the angel told Zechariah that this boy was to be named *John*, and so he was named *John*. Bear in mind, all of this time, Zechariah, the father, is unable to speak. Only Elizabeth is able to speak.

We do not know how expressive Zechariah was during this time; but the Jewish people are known for ability to express themselves nonverbally. But how his face was or how he gesticulated is not told to us. Nevertheless, he enters into this conversation, but lacking the ability to say anything.

Luke 1:61 **And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name."**

They refers to the family and friends of Elizabeth and John. The men who are there—priests and Levites (I have assumed that such were there and making the call on this name). Obviously, those making this argument actually know their family—so they are

aware that there is no one with the name *John*. They know who is a part of their family and they point out that no one in their family has this name *John*. It is very likely that genealogical record keepers (who are likely Levites) are there who have a list of Zechariah's ancestors (the child's name would be added to the official registry).

When a child is named in the family, often this is done in remembrance of a relative—often a grandfather or great grandfather. Sometimes, this is all that we have from that ancestor is his [or her] name. After all, sometimes the only things which you have from a grandfather or a great grandfather is his name. Occasionally, in a movie, there might be some great article of worth handed down from generation to generation, but that is, for the most part, the movies. If I have something from a grandfather or great grandfather, I am unaware of it. In my own line, are their family heirlooms of great value being handed down? For the most part, no. My father painted some paintings, and all of us sons want to have those paintings—but that is the exception rather than the rule today.

What is really passed down from generation to generation are codes of behavior and ethics; and taking the name of a relative from 1 or 2 generations back recognizes that fact.

Back to our narrative. Obviously, there is some frustration among the men there with Elizabeth naming the child, but whatever men were there disagreeing with Elizabeth's decision were finding it difficult to convince her that she was wrong. Therefore, those same men look to Zechariah to straighten out this situation, despite his being mute.

Luke 1:62 *And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.*

This is quite interesting, if not humorous. We don't know that Zacharias is deaf. We do know that he cannot speak. The men who did the circumcision know that he cannot speak. However, they are acting here as if he is deaf. The verb used indicates that they communicated to Zacharias using gestures or improvised sign language.

Now, I don't know whether Zacharias was deaf or not. There is nothing in the text supports this; however, this chapter clearly indicates that he could not speak. So, the men there know enough that *John* is not a family name; but, at the same time, they make signs to Zechariah rather than simply talk to him. So, *what do they really know?*

Were those *speaking* to him confused at this point, or was he struck deaf and dumb? Or did these gestures accompany speaking? The easiest solution is to pronounce Zacharias deaf and dumb; but that is not exactly what is said in the text of Luke 1:19–20 *And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."* On the one hand, this does not preclude the idea that Zacharias is deaf; but it certainly does not state that clearly either. The words used here, including the word *silent*, indicates the choice not to speak or an inability to speak (see Matt. 20:31 26:63 Mark 3:4 10:48 etc.). This particular word is the very opposite of *speaking* (see Luke 19:40 Acts 18:9).

I see things like this: everyone knows that Zechariah cannot speak—that has been the talk of the town for some time now (9 months, at least). Zechariah has found that, since it is difficult to participate in conversations where he cannot speak allows him to, shall we say, tune things out which do not interest him (and all of this fuss and family and neighbors being all over the place is just what a normal man might want to tune out). When entering this state of tuning everyone out, it may appear to some that he is both deaf and dumb, when he only lacks the ability to speak.

Now, if many of the men here are priests and Levites, they may have had little or no contact with Zacharias. If there are Levites there from records, this might be their first contact with Zacharias. So, these men here seem to think that they know everything, but, in truth, they know very little.

Luke 1:62 **And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.**

I emphasize this, because these men are *making signs* to Zechariah, so that he might understand what is going on and be willing to step up as a man and correct his wife as to the name of the child. To me, what they are doing is actually pretty humorous. Furthermore, Zechariah and Elizabeth have been married for quite a long time. He may have no interest at all in stepping up and *correcting* his wife.

If I were to guess, the fault here lies with those who want to name the child. They have a limited understanding of what has taken place. They think they know it all. They clearly believe that the best thing is to name this child *Zechariah*. They know enough about the family to know that no relative was named *John*. But they don't seem to know that Zechariah is dumb but not deaf.

The friends and family turn to Zechariah, the head of the family, and they make the hand sign, *what's up with this?* He would certainly be the one to name their child; not his wife. Who knows, maybe they think that the wife is taking advantage of his disability.

Zechariah may have found it amusing for the men who are there trying to sign to him that they think the child's name should be *Zechariah*, but the mother is saying, *John*. Zechariah might be thinking to himself, "I already know what you are trying to tell me; I am interested in what you think would be the correct hand signals to convey this information."

Luke 1:63a **And he asked for a writing tablet...**

I have no doubts that Luke, the man who put this narrative to paper, realized both the absurdity and humor in what was taking place and takes it up a notch. The people trying to reason with Zechariah are using improvised sign language (even though they can speak and he can hear). And then here in v. 63, it says that Zechariah *asks* for a writing tablet. Just so there is no confusion, Zechariah had to make signs in order to tell them what he wanted; but saying that he *asked* for a writing tablet makes the narrative more humorous. Quite obviously, he cannot speak, so he cannot *ask* for a writing tablet as you or I would.

So, this who narrative is quite humorous. However, whenever you have to explain a joke, the joke is not funny anymore. But, in the Greek...

Zechariah apparently had no writing tablet, but he asked for one. The improvised sign language for this would have been simple—perhaps him appearing to write with one hand on the flat surface of the other hand.

Obviously, writing tablets did exist; and it was very likely that this group of priests and Levites were carrying one (they might use it to make notes on the lineage of the child and to record the new information of the child being circumcised). Zacharias asks to use a such a tablet.

This would further indicate that a writing tablet was not the sort of thing someone just had laying around. This may have been something more common to a group of priests, a synagogue or to the Levites from records.

Here is what likely happened. Some of the priests who have come by are establishing a permanent birth record. On the 8th day, the child is circumcised and named. The priests show up and take down all the relevant information (at least the names of the parents and the child; and possibly the date and the location). They would bring a tablet on which to record this information. The official records would be kept elsewhere; but they would write down the pertinent information on this tablet to be taken back (to the synagogue or wherever) and permanently record the birth. These same men probably know Zechariah's ancestors by name, having access to these records. Based upon these things, we know that someone there has a writing tablet.

Zechariah quickly ends all discussion.

Luke 1:63b ...and wrote, "His name is John."

Zechariah communicated to them that the child's name would be John by writing it on this tablet. The angel had told Zechariah, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you [2nd person singular] shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth,..." (Luke 1:13b–14) If you will recall, Zechariah initially balked at this idea, so the angel made him mute. By accepting the name *John*, and thus overruling the priests who were there, meant that Zechariah now believed the angel and he was willing to commit to the plan of God.

Lesson 047: Luke 1:63c–64

Zacharias's Mouth is Loosened

Luke 1:57–58 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

Luke 1:59–60 And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John."

Luke 1:61–62 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.

Luke 1:63a-b And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John."

Luke 1:63c And they all wondered.

What they did was the aorist active indicative of *thaumázō* (θαυμάζω) [pronounced *thau-MAUd-zoh*], which means, *to wonder, to marvel, to be struck with admiration or astonishment*. Strong's #2296. The aorist tense means a point in time; and when Zechariah wrote *his name is John* on that tablet, the men were struck with astonishment.

Here is why I think that they marveled: Zacharias had been mute for 9+ months; and even though, at the very beginning, people believed him to have had a vision in the Temple; right now, 9 or 10 months later, he may have friends and associates who do not view his experience in quite the same way. There are some who may have thought that Zacharias had lost his mind or had become completely confused about interacting with people. They may have considered that he was disoriented; and they communicated with hand signs, when he could was able to hear their voices and understand them (as I suggested earlier, he may have used the opportunity to ignore some people's input).

Or, quite possibly, they are all with Elizabeth in one room, telling her what the name should be, and she tells them, "No, his name will be John." So they come out to where Zechariah is (in another room or outdoors), and he presents them with the same name that she said. That would have no doubt caused these men *to wonder* or *to marvel*.

Or, they may have wondered that Zechariah here is agreeing with his wife and choosing what may seem to them to be a random name over against the logical choice of *Zechariah*.

Another option is, he and his wife did not discuss the name for the child (obviously, he would have to write the name in the dirt, as he apparently did not have any sort of a tablet available at home). The men may have been surprised that he and his wife both agreed upon this name, which was not a family name.

Luke 1:63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all *wondered* [or, *marveled, astonished at*].

When Zacharias writes out a full sentence (rather than just the word *John*), I think that the priests and Levites who are there fully realize that Zacharias was fully in his right mind; and everything was fine. That could have been another reason why they *marveled*.

In any case, all of them were quite struck by the events of that day. However, there was one more event to take place, something that no one at this circumcision anticipated.

Luke 1:64a **And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed,...**

For 9+ months, Zacharias has been unable to speak. His credibility was strained when speaking to the angel Gabriel when told that he would have a son. He complained that he and his wife were too old to have children, so Gabriel told him that he would be unable to speak. Gabriel essentially told Zechariah, “You do not have a say in this.”

The angel Gabriel laid out what was going to happen and what he would name his son. His son is born, a week has gone by, and everyone thinks that the name of his son ought to be Zacharias. But then, Zacharias writes on a slate or tablet of some sort, writing, “His name is John!” Suddenly, he can speak again.

Now, even though Mary and Zacharias’s initial reactions to the angel Gabriel seemed similar, we have already studied that behind their words, Zacharias was very unsure of this promise whereas Mary believed it immediately (her coming to see Elisabeth and Zacharias afterwards was a sign of her faith).

But now, Zechariah’s mouth is opened. In the Greek, the first word in this sentence is the 3rd person singular, aorist passive indicative of *anoigô* (ἀνοίγω) [pronounced *an-OY-go*], which means, *to open [up]*. Strong’s #455. The aorist tense means that it happened right then at that time; the passive voice indicates that Zechariah did not make this happen; but that it happened to him. The indicative mood is the mood of reality.

Interestingly enough, there is no verb to go with the noun *tongue*. Literally, this reads: **Immediately, his mouth was opened and his tongue [was loosened];...** The missing verb⁶¹ is known as an ellipsis. What this could be saying is, *let’s hurry up and get to the next thing, which is the important thing*. That would be v. 64b:

Luke 1:64b **...and he spoke, praising God.**

Interestingly enough, most of the verbs in this section are aorist active indicatives. Often, that can be the default case for Greek for a narrative of discrete events. But here, *to speak* is in the imperfect tense, meaning that he *began to speak and he keeps on speaking*. He has been quiet for 9 or more months; and no doubt, he has had a variety of things on his mind to talk about—but he could not. Now, he is able to speak.

Primarily what Zacharias is doing after receiving the ability to speak again is, he praises God. In fact, for the first 15 minutes or more, that is very likely all that he is doing. He has a son and he has his voice back and he is fully aware that the angel spoke to him about the plan of God; therefore, he praises God for those things at the very least.

God, through angel Gabriel, told Zacharias what He was going to do. Zacharias expressed some skepticism, so the angel made it impossible for him to express his skepticism. So, all of this time, Zacharias silently watched while all of this came to pass. It was as if God

⁶¹ This verb is not in the Scrivener Textus Receptus or in the Westcott Hort text.

told him, “Shut up, watch, listen and learn.” And that is what Zacharias did. By the time he could speak, his faith in and understanding of God had increased considerably.

Luke 1:64 **And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God.**

God let Zechariah speak, at this point, and he praised (or, *celebrated*) God.

Prior to this, when the angel spoke to him, Zechariah was skeptical; and he was not fully onboard with what was happening; he expressed serious doubts with what the angel told him. He had some on-the-ground information which made the promises of the angel seem suspect. However, by agreeing here to name the boy *John*, Zechariah is indicating that he is in full agreement with the plan of God such as it is.

The key is, when God reveals information to you (for all of us in the Church Age, this generally is done by a pastor-teacher teaching from the Word of God⁶²), then we are to believe it. We have all come out of the world, and we were all raised with a set of values and standards, and as we grew up, we acquired and chose additional norms and standards by which to live. In many cases, the Word of God presents a whole different set of values to us. We need to accept the truth of the Word of God and reject that which is in opposition to it.

Zechariah heard the Word of God being taught by the angel Gabriel; he could have believed; or he could have questioned what the angel said; Zechariah chose to do the latter. Therefore, God temporarily removed his ability to speak. Zechariah’s opinion on this matter was set aside for a time. Zechariah’s son would become herald for the King; that is a very big deal.

Interestingly enough, we really do not know very much about what God required of Zacharias and Elisabeth when it came to the raising of John. In fact, we do not know how many years the parents lived after John was born. But we do know Zacharias has had on his mind, and that is what we will study from this point to the end of this chapter.

There are a lot of people there for the circumcision of Zechariah and Elizabeth’s child.

Luke 1:65a **And fear came on all their neighbors.**

John’s birth was very well-known, as there were a number of things which happened which caught people’s attention. First of all, his father sees a vision of some sort in the Temple, but no one knows exactly what that vision was because he was struck mute. He cannot speak. Then, he and his wife—reasonably well-known to the community given their age and position—are too old to have a child, but she becomes pregnant and they have a child. That was quite out of the ordinary. When the child was born, it was assumed that he would

⁶² Or by reading the Word of God. God does not audibly speak to any individual in the post-canon Church Age.

be called *Zacharias*, after his father; but the angel had already told Zacharias to name him *John*. As soon as he tells everyone the name of the child is *John*, Zacharias gets his voice back. Any one of those things is quite unusual and certainly fodder for conversation. But the supernatural element of this event was enough to cause the people living around him to experience fear. This series of events is somewhat unnerving, as this is a very unusual for such things to take place.

Now, *fear* can be understood to be a good or bad thing. If someone is simply fearful and cannot think due to this fear, that is a sinful fear. If one is fearful of God and has a healthy respect for God; that is something altogether different.

As believers, we have to understand that we are in God's plan, not the other way around. From time to time, some of us may die much earlier than expected; some of us much later. Our only control over that is, Bible doctrine in the soul extends one's life (yes, that is in the Bible). So, the #1 fear of man, which is death, is in God's control, not our own (apart from taking in Bible doctrine).

These were a set of odd events which have taken place. It was odd that Zechariah and Elisabeth were having a child at such an advanced age; odd that Zechariah apparently had a vision in the Temple; and odd that Zechariah lost his voice but now, suddenly had it back.

Luke 1:65a *And fear came on all their neighbors.*

There are two responses to God: *fear* or *reverence*, and the word used here can be used either way. The people of Israel did not respond with universal acceptance to Jesus; and they will not respond with universal acceptance of John.

I would interpret that there was some foreboding among the people in their periphery; and there was also some profound worship of the Revealed God as well.

Luke 1:65b *And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea,...*

I have given you a list of things *why* Zacharias and Elisabeth were being talked about. This would not just be among their friends and relatives, but throughout their general area. Many people in the hill country in Judæa were talking about the birth of John and the all of the related events. Many of those who are discussing these events have never met Zacharias or Elisabeth and would not even recognize them on the street.

Zacharias and Elisabeth apparently lived in or very near to the mountains of Judæa, and the birth of their child was the talk of that general area. No doubt, there were dozens of theories being proposed as to what this all meant.

As an aside, God's miracles are always appropriate to the situation and to the crowd for which they are performed. Now, these circumstances in the life of Zacharias and Elisabeth are things which are not directly observed by most of the people in the mountain district of

Judæa, yet they are being talked about nonetheless. This is how God works—if He wants something considered and discussed, He is able to do that.

I would like you to think about how little God did here. He sent an angel to appear to Zacharias alone (I am focusing in on the Zacharias and Elisabeth situation). He took away Zacharias's power of speech. He gave life to the relationship between Zacharias and Elisabeth. These are all pretty small miracles, and miracles which no one could really observe (except that Zacharias did see the angel—but no one else did). And yet, this small series of (mostly) hidden miraculous events is the talk of the mountain region of Judæa. Zechariah was the only person (apart from Mary) to see a miraculous thing—an angel speaking to him in the Temple. But, he was unable to talk about it, having been struck dumb.

Let's make an application to today: do not sit around your house waiting for God to perform miracles for you. God is not your own private Penn and Teller here to entertain and amuse you; nor will He cause miraculous things to occur regularly in your life in order to build up your faith. These things occurring here; and the miracles of the ministry of Jesus Christ occur because the 1st advent of our Lord is the central event in human history. These things take place so that mankind focuses on this era and this event. Your life, whatever it happens to be, is nothing near as important as the birth of our Savior.

Lesson 048: Luke 1:65–66

The Widespread Discussion of John's Birth

Luke 1:65b **And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea,...**

Now, I want you to consider a small parallel here: there are all of these people who have never met Zacharias and Elisabeth and yet are talking about them and what happened in their life. There is fear permeating this area, wondering what God is doing with this older couple.

Similarly, the miracles performed by Jesus Christ were performed for—let's face it—fairly small audiences (for the most part). Sometimes the audience was an audience of one or two; many times this audience might include Jesus' disciples and a crowd of 10 or 20 onlookers. And, on occasion, this crowd would be much larger. But, compared to the billions of people who have lived on this earth, we are talking about very small numbers. The number of people who saw the miracles of Jesus is not even a thousandth of one percent of the population of man.

And yet here we are—people who did not observe any of these miracles and we don't know any of the people who did see any miracles; nor do we know anyone who was peripherally involved, and yet, here we are talking about them—fairly small miracles which occurred to a relatively small number of people. No one requires a miracle in order to appreciate what Jesus has done and to believe in Him. We hear the gospel (the good news) of Who Jesus is and what it is that He has done for us, and we believe in Him. It is as simple as that.

God did not have to do personal miracles for everything in the mountain region of Judæa; God did some relatively small miracles in the lives of Zacharias and Elisabeth. However, God is able to take those minor events and multiply them. Millions upon millions of people now know about Zacharias and Elisabeth; and God was able to accomplish that by taking two moderately well-known people in an ancient era, and He caused a few unusual things to occur in their lives. And, as a result, thousands of people were affected; and now, today, millions of people are affected.

But, for those of you who search out miracles and signs, I want you to consider this: just how many people in the mountain region of Judæa actually saw any of these miracles? The greatest miracle to come out of this particular set of events is the birth of John. But very few people actually even witnessed that. However, they did see John; and, at some point, many of them would respond to his message (which message he would deliver, incidentally, without benefit of miracles).

What would be most important regarding Zechariah, Elizabeth and John? John's messages which he would deliver roughly 30 years later. What is most striking of this entire series of events is, what John will say 30 years hence.

It is easy to speculate on John's early life as, we study him as an infant in this chapter (and we are not really studying infant John, but his parents). However, soon in this study, we will see John in his public ministry, off in the desert-wilderness of the Jordan, eating wild honey and baptizing people—and he proclaimed the King and His kingdom. How did he end up in the desert in the first place and how did he figure out how to eat wild honey? How did he end up with a public ministry in the middle of nowhere? I have some logical theories, but, all we have by way of record is John's birth, his circumcision; and later, his ministry in the Judæan wilderness.

John's parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth, are only mentioned in this first chapter of Luke, except that Luke calls John the baptizer the son of Zacharias (Zechariah) in Luke 3:2. We do not even find them in the other gospels.

In fact, virtually everything in this first chapter of Luke contains material that is exclusive to Luke's gospel. It is obvious to me that Luke was informed by Mary of the material in this gospel (or by someone close to Mary). If Mary is 18 here, she would be about 48–50 during the public ministry of our Lord and about 68–70 when Luke writes his gospel (and Luke probably gathered material for his gospel perhaps for 10 years prior to completing it).

It is possible that John was quite young when his parents passed (as they were much older), and we have no idea how much he had to depend upon God and his own wits to survive. Perhaps he lived out in the desert-wilderness near the Jordan River. Or, perhaps as a child he was drawn to this region. When we want to eat, there are a plethora of options in every direction; but if John finds himself drawn into this wilderness region, his options for eating are far more limited. This could account for his eating of wild honey.

Now, how did anyone know to come out to John's public ministry out in the middle of nowhere? There are some clues about that in what we will study next.

Luke 1:65b *And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea,...*

Luke 1:66a *...and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts,...*

Them refers to the things which were being talking about in the hill country of Judæa. These are the things which occurred in the lives of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Again, these are pretty small things which have occurred. They are extraordinary events; but fairly low-key, strictly speaking.

While discussing these things, the people there thought about them, discussed them, and then tucked them away in their memory (heart⁶³). The people had no definitive answers; but they indeed had many questions and, no doubt, opinions.

You may recall from what you have heard about John the baptizer that he, as an adult, went out to the desert-wilderness and proclaimed the Kingdom of God and the coming King there. Let me suggest that many people knew about John, had opinions about him; and when he made a bold move to go out into the desert-wilderness, some of them went out to hear him. They had placed this information about these events (John's unusual birth, etc.) in their hearts⁶⁴; they had thought about and discussed the small series of events that we have studied. And then, one day, 30 years later, they heard about John being out in the desert-wilderness, baptizing people and speaking of the King to come. And so, they went out to see him. Their children went out to see him. I believe that much of John's ministry was predicated on the nature of his birth and the events which we have been studying. People remembered these things; so when John is out teaching in the Judæan wilderness, many of these people—who are now about 30 years older—want to know what he has to say.

Luke 1:66b *...saying, "What then will this child be?"*

The people saying this are those who were there for John's birth or circumcision. However, many people discussed this topic, despite their not knowing John's parents or witnessing any of these events firsthand. They still asked, *"Who will this child become?"*

What happened in this situation was unusual. Many things pertaining to the birth of John were unusual. Therefore, the natural question to ask is, *what or who will this child be?* The people knew that this was of God. They knew that, in some way, God was communicating to them some form of truth, and it is all related to this child. *What will this child become*, they ask one another.

⁶³ The heart is often used for the function of the soul or for some specific aspect of the soul—in this case, *memory*.

⁶⁴ Or, memories.

This is showing a reasonable orientation to reality. This is far different from the child who was born at Woodstock, and a performer proclaims, “Your kid is going to be far out!” At this point, we do not even know if such a person [existed](#). What is ironic is, the average aging hippie today, if you asked him about John the Herald, he would express doubts as to John’s existence; but if you talked about the Woodstock baby, then, to him, that would be a solid fact.

What God does is important. Therefore, the people of the Judæan hills knew that John’s birth would lead to something. Who or what would that child be? The angel describes his future impact in Luke 1:13–17. Zechariah’s words, Elizabeth’s words and Mary’s words all emphasized the Savior, as they well should have. Only in v. 76 will Zechariah append the angel’s prophecies with any more information about John.

It is not clear whether this question was spoken aloud or not. I believe that it was and by many people. What people did was lay up the set of circumstances in their hearts—a most unusual set of events for these people to be aware of. Further, I think that many of them spoke this question aloud.

Luke adds an editorial note, which expresses the thinking of those who said, “What kind of person will this child become?”

Luke 1:66c **For the hand of the Lord was with him.**

The people who wondered about this infant John were aware that the hand of God was with him. His father has seen and spoken to an angel; he was told that this child would be born, and the child’s name was given. Then he and his wife had a child while they are too old to have children. So, those who understand what is going on, and have an interest, they realized that God is clearly involved with this child, John. One person would say, **“What will this child become?”** And another would chime in, **“Surely, the hand of the Lord is with him.”**

The question is posed: *is this final statement something uttered by those discussing John or is this a summary of John’s life?* Recall that Luke is recording these events decades after the fact, as a result of extensive interviews and discussions with many of the eyewitnesses (and sometimes with those who knew eyewitnesses). So these words represent both discussions which took place at this time; and they also form a summary statement being made by Luke, based upon what he had heard about John the baptizer’s life.

Let me suggest, for the unknown years of John, prior to his public ministry, that spiritual growth and logistical grace were both obvious in his life.

Luke 1:65b–66 **And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.**

This unusual birth, the words of Mary, the naming of the son, the muting of the father, Zechariah, and now his ability to speak—all of these things are discussed among neighbors and relatives, and with their friends. All of these things would have been known and discussed all around the hill country of Judæa, which was the home of Zechariah and Elisabeth.

In line with God's plan, these people are all focused upon John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, but not upon Mary. Mary slipped away right before the time of John's birth. Elizabeth knows about Mary; and Zechariah knows about Mary, but others do not. Specific people are going to find out about the child Mary is going to give birth to; but there are hundreds, if not thousands of people, who know about Zechariah and Elizabeth.

No doubt, many of them expect John to be a great prophet or even the Messiah. No one knew for certain who he would become or how God was involved, but the circumstances concerning John's birth were quite compelling.

We understand who John is and Who Jesus is; but this was not something fully known and understood at this time. The people of Judæa appreciated the unusual circumstances surrounding the birth of John, but they did not know what those circumstances meant.

Luke 1:65b–66 *And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.*

I want you to notice something about Luke's style of writing, because he does this several times: he records an historic incident or series of events, and then he follows those events out further into the future. This is a perfect example of that.

Here we are at John's circumcision; John is 8 days old, he has been named, and, presumably, he has been circumcised. Vv. 65–66 considers these events, but looks off into the future. People discuss the birth of John, the unusual set of events, but this does not all take place on the day of John's circumcision. This is going to be a topic of interest and discussion for many years into the future. Months and years later, people will be asking one another, *"What then will this child be?"* So, the author Luke has deftly added a postscript, as it were, to these events which we are studying. However, with v. 67, we return to the day of circumcision, presumably.

Lesson 049: Luke 1:59–67

Zechariah's Inspired Speech

The Circumcision of John—a review:

Luke 1:59–60 *And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John."*

This sets the time and place. It is the 8th day, the day to circumcise and name the child. The people who are there have decided that *Zacharias* is the right name to give this infant, but Elisabeth, his mother, says, “*Wrong, his name is John.*”

Luke 1:61 And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name."

These people here know Zacharias's genealogical record and they are aware that none of his forebears have the name *John*. The Jews kept very excellent birth records, so it appears that there is a delegation of men from the Department of Birth Records, and even if they don't know Zacharias or Elisabeth personally, they know about them by their records.

Because these men—probably priests and/or scribes—are having trouble reasoning with Elisabeth, they go to Zacharias to see if they can talk sense with him.

Luke 1:62 And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called.

So, these men know about Zacharias's genealogical line, but they do not appear to realize that he is not deaf, but dumb. They are making signs to him, trying to explain that his wife is not being reasonable (is the universal sign for this a feigned pulling out of one's hair?).

Luke 1:63 And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered.

In keeping with this theme of light absurdity, *Zacharias asks for a tablet*. Now, Zacharias cannot speak, so it is he who makes hand signs to them. He is able to make his wants known. But, in contrast to those making signs about his wife's choice of names, the text tells us that John asks for a writing tablet.

Zacharias knows exactly what is going on and he understands the controversy perfectly, even though the signs being made by these men from records must have been rather difficult to figure out (luckily, Zacharias can hear them).

Zacharias gets the tablet and he writes down that his child is to be named *John*. The people there are somewhat amazed. I have speculated that, Zacharias and Elisabeth are in different rooms; the priests in authority go to Elisabeth first and then to Zacharias; and they both tell the priests the exact same thing: “His name is John.” That would have struck them as quite remarkable.

Luke 1:64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

Now that Zacharias is onboard with God's plan, God allows him to speak. He blesses (or praises God); presumably over this series of events which have culminated in the birth, circumcision and naming of his child.

The men from records—certain Levites and possibly priests—are no doubt surprised by this very eventful circumcision. But there are also Zacharias's neighbors, who appear to be gathered in large numbers as well.

Luke 1:65–66 **And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.**

This is a remarkable series of events, and the people of that region continue to talk to one another about these events. Let me suggest to you that these conversations continued for months, if not years.

Let me suggest to you that John had a ministry because people knew who he was and the circumstances of his birth. They knew him to be a prophet; they were unsure if he was the prophet promised by Moses.

Whereas vv. 65–66 are somewhat of a postscript which looks out into the future, v. 67 brings us back to this day of circumcision. Zacharias has his voice back and now he has a few things to say.

Luke 1:67a **And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit...**

We do not even know if men had been filled with the Holy Spirit in this past 400 years or so. What appears to be the case is, no one spoke God's words (apart from the reading of the Old Testament) up to this point in time. For a people who are basically defined by their relationship to their God, 400 years of silence is quite sobering. However, now, suddenly, in the space of 3 months, 3 different people speak the words of God—Elisabeth, Mary and now Zacharias (as well as the angel).

Interestingly enough, Zacharias appears to be speaking to the largest audience (although that does not make much difference, as what all of them said is recorded in Scripture).

Luke 1:67b **...and [he] prophesied, saying,...**

You may not appreciate the history here, but, for 400 years, the Jews have heard nothing from God. At one time, they had prophets coming to them regularly. In every generation, there were one or more prophets, often one in the north and one in the south, speaking to the people, warning the heads of state. Also in Israel, there have been great spiritual leaders like Joshua, Samuel and David. But for 400 years, the Jews have been a nation lacking independence and any recent revelation. They had a Bible and it was, to that point,

complete; but, where was God? It was as if God had forgotten them or had disappeared. How could God forget His people? How could God forget His first love?

But Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit; and he is prophesying, meaning that he is speaking the Word of God. This is brand new for this period of time. No one in this generation had heard God speaking through anyone, apart from speaking His established written word (the Old Testament).

Mary has spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit; Elizabeth has spoken in the power of the Spirit; and now Zechariah. These words from God all occur within a 3–3½ month period of time. After 400 years, God breaks His silence to Israel!

The people who are here—and there were possibly dozens of them—had not heard Mary or Elizabeth speak (when they spoke to one another, possibly it was just them two and possibly Zacharias was there listening⁶⁵).

Luke 1:68a ...**"Praised be the Lord God of Israel,...**

Most recently, the sons of Israel found themselves under the thumb of Rome (although they were not treated horribly by the Romans). But the Jews were a very proud people and they had a history of independence that they could not seem to let go of. The continued to have a generally negative view towards any other nation that ruled them (there were individual exceptions to this).

Nevertheless, their current government aside, the Jews are still God's people. The circumstances of the Jewish people have changed over the centuries, but their God is the same, and Zacharias praises Him.

Luke 1:68b ...**for He has visited [His people]...**

Then, all of a sudden, Zechariah speaks of God coming to visit Israel, which is, in part, based upon John being born. But, again, Mary, Elizabeth and Zechariah are not talking about John the Herald; but about Jesus the Christ. When filled with the Spirit, their focus was always upon Jesus—even though the people hearing these words may not have fully appreciated that.

Zechariah is speaking the words of God to these people (we do not know how many are there—maybe a dozen or several dozen?).

We do not have a good American verb to translate *to visit*. The Greek word is *episkeptomai* (ἐπισκέπτομαι) [pronounced *ep-ee-SKEP-tohm-ah-ee*], which means, *to visit; to look out for; to go [out] to see; to inspect; to come to help; to select*. Strong's #1980. The British have a phrase for it: *to come and sort a thing out* (or words to that effect).

⁶⁵ Because we know just how much men love to sit on the sidelines and listen to women talk.

What is implied here is a coming face to face with the Jews and actually affecting their lives directly—a hands-on approach, as it were.

Luke 1:68c ...and [He has] redeemed His people...

Literally, this reads, ...and has made a payment for His people...

We have the word *redemption* here, which means *a purchase*. There are two redemptions for Israel's people: (1) when God purchased Israel from Egypt and took Israel out of Egypt (the purchase price was the slavery of the Jews); but the true redemption is (2) Jesus Christ dying for the sins of the Jews (and for us as well). The redemption of Israel in Egypt was analogous to the true redemption. They were slaves, they could not redeem themselves; and, therefore, God redeemed them. We, in this life, are slaves to the slave market of sin; we have no means by which we can purchase our own freedom; but Jesus redeems us from slavery. #1 was a shadow version of #2.

There would also be a payment made for His people. At this point in the gospel of Luke, we do not really know what the nature of this payment is exactly. Previously, animals were offered up as sacrifices in order to redeem the firstborn child.

Right at this time, when Zacharias says this, no one would have fully understood what he was saying or what it meant (I don't know if Zacharias fully appreciated what he was saying). Luke, as an historian, who writes all of this biography after the fact, does understand the payment which Zacharias speaks about—it is the payment of Jesus Christ for our sins on the cross. This is how He has purchased us.

This prophecy is about the most important singular event in human history (from our perspective at least). God would enter into human history and He would redeem His people, offering His Son on the cross for our sins.

Luke 1:67–68 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Praised be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people...

As we study the book of Luke, you need to keep in mind that there are two advents of Jesus Christ: as the suffering servant and as the conquering King (two advents means *two appearances* of the Lord in human history). In the Old Testament, we have these 2 advents treated as one. That is, the prophecy of God coming to this earth is seen as one event, although He comes once to die for our sins and once—at least 2000 years later—to deliver Israel from a multitude of armies warring on her land.

The Jews of this era focused on the conquering King and expected someone to come along and give Israel independence from Rome. As I have heard this put many times before, they wanted the crown before the cross; or they wanted the crown, but without the cross.⁶⁶ They did not appreciate their sinful state before God, and their inability to

⁶⁶ This is one of the many things that pastor-teacher R. B. Thieme, Jr. said repeatedly.

personally redeem themselves. They did not fully understand what the exodus meant, typically speaking (they did not understand what it *typified*).

Many of the Hebrew people, at this time, did not realize what Jesus was doing on their behalf. Jesus, as we will see, had a considerable number of disciples (or, *students*, *followers*); but it will not be a majority of the sons of Israel. Most of the sons of Israel will not believe in Him; and a considerable number will be quite hostile towards Him (particularly those who should have known Him). There were those who believe that they taught the Word, but their fundamental problem was, they were teaching their traditions rather than teaching the Word.

Lesson 050: Luke 1:67–75

Zacharias's Inspired Speech

Luke 1:67–68 **And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Praised be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people...**

Zechariah is not prophesying about his son John, but about the LORD. Whether he fully realizes this or not, we don't know. It is my opinion that, throughout the Old Testament, many prophets did not fully understand all of their own prophecies (or all that their prophecies revealed). However, later in his prophetic speaking, Zechariah will speak of his own son specifically as the herald of the King. Therefore, we may presume that Zechariah understood that his son would be the herald of the true King of Israel.

Luke 1:69 **...and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,...**

The Person raising up the horn of salvation is God the Father. The word *horn* often refers to power or authority or leadership. This is quite unusual to have it here, as we only find this word in the book of Revelation (apart from this one passage).

Jesus comes out of the house of God's servant David. His legal line (the genealogy of his adopted father) is given in the first chapter of Matthew and His genetic line will be found in Luke 3. Both lines lead us back to David (Joseph's line goes back through Solomon to David and Mary's line goes back through Nathan⁶⁷ to David).

This horn of salvation would be raised up in the house of David (which is *not* the house of Zechariah, as he was a Levite and David was from the tribe of Judah). Therefore, in Zechariah's own prophecy, he is confirming that his son John is *not* the Messiah, because he comes from the wrong house (the wrong tribe).

Jesus Christ has the power or the *authority* (= horn) to give us salvation because He Himself will be the actual provider of our salvation.

⁶⁷ Nathan is another son of David and Bathsheba's.

The horn of salvation, or the horn of deliverance can also be understood to refer to a military leader delivering his people from great opposing armies. It is very possible that some who heard this prophetic utterance understood it in that way. That the foot of Rome was on the neck of Israel was found to be disconcerting to the people of Israel and they may have hoped for a military leader to deliver them.

However, here, salvation also speaks of our relationship with God, and how we are saved from an eternal fire. Jesus would provide deliverance from man's greatest enemy, God. Let me explain that: man has no natural affinity for God; and there is no basis of mediation between a holy, perfect God, and fallen man. Jesus would become that necessary mediation, taking upon Himself our sins, and becoming the horn of our salvation. Apart from Jesus, we are in complete and total rebellion against God.

Zacharias, the father of John, continues to speak, after being kept silent for over 9 months.

Luke 1:70 ...as He spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,...

He refers back to God the Father, Who is named in v. 68.

God spoke through His prophets from ancient times; He spoke of His Messiah and, at least on one occasion, He spoke of John (I don't know that Zacharias realizes that his son is found in Biblical prophecy).

Zacharias (Zechariah) is speaking for the first time in 9+ months, and what he has to say is inspired. This is what we have studied so far:

Luke 1:67–70 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has 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 from of old,...

God has visited His people and He has redeemed them. I don't know that every prophet fully understands and appreciates all that he says, but we may understand God visiting His people to refer to Jesus being born (Who is *Immanuel*, or, *God with us*—Isa. 7:14 Matt. 1:23). We may understand that God redeems His people through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ pays for our sins; He takes upon Himself the penalty for our sins.

God the Father raises up God the Son as the horn (leader or authority) of our salvation (referring to eternal salvation, not to temporal deliverance).

What Zechariah says here is in accordance with the prophets who spoke about our Lord's coming in past prophecies. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with passages which look forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel.

We do not find this in other religious or cults. When Mohammed came, he presented his Scriptures which he wrote, and he was the big guy. When Joseph Smith came along, they

were his Scriptures which he wrote⁶⁸, and he was the top dog. However, for thousands of years, we have the Old Testament being composed, telling the Jews (and all mankind) of a prophet to come, from the root of Jesse, from the house of David. Everyone who wrote (or spoke) Scripture did not speak of himself but of the Messiah to come. Zechariah here continues in that grand Biblical tradition.

But Who, conspicuously, did not write any of the Old Testament or the New? Jesus. And yet, He is the Living Word of God.

As an aside, it is important to note that we do not find a promise that Messiah would come from the seed of Solomon, David's son. David would have a Greater Son—a Son he would call *LORD*; but that son would not come through Solomon.

Those who wrote these Scriptures had some measure of authority—as they were speaking the Word of God—but they all looked forward to the One with absolute authority, to Jesus Christ the God-man.

It is fascinating that, in all religions, the focal point is generally the person who writes their Scriptures and then goes about selling his ideas to the population as a whole (perhaps with force, perhaps without); but Jesus wrote nothing down. Those who spoke of Him either looked forward to Him; or they were His disciples, remembering Him, and writing long after the events take place. Interestingly enough, the man who wrote most of the New Testament—Luke—probably never met Jesus. There is no indication that Luke met Jesus in His 1st advent (which is what we are studying); or as resurrected from the dead. Paul, who developed most of the doctrine of the Church Age, met the risen Jesus, but only for a short time.

Yet, if you take the writings of Luke and the writings of Paul, together, this is about half or more of the New Testament. Luke never saw the Lord and Paul saw him only for a brief instant.

Luke 1:71 ...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;...

This verse can be understood in two ways. Many who heard this—and perhaps even Zechariah himself—was thinking of the King, David's Greater Son, Who would come and free Israel from those who conquered her. This deliverance from one's enemies was a part of the package, but this will not occur until the 2nd advent of our Lord (when Jesus returns).

However, we have another set of enemies at this time: Satan, his demons (the angels who fell), and those who follow them. They are our enemies in our daily lives; and God will deliver us from those enemies as well; from those people who hate us. And they do hate us.

⁶⁸ He claims differently, but no one has had any proof that the book of Mormon came from anyone else other than Smith.

And, as an aside, people tend to have strong opinions about Christ and about Christians, and they often feel strongly one way or the other. And there are many out there who hate us who have believed in Jesus.

Currently, there is a lot of anger and hatred occurring in our political system in the United States. I have heard and read hundreds of remarks about our current president, remarks which reveal anger, hatred (as well as a myriad of other negative emotions). He has been called every name and accused of everything a man could be accused of—all of this fueled by hatred. If there is the slightest hint of impropriety—the vaguest story with the vaguest of details—it will be seized upon and made prominent by many so-called newsmen, who will milk such a story for every bit of negativity that they can get from it, until they can find the next *big* story which they can use against our current president (I write this in 2019).

Jesus will be on the receiving end of a much greater hatred, much greater anger. He will be unreasonably hated throughout most of His public ministry; and this hatred continues through today (hardly a script for a Hollywood movie can be written without taking His name in vain—something which has no parallel in any other religion).

We, as believers in Jesus Christ are also the objects of a visceral hatred, because of our association with Him. We do not experience it as strongly as many would like to dish it out; and we are protected from it for most of our lives. However, there are nearly an uncountable number of fallen angels who would love to see us dead, and tortured prior to that in our lives. If the restraining ministry of God the Holy Spirit was removed, our lives as believers would become a living hell.

We have a model playing out before us. The anger and hatred toward President Trump and his followers appears to be unrestrained. There are places and cities in the United States where wearing a red MAGA hat could actually get you into a physical confrontation with strangers (and there are politicians who have actually encouraged this). This is a fairly good illustration for us today of the hatred which we could experience (as many Christians who live in the Middle East experience); but the actual expression of hatred against Christians will be far greater when the restraining ministry of God the Holy Spirit is removed.

Luke 1:72a ...to show the mercy promised to our fathers,...

The verb here is the aorist active infinitive of poieō (ποιέω) [pronounced *poi-EH-oh*], which means, *to do, to make, to construct, to produce; to carry out, to execute [a plan]*. Strong's #4160 (this is a very common verb). The aorist tense generally refers to a point in time; but it can also refer to a specific period of time. The active voice refers back to the subject of the verb, which is *the Lord God*, who would *produce, construct, make* this mercy. *Mercy* here is the neuter singular noun eleos (ἐλεος) [pronounced *EHL-eh-os*], which means, *grace, mercy, kindness; clemency*. Strong's #1656. This was the time in Israel's history where God would produce the *mercy, grace, clemency* which He had promised to their forefathers. God promised this specifically and God promised this symbolically through the many sacrifices which were offered up for the forgiveness of sin.

The people of Israel did not deserve God's mercy. Over and over again in their history, they turned against God. Jesus Himself will speak of Israel's unfaithfulness, when He says, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34; ESV) Nevertheless, God will show Israel mercy. In fact, soon, Jesus would come to the people of Israel and offer them salvation and freedom; to the Jew first. No matter what God foreknew of the Jewish people, Jesus would go to them first.

Luke 1:72b ...and to remember His holy covenant,...

Also, throughout Israel's history, God made several covenants (contracts, agreements, promises) with the people of Israel, through specific men (primarily, through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and David); these covenants being understood here as a single covenant (contract between man and God). We might understand these to be the promises of God which He has made to Israel throughout the centuries. These promises remain eternally in effect for Israel and have never been transferred to any other entity (such as, the church). The promises which God made to Israel still stand today; and they will be completely fulfilled in the future. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all Jewish people *to remember His holy covenant*.

More specifically, Zechariah speaks of what God promised Abraham, the father of the Hebrew peoples.

Luke 1:73 ...the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us...

On several occasions, God made promises to Abraham. Some promises were repeated, some promises were appended. This allowed Abraham to begin to understand all that God would do for his seed.

God's word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob specify the things that He would give to the people of Israel. God first made these promises to Abraham, and then to his son Isaac and to his son Jacob.

Luke 1:74a ...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,...

Throughout much of Israel's history, they had faced enemies without, enemies who continued to attack them. God's covenants certainly covered them in this area. God delivered Israel on many occasions. Israel might remember specifically their deliverance in the exodus, when they were held as slaves by Egypt. When David was king, it seemed as if every nation close to Israel attacked them, yet God gave them deliverance again and again from their enemies (first God used David as Israel's general; and then Joab, when David became king).

Luke 1:74 ...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,...

The idea is, God would provide Israel with safety from their enemies; but that they must serve Him.

In the first example I gave, when Moses and Aaron went before the Pharaoh of Egypt, they first requested that he grant the people time to go out to the desert-wilderness and to celebrate and worship their God. They could not openly do this in the polytheistic country of Egypt, where their God was in direct opposition to the gods of Egypt. The Pharaoh would not allow them to openly and easily worship their God. In fact, he increased their workload considerably after Moses and Aaron first appeared before him.

During the time of David, there were severe problems regarding the worship of God. The previous king, King Saul, attacked and wiped out one line of priests (save one very young man) who escaped with the ephod and his own life to David, joining David's band of refugees. King Saul all but destroyed their centralized worship at the Tabernacle, filling the Levites with fear.

At this point in history, when Zechariah spoke these words, the worship of the Jews was allowed—Rome did not interfere with that—but their priesthood had become corrupt from the inside. The groups which emerged, the Jewish religious class—the scribes, the pharisees and the sadducees—were so thoroughly corrupt that they would reject the Savior God sent to them. They would reject the God Who had protected them all of these years.

Lesson 051: Luke 1:75–79

The Way of God

Zechariah has gotten his voice back, and he had a lot to say. He continues in v. 75:

Luke 1:75 *...in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.*

Holiness speaks of being *set apart*. The worship of God and the relationship between God and His people was set apart from all else. It was never designed to simply be a part of Jewish culture, but the very center of their lives. God did not reveal Himself to other nations as He did to Israel. There was not a specific relationship between God and the Assyrians, for instance. God was willing to save any Assyrian who believed in Him (see the book of Jonah); but God's relationship with Israel was so much more. The Savior of mankind would come through Israel.

God's relationship with His people, the Jews, is why we have Jews living among us to this day. You don't know any Assyrians, Edomites, Philistines (those in Palestine are *not* descended from the Philistines), Canaanites, etc. because they had no relationship with God; and therefore, no protection or guidance from God. The Law is the fundamental guidance which God gave to His people; and this is why they are here and all of those other groups are not.

There is always an aspect of holiness in God's relationship with His people. We, as believers in Jesus Christ, are set apart from all else. There are believers and there are

unbelievers; we are set apart from unbelievers, and this will be our eternal status. Once we have believed in Jesus, that status becomes fixed and eternal.

Luke 1:75 ...in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

Righteousness is what allows us to stand before God; it allows us to have a relationship with God. Now, we are not righteous on our own; nor do we, through effort and hard work, achieve a righteousness which is acceptable to God. Our righteousness is imputed; we receive righteousness before God because we have believed in His Son. When God looks at us, He sees His Son because we are *in Christ* (a phrase which occurs 91 times in the New Testament). When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are placed in Him. As a result, all that God has promised to His Son, we share, by virtue of being in Christ.

Luke 1:76a And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;...

Zechariah momentarily changes his focus to his own son, who is there before him. We have no idea who is there, hearing these words of Zechariah. My guess would be, given the circumstances, there were a considerable number of relatives, neighbors and Levites who were there (someone from this group would have to remember these words and tell them to Luke at a later date⁶⁹). God gathered them there to hear His message to them.

So Zechariah turns toward his young child, possibly looking down to where he is being cuddled by his mother, and Zechariah speaks.

Luke 1:76a And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;...

Zechariah fully understood the place of his young son, that his son would go before our Lord, as His herald.

Here, John—the infant son of Zechariah laying before them—is called a prophet. A prophet specifically represents God to man. A prophet speaks the words of God to man. God reveals Himself by means of the prophet.

Too often, when we hear the word *prophet*, we think of him as one who foretells the future. A prophet certainly does that, as he speaks the truth of God—and God's knowledge is not confined to time. Therefore, a prophet will reveal things from the future, simply because God's knowledge is not limited by time. But a prophet primarily speaks God's message to the people of his generation (and sometimes, the prophet's message is preserved in Scripture for us to read and benefit by).

Luke 1:76b ...for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways,...

John would act as a herald of the Lord. His public ministry would occur first, and he would speak of Jesus. What John would do is the aorist active infinitive of *hetoimazô* (ἐτοιμάζω)

⁶⁹ I would not be surprised if someone there—perhaps even Zechariah—wrote these words down.

[pronounced *het-oy-MAHD-zoh*], which means, *to make ready, prepare; to make the necessary preparations, to get everything ready*. Strong's #2090. The aorist tense is a point in time. This does not mean an instant; it could certainly refer to a two-month long ministry or a year-long ministry. But, once John has prepared the way, then Jesus, the Messiah, would come. John would not, at a later date, prepare the way; or keep on preparing the way.

You perhaps have heard that there were many messiahs in Israel—many men who claimed to be the Great Prophet spoken of in the Old Testament. Whereas, I think that this is probably made into too much of a thing; even assuming that some people did make this claim, none of them had a herald. None of them had a man come before them, to say that, **"The time is at hand..."**

One of the great themes of the gospel is, Jesus often allowed others to testify as to Who He is. Rather than repeating over and over, "You people need to get this—I am your Messiah!" Instead, Jesus very often solicited the opinions of others, including His disciples.

In Matthew 16:13–17, Jesus will quiz His disciples:

Matt. 16:13 **Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"**

Matt. 16:14 **And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."**

Matt. 16:15 **He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"**

Matt. 16:16 **Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

Matt. 16:17 **And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven. (ESV; capitalized)**

Luke 1:76b **...for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways,...**

Zechariah himself is testifying to the Person of the Lord, saying that his infant son, laying before them, will go and prepare the way for the Lord.

Luke 3:3–6 describes John's ministry and what he said to the people: **And he [John] went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.' "** (ESV; capitalized; Isaiah 40:3-5)

John's ministry would come first, and he would tell the people of the Messiah to come, a Man, the strap of Whose sandals John was not worthy to untie (Luke 3:16).

Luke 1:77a **...to give knowledge of salvation to His people...**

This refers to the Lord Who would come would give His people knowledge of salvation. *Salvation* can refer to *temporal deliverance*, as King David provided for his nation by destroying Israel's enemies. This is, in fact, very much what many people were focused upon during this time—they wanted temporal deliverance from Roman rule. They wanted Israel to be autonomous again (which is promised by God).

However, far more important than this is eternal salvation. This is what Jesus ultimately offered those who would hear Him.

Luke 1:77 to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins,

The word for salvation here could either refer to *eternal salvation* or to *temporal deliverance*. Here we know that it is eternal deliverance because it is associated with the forgiveness of sin. The word *in* can also mean *by means of*. Salvation comes to the people of Israel *by means of* the forgiveness of sin.

We are eternally saved and made right before God because we have the forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin is our relationship with God, not with man. Because God forgives us our sins, we are saved.

Luke 1:78a ...because of the tender mercy of our God,...

This short phrase, although populated with very common Greek words, is moderately difficult to translate.

Analytical-Literal Translation	...because of [the] bowels of mercy [fig., tender mercies] of our God,...
Context Group Version	Because of the tender generosity of our God,...
Disciples' Literal New T.	...because of the deep-feelings-of mercy of our God,...
Modern Literal Version	...through the heart* of mercy of our God,...

This ought to be translated, *because of the tender affections of our God's mercy...* God's tender affections are based upon *His mercy* (or, *grace*). Because God has given us His grace/mercy, because of that, we are recipients of *his tender affections* (which word means, literally, *bowels*; but has the secondary meanings, *tenderness*, *mercy*; *tender mercy*; *affections*).

God does not have feelings and emotions as we do; but what He thinks and does is often expressed in terms of human emotion so that we might better understand His actions and motivations. What we receive from God seems to be the result of great tenderness and affection. Receiving mercy from God appears to be the result of Him having great tenderness or affection towards us. We do not deserve His affection or His mercy; but we receive it, being in Christ.

Luke 1:78b ...whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high...

This is an unusual phrase, where the Greek word, generally translated *east* refers to the *sunrise*, but the *sunrise* which will come to us from on high. This is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used in this way. However, this word will be used in association with our Lord's 1st advent (Matt. 2:1–2, 9) and His 2nd advent (Matt. 8:11 24:27).

I understand this to be setting up an analogy. Every morning, the sun rises from on high and brings light. In the same way, soon would come the Son of God from on high to bring us light. We have been walking in darkness, and the Savior-King would bring us light.

Luke 1:79a ...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,...

The imagery is we are sitting in the dark, under the shadow of death, without light and without the forgiveness of God; but then comes the sunrise to bring us light; and to bring us forgiveness and salvation. As unbelievers, we are in the dark and under the shadow of death. As sinners by birth and by our actions, we are deserving of death. We cannot even see the truth because of the darkness which is all around us. The bringing of light to us is hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ; that He has made provision to take us out of the darkness and out from under the shadow of death. God even makes it possible for us to understand what the gospel means (as fallen man, we cannot understand spiritual information; but God makes it possible for us to hear the gospel and to respond to it from our free will).

Luke 1:79b ...to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Because of the light, which is brought to us by the Son of God, we can see and we know where to walk. We can see what is before us and we understand how to properly navigate it.

Just yesterday, I was standing on my roof with a leaf blower, blowing the pine needles off, something I have to do once or twice a year. Now, I have to step just the right way on my roof, or I could damage the roof or slip and fall. Therefore, this job requires light; I must navigate my steps according to the light. If I did this in the dark, it would be a much more precarious chore.

The *way of peace* here speaks of the *peace* between man and God. The word *way* (or, *road, course of conduct*) is often used in the Bible—in both testaments—to refer to the way in which we should morally walk (as properly living the spiritual life). The *way of peace* refers to faith in Jesus as our means of acquiring peace with God.

The *way of God* is quite an extensive doctrine; so let me focus on one particular aspect of it:

The Way of God and the Lord Jesus Christ

1. John the Baptizer prepared the way of the Lord as His herald. Isa. 40:3 Mal. 3:1,

The Way of God and the Lord Jesus Christ

- 3 Luke 3:3–7
2. Jesus Himself is the way of salvation. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6). Jesus illustrates this in several ways:
 - a. “Because narrow is the gate and constricted is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matt. 7:14). Compare to Prov. 8:20 Matt. 7:13, 15
 - b. Then Jesus said to them again, “Point of doctrine: I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.” (John 10:7).
 - c. I am the door. If anyone enters in by Me, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9).
 - d. So, Jesus is the door which we must go through.
 3. The way of salvation, of course, is by faith in Jesus Christ: Therefore, brothers, having boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies having been washed with pure water (Heb. 10:19–22). The Holy of Holies is the sacred room of the Temple where only the High Priest could enter; and he went into this room only once a year on the Day of Atonement where he sprinkled blood on the Mercy Seat. *No one else ever went into the Holy of Holies.* But the writer of Hebrews instructs us to *boldly enter into the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus*. We are not physically entering into that sacred room of the Temple (as the Temple no longer exists), but we come before God sprinkled by the blood of Christ—that is, we are saved on the basis of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We may draw near to God because Jesus has provided the means.
 4. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who teaches us the way. “Come near to Me, hear this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From its being, I was there; and now the Lord Jehovah, and His Spirit, has sent Me.” So says Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, “I am Jehovah your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way that you should go.” (Isa. 48:16–17)

For the a more exhaustive doctrine: **The Way of God** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Lesson 052: Luke 1:79–80

The Word Peace in the Bible

We are studying what Zechariah is saying about his son (John the Herald) and about the Lord Jesus Christ. He just spoke of Jesus guiding us to the way of peace:

Luke 1:79b ...to guide our feet into the way of peace."

The Person guiding our fee to the way of peace is the Messiah.

We have just studied the *way of God*, a phrase used often in the past; but not much today. But let's look at the word *peace*:

Although the word *peace*, in the Bible, can refer to *peace between nations*; most of the time it refers to *peace between God and man*. We are, by birth, at enmity with God. We are, in our actions and in our innate being, the enemy of God. Jesus did not come to show us the way to world peace. If that was His purpose, it certainly did not take.

The Use of Peace in the Bible

1. *Peace* is used for the peace established between God and man through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. **As it stands written, There is no one righteous. No, not one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks after God. They have all turned aside. They have together become unprofitable. There is no one who does good, No, not, so much as one...The way of peace, they haven't known.** There is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:10–12, 17–18; quoting Psalm 14:1–3 53:1–3 Isa 59:8 Psalm 36:1). **Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;** through Whom we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand. **We rejoice in hope of the glory of God** (Rom. 5:1–2). See also Rom. 2:10 10:15 Eph. 6:15
2. *Peace* is used in titles for God, which are related to the peace between man and God, as established and provided by Jesus Christ. **Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus** (Heb. 13:20).
3. *Peace* can refer to a state of mind, which is a part of the thinking of the mature believer. **Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit** (Rom. 15:13). **The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus** (Philip. 4:7). See also Col. 3:15
4. *Peace* is used to describe one of the workings of the Holy Spirit within a person. **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** (Gal. 5:22–23a). In this, *peace* is a state of being brought about by spiritual maturity and the filling of the Spirit.
5. *Peace* may be seen as a spiritual goal. **Flee from youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart** (2Tim. 2:22). Timothy is the pastor of a church here, so Paul is *not* encouraging him to exercise faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. His pursuit of peace, contextually, would be the spiritual goal of a man who is already saved and spiritually growing. See also 1Peter 3:11
6. *Peace* is used to describe the sort of relationship we as believers ought to have with others (believers and unbelievers both). **Finally, brothers, rejoice. Be perfected, be comforted, be of the same mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you** (2Cor. 13:11). This is not always possible. It should be clear that many in the Roman empire did not see peace with Peter or John as a viable option. Therefore, both men were persecuted for much of their lives

The Use of Peace in the Bible

- simply for teaching the gospel and Bible doctrine. However, wherever possible we should seek to live in peace with all men. See also Eph. 4:3 Heb. 12:14
7. *Peace* is used in contrast with the confusion of many people speaking in tongues all at once in the Corinthian church. **God is not a God of confusion, but of peace** (1Cor. 14:33a).
 8. The word *peace* is used as a synonym for Christianity. **He came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father** (Eph. 2:17–18). Quite obviously, there is not a lot of difference between this and the doctrine that Jesus Christ establishes peace between man and God.
 9. *Peace* is used as part of a greeting or a salutation. In this way, it is shorthand for both *peace with God* and for wishing one well in the Christian life. **To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** (Rom. 1:7). See also 2Cor. 1:2 Gal. 1:3
 - a. One may understand *peace* to refer to individual peace and prosperity in these greetings. **Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** (2Thess. 1:2). See 1Tim. 1:2
 10. *Peace* is also used for *peace between enemy nations*. **For when they are saying, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come on them, like birth pains on a pregnant woman; and they will in no way escape** (1Thess. 5:3). When Israel began to take the land from the heathen in the and, Rahab the prostitute received Joshua's envoys in peace. **By faith, Rahab the prostitute, didn't perish with those who were disobedient, having received the spies in peace** (Heb. 11:31). See also Rev. 6:4

The primary use of *peace* is the establishment of a relationship between man and God through Christ Jesus.

Returning now to our narrative. Elisabeth, wife of Zacharias, has given birth to John. Zacharias has stood up and spoken quite eloquently about the Messiah to come (vv. 68–75) and how his son John would be the herald of the Messiah (vv. 76–79).

I believe that it is instructive to see all that Zechariah said. He is the father of John the Herald. Zechariah has not been able to speak for about 9 or 10 months, due to his skeptical response to the angel Gabriel. But now, he is back on track with God's plan.

When God gives Zechariah the ability to speak again, he glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ by what he says.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

Luke 1:67–79: Zechariah's Testimony

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Luke 1:67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,...	Zechariah was now able to speak, and he speaks that which will glorify the Messiah. He will also mention his son incidentally at the end.
Luke 1:68 ..."Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed his people...	God visited His people in the book of Exodus and He redeemed them (paid for them) there. They were slaves to Egypt and God bought them and brought them out of Egypt. God's contact with the Hebrew people was direct and powerful.
Luke 1:69 ...and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,...	The horn of salvation is the <i>power</i> of salvation. This salvation would come to us from the house of David (which means Zechariah cannot be speaking of his own son here).
Luke 1:70 ...as He spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,...	God spoke to us about this day through His holy prophets of centuries ago. Jesus would be the Savior of Egypt.
Luke 1:71 ...that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;...	David was known for His great deliverance of Israel. He defeated many hostile nations who wanted to destroy Israel.
Luke 1:72a ...to show the mercy promised to our fathers...	We deserve death because of our sins and rebellion against God; but God is merciful, as promised us by our fathers.
Luke 1:72b ...and to remember His holy covenant,...	God has made His covenant with His people (through specific individuals) and the Messiah is the culmination of many of those promises.
Luke 1:73 ...the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us...	God first began swearing an oath to Abraham of what He would give to Abraham and his seed.
Luke 1:74 ...that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,...	We here refers to Zechariah and fellow Israelites, or representatives thereof; and they have been rescued from Israel's enemies. Due to this deliverance, they may serve God without fear.
Luke 1:75 ...in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.	The people of Israel are set apart to God through faith in Christ and they have His imputed righteousness as well.

Luke 1:67–79: Zechariah's Testimony

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Luke 1:76a And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;...	For the first time in this song or poem, Zechariah speaks of his son, who will be the prophet or the herald of the Most High (of God the Father).
Luke 1:76b ...for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways,...	John will go before the Lord and to prepare His path. John will announce the coming of the Lord.
Luke 1:77 ...to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins,...	It is Jesus Who will give the knowledge of salvation to His people which is a part of their forgiveness of sins.
Luke 1:78a ...because of the tender mercy of our God,...	This comes about based upon the grace of God.
Luke 1:78b ...whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high...	The sunrise is all about a new day, which describes the Millennium. Or the sunrise is emblematic of light, the light of the gospel and the truth of God.
Luke 1:79a ...to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death...	The light of the previous verse is light brought to those who are in darkness, and those who might face death, due to the barrier between them and God.
Luke 1:79b ...to guide our feet into the way of peace."	This light is the guide a person's feet to the way of peace, which begins by exercising faith in Christ, and thus establishing peace between man and God.

It is fascinating that, all 3 of the people in this chapter who are inspired by God the Holy Spirit speak in Hebrew poetry.

For the most part, the book of Luke is in chronological order. However, from time to time, when in a specific narrative, Luke might follow that particular narrative out into the future, as he does here in v. 80. In v. 79, infant John is 8 days old and his father is speaking about him and about the Messiah. V. 80 covers the childhood of John and takes us to the actual public ministry of John, about 30 years into the future. So, this chapter is in chronological order with respect to itself. However, beginning with Luke 2, we return to the time after Elizabeth has given birth and prior to Mary giving birth.

Luke 1:80a **And the child grew and became strong in spirit,...**

John's growth is both physical and spiritual. He grew into a man; but more importantly, he grew in spirit (which indicates that John grew spiritually).

Our soul is how we relate to other men (and women). How we think and feel about Charley Brown is a function of the soul. The soul is the immaterial part of our existence and what it thinks in relation to other people.

The human spirit is the immaterial part of our lives and it is how we relate to God. As unbelievers, the human spirit is either dead or inactive. We do not increase the knowledge of the human spirit as unbelievers. No matter what we do as an unbeliever, everything remains in the soul. However, when we believe in the Revealed God (*Jesus* to us), then we are born again and our human spirit is made alive or made functional. In the human spirit, we begin to learn information about God. When we believe this information, it is placed into our human spirit, into the frame of reference for the human spirit. Just like, when you look at Charley Brown, you have certain thoughts, memories and emotions about him, based upon your knowledge of him and the things which you believe about him (in other words, the frame of reference of your human soul); so you begin to understand God and His plan for you by increasing your understanding of spiritual things, all of which takes place in the human spirit. This growth of John is the growth of the human spirit that is important.

The unbeliever is unable to develop anything beyond the most rudimentary information about God. Let's say such a one hears the gospel spoken; but if the person is negative towards the gospel, then for the most part, that knowledge appears to be taken away from the unbeliever. Furthermore, since none of this knowledge is believed, it does not remain even in the sphere of the human soul.

Luke 1:80b ...and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Now, this is somewhat odd. John is out in the desert-wilderness until he begins to publically appear before Israel. Now, we do not know what happened exactly between v. 79 and 80, but John went from being a newborn babe to an elderly couple, to being the herald of the Lord, and what we are told is, he was out in the desert-wilderness until he made his first public appearance.

Because John's parents are older, did they die when he was in his youth? Did his father teach him how to survive in the desert-wilderness? Did he make the decision himself to go out into the desert-wilderness after his parents passed? Obviously, this is speculation. All that we really know is, John, at some point, appears to be living out in the desert-wilderness; and this seems to occur prior to his public ministry. It sounds as if this may have been over a significant period of time (if he goes out into the wilderness one week and begins preaching the next, then why even mention it?).

There are a number of things about John the Herald which are peculiar, but this could be a result of him living out in the desert for a considerable period of time.

Luke 1:80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

The child here is John the Baptizer who first grows spiritually, then is living in the desert-wilderness, and then begins a public ministry.

Because John is born to an older couple, it stands to reason that they might die before he becomes an adult. It is possible—and I am speculating here—that John might have to spend a portion of his life growing up in the desert-wilderness because his parents pass, and he is left with little or nothing.

We will find that he has a very peculiar diet, but could that diet be a result of him living out in the desert-wilderness, and growing up there for a portion of his life?

Interestingly enough, we make a time jump from v. 79 to v. 80; but that will not be the case for the entire narrative. With Luke 2:1, we will be back to the time shortly after Mary has left her Aunt Elizabeth's home and she is with Joseph, her husband; about to have a child, but without any contribution from Joseph.

Within the confines of this chapter, we are going in strict chronological order; but, it goes into the future about 30 years. However, with Luke 2:1, we return to the time of the bulk of this narrative.

Lesson 053: Luke 2:1–3

Roman Rule and Taxation

Luke 1 dealt primarily with birth of John the Baptizer (and the events leading up to that); Luke 2 will deal primarily with the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ (and the events leading to His birth). Just as Luke 1, at the final verses, seemed to jump ahead 30 years, so Luke 2 will do.

Luke 1 has no parallels in the other gospels; but there will be some common passages in Luke 2 which may be found elsewhere. However, there will be a considerable amount of narrative recorded only by Luke.

The key is Luke assembled his gospel much differently from the others. Matthew and John both wrote what they themselves saw and remembered (for the most part); and Mark wrote about what Peter saw and remembered (for the most part).

Luke was apparently not a part of this movement until a considerable way into Acts (Acts 16:10, to be [precise](#)). When he became a part of Paul's traveling seminary, he came into contact with dozens of people who saw the Lord and heard and experienced the Lord's ministry. At some point, Luke became very interested in recording what he had been told. As a general rule, the portions of the book of Luke which are not found anywhere else are things which Matthew, Peter and John did not personally experience—they may have been unaware of these incidents.

The organization of this chapter is fairly straightforward.

Outline of Luke 2: Jesus' Life Prior to His Public Ministry

- I. The Birth of Jesus and the Circumstances Pertaining thereto. Luke 2:1–7
- II. Witness of the Angels and of the Shepherds. Luke 2:8–20
- III. Jesus is Circumcised and Presented in the Temple. Luke 2:21–24
- IV. The Witness of Simeon. Luke 2:25–35
- V. The Witness of Anna. Luke 2:36–38
- VI. The Family Returns to Nazareth/Jesus Grows and Matures. Luke 2:39–40
- VII. Jesus, at Age 12, Astounds the Temple Scholars. Luke 2:41–50
- VIII. Jesus Continues to Grow and Mature. Luke 2:51–52

Twice in this chapter, Jesus' growth will be associated with the accumulation of wisdom.

Luke 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

The Roman empire had taken in large swaths of land; and because they provided some basic necessities (the Roman legions to keep order), they charged for this. These various places, like Judæa, were under Roman control. Even though the people of that region did not much like this, it was probably to their benefit. Rome established a common governmental control over a very large area. It also provided law and order as well as a good system of jurisprudence.

There is an overall societal advance here. At one time, a great powerful army might come into a village and simply take everything they have, and destroy what is left. Later in human history—and I am thinking particularly of the time of Solomon—a region might be dominated by a greater power, and this greater power would return periodically to be paid off not to rob and pillage (Gen. 14, if memory serves, deals with a people who decide to rebel against the greater power). But now, at this point in history, an empire is developed where the empire moves in and administrates, primarily providing governmental structures (law and order, an army and a judicial system); but they collect taxes to cover this expense (and to provide enough treasure to make it worthwhile for the Cæsar).

In some places, portions of the population rightly appreciated the law and order which Rome provided.

In exchange for governmental services and structures, taxes had to be levied. In order for taxes to be levied, the Romans needed to know who lived where and other pertinent information so that these people might be taxed in some sort of orderly fashion.

Now, let's say that some Jewish rancher decided that he did not like this idea, and that he was not going to register in order to be taxed. He would eventually be discovered and it is very possible that the Roman government would simply take over his entire ranch for back taxes. This is not unlike what might happen in the United States today, except that there would be less recourse.

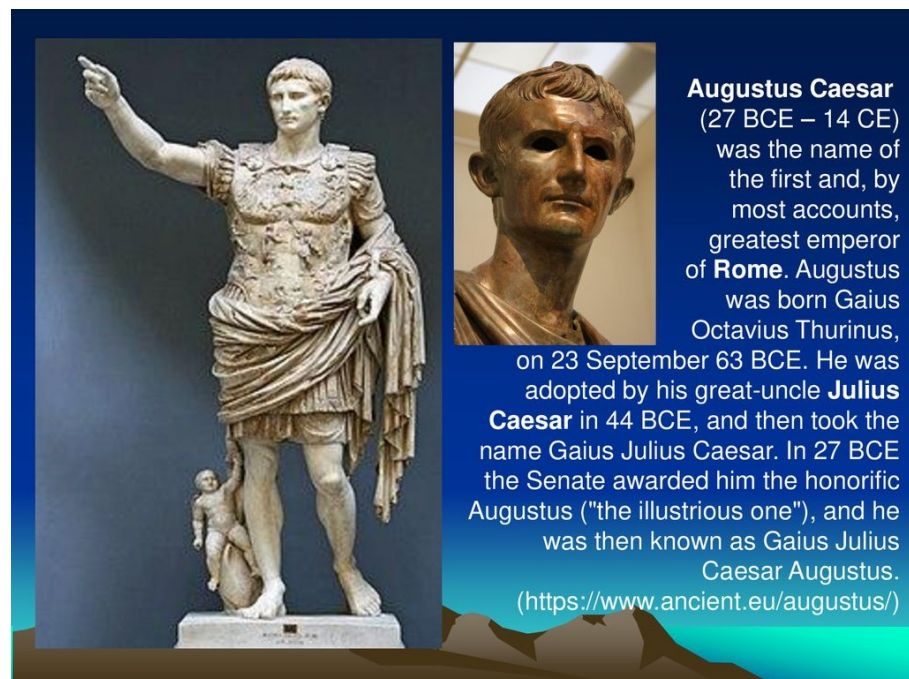
Luke 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Julius Cæsar *adopted* his grandnephew Octavian (another source calls him Gaius Octavius). This does not mean that Octavian was some fatherless waif that Julius Cæsar saw in the streets and he took him home. Adoption by a military political leader was quite a different thing. At some point, Cæsar looked around at his various children and relatives and had determined that Octavian, age 19, had the more on the ball than anyone else related to him; and, therefore, he should be the one to be his heir. Cæsar had quite an empire, and he did not want to be followed by someone ignorant and/or irresponsible.

Octavian took on the name Gaius Julius Cæsar Octavianus when his great uncle, Julius Cæsar was assassinated in 44 B.C. Although Mark Antony had assumed Caesar's authority, as well as taking his money and papers, Octavian raised an army and defeated Mark Antony in battle in 43 B.C. (you may recall discussing this when we studied Herod the Great). Octavian and Antony reached an agreement, killed 2000 enemies, and then defeated an army led by the assassins of Cæsar.

Although Octavian and Antony agreed to a split in the kingdom (Octavian ruled over the western Roman empire and Antony over the east), Octavian later went to war against Antony after he married Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. In 31 B.C., Octavian's admiral, Agrippa, defeated the navies of Antony and Cleopatra, who both committed suicide soon thereafter.

In 27 B.C., the Senate gave Octavian the name/title *Augustus*, and he, from that point on, ruled over the Republic of Rome, which was the land which surrounded the Mediterranean Sea, going as far north and west as Spain and Gaul (France). He would rule until 14 A.D. (41 years). Julius Cæsar was obviously a very good judge of character and potential.



Augustus Cæsar (Octavian) (a graphic); from [slide player](#); accessed November 1, 2019.

Octavian was a good ruler who attempted to maintain an honest government with honest rulers, a sound monetary system, and free trade throughout the Republic of Rome. Rulers had figured out that, you want the people that you conquer on your side as much as possible. It is obviously better for the Roman government if the people accepted its authority and appreciated the order and organization which it provided. Therefore, there had to be a good balance between being a conqueror and an administrator for Roman Cæsars.

Augustus took a census at least 3 times—in 28 B.C., 8 B.C. and 14 A.D. Estimates are that Jesus was born between 7–4 B.C. Some suggest that the initiating decree from Augustus was in 8 B.C., but that it took a few years before it was actually enacted throughout the entire Republic of Rome.



The Roman Empire under Augustus (a map); from Ancient.EU; accessed November 1, 2019.

Luke 2:1 In those days a decree went out from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be registered.

Wilbur Pickering: *Of course the Roman Empire did not control the whole world, but the decree was doubtless worded in grandiose terms.*⁷⁰

The whole world here is a reference to the entire Roman Empire. This is a metonym, where one thing stands for another—and the original readers understand this.

Let me give you a modern example of a metonym: someone writing about addictions, may sum up his findings and write, “Seemingly *all America* is subject to one form of addiction or another.” *All America* does not refer to the land holdings of the United States; or to the *United States government*, but to the *people in the United States who are suffering from addiction*. There is such a large percentage (comparatively⁷¹ speaking) that the author uses the term *all America* (this descriptor is somewhat hyperbolic as well).

Luke 2:2 **This was the first registration came to pass [under] governor of Syria [by] Quirinius . [LITV]**

Syria is north of Judæa.

Herod the Great ruled over Judah and Quirinius is governor over Syria, which is north of Israel. However, Quirinius (also called *Cyrenius*) did not become governor over Syria until 7 or 8 years after the birth of Christ. What has been suggested is, Quirinius (Cyrenius) oversaw the second census, spoken of here, and the third census *after* he was made governor over Syria. So Quirinius was an administrator of the second census and governor during the third. At the time that the book of Luke was written and disseminated, he would have been known as the (former) governor of Syria.

There is a concern that this is an historical inaccuracy. It is believed that Cyrenius (Roman name, Quirinus) ruled a few years later in A.D. 6. There are at least 4 possible solutions to this problem: (1) Secular history is incorrect and the Bible is correct. Most of the time, the Bible provides better and more accurate records than are found in secular history. (2) This census perhaps was begun by Cyrenius (he oversaw it in his region), but he became governor after the census had been completed. (3) The census was not completed and/or certified until the time that Cyrenius was governor of Syria. This census depended upon the conquered peoples to go to the proper city and register. Do we really think that all Jews did this? The follow up would have been horrendous nightmare of cross checking records and paperwork. (4) Cyrenius was twice governor; once during the census, and later, in A.D. 6, after Archelaus was banished. It would not be unheard of for Rome, as a conquering country, to install their own king in this or that province; and later, due to political intrigue, or whatever, remove one governor and replace him with another.

I could not tell you which of these is the proper explanation or if we are to insert the word *before* into the text, as some translations did (The Expanded Bible has this: **This was the first registration; it was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria** [or This was the first

⁷⁰ Wilbur N. Pickering's New Testament; Luke 2:1.

⁷¹ Compared to other countries.

census while Quirinius was governor of Syria; or This census occurred before Quirinius was governor of Syria].). Only a handful of translations took this approach.

Almost every English translation throws in the word *when* or *while* into their translation (example of the Voice in the Wilderness: **This census first took place while Cyrenius was governing Syria**). However, that particular word is not found in the text. Dr. Lardner (who explains how this correctly coincides with ancient history) translates this verse **This was the first assessment of Cyrenius, governor of Syria**. We solve all related problems here by inserting a few words: **This was the first assessment of Cyrenius, [who later became] governor of Syria**. Or we could have inserted, *who was also known as*.

For many of the so-called contradictions/problems with the Bible, we may not know the exact correct explanation this side of eternity. This is a very reasonable approach which solves this particular problem. Although it is *probably* the correct explanation, we don't really know; nor is it that important. Primarily, we need to recognize that this problem has been considered and reasonable solutions have been given.

Luke 2:3 **And all went to be registered, each to his own town.**

More literally, this should read: **And all [of them] kept departing to register, each [one going] to his own city**. The imperfect tense on the main verb means that this action of *going to register* began in the past and kept on going. I believe the sense of the Greek here is to pick up the main verb and apply it to the adjective (which acts as a substantive here). So each one—each person—is going to his own city. I would assume that is the city of his origin, where his birth records are kept. It is possible that birth records and real estate transactions are recorded in specific cities; or the birth records of their ancestors—and that is where they are to go.

Not many people are enthused about taxation; and it does not seem unlikely that some people would have chosen to sit this registration out. Well, what do they do? The registrars would have the birth and property records right there at their disposal, that they might refer to in order to find out who showed up and who did not. The Jewish people in particular kept very good birth records and, apparently, very accurate property records.

We might understand the Roman government to be relatively enlightened for that era. In past centuries, a conquering nation would go through a country and kill, rape and/or enslave the current population and take away all of their good stuff. Clearly that would engender deep-seated hatred among those who were not killed or among those who are enslaved, which could be trouble down the road. Furthermore, that did not always make the best use of the land which had been conquered. If every country they ruled over was antagonistic, that would require far more resources (Roman soldiers) to keep order. It is better that the population be somewhat more compliant, with even a significant segment of the population approving of Roman rule.

The Romans had a different approach where they would oversee a conquered country and provide Roman soldiers for that country for protection, order and to keep the people from

rebelling. In return, the people would be taxed, which could be understood by them as a necessary evil, in exchange for order and protection.

What is good about this approach is, taxes could be collected periodically, and without requiring a Roman army to go in to kill and conquer for it. This taxation represented a constant source of income. This seemed to have been worked out to a science. The Romans often used local citizenry to collect the taxes (Matthew, a Jewish man and a disciple of the Lord's, was a tax collector).

This is similar to a choice that real estate people face when they buy and later sell a home; as over against, buying and holding a home as a rental. In the latter case, there is reasonably reliable income provided each and every month. For the person who flips houses, he gets that income only one time.

Let me explain the parallel: Rome could go into a country, destroy the population and take all of their good stuff. That is like buying a house, fixing it up and selling it—it is a one-time deal. Or Rome could go into a country, take it over, administrate it, give the people some rights and freedoms, and tax it. That is analogous to buying a house and making a rental out of it. The dividends continue to come in periodically.

It is not necessary that this was the protocol of all Rome. However, the Jews were apparently quite well-organized when it came to their birth records. My assumption would be, on at least this occasion, that males would travel with their families to whichever city held their birth records (Jerusalem obviously had the birth records of those born in the line of Judah). We do not know if it was done exactly this way throughout the entire Palestine area, nor do we know if there were birth records anywhere other than Jerusalem (or near to Jerusalem).

Lesson 054: Luke 2:1–6

Joseph and Mary Register in Bethlehem

Joseph and Mary Register for Tax Purposes in Bethlehem

We have begun Luke 2, where Mary and Joseph are going to travel to Bethlehem in order to register for taxation purposes. So far, this is what we have studied:

Luke 2:1–3 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. (ESV)

A little history might be helpful at this point: Under Kings Saul, David and Solomon, Israel was a growing nation which was far larger than the tiny postage stamp country of Israel today, and it included most of modern-day Jordan as well as sizable portions of Lebanon and Syria (the area over which David and Solomon had control was actually quite large).

After Solomon, Israel split into two nations and northern Israel (called *Israel*, *Ephraim*, or *Syria*) and southern Israel (called *Judah*). Northern Israel was overrun and the Hebrew people were deported in 721 B.C. The southern kingdom suffered the same fate in 586 B.C. Some Israelites in the northern kingdom escaped to the southern kingdom. Some Israelites remained in both of these areas after the great deportations. By the time of our narrative, there appears to be large Jewish populations throughout both the northern and southern kingdoms (the bulk of the Lord's ministry seems to take place around Galilee, which is the northern kingdom). The southern kingdom, Judah, retains more of a national identity, despite the fact that it is not an independent nation.

The Southern Kingdom was defeated and the people removed in 586 B.C. Later, Persia took control of this region and the Persian ruler, Cyrus the Great, allowed the Jews to return to the southern kingdom in 516 B.C., and so Judah continued to exist as a nation, but not as a sovereign nation.

I do not know if the principle cities in the north continued to have centralized records (which would have been for 10 tribes). It appears certain that Israel retained excellent records—although we do not know exactly where they were all kept. In any case, according to the historical account of Luke, there were genealogical records kept in Jerusalem for the tribe of Judah. Therefore, Joseph and his family were expected to register in nearby Bethlehem. It would make sense that the tax registration, birth records and land deeds would all be found in centralized locations.

As an aside, the excellent record keeping of the Jews must have been greatly appreciated by the Romans who initiated this census. This would have given them records by which to check the people who came to them; and property records which would have been some indication of wealth.

Palestine Under Herod the Great (a map); from abu.nb.ca.



Luke 2:4a **And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea,...**

The Galilee area is within the territory of the northern kingdom, where the 10 tribes originally lived. This is no longer an independent territory under the control of the Hebrew people. In fact, they lost their independence in 721 B.C.

Joseph and Mary would be traveling south to get to Judæa. Since we are used to reading maps which are oriented towards the north, *going down* to us refers to going south. However, here they go up because they would go up in elevation to get to Bethlehem; and from there, Jerusalem.

Joseph has been mentioned before, incidentally, as the fiancée of Mary, back in Luke 1:27.

So, Joseph lives in Galilee, in the city of Nazareth. He is heading out towards Judæa, which is the remaining territory of the Jews. Judah (southern Israel) has not been an independent entity for over 500 years. At this time, they are under the control of Rome. The Jewish people did not like this; however, disobedience towards the Roman tax system could result in a loss of land or more.

Luke 2:4b **...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem,...**

Two things can be said of Jewish record-keeping: they would have kept accurate genealogies and, very likely, accurate land records. God giving them this land and blessing them as a people was preserved in such records. This is suggested by the second half of the book of Joshua (where the land and cities are all distributed) and the first 10 or so chapters of 1Chronicles (which are primarily genealogies). If this information found its way into their holy Scriptures, then surely they kept many property and genealogical records.

So, Israel was not defined only by this people's relationship to their God, but by identity and property as well. In the resurrection, believers will be given a resurrection body, somehow related to the previous earthly body (but without defect); and the Jews will live in this same land ruled over by their own King (Jesus Christ).

Luke 2:4b **...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem,...**

Let me suggest that, for purposes of taxation, Bethlehem is David's city, where the records of David and his descendants are kept. It would strike me as reasonable that property records were kept in the same place (assuming that such records had a centralized location).

Luke 2:4c **...because he was of the house and lineage of David,...**

Joseph is from the royal family of David. However, being in David's line does not insure that someone is therefore king. By this time, there were tens of thousands in the line of

David. Nevertheless, the Davidic line is the royal line (just as the line of Levite is the priestly line, even though all Levites are not priests).

Whedon explains: *The house included the entire body of ancestors and descendants. The lineage was a direct line of descent.*⁷²

Perhaps *the house* indicates that Joseph and his parents and grandparents all knew that they were from the house of David. That they are from the lineage of David suggests to me that they knew the exact line of descendants lead from David to Joseph. For instance, I am part Polish. It is one thing for me to know that I have ancestors who are Poles; it is quite another thing to be able to trace my line back to a particular Pole who had once lived in Poland. I have read several commentaries, and this is the best explanation that I can come up with for v. 4c, to differentiate between the words *house* and *lineage*.

Luke 2:4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,...

At this time, Joseph lives in Galilee. However, he is required to register down in Bethlehem as that is probably where his birth and property records are kept. Property records are not mentioned here but his lineage is; and this allows the Romans to have a clear picture of the people over whom they are administrating. I have assumed that property records are a part of this registration process.

Luke 2:5a ...to be registered with Mary, his betrothed...

Joseph goes there to register so that he will be on the tax rolls.

I don't know if it is necessary for Mary to be there with him or not. Does she register as a woman, as his wife? All of the verbs are applied to Joseph; but that does not mean that Mary is just there for the ride. I think she is an integral part of this registration process.

Mary is called Joseph's betrothed or espoused. This is the Greek word *mnêsteuô* (μνηστεύω) [pronounced *mnace-TYOO-oh*], which means, *betrothed, espoused, engaged to be married, fiancée*. This appears to be a word specifically for an unmarried but engaged couple. Strong's #3423.

What appears to be the case is, Mary and Joseph were living together, yet not yet considered married, as they had not yet consummated their marriage. I make the assumption of living together, as they are traveling together (however, it is a matter of Biblical record that they had not consummated their marriage yet—Matt. 1:25).

Luke 2:5b ...who was with child.

⁷² Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Luke 2:4.

What is stated here could either be seen as humorous, scandalous or ironic; or, perhaps a bit of all three, even though the author Luke is just simply stating facts. In the 21st century, most people hardly notice what is being said here. Joseph and Mary are engaged to be married; they are not married. They have not had sex. If they had had sex, then they would be married—that is what would have consummated (completed) their marriage. They become married upon having conjugal relations. But they were not yet married; and yet, Mary is very pregnant. Today, we might say that she is showing. She is not just showing; she is about to burst.

Luke 2:5 ...to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

We live in a time when a woman might be getting married to some guy she has been living with for a few years, and two of her children, by other men, might participate in the ceremony (as a flower girl or ring bearer or whatnot). Today, nobody would bat an eye at such a ceremony.

In that era, Joseph is showing up to register with his pregnant fiancée, and he is not the father and, on top of all that, they are not even married, but about to be. This was unheard of. I don't know who they stood before, or what they said, but registrar no doubt requested, "Do you want to explain that to me again? Your woman is obviously pregnant but she is your betrothed and not your wife? Do you want to explain to me exactly how that works?" If this was not said out loud, this is what they were thinking.

Again, this is quite humorous, but given the morals of our society, we might not see the humor or appreciate the disparate images and relationship portrayed here.

Luke 2:4–5 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

Wilbur Pickering describes their marriage as atypical. Let me suggest that, for that day and time, it was likely unique. Today, we can imagine a woman getting pregnant from guy X, but marrying guy Y. *That* would be atypical. It happens once in a blue moon. But, in the era in which we are studying, marriages where there was a pregnancy was rare; marriages where there was an existing pregnancy by another—unheard of. You see, they are, for all intents and purposes, married to the one who impregnated them. That is what made a couple married—conjugal relations. The relations which preceded the pregnancy would essentially define them as married—but there were no such relations between Mary and Joseph. Do you see how confusing they would have seemed to a registrar?

The couple would present themselves as unmarried, because they had not consummated their marriage. I do not know how extensive these forms were, or the interview process which took place, but for them to say out loud, "We are engaged to be married; we have not consummated the marriage," and there Mary is, clearly pregnant. This just would not compute to the person registering them.

Joseph and his family lived up in the Galilee area, which is shown on the map as an area controlled by Herod the Great, who would have been governor over the land marked. This included much of the southern and northern kingdoms of Israel, as well as eastern Israel. Whether major cities were restored is unknown to us. In any case, this was a part of the Roman Empire under Augustus.

Herod's Kingdom—Divided (a map); from [Biblestudy.org](https://www.biblestudy.org); accessed October 19, 2019.

Luke 2:6 *And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth.*

We have never really sorted out why Joseph and Mary are *both* there. Perhaps they both had to appear to register; perhaps Mary wanted to be with Joseph at this time (despite being so pregnant). My guess would be, she is so close to giving birth that she wanted Joseph there when she gave birth. Joseph appears willing, even though explaining this to an outside party would have confused the outside party.

In any case, it became clear to Mary that the time had come for her to give birth.



Lesson 055: Luke 2:4–7b

Jesus' Birth/The Firstborn in the New Testament

This is what we have just studied:

Luke 2:4–6 *And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage*

of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. (ESV)

Joseph and Mary both traveled together to Bethlehem to be registered. It appears that this is the census or related to the census. First and foremost on the minds of the Roman government was to identify and collect from a solid tax base.

Joseph and Mary are away from their home in Nazareth in obedience to the mandates of the Roman empire. At this moment, they find themselves in the town of Bethlehem, which is not far from Jerusalem. We do not know the period of time that they were to remain in Bethlehem, but while they are there...

Luke 2:7a *And she gave birth to her firstborn Son...*

Mary, still a virgin, gives birth to Jesus, Who is called *her firstborn Son*.

There are two possible points being made here by calling Jesus Mary's *firstborn son*: (1) Mary would have other children in her marriage (and Joseph would be their biological father); and (2) Jesus, by virtue of being the firstborn, is the recipient of the double portion and He carries forward the family royalty, if any.

In the Old Testament, the firstborn in a Hebrew family received the double portion and they carried forth a leadership position in the family, second to the father.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

The Firstborn in the New Testament

1. The term *firstborn* is only found 8 or 9 times in the New Testament.
2. Jesus is called the *firstborn* in Luke 2:7 and also in Matt. 1:25, in some manuscripts (it is found in Scrivener Textus Receptus but not in the Westcott Hort text).
3. Most of us knew Rom. 8:28, but notice the context of this verse: Rom. 8:28–29 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers.*
 - 1) God works all things together for good for *those who are called according to His purpose*. So, Paul explains that in greater detail.
 - 2) God knew about us—believers in His Son—in eternity past. When God set things in motion, He knew all about us, and that we would believe in Jesus Christ. He *foreknew* (= *knew beforehand*) those who are His.
 - 3) God has a plan for those whom He foreknew. This plan is called *predestination*. For those who God knew beforehand, He pre-designed a portion of their future. He set up a plan for us in eternity past. Part of that plan includes that we will be conformed to the image of His Son. Jesus never had a sin nature; and He is in a resurrection body. To be conformed

The Firstborn in the New Testament

- to Him, we will lose our sin nature and we will have a resurrection body. Essentially, this passage (and others) promises these things to us.
- 4) With regards to His resurrection body, Jesus is the *Firstborn*. When He is resurrected from death, He is raised up in a resurrection body. We who have believed in Him, we who are known in eternity past by God, God's plan for us (His predetermined plan) is that we will be like His Son. Therefore, we will also, after death, have a resurrection body. (There is more to this passage, but we will have to take it up at a later time.)
 4. Jesus is called *the Firstborn of all creation* in Col. 1:15. The entire passage reads: Col. 1:15–17 **He [= Jesus] is the image of the invisible God [God the Father], [Jesus is] the Firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**
 - 1) We are unable to see God. We can see manifestations of God (Moses saw the burning bush, the pillar of fire, the cloud that led Israel); but we cannot actually see God. However, we can physically see Jesus (and we will). In this way, He is the image of an invisible God. Jesus is more than simply a manifestation of God; He is God.
 - 2) Jesus is called the *Firstborn of all creation*. Dr. Grant C. Richison explains: *This is not a statement about the creation of Jesus Christ because he cannot create himself. He is not a creature. He created all things (John 1:3; Heb. 1:2,3). He came from eternity. He is everlasting (Prov. 8:23-26). "Firstborn" indicates his dominion over all things. The firstborn in Israel had the right to rule. Jesus has the right to rule because of his rank over all creation. He is the sovereign God of creation.*¹
 - 3) The Jesus of the Bible created all things—things which we can see and things which we cannot see (like space, gravity, molecules).
 - 4) Nothing comes before Jesus; and the universe is held together by Him (the universe in which we live conforms to a system of divine laws, which Jesus initiated and set into motion).
 5. Jesus is also called *the Firstborn* in Col. 1:18 **And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent.** The church is the body; Jesus is the head of the church. He is the firstborn from the dead, meaning that He is the first person resurrected.²
 6. Heb. 1:5–6 **For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are My Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? And again, when He brings the Firstborn into the world, He says, "Let all God's angels worship Him."** Jesus, being born into the human race, was an amazing thing. All angels were to honor Him.
 - 1) The two quotations in this passage are things which God the Father said to Jesus, His Son. These are things which God never said to any angel.
 - 2) Here, *the Firstborn* is a reference to Jesus Christ.
 - 3) When it says that God *again* brings Jesus (= *the Firstborn*) into the world,

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- this is a reference to the 2nd advent (when Jesus returns to the earth).
- 4) All angels will be called upon to worship the Lord.³
 7. Heb. 11:28 **By faith he [= Moses] kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.**
 - 1) Much of Heb. 11 is about various saints in the past applying their faith in God and His Word to their circumstances in life.
 - 2) This is the final plague against Egypt, when the *Destroyer of the firstborn* would go throughout Egypt and kill the firstborn of every family.
 - 3) *Everyone* had a way out, and that was called the Passover. When a family killed a lamb and put its blood on the sides and top of their entry door, God would see that blood (which represents Jesus Christ) and passover that house (not killing anyone inside).
 - 4) Everyone had a warning; and this was the 10th and final plague. The Israelites and the Egyptians all saw what God could do in the previous plagues. They had to choose whether or not to believe what God would do in this final plague. For the most part, the Israelites believed and did what God required (which represents faith in the Revealed God); and the Egyptians, for the most part, did not (we do not know of any exceptions to either group, although there may have been).
 8. Heb. 12:22–24 **But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.** Believers are the firstborn spoken of here. We are enrolled in heaven and made perfect (we have no sin nature anymore).
 9. Rev. 1:4–6 **John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him Who is and Who was and Who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the Firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To Him Who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Jesus is speaking to John with a message to the 7 churches of Asia. Jesus is called *the Firstborn of the dead*, as He is the first man to be resurrected from the dead.

¹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/colossians/colossians.pdf> (Col. 1:15); accessed November 15, 2019.

² Jesus is fully man and He is fully God. He physically died when He chose to breathe His last. 3 days later, He was raised up in a resurrection body. The people that Jesus brought back to life were merely resuscitated, and not resurrected. That is, their human bodies eventually failed and they died.

³ See Dr. Robert Dean, Jr. for a more detailed [exposition](#) of this passage.

Luke 2:7b **...and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths...**

We are witnessing the birth of Jesus here. He has been born and Mary and Joseph wrap him in swaddling cloths. *To wrap in swaddling cloths* is actually one word: sparganoô

(σπαργανόω) [pronounced *spar-gan-OH-oh*], which means, *to wrap with strips; to wrap in swaddling clothes; of an infant just born*. Strong's #4683. In our contemporary world, as our child grows, we go get new clothes for him or her. In the ancient world, *Baby and Beyond* had not been invented yet. So the child would be wrapped with strips of cloth; not unlike a person after their death.

That she wraps the child with strips of clothing indicates that the weather is cool or cold and some kind of clothing is necessary. It is interesting that this is mentioned, but I don't know that we can draw any conclusions from this. The reading which I do when working on the book of Luke suggests that this is not an unusual approach to clothing an infant. At least one translator said that this was done to all Jewish babies and it helped them develop physically.

Some have claimed that, wrapping up the child in this way is similar to how mummies are wrapped; and that these are *death clothes*, so to speak. Even though this is not necessarily an unusual thing for parents to do, it is possible that the Divine Author is drawing an intentional parallel to wrapping a corpse with strips of cloth as well. Jesus' death is clearly as important as His birth. Jesus certainly came to this earth to die for our sins. That is His primary purpose.

This is from *Got Questions*:

"What does it mean that baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes?"

Swaddling clothes are cloths and bands used in the practice of swaddling, or essentially "wrapping" an infant tightly in cloth. The idea behind swaddling is that it helps the baby transition from the womb (a very snug place) to the outside world. Swaddling clothes are still used today, but with some modifications. In general, swaddling has been proved to help infants sleep better, to prevent them from scratching themselves, and to reduce the risk of SIDS. In ancient times, like today, a swaddled infant was safe if wrapped and watched properly. Many cultures still practice swaddling today.

The biblical passage that refers to swaddling clothes is Luke 2: **"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn"** (Luke 2:7, ESV). We can assume from the fact that she swaddled the baby Jesus that Mary was an attentive and loving mother. The angel who spoke to the shepherds on the hillside mentions swaddling clothes as part of the sign to the shepherds that they had found the Messiah (Luke 2:12).

There are some interesting theories about Luke's detail of Jesus' swaddling clothes. Some have postulated that the swaddling clothes were a foreshadowing—a prophetic reference—of Jesus' burial cloths. The Greek word sparganoo is the root word used in the phrase "swaddling clothes," and it means "to clothe in strips of cloth." But this word sparganoo is never used in the New Testament to refer to burial cloth. In the descriptions in the Gospels of Jesus' burial, we see variations on the phrase "wrapped in linen cloth,"

"What does it mean that baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes?"

and different Greek words are used for the binding. The swaddling clothes could prefigure Jesus' burial (the Magis' gift of myrrh in Matthew 2:11 is a clearer bit of foreshadowing), but the link can't be proved linguistically.

When the Son of God came into our world, He was entrusted to responsible, loving parents who sought to meet His every need. Baby Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes according to the custom of the day, an action that showed the tender care and affection of His mother.

From <https://www.gotquestions.org/swaddling-clothes.html> accessed October 19, 2019.

Lessons 056–057: Luke 2:4–9c

The Glory of the Lord

This is as far as we have gone:

Luke 2:4–6 **And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. (ESV)**

Joseph and Mary were away from home together, registering themselves and their property (if any) for the Roman government. The timing was such that, she was ready to give birth at this time.

Luke 2:7a-b **And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths...**

Mary gives birth to Jesus and she wraps him with strips of cloth. As we have discussed, the strips of cloth were apparently quite common to be used in the ancient world both for infants and for the dead. What differentiated the use of cloth strips is, for the death, strong spices were used to mask the odor of the decaying body.

Luke 2:7c **...and laid Him in a manger,...**

As we will find out, Joseph and Mary did not have any place to stay; so they were in a barn or stable. The baby crib appears to be a manger, which is, a water or a food trough which has temporarily been re-purposed as a baby's crib.

Luke 2:7d **...because there was no place for them in the inn.**

The fact that there was no room in the inn does not indicate that Mary and Joseph were indigent. If they were indigent, then it would not matter whether or not there was no place at the inn for them. This decree to come to specific cities and register went out throughout

the land, so that there were an excess of people in all of the cities of registration during this time. Hotel space would have been quickly snapped up, leaving nothing available for anyone else. Note that the word *inn* is in the singular, suggesting that there was likely but one public place to go for a room to rent. People would have scrambled to find any kind of living accommodations. That Mary and Joseph stayed in a barn was probably not a unique experience.

It does not appear that they traveled with a tent or with many items that would be helpful if the baby was born. All of this would have been a new experience for both Joseph and Mary (the going out of town to register and Mary having a child).

There is a contrast here between the great royal birth of Jesus Christ and the circumstances of His birth, which are very humble. In this way, Jesus is fully identified with man in his most humble state. That is, despite Jesus being God, the circumstances of His birth clearly identify Him as a man in all respects. However, despite the circumstances of the Lord's birth, His Presence on earth would nevertheless be celebrated.

Luke 2:7 **And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.**

While in Bethlehem, registering for taxation, Mary, the espoused woman of Joseph, gave birth to Jesus. As we have previously discussed, Mary is a virgin, in every sense of the word.

Mary and Joseph did not have reservations at the inn, so they found accommodations in a stable or a barn of some sort. They took the feeding trough and re-purposed it as a baby bed for their newborn.

There would be many witnesses to the unusual birth of our Lord and His early days. Much of this is testified to in this chapter.

Luke 2:8a **And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field,...**

At the time that the Lord is born, there are shepherds staying out in the fields with their flock. This is not an unusual arrangement. The sheep and goats would be guided throughout the land, eating whatever greenery they could find, and then moving on. This kept the sheep fed, exercised and, in this way, no particular field would not be eaten down to the ground.

This is a long-standing tradition among those with livestock. We have cattlemen today who often move their cattle around to different areas, keeping them exercised and well fed. At one time, this was quite commonly done on open, federal lands in the western United States. Over the past few decades, the federal government has sought to curtail this practice, likely with an unstated political purpose in mind.

I would guess that the shepherds were working in shifts. Whatever the situation, we do not know how many shepherds are here.

Region is the word *chôra* (χώρα, ας, ῆ) [pronounced *KHOH-ra*], which means *country, land; district, region, place; [open] country [as opposed to the city]; [dry] land [as opposed to the sea]*. Strong's #5561. Joseph and Mary were in Judæa, staying in Bethlehem; and on the outskirts of the city, there are shepherds attending to their flock.

Luke 2:8b ..keeping watch over their flock by night.

These shepherds are keeping the night watch, meaning that they are awake, watching over the sheep; but it is the middle of the night.

Luke 2:8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Not too far from where Mary and Joseph were temporarily staying, there was a particular group of shepherds, watching their flock. There are no clues as to how many shepherds that we are speaking of; or how big their flock is.

Luke 2:9a And an angel [or, *Angel*] of the Lord appeared to them,...

Suddenly, an angel stands right in front of them. No doubt, this would be a shock to them.

The fact that this is called *an angel [Angel?] of the Lord* will result in no little discussion. The fundamental question would be, *is this angel just an angel or is He a divine manifestation? And if divine, then which Member of the Trinity?*

The angel who spoke to Zacharias and to Mary is specifically identified, but this angel who has appeared before these shepherds is not given a name, but a title. If I am to guess why, previously, the angel Gabriel was identified so that we do not get him confounded with the Angel of the Lord, a Christophany of the Old Testament. Here, however, we cannot confound this angel with the LORD because the Lord has been born. So He cannot be simultaneously appearing to others elsewhere. When God became a man, He is automatically confined His human body to one place at one time.

On the other hand, does this narrative really demand that the Lord's birth (vv. 6–7) precede the appearance of this angel (vv. 8–14). The transition between these passages is, *And in the same region...* Another way of putting that is, *meanwhile, back on the ranch...* This is not the same as saying, *and then this happened next...*

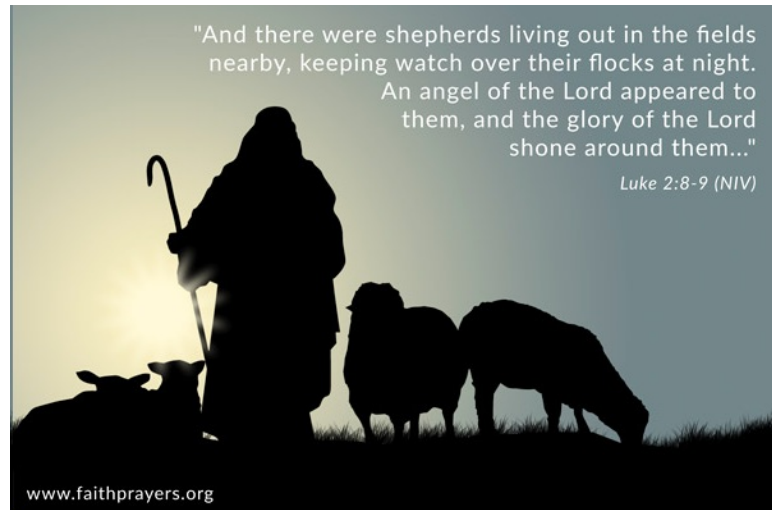
Could this be a manifestation of God the Holy Spirit or of God the Father? I would say *no*, simply because the Revealed Member of the Godhead is usually, if not always, Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Who interacts with man, either in His Preincarnate form or His actual physical appearance on earth. Understanding this to be Jesus, as an angelic manifestation prior to His birth, carries with it some heavy theological significance.

Luke 2:9b ...and the glory of the Lord shone around them,...

V. 9b takes this whole discussion up a notch. This is no longer just an angel appearing to these shepherds, but there is this great light being shown all around them, which light is called *the Glory of the Lord* here.

And there were shepherds... (a graphic); from FaithPrayers.org; accessed November 22, 2019.

Who exactly is this angel? What might we understand by this passage? One option is, this angel does not have any glory, but perhaps it has reflected glory from God; and everything around them is illuminated. So, it is the middle of the night, but the angel suddenly appears and everything around them (the shepherds and the angel) is lit up.



Possibly, we could understand this to indicate that God is giving His authority to this angel. That is, what the angel is saying can be trusted, as God has given him this great light, God's reflected light, His seal of authority.

But, again, why couldn't this be Gabriel or another specific angel; and is the great light actually necessary? What does this great light mean? Further, if this is *God*, then the great light makes sense—it reveals that this is the Lord. Gabriel has appeared both to Zacharias and to Mary—but there was no great light shining all around him, despite his amazing announcement.

Is the light just a thing done because it is dark? Or is this possible that this angel is a Member of the Trinity? The glory of the Lord being shown all around certainly suggests this.

The phrase *glory of...* occurs 109 times in the ESV. Most of the time, it is *the glory of the Lord*. The second most often phrase found is *the glory of God*.

I don't know that I want to look at every passage; but let's view a representative group of them, to discover just how these words are used.

The ESV; capitalized will be used below. Emphasis, where used, is mine.

The Glory of the Lord

1. The phrase *the glory of the Lord* occurs 13 times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; but not at all in Genesis or in Deuteronomy.
 - 1) We may think that *the glory of the Lord* would be found as a part of the plague narrative, but it is not. It is closely associated with the people of Israel moving along in the desert and being exposed in one way or another to *the glory of the LORD*.
 - 2) The glory of the Lord is first associated with the manna from heaven; which food sustained the children of Israel throughout their 40 years in the desert. This is logistical grace (God providing for His Own). Exodus 16:6–8
 - 3) God spoke to the people of Israel. The glory of the Lord is associated with God personally responding to the expressed wants and desires of the children of Israel. Exodus 16:9–12
 - 4) The glory of the Lord was abundant on Mount Sinai, where the cloud covered the mountain. Moses went there to receive the Word of God. Exodus 24:15–18
 - 5) The glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle upon its completion. Exodus 40:34–35
 - 6) This same cloud guided Israel through the desert, so it is associated with divine guidance. Exodus 40:34–38
 - 7) Throughout the books Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, the glory of the Lord appears to the people. Lev. 9:6, 23 Num. 14:10, 21 16:19, 42 20:6
 - 8) I do not know that I could differentiate between God and the glory of God in these passages. They do not appear to be presented as separate and distinct entities.
2. In fact, throughout the Old Testament, it is hard to disassociate the glory of the Lord from some sort of appearance which is clearly a manifestation of God.
3. When the Temple had been completed, the glory of the Lord filled the Temple. In fact, this filling of the Temple was so intense that it could not be inhabited by the priests. 1Kings 8:11 2Chron. 5:14 7:1–3
4. The psalmist famously tells us that the heavens declare the glory of God in Psalm 19:1; where God's creation reveals God and His brilliance.
5. The *Glory of the LORD* refers to Jesus Christ, the Revealed Member of the Godhead.
 - 1) Psalm 104:3 is one of the Old Testament passages where all 3 Members of the Trinity are named: Psalm 104:30–32 **When You send forth Your Spirit, they are created, and You renew the face of the ground. May the Glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works, Who looks on the earth and it trembles, Who touches the mountains and they smoke!**
 - 2) Isa. 40:3–5 is a passage directly pertinent to our study: **A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the**

The Glory of the Lord

- rough places a plain. And **the Glory of the LORD** shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." It is John the herald who will quote this passage in anticipation of the revealing of the Lord (Matt. 3:3 Mark 1:3 Luke 3:4–6 John 1:23).
- 3) These words in Ezek. 1:28 appear to refer to the LORD: Like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness all around. Such was the appearance of the likeness of **the Glory of the LORD**. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of One speaking.
 - 4) Ezek. 10:4 appears to be a vision which Ezekiel is having, which vision features a clear manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. **And the Glory of the LORD** went up from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was filled with the brightness of **the Glory of the LORD**. See also Ezek. 10:18–19.
 - 5) Jesus will return **with His angels in the Glory of his Father** in Matt. 16:27. See also Mark 8:38 Luke 9:26
 - 6) See also Isa. 58:8 60:1 Ezek. 3:23 8:4 9:3 11:22–23 43:1–5 44:4.
 6. There are times when we do not find *the glory of the Lord* or *the glory of God*, and it still refers to the revealed Member of the Godhead.
 - 1) 1Sam. 15:28–29 And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you. And also **the Glory of Israel** will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret."
 - 2) Psalm 66:1–4 Shout for joy to God, all the earth; sing **the glory of His name**; give to Him glorious praise! Say to God, "How awesome are Your deeds! So great is Your power that Your enemies come cringing to You. All the earth worships You and sings praises to You; they sing praises to Your name." Selah.
 - 3) The glory of His (Your) name is also found in Psalm 79:9.
 - 4) In Psalm 89:17, we find *the glory of Israel's strength*, which is a reference to God increasing Israel's power and footprint.
 7. There are a few times when *the glory of* is not affixed to *the Lord* or to *God*; and God's power or magnificence is being referred to:
 - 1) Psalm 145:10–12 All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, and all Your saints shall bless You! They shall speak of **the glory of Your kingdom** and tell of Your power, to make known to the children of man Your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.
 8. There are a few times when *the glory of* is not affixed to *the Lord* or to *God*; and deity is clearly not referred to.
 - 1) Psalm 37:20 But the wicked will perish; the enemies of the LORD are like the glory of the pastures; they vanish—like smoke they vanish away.
 - 2) Psalm 49:16 Be not afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house increases.
 - 3) In Isa. 10:16–20, God is judging Israel (**The glory of his forest and of his**

The Glory of the Lord

- fruitful land the LORD will destroy...)
- 4) When speaking of the glory of man (in one way or another), judgment is often a part of such a passage. Isa. 13:17–20 16:14 17:3–4 21:16 35:2 Ezek. 25:9–10.
 - 5) Similarly, see Prov. 14:28 17:6 20:29
 - 6) Generally speaking, when glory is affixed to something which is passing, temporary, the indication is, this is applied to reveal a glory that is temporary or a glory which is tied to the world.
9. After all of this study, it should be clear that when we speak of *the glory of God* or *the glory of the Lord*, we are speaking usually of a divine manifestation and/or of divine power. My point being, the Bible does not lightly throw those phrases about.

Passages not covered in this study: Psalm 106:20 138:5 Prov. 25:2 Isa. 60:13 66:12 Daniel 4:30, 36 11:20 Micah 1:15 Habak. 2:14 Haggai 2:9 Zech. 12:7 John 7:18 11:4, 40 Acts 7:55 Rom. 1:23 3:23 5:2 6:4 8:21 15:7 1Cor. 10:31 11:7 15:40–41 2Cor. 3:18 4:4, 6, 15 8:19, 23 Philip. 2:11 Col. 1:27 2Thess. 1:9 2:14 1Tim. 1:11 Titus 2:13 Heb. 1:3 Rev. 15:6 21:11, 23. Some of these are quite interesting, but they either restate what has already been studied, or go off in a different direction entirely.

Jesus has just been born (vv. 4–7) and now we are studying this passage:

Luk 2:8–9b **And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them,...**

The Annunciation Of The Angels To The Shepherds (by Benjamin Gerritsz. Cuyp); from Wikigallery.org; accessed November 22, 2019. I like that the manifestation of the Glory of God is presented primarily as light in this oil painting.

We have considered two things so far: (1) Are these events sequential? Is Jesus born *and then* does this angel appear to these shepherds? The text does not demand



that be the order of events. (2) The *Glory of the Lord* is found here, apparently lighting up everything. In our study, it appears that this is not a phrase used lightly or generally in the Old Testament. This phrase nearly always speaks of some sort of manifestation of God.

If this is the Preincarnate Jesus, then that would lead us into quite the theological discussion, because Mary, at this time, is pregnant and ready to give birth (assuming that v. 8 does not immediately follow v. 7 in time). However, even granting that this *Glory* which occurs before the shepherds is the LORD, then Jesus cannot be simultaneously in the womb of Mary. So, even though all indications are that the *Glory of the Lord* is a manifestation of God; and in fact, is likely the Preincarnate Christ; then the life which is in Mary's womb cannot be Jesus. He cannot be two places at the same time—not as the Revealed God.

So, whatever is in Mary's womb—if we accept that the Glory of the Lord here refers to the Christ—cannot be God. You may be surprised, but this is not out of synch with the prevailing Christian and Jewish theology. It is generally (but not universally) believed that, God breathes life into each person as they are born and take their first breath. That is the point at which God gives soul life; and not before. The logical deduction from this is, even though there is a fully functioning brain in the head of a fetus, this would not be considered a fully functioning soul. This soul-life, this life from God—which would be God—would be given at birth.

Now, the reasoning here is, Mary is clearly pregnant; and yet, can this be Jesus-incarnate appearing to the shepherds? None of this contradicts any orthodox theology, insofar as I can tell.

Let's just say that my understanding here is correct (I believe that this is Jesus, manifested as an Angel, telling the shepherds that He is about to be born). If there is no true soul-life in the womb (and, believe it or not, this is orthodox theology; this is not a cultic position), what rights does this life have? I believe that it is an inaccurate application to then suggest that the mother (perhaps consulting with a doctor) has carte blanc rights with regards to the life in her womb. The life in the womb is a potential person being developed who will be given soul life from God at birth. Nevertheless, this, as a potential human life, should not be subject to human whim regarding its own life.

What person would suggest, at this point in time, that the life within Mary was unimportant and could be ended on a whim? Therefore, regardless about what you believe about the beginning of soul-life (or ensoulment), you certainly do not believe that the life within Mary is expendable. So, the natural application of this is, life in the womb—regardless of when ensoulment takes place—should be protected. It is not expendable. The continuance of life should not be subject to a vote.⁷³

In the Old Testament, the *Angel of the Lord* was Jesus Christ. The fact that we have the glory of the Lord shining all around them, this certainly suggests that this is a member of

⁷³ This is one of the few places where I differ with R. B. Thieme, Jr.

the Trinity, Who had come to make this announcement. The opposing view would be, this could simply be the light of the angel or light provided by God (which point of view is much harder to justify, in my opinion).

Let's briefly sum this up: first, why does a particular angel Gabriel appear to Zechariah (Luke 1:11–12, 19); and then to Mary (Luke 1:26–28); but then here, the identify of the angel who appears to the shepherds is not given? Why is there the phrase *the Glory of the Lord*, if we are not speaking of a Divine Manifestation?

The logical question then, is, could this be Jesus, in His preincarnate form, appearing to these shepherds? Or could this be God the Holy Spirit? Or is this simply a messenger angel? Even though we have the Lord being born in v. 7 and now we are in v. 8, that does not mean that v. 8 occurs right after v. 7. Remember, the final verse of Luke 1 advanced the story of John the Herald from birth all the way to his public ministry, 30 years later. So here, v. 7 may have been the logical advancement of Luke 2:1–6; but v. 8 may have occurred a few hours earlier.

Let's get back to the shepherds and the angel (Angel?) of the Lord:

Luke 2:9c ...and they were filled with fear.

The shepherds, being normal people, are shaken up by this event of the angel. People do not see angels generally speaking (Zechariah, Joseph, the husband of Mary⁷⁴ and Mary, notwithstanding); and dramatic events and signs occurred at some specific times in history in the past; but, apparently not for at least 400 years.

We too often think, *this is the Bible; there are going to be a lot of miracles*. However, point of fact is, miraculous events are, in general, quite rare, even in the Scriptures. So this event is spectacular, and should be understood as such.

The shepherds are filled with fear, as would be the natural reaction. Standing before them is an angel (Angel) bathed in light.

Lesson 058: Luke 2:6–10b

Miracles in the Bible

Mary and her husband-to-be, Joseph, have come to Bethlehem to register for the Roman census, likely to put them on record for future tax collection. They went to Bethlehem at this time, as Joseph was from the tribe of Judah and a descendant of David's. Bethlehem was apparently where those descended from David registered.

Mary is pregnant and she and Joseph are not actually married at this time (a marriage was considered to be consummated when the man and his woman had enjoyed marital

⁷⁴ In the book of Matthew, when Joseph finds that Mary is pregnant, he was going to quietly end their relationship. An angel appears to him in a dream and convinces him not to do that. Matt. 1:20–24

relations). You may recall laughing uproariously when you were thinking about Joseph showing up with his pregnant fiancée with whom he had not had relations, as you imagined him explaining this when he registered with the Roman government in Bethlehem (despite Luke's narrative being so matter-of-factly presented).

Luke 2:6–7 *While they were there, the day had come for her to give birth. She gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

There were a great many people in Bethlehem registering, and so all of the rooms had been taken. This left Joseph and Mary with very limited options, so that they took shelter in a barn, using a feeding trough as a crib for the child she had given birth to.

Then there is an abrupt change of scene.

Luke 2:8 *There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.*

Although Luke presents his material generally in chronological order, that is not always the case. Luke 1:80 presents John the Herald as a youth growing into a man, whereas, he is about 6 months older than Jesus (and, quite obviously, in the narrative of Luke 2, Jesus has just been born).

For this reason—for the reason that Luke may present each individual narrative in chronological order with respect to itself, but not necessarily with respect to adjacent narratives—Luke 2:8–14 *may* have occurred right before the birth of the Lord.

Luke 2:9 *And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.*

Although this is a very difficult call, I am leaning more and more towards this being Jesus-incarnate, even though there is clearly physical life, at this point in time, in Mary's womb (this would require us to place Luke 2:8–14 earlier in time than 2:6–7).

But let's look at another aspect of this situation: these are shepherds in the field at night and, suddenly, they see an angel surrounded by light.

Miracles in the Bible:

Too often, we think that people in olden times saw a plethora of miracles, but this is not true. God, when there were some important reasons to redirect man or to get man's attention, He gave miracles—often to establish authority of this or that person; or of this or that group.

When Israel was being formed as a nation, to take the Hebrew people out of Egypt, God allowed Moses to perform great signs and wonders—which signs affected the entire nation

of Egypt. Further, authority would be conferred upon Moses for this connection which He had with God. Moses is the father of the Hebrew nation; and the Law came through him. Therefore, the 2 million Hebrews needed to know that he had this authority. After all, he led them out of Egypt, he gave them the Law, and he led them right up to the border of Canaan. It was not an easy thing to get the people of Israel to accept his authority as from God, despite the many miracles which Moses did.⁷⁵

Jesus—Whom we are studying—established His Own authority with signs and miracles and healings during His public ministry; but it is His words and what He taught that remains with us over the centuries. When someone has not seen or experienced a miracle, it is not necessarily negative volition for that person to be skeptical of miracles which occurred 2 millennia ago. However, when he hears the words of Jesus and rejects those words, then that is clearly negative volition.

My point being, the miracles of Jesus were designed at that point in time to confer authority upon Him. However, His words are what remain with us to this day; therefore, it is His words that are important. Did Jesus heal the blind and lame? I believe that there is no doubt that He did. Nevertheless, I am not unsympathetic towards the person who does not immediately hear and accept this. But if that person hears the words, **“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but through Me.”** and is unmoved, then I am less sympathetic. There is far more power in the Lord’s words, as they still stand up today.

The Lord’s words and parables still have great meaning today; and His logic and reasoning far surpasses that which the Greeks were famous for. A person may or may not agree with the Law of Moses; but when the Lord explains it and gives reasoned application of this Law, it should seem far superior to the applications made in the religious traditions of the Jews. This is why Christianity has spread throughout the world and has taken root in virtually every corner of the world; whereas, traditional Judaism has not (even among the Jews today, there is a very small percentage of them who adhere to the teachings promoted by the scribes and pharisees of Jesus’ time—in fact, I would wager that there are a higher percentage of Jews today who believe in their Savior, Jesus Christ).

The point I am trying to make is, it is the Lord’s teachings which are pertinent and so fundamental to His ministry—even to today. What Jesus explained about God, about Himself, about life on planet earth—all of that is fresh today. The Lord’s miracles were real; but the foundation of our faith is upon His words.

When the early church was being established, the fathers of the church (that is, Jesus’ disciples and their close associates) were given the ability to perform miracles so that their authority would be established as well. This authority which was established by miracles and signs, gave their words authority; and we have their words with us today (called the

⁷⁵ God obviously effects these miracles, but He does them at the hand of Moses. That is, Pharaoh and his crew never saw God or any manifestation of a personal God; but they did view Moses (or Aaron) wielding a staff, which was often an integral part of initiating a great sign.

New Testament). There was a point at which these sorts of sign gifts began to fade away. The key to Christianity has always been the doctrine, and *never* the miracles. The teaching of the Apostles is what endures to this day. God simply allowed the miracles during specific points in time so that the authority of His men could be established, as the church was a whole different thing from Israel.

Paul *never* tells a church, “If there is an unbeliever among you, have your best healer stand before this reprobate and heal him or someone else—that will get his attention and he will believe.”

We know from the negative volition observed by Moses, Jesus and Paul that no one ever simply believed because they witnessed a miracle. Or many miracles. There were some pharisees who witnessed several miracles and knew of many others, yet they still rejected the Lord. An entire generation guided by Moses out of Egypt believed in the Revealed God, but they still rejected Bible doctrine and spiritual growth; and therefore, that generation died the sin unto death out in the desert wilderness without ever entering into the Land of Promise. God’s abhorrence for that generation is stated on many occasions in Scripture. Yet was there a generation of Hebrews who ever received greater number of large miracles? No generation of Israelites saw anything like the miracles that the Exodus generation witnessed; yet God will leave their bodies strewn all over the desert, because they continually rebelled against Him.

Despite all of the miracles done by Jesus—decidedly on a different scale than those done at the hands of Moses and Aaron—the Jewish religious continued to push for His persecution until they finally convinced the Roman authorities to crucify Him.

My point being, a person does not believe in God or in His Son simply because they witness a miracle (or many miracles). That decision is made in the soul.

Therefore, we must recognize that God did use signs and miracles, but far more sparingly than most people think; and with very specific ends in mind. Once the divine authority was established (with Moses, with Jesus, with the Apostles), there was no reason to continue with a bunch of miracles. What is always key is authority and God’s Word. When God’s man had clear authority, and his words were listened to, then there were fewer reasons for miracles. Once the authority of a person or a group of people had been established, then the key to their ministry would be the words which they spoke and wrote.

Let’s look at two very divergent situations recorded in Israel’s history. There is Moses and the adult generation who followed him out of Egypt. The miracle *tap* for that generation never seemed to turn off. There were a series of ten plagues placed on Egypt, which the people of Israel observed; and there were also a number of miracles and situations requiring miracles which seemingly followed Moses and the people as they continued walking in the desert-wilderness. Those miracles continued (including the daily miracle of manna from heaven) until they actually set foot in the land to take it. Why did they get so

many miracles? They never quite accepted them; they never quite accepted the authority of Moses and Aaron. Every time a new difficulty occurred, these people went into rebellion mode. By the time that Israel was ready to enter into the land of promise, nearly every person from that generation had been wiped out; killed under the principle the sin unto death. They were never able to accept their God, Moses as their leader and mediator between them and God, nor were they able to accept the authority of Moses' words—despite viewing a plethora of miracles. As a result, God left their bodies strewn throughout the desert. So, even though God continued to give them miracles, they continued to reject God, His words and His messenger Moses.

Secondly, I want you to consider one of the most important New Testament authors: John. He will spend his final years in isolation on the Isle of Patmos. His authority has already been established; and he is isolated from everyone else. What does God have John do? Does God bring the Apostle John to the nearest shore, riding a Tsunami-like wave, his feet acting as a surf board, so that all near the shore could see and appreciate this great miracle? No! John's authority as an Apostle of Jesus had been fully accepted already. So, John wrote and wrote and wrote. He wrote 3 epistles, he wrote the book of John, and he wrote the book of Revelation. His authority had already been established. Therefore, what he *wrote* was significant. Since his authority had been accepted, there was no need for it to be reestablished by further miraculous acts. In fact, God clearly placed John on that island so that he would have the quiet opportunity to write.

What endures from the time of Moses? The Law of Moses. What endures from the ministry of Jesus? His words, as recorded in the gospels. What do we have today as the result of the Apostles' ministries? The epistles which they wrote. In every case, what remains to us today is the Word of God.

There are, no doubt, Christians today, who think that they have somehow lost out because they were unable to sit at the feet of Jesus as He taught and performed miracles. They are wrong to think that way. We live today in the greatest age until now. We are able to witness the Lord's teachings and His miracles in our mind's eye. As believers in the Church Age, we are able to take in a great swath of historical narrative, taking place over thousands of years. Not only can we *witness* 3000–4000 years of world-changing events, but we live during an age when our spiritual potential is greater for us than it has ever been. When you read and study your Bible and you think about great men, like Abraham, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Peter and Paul—your potential for eternal impact is right before you and it is a greater potential than available to those men. The only thing which restrains you is your own volition. People like to matter; they like to think that their lives were important and as having impact. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, having a meaningful, eternal impact is a very real option. We can have Paul-level (or Moses-level) impact on this world. All it takes is Bible doctrine in your soul and positive volition towards God's plan for your life.

Furthermore, it does not matter the circumstances that you find yourself in. You might be married with 3 kids and tied down to a mortgage that you can barely afford. God is still

able to work through you (and God will not require you to abandon your family or quit your mortgage). God can work through any person, where they are, using who they are, with great eternal consequences. That truth of Bible doctrine in your soul is far greater than any set of miracles that have occurred at any point in history.

Back to our narrative. An angel has appeared to a group of shepherds at night, and there is a great light all around the angel. This light is the glory of the LORD shining all around them.

Luke 2:8–9 *There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.*

Regarding the Lord and His public ministry, and times like this, there will be miracles which guide people to Him; but what remains of His ministry are His words. These are God's word spoken for our benefit.

Luke 2:10a *And the Angel said to them, "Fear not,...*

What these shepherds are seeing is quite an amazing spectacle, and certainly, they are taken aback with fright. The angel first tells them not to be upset or frightened.

There were a number of great miracles and signs during this period of time—I suspect that there are a great number of them not even recorded in the New Testament—but, they seem to be limited and carefully targeted. Furthermore, no one treats them as everyday occurrences.

Luke 2:10b *...for behold, I bring you good news...*

This is the greatest news that could be brought to anyone of the human race.

The angel is speaking to a handful of shepherds—probably less than 6—of what is about to happen (or has happened) (depending upon who/Who the angel truly is).

In this age of *mega-churches*, we too often think in terms of large numbers. We think that, a church in a metropolitan area, where 3000 or 10,000 (or more) people in attendance is successful; and that a little country church of 18 parishioners (and sometimes, far less than that) is not. That thinking is wrong. God works through large groups of people, as well as medium or small groups. I have been to churches with 4 or 5 parishioners who met in a room which was open to free meetings. God works through all kinds of groups and every size. The impact of a tiny church can be every bit as important as the impact of any sized church. But—and listen to me carefully here—God does work through churches. We are gathered into various sized groups, and there is a man with the authority who teaches the Word of God to his congregation, large, small or in between.

I arrived in Houston soon after what I would consider the golden age of Berachah Church, at which time, it was hard to find a seat at a Sunday service; and pastor Thieme did everything he could to discourage such an overpopulation. However, even after this sort of enthusiasm began to die down, and other churches with doctrinal teachers began to be established, the Word of God continued to be taught at Berachah Church and this tradition continues to this very day.

What is key for every church is a well-trained pastor-teacher, who studies and prepares to teach as many classes as he is able to in any given week. It is from such a one that all spiritual growth emanates. There may be 5 regularly in attendance and there might be 2000. The numbers are never an issue to God. The faithfulness of the pastor and of the congregation—whatever its size—is.

Lesson 059: Luke 2:8–15

The Shepherds Are Told About the Messiah

Let us briefly review where we are in the narrative of Luke 2:

Luke 2:8–9 *There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear.*

We are somewhere on the outskirts of Bethlehem. As previously discussed, even though the Lord has been born in Luke 2:7, this event beginning in v. 8 could have taken place immediately before the Lord's birth.

Luke 2:10a *And the Angel said to them, "Fear not,...*

An angel (Angel?) appears to these shepherds and tells them not to be afraid.

Luke 2:10b *...for behold, I bring you good news...*

The good news is the birth of the Messiah in nearby Bethlehem.

Luke 2:10b-c *...for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

It is interesting to whom the Angel spoke. That may be, in itself, an interesting study. Of all the people in and around Bethlehem, the Angel goes to these shepherds. The Angel does not go to the local synagogue.

The great news will be for the entire human race, not just for the Hebrew people. And the Angel has chosen to speak to these very common shepherds, who we might see as representative of mankind in general.

Luke 2:10 *And the Angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

I am vacillating between capitalizing *angel* or not (I use the ESV, which does not capitalize *angel*; however I am capitalizing it, just as I capitalize all pronouns which refer to the Lord).

This good news, announced to the shepherds, will be great joy for all the people (and I would interpret this to have a much wider application than for just the Jewish people).

What is announced is both good news and great joy. The future tense of *will be* indicates that this *great joy* is a future event. Apart from this event, we have no relationship with the God Who created us.

Luke 2:11a **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,...**

I would make the assumption that *this day* refers to that very day that the Angel is speaking to the shepherds.

The timing of the birth is still up in the air. It is an aorist passive indicative; the aorist tense refers to a point in time (the time of the birth); the passive voice means the child did not cause himself to be born; and the indicative mood is a reference to reality. Although we often translate the aorist tense as a past tense, it can be event which is occurring right at this moment or will occur in the future. The punctiliar nature of the aorist tense is a reference to the action of the verb, but not to the timing of that action.

Luke 2:11b **...who is Christ the Lord.**

The word which we transliterate *Christ* means *Messiah*. *Christ* is our English transliteration of the Greek word *Christos* (χριστός) [pronounced *krees-TOSS*]. *Christos* is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew word, *Mâshîyach* (or, *mâshîyach*) (מָשִׁיחַ) [pronounced *maw-SHEE-ahkh*], which is usually translated *anointed (one)*; but transliterated *Messiah*. Strong's #4899 BDB #603.

Interestingly enough, many translations only have the word *Messiah* occur 4 times (Daniel 9:25–26 and John 1:41 4:25); but it is found many more times in the Hebrew (39 times in the Old Testament). What is actually very rare is the Greek version of the Hebrew word, which is only found twice in the NT (the John passages). That is simply the Hebrew word transliterated into the Greek.

The announcement here (rightly) presumes that the shepherds know about the Messiah (the Christ) and have been looking into the future for Him. The omniscience of God knows the souls of these men. None of these men are going to say, “Christ? What do you mean by that? Who exactly is that?” Many common people in the Judæan area knew about such doctrines.

Jesus is our Savior and our Messiah and our Lord. He has come to save us; He is the One Promised; and He is our ultimate authority.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

It is very possible that the Angel is the Preincarnate Christ. The angel is not identified by name (as Gabriel is); nor does He say, "I have come as a messenger from God" (or anything like that). Furthermore, He comes to these men with this great, magnificent light—something which is often indicative of a divine nature (this is the Shekinah Glory). The Scriptures here do not unequivocally identify this Angel with the Lord; but all of the circumstantial evidence points in that direction. However, if this is the case, then this same Angel will then, in a matter of a few minutes or hours, be born to Mary. I trust that you can see that there are a variety of doctrines impacted by this understanding of Luke 2.

The other option is, this is an angel from God, who has divinely given authority, but who is not himself divine. If that is the case, then there are no spiritual implications by his presence here before the shepherds.

Luke 2:12a And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths..."

A *sign* is something unusual, something that stands out, something which is unexpected. The fact that this is presented as a sign to the shepherds suggests that they will actually see what the Angel is speaking of here. The sign here is essentially a description of what they are to look for specifically.

Swaddling cloths are strips of cloth, often used with the bodies of people who have died, as actually dressing them, after they have begun to decay. As these individual strips of cloth are wrapped, various spices could be added in order to neutralize or overpower the awful smell of the decaying body.

Obviously, they are looking for a recently born child (in fact, just born this day). They are to find an infant wrapped up with strips of cloth, like a corpse of that era.

Many of us have seen mummy movies; and this was pretty much what dead people looked like in some parts of the ancient world (minus the part about them wandering about). They would be wrapped with strips of cloth which were infused with spices that would preserve the body (or these spices would be sprinkled on in between layers or perhaps the cloth would be infused with them). This is certainly not necessarily what we would expect to find a live baby clothed in (although there are other opinions about this).

Part of the reason for interpreting this passage as I have is, this is said to be a sign to the shepherds. Therefore, it is generally going to be out of the ordinary (although various sources dispute that this is unusual).

Luke 2:12b ...and lying in a manger."

This part of the description is what likely makes this child unique. A *manger* is a feeding trough, where food or water might be placed for animals to eat or drink from. This suggests that the child and his parents were outside and not under the cover of a home; or in a barn of some sort.

Luke 2:12 *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

The angel has given these shepherds three things to look for: (1) newly born infant; (2) an infant wrapped with strips of cloth and (3) this infant is placed in a feeding trough as its crib.

This would have been a unique combination of circumstances; so that there would be clearly only one family in this particular situation, with a newborn child, wrapped in cloth strips, and laying in a feeding trough.

Luke 2:13a *And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...*

All of this is occurring before a band of shepherds (we do not know how many there are; but I would suggest that there cannot be too many of them).

This heavenly convocation, all occurring in the periphery of these shepherds, must be an amazing sight. No doubt, these men had lived fairly ordinary lives; and for this to occur, it must have been quite extraordinary.

As an aside, I would not be surprised that, in our eternal future, that we will be able to see sights like these; or even experience them.

Luke 2:13b–14a *...and saying,"Glory to God in the highest,..."*

The words giving glory to God are spoken by this heavenly host.

What was about to take place is the seminal moment of human history. There is no other period of time more important to mankind. For God to have planned this and to carry it out is a marvelous thing.

Luke 2:14b *...and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"*

Peace can have many different meanings; but it is best for us to understand this as peace between man and God. God is well-pleased with those who put faith in His Son. This faith establishes an eternal positive relationship between man and God.

Luke 2:13b–14 *...and saying,"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"*

Was this a chorus of singing? Was this simply something that they said? In either case, it is the content of what they say that is important.

Luke 2:15a **When the angels went away from them into heaven,..**

We have no idea how long this went on for. I would guess only a few minutes; but then, I am not an expert in the field of angel sightings (apart from studying the Word of God).

In any case, at some point, the angels departed from them. Whether this is a 5 minute spectacle or 30 minutes, we do not know. No doubt, the shepherds were moved by this experience.

Now, despite all of the razzle dazzle, the shepherds understood what they needed to do. God had given them this information in order to act upon it.

Luke 2:15b **...the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem..."**

What they have just witnessed is obviously the primary conversation among these shepherds—in fact, there is nothing else that they can talk about.

"We don't really have a choice," one of them may have said. "Based upon what we have seen and heard, we must go to Bethlehem." I don't know if any of them men stated this obvious in such a pragmatic way, but this certainly understood this to be the case.

It is one thing to experience such a vision and to hear such sounds by yourself. You would doubt this and wonder if you had not just dreamed it. But, it is quite another when you see the same thing that several other men see. It just cannot be a dream or some sort of an apparition. Therefore, they all appear to take the attitude that the information given them was real and it came from the LORD. What they saw and experienced was unlike anything that they would ever experience again.

Luke 2:15c **...and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."**

The shepherds here speak of the Angel as being *the Lord*. The argument against this is, God, through the angel, made this known to the shepherds.

If this Angel is the Lord Incarnate, could Jesus have appeared to them immediately prior to His birth?

Lesson 060: Luke 2:8–15

Who or What is this Angel?/Abortion

In the passage which we have been studying, we did a *meanwhile, back at the ranch* thing (that reference surely dates me). All that this means is, we have spent time with Mary and Joseph, we have seen the situation that they are in, Mary has a child; and then we have

a sudden change of scenery, where we are on the outskirts of Bethlehem with an unspecified number of shepherds.

The passage which we have been studying reads:

Luke 2:8–12 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the Angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Luke 2:13–14 And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"

Luke 2:15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

There are 3 options: 1) The angel of the Lord is simply an angel; 2) He is God the Holy Spirit or God the Father; or 3) He is Jesus. The final option logically leads us towards a number of theological implications.

Is the Angel of Luke 2:8–15 the Lord?

1. Unlike Gabriel, who twice makes an appearance in the book of Luke, this Angel is only identified as *the Angel of the Lord*. He is given no particular name.
 - 1) The phrase *the Angel of the Lord* nearly always refers to the Preincarnate Christ in the Old Testament (Gen. 16:7–11 22:11, 15 Exodus 3:2).
 - 2) However, this is not necessarily the case in the New Testament (Matt. 28:2 Luke 1:11).
2. With this Angel comes the glory of God in the form of light all around. This is very similar to the transfiguration that we will study later in Luke 9:28–36. This sort of thing does not appear to be a common occurrence, sometimes separate from God.
3. The Angel appears to be separate and out in front of the group of angels (called here *a multitude of the heavenly host*).
4. Another factor which leads us to conclude that the Angel is the Lord is, the shepherds understand that what they heard was made known to them *by the Lord*. This suggests that they understood the Angel to be the Lord. Let me repeat what they said: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."
 - 1) Obviously, this can be interpreted to mean, *the Lord, through the angel, made this known to us*.
 - 2) However, I lean towards the clear, unambiguous interpretation of a passage unless there is strong evidence to indicate the opposite. That

Is the Angel of Luke 2:8–15 the Lord?

points towards this angel as being Jesus in His Preincarnate state.

5. Although there are other options—and although each of these verses and circumstances could be parsed and explained away—I think the most obvious explanation for what we read is, *this is Jesus, the Revealed God, the Preincarnate Christ*. Every other explanation requires a great deal more parsing and equivocation. And, for what reason? What is an overriding doctrine or passage which requires us to think of this Angel as not divine?
6. If just any Member of the Godhead acted as *the Revealed God*, the specific nature of the Lord-Messiah becomes less important. Throughout the Old Testament, we find God revealing Himself in a myriad of ways—and in nearly every case, it makes sense to understand this as the Preincarnate Christ (I cannot think of a counterexample).
7. However, if we understand this passage in this way, then there are two implications, the latter one being quite important:
 - 1) Jesus has not yet been born, relative to the shepherds being witnesses to these great signs. This simply means that this passage occurs prior to Luke 2:7, which is in keeping with Luke's style of writing (for example, Luke 1:80 is 30 years in the future from our current narrative). On occasion, Luke will move a narrative forward in a particular passage; but then, in the next verse, he returns to the time of the general narrative (as He does in Luke 2:1, the verse which follows 1:80).
 - 2) What is a very important implication of understand this Angel to be the Lord is, ensoulment does not occur until the child takes the first breath. That is, the soul, as we know it, is not a part of a person until God breathes that first breath into him. Even though God is omnipresent, we do not find Jesus appearing in multiple places at the same time. When God became man (John 1:1–3, 14), taking on humanity places some limitations upon the Lord (this is a whole different topic).
 - 3) Neither of these implications is a leap. #1 is very much in keeping with the way that Luke writes; and #2 is the view of orthodox theology.

What this means is, the Lord appears to the shepherds perhaps minutes or hours before He is born. Therefore, the ensoulment of the Lord occurs at birth (which is the orthodox viewpoint). Because of the great abortion controversy of the past 40 years or so, this particular understanding of the soul has been lost among Christians who oppose abortion.

One very specific difference between the life of the Lord and ours is, He preexisted as a Spiritual Being. Jesus, as a human being, has a beginning when He is born; but His Spirit is eternal. For us, there is no preexistence of souls taught in Scripture. Everything in Scripture points to us becoming human life at birth, our souls being created at that instant (not unlike Adam and the woman being created on the 6th day).

Quite frankly, I do not know if this particular issue is discussed elsewhere, concerning the question, who or what is this angel? (Sometimes I read commentaries prior to writing these lessons; but most often, I do not.)

On the surface, this clearly seems to be the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament, the Deity Who Revealed Himself to various men in Israel throughout the previous 2000+ years is commonly understood to be the Preincarnate Christ. One member of the Trinity has a relationship with man where He reveals Himself and God's plan to various people throughout the Age of Israel; and even prior to that. He is the Revealed God, as we do not discover God on our own; He must reveal Himself to us. To draw a fine point here, prior to God revealing Himself to us, we do come to a place of God-consciousness, where we become aware of the concept of God. Today, in the Church Age, we come to the point of God consciousness; and if we are interested in knowing God, then Jesus reveals Himself to us soon thereafter (that is, someone gives us the gospel or we read it in the Bible).

In the incident which we are studying, there is more going on here than an angel simply coming to these shepherds and saying, "Hey, listen; you guys may want to head on over to Bethlehem and look for the Messiah Who has just been born." With this Angel came a great deal of light, which is very often associated with the Shekinah Glory. There is also this great angelic host which seems to act as a backup for this Angel. Finally, the shepherds themselves say, **"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."** (Emphasis mine)

The implication of all this is, when we breathe in our first breath, God breathes soul-life into us. With that first breath, we become a complete human being—helpless and fully dependent upon adults, at that point—but complete. A newly-born child has a soul and a body (and Jesus would have been born with a spirit as well).

Adam was created trichotomous (with a spirit, soul and body); Jesus is born trichotomous; but we were born dichotomous—with only a soul and body. This is because we are born spiritually dead. Adam's original sin has been imputed to us and we are born with an inherent sin nature. Therefore, our spirit (the way that we interact with and understand God) is either non-existent or dormant.

This takes us into one of the most controversial places in Christian theology—abortion. Now, clearly, most Christians oppose abortion; and most oppose abortion at any stage, whether caused by the morning after pill or taking place at any time prior to birth.

At the same time, there are also some who believe—and this does include some Christians—that abortion is a matter to be decided between the (potential) mother and her doctor. The explanation as to how a Christian can believe this, goes like this: there is no soul in the fetus, so destroying a fetus is not the same as destroying a person. Now, whereas that is technically true, that does not mean that people should have the right to destroy the life which is in the womb. I believe that is a misapplication of understanding of when ensoulment takes place (when baby takes its first breath).

Let's take a simple case study—if this Angel is Jesus in His preincarnate state, and that the child in Mary's womb does not yet have a soul or spirit—which is, again, I must stress this—the orthodox Christian and Jewish position—does that mean that Mary and her doctor, if she chose to, could get rid of this fetus? The answer is obviously *no*; and it seems blasphemous to even suggest such a thing. One might argue, *well, in this one particular case, clearly Mary would not be allowed to abort her child* (given all that has taken place up to this point in time).

However, I would argue that this is the case at any point in a pregnancy, and I believe that there is Scripture which backs this up (the only passage which speaks directly to this controversy).

Exodus 21:22–25 [God is speaking directly to Moses] "[When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.](#)" (ESV)

We have two men in a fight and a pregnant woman is inadvertently involved and she is injured. These are men who have no intention of harming this woman; but it just happened. So, there is no motive. Whatever happens here is unintentional. However, their actions clearly endanger this woman; and in our law, we call this, *reckless endangerment*. Let me come up with a current situation to illustrate this—a person is texting while driving and gets into an accident. Obviously, that person has no intention of getting into an accident or causing any harm to anyone, but, by their actions, could be charged with reckless endangerment.

This narrative concern itself with which man is in the wrong.

As a result of being put into the fray, in some way, the woman is caused to give birth, but, *there is no harm*. The verb *to be* here is an imperfect verb, which means, *there continues to be no harm*. Let me suggest that, if there is any injury—including death—whether to the mother or to the child (or children), an appropriate punishment is assessed, which includes *a life for a life*.

Let's first look at the best case scenario—the woman gives birth as a result of the altercation, but there is no harm. I would think that would mean, the woman continues to be okay and her child (or children) continue okay—she has given birth to a child, but that child is unharmed. Then a fine would be assessed against the guilty party (the man who caused her to be jostled or knocked over or whatever, causing her to give birth). The husband would suggest a fine, and that might be modified in court.

The second option is, the woman gives birth and there is harm which follows. The word for *harm* is, ἄσῶν (ἄσῳ) [pronounced *aw-SOWN*], which means, *mischief, evil, harm, hurt*.

Strong's #611 BDB #62. This word only occurs 5 times in Scripture (Gen. 42:4, 38 44:29, Exodus 21:22-23), and in each case, it appears to refer to physical harm.

What would be an outcome which could be understood to be physically harmful? If there was any harm which came to the mother or to her child. I do not see any way for a person to read this and conclude, the mother is fine, the child dies; and that would be considered as if no harm or hurt took place (there are some who interpret this passage in this way). One of the assumptions of this passage is, *and her children come out* (that is, she gives birth or she miscarries). I don't see any way that you can view the death of the child as being a non-harmful outcome. I believe that a person who comes to that interpretation had a preset ideology to begin with; and that taking this passage at face value interfered with that ideology.

The punishment described is described like this: *But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*" This does not mean that, the woman is knocked over and her hand is injured, so the punishment will be a cutting off of the culprit's hand. That is *not* what this means. It means that punishment will be equivalent in some way to the injury that was caused.

Today, in many states, we have actual settlement numbers attached to various injuries. The loss of an eye would mean this amount; the injury of a hand would mean a different amount. The idea is, to find what would be a proper amount to compensate the injured party. Attaching such numbers to various injuries is an attempt to find a proper compensation for various injuries.

Let me suggest that the proper application here is, the child in the womb—even though it does not have a soul—is a process developed by God, and that we have no business trying to interfere with that process (that is, in a way which could end the viability of the fetus). God has a process by which some fetuses do die in the womb or at some point between conception and birth. God is sovereign over life; and we accept this. However, I do not believe that we have God's sovereignty over the life a woman is carrying in her womb, even though this life does not yet have a soul. And, when I use the word *we*, I mean the woman. Once this life process has begun, the woman does not have authority over that process. The argument, *my body, my choice*; is a slogan, not really an argument. When a separate human life begins, the mother does not have an absolutely right over that child's life—not before birth or after. In fact, the slogan, *my body, my choice*; is very similar to the saying, *I brought you into this world and I can take you out* (something a very angry mother might say).

One more thing: the concept of ensoulment is very much a religious issue. Christians and possibly even some religious Jews have different views on this topic. When it comes to a societal law regarding abortion (or banning abortion), ensoulment cannot be a part of that conversation. We have to be careful about taking Christian doctrines—particularly doctrines which are not universally agreed upon—and basing laws upon those doctrines.

What we can do is, take passages like Exodus 21:22–25 and given them a modern-day application.

Interestingly enough, an atheist is, in general, not going to believe in a soul as separate from the body. Therefore, logically, the atheist who is against casually taking life, ought to be against abortion (although most are not).

Lesson 061: Luke 2:8–19

The Shepherds Go to See the Christ Child

At this point in our narrative, an Angel, and then a great number of angels, have appeared to some shepherds in a field at night and have told them about the baby about to be born.

Luke 2:8–9 *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*

We have already discussed in depth the identity of this Angel; I believe that this is Jesus in His Preincarnate form. This would require that ensoulment takes place at birth and not before. Furthermore, this passage must take place immediately prior to the birth of the Lord in Bethlehem.

The Angel has appeared to these shepherds and the glory of the Lord is all around them.

Luke 2:10–12 *And the Angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

The Angel, telling these shepherds of the Savior being born, tells them how to identify the Savior.

Luke 2:13–14 *And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!"*

Suddenly, there is a multitude of angels, praising God and saying these words.

Luke 2:15 *When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."*

The shepherds understand that God made this thing known to them, but through the unnamed Angel Who appeared to them (Whom I believe is the Lord).

Nevertheless, I doubt that there were any deep theological discussions about the angels at this point. To see such a wondrous sight must have caused these men to focus upon heavenly things; and upon what they had just seen and heard.

They use the subjunctive about *seeing this thing*, which could be translated, **Let us go to Bethlehem that we *might* see this thing which has happened**. Bethlehem is a big place (relatively speaking), and there must be dozens of stables there—maybe over a hundred? So, they don't know if they can find what the angel has described, but their volition is pulling them in that direction, nevertheless. They saw themselves as having no other choice. They had to find the Savior of Israel born that day in Bethlehem.

Luke 2:16a **And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph,....**

The shepherds moved quickly to Bethlehem, excited about the promise of the Angel.

The shepherds did not go all over Bethlehem calling out for *Mary and Joseph* because it does not appear that they were given their names. However, they found Mary and Joseph as a result of searching for the specific things which the Angel of the Lord told them to look for. Logically, these shepherds would have gone to the stables in Bethlehem, which is where mangers (feeding troughs) would be found.

Another possibility is, they went to one or several inns and asked if anyone had given birth recently. When they were told that there was such a couple out in the stables, the shepherds knew they had found what they were looking for. I doubt that there were many births occurring at this time; so it is my guess that, the first place where they discovered a recent pregnancy was the right place.

Joseph and Mary and named first, simply because the shepherds would have seen them first, as the adults.

Luke 2:16b **...and the baby lying in a manger.**

The child was likely born while the shepherds were walking towards Bethlehem.

There are likely many things happening closely related to the birth of the Christ-child, not all of these things recorded in the Word of God. In the books of Matthew and Luke, a number of people interact with Mary and Joseph and the Child. However, I suspect there are far more stories to be told than have been recorded.

Luke 2:16 **And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.**

I would think that the child was born while the shepherds were making their way to Bethlehem. Here, we are told that the shepherds walked quickly to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby as well.

How many children had been born in Bethlehem within that past week? Probably very few; possibly just one. How many of them were laying in a feeding trough? Undoubtedly, just one.

Luke 2:17 *And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.*

The shepherds tell everyone who is there what happened and what the angels said to them (maybe it is just Mary and Joseph; but I would not be surprised if there are other people there at this time). They found the child laying in a feeding trough; and He was wrapped in pieces of cloth, not unlike a mummy. They had no doubts as to this child being the Christ-child that they had been told about.

The shepherds would have likely told the people there about what they saw and what the Angel told them about what to look for.

Luke 2:18 *And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.*

Notice the words, *and all who heard it*. This in itself implies that there are more people here than Mary and Joseph (and the Child). Based upon the events that we will read about in the book of Luke, it is likely that God had drawn a number of people to His Son—many of whom are not named or identified in any of the gospels. The shepherds arrive and they begin talking about their experience, and these other people, who have come to see the baby Jesus, are amazed by what they hear.

It is my opinion that the Biblical narratives only tell of a few of the things that happened around the birth of Jesus; but they don't tell the whole story. Here, several translations use the word *everyone* (*Everyone who heard about it was astonished at what the shepherds told them, while Mary paid close attention to what they said and mulled over what they meant.*—Luke 2:18–19, Wiki). I think that *everyone* implies that there were a number of people in attendance at the birth and soon after the birth of the child, and that they have been brought there by various and sundry means. It would not surprise me that there are 5 other people there; or 10 or perhaps even 20.

The word translated *wondered* is the aorist active indicative of *thaumázō* (θαυμάζω) [pronounced *thau-MAUD-zoh*], which means, *to wonder, to marvel, to be struck with admiration or astonishment*. Strong's #2296. The aorist tense means that we look at the action of the verb as a single act. The shepherds tell about their experience, and during that period of time, the many people are astonished by what they heard. The active voice means, they heard the words of the shepherds and they then actively became astonished (that is, as a result of their volition, considering the words of the shepherds). The indicative mood indicates that this really happened.

The people there in attendance hear the shepherds and they are amazed at their words because they believe them. A variety of situations may have caused these people to come

there to witness the Christ-Child; and what the shepherds testify to confirms their own set of experiences.

All of these people are witnesses to the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus, as the Christ-Child does not Himself give a testimony as to His Person. These people who show up and explain how they happened to be drawn there—these people witness as to Who the Baby Jesus is.

It is my guess that other people, having been drawn to this place on this day, also speak and tell others how it is they happened to end up here, in the stables, to see the Child just born to Mary.

Perhaps you have been to a meeting where several people speak about their experiences which brought them to God. This is very much analogous to such a meeting. We do not know how many shepherds there were; we do not know how many other periphery people showed up, but I would not be surprised if there were 20 or more people there on the first day of the birth of Jesus. They would have been brought there by various and sundry means. It is even possible that some of these people could have been walking about, saw crowds gathering, and they went over to see what was happening. God would not necessarily have drawn men to Him through only spectacular means.

However, many people no doubt had an experience or situation which caused them to travel to Bethlehem and to find the child. The shepherds shared their story; and, very likely, 5 or 6 others (maybe 10 or 20 others) share their story as to how they came to be here, at the birth of Jesus. However, in the book of Luke, we only have the point of view of the shepherds, but I see them as a representative sampling rather than the only ones drawn there.

Luke 2:19 **But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.**

Let me suggest that Mary was likely the source of much of this information for Luke. She remembered what was said, she sets this information apart in her heart and considers it, remembering it for much of her life. At various points in the future, she shares the narrative of these events with many people. We are privy in this verse to her thinking, which suggests to me that Luke got this information directly from Mary.

If you recall Mary's trip to see Elizabeth, this would have been a meeting only known to these two women (and Elizabeth's husband). Given that Elizabeth and Zacharias were both older, they would probably have died prior to the ministry of their son, John. So Luke would have never met them. However, it is very likely that Luke met Mary, and, through Mary, learned about the birth of John the Herald, the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, and these events that we are now studying.

Mary has a great many things to consider. She is going to give birth without knowing a man; an angel has spoken to her; and there shepherds who are strangers to her came out

of nowhere and told her about an amazing experience. She was experiencing a birth and a child like no other. And there is probably a crowd of people there.

Mary knew for a fact everything was different; that things were not as per the normal course of events, giving birth to a child without the help of a man. So, when she heard things like this, she kept them in her mind; she thought about them and considered them and remembered them.

You may recall that there are incidents recorded in the book of Luke that no one would have known except for Mary—that is, by the time the Luke was on the scene. We know about Luke and his interactions with Paul in the book of Acts. By this time, most of the people in Luke 1–2 would have been dead or impossible to find—apart from Mary, the mother of Jesus. Again, it is an assumption on my part that Luke received much of his information for the early chapters of his gospel from Mary by direct interview (obviously, Luke may have learned this information from Mary’s children, from any of the half-brothers and half-sisters to the Lord).

We should never forget that the Bible is both the Word of God and the writings of men. Throughout Scriptures, there are natural reasons which explain how these various men wrote these things (in our study of Genesis, on several occasions, I discussed the authors of that book). Let me suggest that these are clues regarding Luke’s gathering of this information. Even though he came along after the fact, much of the information included in his gospel sounds very much as if it came from Mary’s point of view. Therefore, Luke may have spoken to Mary (the mother of Jesus) or to people closely associated with Mary, and found out most of these things via direct interview.

Lesson 062: Luke 2:20–22 The Shepherds Return/Jesus is Brought to the Temple

In Luke 2:7–19, an Angel (Whom I believe to be the Lord) came upon shepherds out in the field and told them about a child soon to be born. They came to see the child, which is what we have been studying in this second section of Luke 2.

Luke 2:20a *And the shepherds returned,...*

We are never given a time frame here. Did they stay a few hours or a few days? I think that it is logical that they only remained there a few hours. Where would they sleep? How would they eat? These things certainly could have been seen to; but it is possible that this place was crowded to begin with (we do not know how many people God drew to the birth of His Son). These shepherds (we don’t know how many) would have found little space to stay, given that even Mary and Joseph had difficulties themselves finding any place to stay.

Furthermore, shepherds are used to living under the great sky, with deserted acres in all directions around them (deserted, except for the sheep). So it makes sense that they did

not overstay their welcome. Also, the shepherds had a responsibility towards the herd (no doubt, one man was left behind to manage the animals).

Luke 2:20b ...glorifying and praising God...

This entire experience has really jazzed up the shepherds. My guess is, they are powered now by adrenalin and that they are totally psyched to have seen the Christ-child. There does not seem to be a doubt in any of their minds about this, which we would expect, given the way that the Angel informed them. We have no idea what it was like to be in the Presence of the Christ child—but the narrative paints a very clear picture of the experience of the shepherds out in the field. That in itself would have certainly convinced them.

That they found the Christ child exactly as described was enough for them. Given how this was announced to them would have left little room for doubt.

Let me suggest that, at this birth of Jesus, there were a number of people who showed up, all guided there in a variety of circumstances; and that they would have discussed these things openly and fellowshiped over the entire experience. Let me further suggest that not all of their stories are recorded in the gospels. We have a very limited view of what takes place this night in Bethlehem, as well as future nights there. There is no reason for us to expect that Luke recorded each and every human interaction which takes place (for all we knew, he may have edited⁷⁶ some of them out).

Luke 2:20c ...for all they had heard and seen,...

In terms of miraculous experiences, we only know of how the shepherds were contacted in the field to begin with, by the angel, which face to face meeting then suddenly became an angelic choir.

I suspect that, around the baby Jesus, things were more calm; but that many there (I am guessing 5–20) would be there telling of their experiences and how God brought them there.

Despite the amazing experience of the angels in the field, coming into the Presence of the Christ Child must have been a wondrous experience. This has been promised from the very beginning of the Bible.

We have no idea how often God gathered small groups of people to the Christ child. I can only recall two specific instances—the shepherds and the magi. However, there is no reason to presume that they were the only groups to come to see the Christ Child.

Luke 2:20d ...as it had been told them.

⁷⁶ Meaning, he may have heard about this or that person, but decided not to record it in the Lord's biography.

These shepherds had an amazing experience and they know with a certainty that Israel is now saved. Exactly what this meant and how much they understood, is a whole other thing.

The Angel announced to the shepherds about the birth of the Lord and where He might be found.

Luke 2:20 *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*

The shepherds do not appear to have any doubts about what has happened; or Who they have seen, even as a babe in the manger. What they were told they would see, they saw. Despite their semi-nomadic life, it is likely that they all shared this story with others. How could they not?

Luke 2:21a *And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised,...*

At this point, the narrative jumps ahead 8 days—and a movement ahead in time is common to the biography.

Jesus, like virtually all Jewish children, was circumcised at the end of 8 days.

Circumcision generally speaks of the new birth or the spiritual birth. God takes that which is dead and makes it alive. This is based upon Abraham being quite old, and his wife as well; and then he is circumcised and he fathers his first child with Sarah. For the previous 80 years (give or take) their union produced no children; but after being circumcised, Isaac was born to Sarah and Abraham.

Having a child circumcised speaks more to the faith of the parents more than to that of the infant.

Luke 2:21b *...He was called Jesus,...*

It is at the circumcision where a child is officially named. It appears to me that those who keep such records come as witnesses to the circumcision of a child, and record all of the pertinent information, which is then made a part of the official Jewish records. Both Matthew and Luke have an extensive genealogy, only made possible by accurate records.

In the Greek, *Jesus* is actually *lêsous* (Ἰησοῦς) [pronounced ee-ay-SOOCE], and it means *Jehovah is salvation*. The Old Testament (Hebrew) version of this name is *Joshua*. Strong's #2424. *Jesus* and *Joshua* are both our English version of these names (despite there being no letter *j* in either the Greek or the Hebrew).

Luke 2:21c *...the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*

The angel Gabriel had told Mary that this is what the child's name would be.

One translator says that the angel was prophesying Jesus' name; and that Joseph named Him. My problem with this is, even though Mary is said to store up all of this information that she had been receiving, this does not mean that she never spoke of it to anyone. Quite obviously, she had to speak to Luke in order for him to record this narrative. So, when an angel comes to Mary and says she will be pregnant by the Holy Spirit; and then she is pregnant, I would logically assume that she is going to convey all this information to her husband-to-be—including the Lord's name. I can see no logical reason why she would withhold that little detail. Therefore, Joseph would already know the Lord's name before He is born.

It is customary for the man to name the child, so Joseph naming the Child *Jesus* indicates an acceptance of the situation just as described to him by Mary (also, recall that an angel spoke to Joseph when he found out that Mary was pregnant).

Luke 2:21 **And at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.**

With the birth of Jesus, God is forever identified with the His people and with the human race. Jesus is eternally our road/way/means to God.

Luke 2:22a **And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses,...**

This is according to the Law as found in Lev. 12:2–6 "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation. And she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for sixty-six days. And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering,..." (ESV) In the Leviticus passage, God is speaking to Moses. The woman who has just given birth to a male child is unclean for 7 days; then the child is circumcised and she remains unclean for another 33 days. She will be unclean having given birth to a female child for 2 weeks, and then 66 more days.

The woman is considered ceremonially unclean because, even though she has brought life into the world, this is life corrupted by the sin nature. Therefore, she is considered unclean, because she is in close contact with the unclean. You will notice that the husband is not bound by this same law as he has not come into that same close contact with the unclean thing.

Luke 2:22b **...they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...**

Once these days of purification have been completed (the time table being given above), then the child is brought to the priest to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting (previously the Tabernacle; and now, the Temple⁷⁷).

We do not know if Mary and Joseph have remained in Bethlehem all of this time, or whether they returned back home. I would suggest that they remained in Bethlehem (or somewhere else close to Jerusalem), as they had the financial wherewithal to do so (Matt. 2:11).

Luke 2:22 *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord...*

Mary and Joseph strictly followed the Law of Moses with regards to Jesus. That means that they had to know the Law first in order to obey it.

Luke now quotes a portion of the pertinent principle (interestingly enough; rather than quote the passage which they were obeying):

Luke 2:23 *...(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")...* Ex. 13:2

Jesus, as the firstborn, is set aside to the Lord.

We read in Ex. 13:1–2 *The LORD said to Moses, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."* The firstborn child is considered the LORD's. That is, the firstborn is to be set apart to the Lord. Specifically, these are males who *open up the womb*: Ex. 13:11–12 *"When the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the LORD all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the LORD's."*

This is specified to be the firstborn male in Ex. 22:29; but it appears to be true for all of the firstborn. Ex. 34:19 Num. 3:13 6:16–17 18:15. Perhaps we should understand this to be true of all the firstborn; but particularly true of the male firstborn.

The 10th and final plague in Egypt was the death of the firstborn. All Israel was told to sacrifice a lamb for a house and the blood of that lamb would be put onto the door frame of each house. The Angel of God would see that blood and pass over that house. Where the Angel did not see the blood, he would kill the firstborn in that house (which could be more than one person; and it included animals). Those who were not killed—those under the blood—were said to be redeemed by God. Therefore, the firstborn of the Hebrew people—whether human or animal—had to be redeemed (paid for) in order to commemorate this event.

⁷⁷ The Tabernacle was a tent which could be moved about; the Temple was a permanent structure, first built by King Solomon.

Luke 2:24a ...and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord,...

An animal was offered as a sacrifice in order to redeem the firstborn. If the couple was poor, then they might offer up the following:

Luke 2:24b ..."a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Lev. 12:8

Lev. 12:5–6 And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering,..." (ESV) The child is brought into the world with a sin nature; and that is the ceremonial significance of the days of purification. So, the child with the sin nature is brought to the priest—who, as a priest, represents man to God. The priest, in this way, is a picture of Jesus Christ. So the priest must receive an animal sacrifice in order to redeem the child—who, despite being the cutest thing ever, is fully infested with a sin nature, and therefore, the child is unacceptable to God without a sacrifice.

Lev.5:11 12:8 allow for some substitutions, if the parents are poor.

It is the sacrifice and the priest which stand between the Tent of Meeting (or, the Temple). Man goes to the Tent of Meeting (or to the Temple) in order to commune with God. However, the child has a sin nature. So there is no communion with God. Therefore, the sacrifice is offered and then the priest appeals to God—each, in its own way, represents Jesus Christ dying for our sins and then interceding on our behalf. By *each*, I am referring to the priest and to the animal sacrifice.

But, on this day, things are different. Joseph and Mary bring Jesus, but He is a child without sin and without a sin nature, yet here, He is being brought to the Temple and to the priest. Jesus has no sin nature; He has not been imputed with Adam's original sin. So Jesus being brought here cannot be the same as bringing any other baby to the Temple. For Jesus, He is being brought before God in order to enter into the plan of God. He will fulfill the plan of God by becoming our High Priest Who offers Himself for our sins. Jesus, in this ceremony, is being identified with the animal sacrifice and with the priest. He will become our sacrifice and He will be our High Priest.

Luke 2:24 ...and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Lev. 12:8

The book of Hebrews describes this to us: Heb. 10:10–13 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. (ESV; capitalized) Jesus Christ is our High Priest; and He offers His Own body on the tree on our behalf. See also Heb. 7:27 9:11–14.

So, Mary and Joseph have brought the child Jesus to the Temple for these rituals to be performed. Jesus is not cleansed or purified by the offering of the turtledoves (or young pigeons), but He is identified with them, as He will offer Himself, in the fullness of time, for our sins.

Lessons 063–065: Luke 2:25–35

The Righteous and Devout Simeon

Then Luke tells us about what happened at this time that offerings are being made for Jesus.

Luke 2:25a **Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon,...**

Luke made a great many private discoveries about the Lord and His early life. It is my educated guess that there were hundreds of various stories of individuals and groups who knew something about the birth of the LORD Jesus along with the events of the first few months. Given what we have studied so far, it seems very likely that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is likely the source for most of what we have read in these first 2 chapters of Luke.

One of these incidents involves a man called Simeon, which is a common Jewish name (one of the original tribes is Simeon).

Luke 2:25b **...and this man was righteous and devout** [or, *circumspect*],...

Simeon is righteous by means of imputed righteousness.

The Greek word translated *devout* is *eulabês* (εὐλαβής) [pronounced *yoo-lab-ACE*]. It means, *taking careful hold; circumspect; pious; devout*. Strong's #2126. Devout suggests that he was knowledgeable about the Word of God. So, he was both a believer in the Revealed God of Israel and he had achieved a reasonable level of spiritual maturity. Therefore, he would have been a man learned in the Scriptures (the Scriptures at that time being the Old Testament).

Luke 2:25c **...waiting for the consolation of Israel,...**

The word *consolidation* is the feminine noun *paráklêsis* (παράκλησις) [pronounced *par-AK-lay-sis*], which means 1) *a calling near, summons, (especially for help)*; 2) *importation, supplication, entreaty*; 3) *exhortation, admonition, encouragement*; 4) *consolation, comfort, solace; that which affords comfort or refreshment*; 4a) *thus of the Messianic salvation (so the Rabbis call the Messiah the consoler, the comforter)*; 5) *persuasive discourse, stirring address*; 5a) *instructive, admonitory, conciliatory, powerful hortatory discourse*. Thayer definitions only. Strong's #3874. The Jews believed that, at some point in the future, nation Israel would be restored; the Jewish people would be called or summoned by the Messiah, the King of Israel, to Israel, having been scattered all over the earth. At that point, God would give them comfort and solace.

So, Simon is also there, at the Temple, and he was thinking about and looking for the comfort or consolation of Israel, which is a referral to the time when Jesus would rule this earth from Jerusalem.

There were many Jews who believed that a messiah would free Israel from the control of Rome. Now, even though it appears that Simeon is thinking about this; my guess is, since he is circumspect, he will be able to adjust his thinking to whatever the truth is.

Jesus will offer the kingdom to the people of Israel, but they will, for the most part, reject it. The rejection of the Lord will be so complete that those who ought to know the Scriptures the best—the priests and Levites—will engineer sham trials against the Lord, producing a series of false witnesses. And then the people there, when offered by Pilate the freedom of Jesus or a gangster, they choose the freedom of the gangster. The rejection of the Lord by Israel could not be much more stark than with that incident.

Some commentators see the *Consolation of Israel* as being a messianic title. Both would be closely tied together—the Messiah coming to His people and Israel being comforted as a nation. However, I believe this to be best understood as the restoration of Israel (which can only take place under Israel's Savior).

Now, when it comes to the Messianic prophecies, the Messiah is described in many ways. He is described both as being human and as being God; He is described as being a conquering Hero Who regathers the Hebrew people, but also as a suffering servant.

Simeon is there, at the Temple, thinking about the restoration of Israel—the Scriptures he has heard are in his mind. At this point in time, Israel was in a fragile state—Simeon could see this. Let me suggest that he realized that there was corruption in the religious class. So he had grave concerns about Israel, spiritually; which translated into having an affect on every aspect of their lives. And this causes him to think about the Messiah and the restoration of Israel.

Luke 2:25d ...and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

The Holy Spirit coming upon Simeon may or may not have been an ecstatic event. I prefer to think that, Simeon was hearing the Word of God being spoken, and the Holy Spirit revealed to him just what was being said and what was meant by these words. He is hearing these words from Scripture in his mind and they are making perfect sense to him.

Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

We have two things taking place at the same time. We have Mary and Joseph bringing the infant Jesus to the Temple for the purification rites found in Leviticus. But also, there is this man Simeon. He is thinking about the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit comes upon him while these things are on his mind.

Luke 2:26a **And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit...**

I would understand the verb here to refer back to God the Holy Spirit from the previous passage. The Spirit has come upon Simeon and He is now revealing new information to him.

In our era, we as believers have the Holy Spirit; and He reveals truths to us from Scripture. We accord our lives with the Scripture in our souls. The Holy Spirit is not sitting right next to us as we drive, telling us, “You intend to make a right turn up ahead; don’t do that; make a left turn instead.” We receive revelation of truth from Scriptures.

As believers, we need to rightly divide the Word of Truth. The Holy Spirit has a ministry in every dispensation; but it is not the exact same ministry. Just as Jesus Christ—the Revealed God in the Old Testament—has a particular ministry in each dispensation, but it is not the exact same ministry. Let me point out a most obvious difference: for 3–4 years, the people of Israel got to see Jesus in person during His very short public ministry. 2000 years prior to this, no one saw the public ministry of Jesus. And for 2000 years after that time, no one can take a plane trip to Israel and find Jesus teaching somewhere. He only had a real physical presence for a relatively short period of time in human history. So, we have to recognize that, based upon that fact alone, the Lord’s ministry is different then than it is right now.

It should not be difficult to figure out that God the Holy Spirit also has a different ministry to us. When the church was being established—which meant that nation Israel was temporarily being set aside—the Holy Spirit had a very dramatic impact upon His coming upon those who had believed in Jesus. People suddenly could speak in foreign languages that they had never learned. Certain believers could actually do what Jesus did and heal others of real physical diseases. This sort of activity had not occurred before.

Current charismatic churches notwithstanding, there is no place where you can go today and hear real foreign languages being spoken by people who have never learned them; there are no traveling groups of believers who heal any and all who come to them. All of that took place for a very limited period of time. These were signs which accompanied history changing events (the 1st advent of the Lord; and the foundation of the church). At this point, the church has clearly been founded and the nation Israel has been set aside as a conduit through which God works and reveals new information. We know this. No one goes to Israel today in order to find a prophet teaching new things from God.

Now, what is nice for us, in this era, is we can see all of these things take place in our own mind’s eye. The great battles of David? We can be there, in the midst of the battle. God making His covenant with Abraham? We can be right there, hearing God’s words and seeing Abraham’s reaction of faith. The Lord’s public ministry? We can be right there, with knowledge of the Scriptures and a modicum of imagination.

Back to Simeon—and I blame Simeon for this digression—he will experience something that you and I will not personally experience. He will know that he will see the Messiah

before he, Simeon, dies. God the Holy Spirit reveals this to him. However, we know that, at death, we will see Jesus.

Luke 2:26b ...that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Simeon understood that he would not die before seeing the Christ [= Messiah] of the Lord. You will note that what is happening around the birth of the Lord are a variety of strange happenings—some of them miraculous.

All Israel knew of the coming Messiah; and they knew about various aspects of Him. The way that Jesus appeared on this earth and His earthly ministry will not be exactly what was expected. This is because many of the people at that time overemphasized one aspect of His ministry (the restoration of Israel), but did not appreciate Him as the suffering servant (Psalm 22 Isa. 53), the One Who would die for our sins (the book of Leviticus).

This is no different from cults and some denominations today. They often focus on one set of specific Scriptures, and extrapolate their entire theology from that set of Scriptures, and then force everything else in the Bible to conform to that theology (or, they ignore what is found elsewhere in Scripture). The Jehovah's Witnesses are a prime example of that. The Bible clearly teaches the humanity of Jesus Christ. In fact, the book of Luke focuses upon that aspect of Jesus more than the other gospels. This emphasis of the Jehovah's Witnesses causes them to bend all Scriptures to fit this view of Jesus, Whom they call a *god*, but refuse to recognize Him as *the God*. So they take every instance where Jesus is clearly spoken of as God and they put their own JW spin on it. They add in their own phoney Greek *scholarship* in John 1:3. When Thomas sees and feels the nail prints in the hands and side of Jesus, he says, "My Lord and my God." The claim of the JW's is, Thomas says the first thing to Jesus and then he looks up into the sky and says the second thing to God the Father (despite there being nothing in the context to suggest that). Those are two examples of dozens of places where they have to put a spin on the Scripture which is there, in order to make it coincide with their corrupt theology.

Similarly, liberals today will take a handful of Scriptures concerning Jesus and paint Him as a long-haired, sandal-wearing hippie, spreading peace, love and socialism.

Believers must allow themselves to be informed by the entire Bible, not just the parts that they really like. This is why verse-by-verse, book-by-book teaching is necessary in the church today.

Back to Simeon:

Luke 2:26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Simeon here is thinking about the consolation of Israel, and somehow, he comes to the realization that he will see the Messiah himself. This is extra-Biblical information. Obviously, there is no verse in the Bible which states, "Simeon will see the Messiah before

his death.” So, in some way, apart from the revelation of Scripture, this was revealed to him.

Luke 2:27a *And he came in the Spirit into the temple,...*

This would have been Herod’s Temple which Jewish people are, apparently, loathe to admit as being another Temple. Most seem to believe that this is a refurbishing of Zerubbabel’s Temple, which was built when the diaspora returned to Judæa.

On this history, I am not fully certain. In the studying which I have done, it appears that the Jews officially recognize two Temples, but these would be Solomon and Zerubbabel’s Temples. Now, it is at least 400 years after Zerubbabel and we know for a fact that Herod build a Temple for the Hebrews, using his private funds. Now, did he thoroughly refurbish the old Temple? On this point, I could not find specific information that Herod built a new Temple or refurbished the old one. Philosophically, an argument could be made for both cases. The Hebrew people needed their Temple in order to facilitate Y^ehowah worship. This would suggest that Zerubbabel’s Temple was in use while Herod built the 3rd Temple. But, how could Herod get the people to leave the Temple built by one of their own and go to a Temple built by Herod? Most arguments seem to lead in the direction of Herod refurbishing the old Temple.

In any case, during the earthly ministry of our Lord, this Temple built by Herod, was fully put to use. This is where Simeon and Joseph and Mary were all gathered.

Even though it says that Simeon *came in the Spirit into the Temple*; he did not actually enter into the Temple sanctuary. There were specific ceremonies and rituals which took place inside of the Temple; but they were not made public. However, there was a wall and several gathering places around the Temple, within the Temple complex (or Temple courtyard). It is to these various gathering places that people went to pray, to hear teaching or to interact with the priests.

So, Simeon, Mary and Joseph are within the Temple complex walls. All 3 are apparently guided and empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

Luke 2:27b *...and when the parents brought in the child Jesus,...*

There was a time frame during which the parents were to bring a child before a priest (Lev. 12:2–6).

Luke 2:27c *...to do for Him according to the custom of the Law,...*

They had apparently brought two turtledoves or two small pigeons to be offered.

Luke 2:27 *And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law,...*

There was a custom of bringing a new child to the Temple (not into the Temple proper, but to the Temple grounds). At the same time, Simeon was led by the Holy Spirit—and we do not know exactly how—to be in the Temple area at the same time.

As an aside, vv. 27–32 appear to be a singular sentence. I have no idea why it is spread across 5 verses (Luke occasionally writes some very long and complex sentences). When his writing was divided into verses and chapters, someone (or some group) simply decided, *this is too damn long for a single verse; we need to divide this sentence up.*

Luke 2:28a ...he took Him up in his arms...

Simeon realized that this child was the Messiah. He takes the child in his arms.

Simeon's Moment (Artwork By Ron Dicianni); from KingdomHigh.com; accessed December 27, 2019.

Luke 2:28b ...and blessed God...

Simeon blesses (or, praises) God as he takes up the child.

Luke 2:28a-b ...he took Him up in his arms and blessed God...

It is my educated guess that Mary and Joseph had become used to complete strangers interacting with them and with their child, the baby Jesus. This is taking place about 40 days after the Christ-child was born; and I suspect that there had been a great deal of interaction between strangers and this family. I would not be surprised if they encountered it everyday.



At the time that the Lord was born and soon thereafter, His family entertained a great many people, who seemed to come out of nowhere; but these people all seemed to know who Mary and the child were. One of these men was Simeon.

Luke 2:25–28b Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God... (ESV; capitalized)

When this is all put together, it makes a great deal of sense.

Luke 2:28c–29 ...and said, "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to Your word;..." (ESV; capitalized)

Simeon is speaking and he is the slave of God, to Whom he speaks. He is praying to God the Father; and he says, "I am Your slave and you have freed me this day."

This is very much how we understand the gospel to be. We, as unbelievers, are in the slave market of sin. We have nothing which allows us to purchase ourselves. As slaves in the slave market of sin, we are beset by our sin nature, by our personal sins, and by the imputed sin of Adam. It is by means of Christ that we are set free; He has paid for our freedom.

The word *peace* does not refer to *world peace*, but to the peace established between God and man. Our peace is Christ Jesus. We cannot have peace with God apart from Jesus providing the way of peace.

Simeon apparently was old, had expected to die sometime in the near future (say the next year or five); and he is praising God for letting him see the Servant of the Lord, the Messiah.

Mary and Joseph have brought Jesus to the Temple for a purification rite. Simeon has come to the Temple to see the Lord, having been guided by God the Holy Spirit. They met up together, as was God's plan.

In obedience to the Scriptures (Lev. 12:2–6), Mary and Joseph have brought the baby Jesus to the Temple. The Child is about 41 days old.

Simeon the Righteous (an oil painting by Alexey Yegorov) in the Public Domain, from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_the_Righteous); accessed December 27, 2019.



Simon, filled with the Spirit, speaks about the Person of Christ, the child that he held.

Luke 2:30 ...for my eyes have seen Your salvation...

The baby Jesus is called God's salvation here. Simeon knew that this Infant was his Messiah.

Luke 2:31 ...that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,...

God the Father has developed a plan, and plan which will be executed in public. This suggests a universality of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is taking place in the *presence of all peoples*. This is an interesting thing for Simeon to say, as he is there in the Temple courtyard with Mary, Joseph, the Infant; and who knows how many others? 20 or 30 or even 50 people? But Simeon sees the Infant as being in the presence of all people, despite the relatively small audience at the Temple on that day. Therefore, Simeon is speaking of the future and not of that brief moment in time.

Luke 2:32a a light for revelation to the Gentiles,..."

Even though the Jewish people were God's people (and still are) and even though the Scriptures—up to that point in time—were written by Jewish authors (with some exceptions, notably a quarter of Genesis and the book of Job); this Child would become light to the gentiles. Their place in the plan of God would be clearly revealed to them.

Luke 2:32b ...and for glory to Your people Israel."

Jesus is clearly a Jew; there was never any reason to doubt that. He reveals God's glory to His people, Israel. In the fullness of time, their Messiah had come to them.

Luke 2:32 ...[You are] a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

The universality of Jesus is attested to here, as He would be a light of revelation to the Gentiles. This is not what the religious crowd would have expected (although, those who would be considered *religious* in a negative way would not have been drawn to the Christ child).

Let's take a look at this single sentence, spread across 6 verses, as a whole thought:

Luke 2:27–32 And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the Law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

Throughout Scripture, various people witness to the Person of Christ—even when He is as young as 41 days old. There are far more people (and angels) speaking as to the Person and purpose of Jesus than we might realize. This surfeit of witnesses confirms over and over again Who Jesus is. Although Jesus did identify Himself on occasion, He much preferred others to do this for Him.

Simeon knew—as it had been revealed to him by the Spirit—that he would see the Messiah before he died. In Jesus, Simeon sees the salvation that God had prepared before all peoples, Jews and Gentiles. Obviously, Jesus is a glory of God's people Israel (= true Israel, those who have chosen to have faith in Jesus).

Luke 2:33 **And His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him.**

I have stated before, I think that there were many people who were drawn to the Christ-Child through a variety of means; and that we only read of a few of them in Luke.

Whether the things said are from Simeon or from others, we don't know. I suspect that Mary and Joseph have heard many things over these past few weeks, and have entertained quite a number of unexpected travelers and visitors. If God guided these people to Joseph and Mary, then it is reasonable to suppose that they said things related to the Christ-child.

This is far and above the old friend who drops by after your wife has given birth and he says, "That boy is gonna be something," not really having much else to say about a 10 lb. infant.

God, in various ways, revealed that Messiah was with us. Simeon, with these words, indicates that he knows this Child is Messiah. Joseph and Mary are quite blown away by all of this. The Bible uses the word marveled, which is the masculine plural, present active participle of *thaumázō* (θαυμάζω) [pronounced *thau-MAUd-zoh*], which means, *wondering, marveling, being struck with admiration or astonishment; the ones being struck with wonder*. Strong's #2296. The masculine plural refers to both Joseph and Mary. The present tense is linear aktionsart, meaning that they continue to be amazed or astonished at what Simeon has said.

Luke 2:34a **And Simeon blessed them...**

Simeon wishes Mary and Joseph and the child prosperity and blessing, as well as guidance.

Luke 2:34b **...and said to Mary his mother,...**

Now, this is quite fascinating. In most cases, a man would speak to another man about his son; but Simeon speaks directly to Mary.

Bear in mind that Joseph is the step-father; but this is not necessarily something that Joseph and Mary are telling everyone. There was not some posted sign saying, "This is not Joseph's baby." This fact is recorded in Scripture; but nowhere do we read about Joseph saying, "She was already pregnant when we married, but by the Holy Spirit." Joseph knew this and Mary knew this; but I doubt seriously that this was ever a part of their conversation with others. How many people knew this and understood might not be any more than 2 or 4 (Mary and Joseph and possibly Elisabeth and Zacharias).

My point being, Simeon instinctively speaks to Mary rather than to Joseph, despite there being nothing external to guide him in that way. What is guiding him is the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that Simeon speaks to Mary, and interesting what he says to her directly.

Luke 2:34c ...*"Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel,...*

Because of the Christ-child, many in Israel would fall and many in Israel would be resurrected. Those who rejected Christ would fall. Jerusalem would be destroyed as a city in A.D. 70, and thousands of Jews would be killed in that battle. However, many others would also rise again—be resurrected, in the final resurrection.

Up to this point, everything spoken about the Messiah sounded good. God had sent His Messiah, and He would fulfill the many Scriptures which reference Him. But here, suddenly we are talking about those who rise and those who fall; indicating that some would be blessed by the Lord and some would be cursed.

Many times, a translation will help (or try to help) the reader understand the passage:

Breakthrough Version	<i>And Simeon conferred prosperity on them and said to Mary, His mother, "Look, this child lies here for a fall and return back to life of many people in Israel...</i>
Contemporary English V.	<i>Then he blessed them and told Mary, "This child of yours will cause many people in Israel to fall and others to stand.</i>
Understandable Version	<i>Then Simeon [asked God to] bless them and said to Jesus' mother Mary, "Look, many Israelites will be caused to fall [<i>i.e., into spiritual ruin</i>] or rise [<i>i.e., to spiritual renewal</i>] because of Him.</i>
Unlocked Dynamic B.	<i>"Note what I say: Yahweh has determined that because of this child, many Israelite people will turn away from Yahweh, and many others will turn to Yahweh.</i>

Interestingly enough, in two translations above and in many note cited, with have that the child would *cause* the fall and rising up of many; but that word *cause* is nowhere to be found.

There is an alternate way to translate this portion of v. 34: ...*"Listen, This One is appointed to fall and rise again to the benefit of many in Israel;...* This very much describes what will happen to Jesus Christ. He will fall (be crucified); but He will rise again. And this will be

to the benefit of many (dative of advantage). In fact, this interpretation makes more sense than the *many of Israel* falling and rising. This seems to be implied with the final phrase in this verse, which appears to refer to Jesus and not to *the many*.

Luke 2:34d ...and for a sign that is opposed...

This is a difficult phrase, but this phrase ends v. 34. Let's see how others dealt with it:

A Literal Translation	...and for a sign being spoken against...
Understandable Version	And [He will be] a 'sign' [for people] to speak against.

Some translations take a little more liberty with their translation:

Contemporary English V.	...Many people will reject him,...
Free Bible Version	He is a sign from God that many will reject,...
International Standard V.	Also, he will be a sign that will be opposed.
Jonathan Mitchell NT	...and into a sign being constantly spoken in opposition to, and being repeatedly contradicted!

Jesus Himself is a sign to Israel; and all that He does will be a sign to Israel; but He will be spoken against, He will be opposed and rejected, and many will contradict what He says and does.

I would understand this to refer to the Christ child, that He would be both a sign and the center of the most fundamental disputes of life. Or, perhaps we should understand this to mean that, *He would be a sign of disputation*; that is, all Israel would not come together around Him, but that this would create division. Many in Israel would speak against the Lord.

Now, logically, if Jesus is the sign of disputation; then He would be the one appointed to fall and to rise once again. However, there are no translations which understand this verse in this way (not that I could find).

Both approaches are true; that is, Jesus will face a fall then a rising up; and the many of Israel will either fall or rise up, depending upon their attitude towards Jesus. Nevertheless, I am leaning towards those words describing Jesus and not the man. However, I can find no other translation to support that approach.

Luke 2:34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed...

Another way to translate this, which I believe is more valid is:

Luke 2:34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for a fall and rising up, for the advantage (or disadvantage) of many in Israel, and [He is appointed] for a sign that is opposed...

Simeon has blessed Mary and Joseph, and then he speaks directly to Mary. One understanding is: (1) people would rise and fall in Israel based upon their attitude towards the Lord; He will be a sign that is opposed, disputed and rejected. Or, (2) it is Jesus Who would fall and then rise up; and this would be for the advantage of many in Israel (an advantage for those who would believe in Him).

There is the very interesting question, *Why does Simeon say this to Mary specifically?* Who is more concerned about her child and his place in the world? The woman; the mother. She often loves her child in a way that she did not even know that she could; and the harm that befalls him hurts her as well. And, obviously, Simeon is guided by the Spirit, and in that power, he is warning her that this will happen.

It often appears as though someone decided, *this verse is long enough*, and then just cut it off. No idea why these verses are divided where they are.

Simeon has something very important to say to Mary, designed for her and her alone:

Luke 2:35a ...*(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also),...*"

What Simeon is saying here is rather difficult to determine. What sword are we talking about and how will it divide Mary's soul?

I believe that these words were meant specifically for Mary, Jesus' mother; and that her experience regarding her Son would be, at times, as a sword going through her heart. She will know Jesus as no one else knows Him; and the anger and hatred expressed towards Him will pierce Mary's heart as well. We can only imagine that this describes how she felt at the cross (Mary was there at the cross).

Simeon tells Mary that there is a reason for this; there is a reason that her Son would be oft times rejected.

Luke 2:35b ...*so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*"

What is the importance or the significance of revealing the thoughts of a person? The key is this—our salvation is accomplished in our souls—in our minds. Charlie Brown might get baptized and go to church every Sunday; but Lucy Van Pelt does not. However, if Lucy believed in Jesus Christ and Charlie did not, then Lucy is saved (despite not have any outward manifestations that testify to her salvation).

God has made salvation something that can occur 100% on the inside. We can be saved and *no one* around us can see it happening. You may be at an evangelistic meeting and you hear the gospel. You do not have to raise your hand, or look up at the pastor, or come forward. But, what you do have to do is believe in Jesus Christ.

Now, in this context, that is not exactly what Simeon is saying. He is saying that there will be some strong opposition to Jesus, so strong that it will pierce Mary's own heart; but this

has a purpose, to reveal the thinking of those who are positive or negative towards the Lord. They will by their actions reveal what is in their hearts.

Let's look at this portion of our passage, as it all fits together.

Luke 2:34d–35 ...and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Jesus is going to be a sign, but He will face stiff opposition; and this overt opposition will be a sword piercing Mary's heart, as He is her Son. But she is to take comfort in the fact that this is all done for a reason, that the thinking of many will be revealed, based upon their interaction with the Lord.

Lesson 066: Luke 2:36–38

Anna, the Prophetess

At this point in the narrative, we are apparently still in the Temple and Mary and Joseph have brought Jesus there, on day 41, in accordance with the Mosaic Law. They first have run into Simeon, who prophesies about Mary's Son. But at the Temple, at the same time, apparently, is Anna.

What follows is what I believe to be one the strangest narratives recorded in the gospels. It would be easy to read through this narrative, and then suddenly say, "What? That's it?"

This narrative is only 3 verses long and 2 of these verses are devoted to Anna's backstory. Furthermore, it is not even clear whether Anna has any face-time with Mary or Joseph or the Christ Child at all.

Luke 2:36a And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.

One of the people that they ran into was Anna, who was a prophetess. Perhaps she was able to speak of the future; perhaps not; but she was considered inspired. She is the daughter of Phanuel (this is like giving your surname), who was from the tribe of Asher.

First off, that the tribe of Asher is mentioned at all is quite amazing. This means that, even though the northern tribes were carried away under the 5th stage of national discipline, some of these tribes persisted, living in Judæa or in other places in that general region. They had maintained their tribal identity; and I would assume, they knew where their forerunners had been and the various places that they had lived (most of those living in the northern kingdom had been expelled; but it is clear that there are many living in the northern kingdom at this time who are Jewish). After all, Jesus performs most of His miracles and does most of His teaching to those in the northern kingdom (which does not appear to have the same national unity as is found in ancient Judæa).

The tribe of Asher has an interesting heritage. Recall that the northern tribes had been disbursed and removed from the land centuries before, and Asher was one of those tribes. Although there may have been a few Jews who remained in the northern kingdom after the dispersion, most of them had been evicted from the land; and most of them, carried into slavery, subject to those who had conquered them (the Assyrians, as led by Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul) and Shalmaneser V).

Regardless of what has taken place, this woman is from the tribe of Asher and, since this is Scripture (and given that she is a prophetess), we may assume that this is true.

Luke 2:36b **She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,...**

I believe what is being said about this woman, Anna, is that she was a virgin when she married and she and her husband lived for 7 years together before he died. Since then, she has been a widow; now being 84. She has known a man, but it was many, many decades ago.

Luke 2:36 **And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,...**

What is being emphasized here is not that she was a virgin at marriage or that she remained so while married. This simply tells us that she married when she was young; her husband died soon after they married (7 years later); and she has not remarried since then.

It was very common in that era for a woman and a man to know no other person intimately. In fact, it was the intimate relationship which essentially defined two people as married.

Luke 2:37a **...and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.**

She has remained unmarried for many decades after her brief marriage.

Luke 2:37b **She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.**

She spent a great deal of time at the Temple. In fact, for some period of time, she has just stayed there, relying, I assume, on the assistance of others.

Again, she is not inside the Temple proper, but she is on the Temple grounds, in the Temple courtyard. Based upon what we will read, she does not appear to living on Temple grounds 24/7; but she is there so often, it does not appear that she ever leaves.

Luke 2:37 **...and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.**

Did she live inside the Temple grounds? Based upon v. 37, that appears to be the case. However, that impression is modified by what follows.

Luke 2:38a **And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God...**

This is a verse where we need to consider it and compare it to previous verses. If one only reads v. 37, it would appear that this woman lived outside of the Temple (within the Temple courtyard walls). However, here, she is coming up. This suggests that, it *appears* as though she is always within the Temple walls; but that she did go home from time to time.

Luke 2:38b **...and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.**

She would speak of God and of His Messiah to all those around the Temple who were also waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

God speaks of the redemption of Jerusalem in Isa. 52:9 **Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the LORD has comforted His people; He has redeemed Jerusalem.** (ESV; capitalized)

Prophetically, there would be a time when the Lord must redeem Israel; and the Lord must comfort His people (meaning, obviously, that they need His comfort).

Luke 2:38 **And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.**

What seems to be the case is, this woman is often on the Temple grounds; and she speaks about God to those waiting for Jerusalem to be purchased/redeemed by God.

Presenting Jesus in the Temple (an artistic rendition); from [Word Press](#); accessed January 3, 2020.

I do not know who painted this or even for certain if Anna is the woman in the corner.

Now, believe it or not, that is the entire narrative about Anna. Let's look at it as a whole:



Luke 2:36–38 **And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night**

and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

I am assuming from this that Anna and Mary and Joseph (with the Christ Child) are all in the Temple courtyard together.

The implication I take from this is, Anna spoke to Mary and Joseph. Or, she is speaking to others in the Temple area about the infant Jesus. Or is she speaking of the Messiah to come, not really knowing about Mary and Joseph and the Christ child?

This is an odd little narrative because we do not have any more than implied direct contact between Anna and Mary and Joseph; and we do not know what she said to them (assuming that she said anything).

We do not really know anything about what Anna said, what she did, or what was resolved or what occurred after this meeting.

Here is how this strikes me. Mary is telling Luke all that happened, and she says, “And I will never forget going onto the Temple property and there was this woman named Anna. She just sticks in my mind. I don’t even remember exactly what she said, except that it was about the redemption in Jerusalem. I do remember hearing some things about her.”

Jesus is that redemption in Jerusalem.



The person that all were waiting for the redeem Jerusalem is the LORD Jesus. She is giving thanks for the Redeemer of Israel. It is not clear that she came into contact with Joseph and Mary; or if they heard this; or if someone simply reported it. Nevertheless, Luke eventually heard it.

There are several artist representations of Anna and Simeon with Mary and Joseph and the Child.

Anna and Simeon with the Christ Child (a painting); from [Word Press](#); accessed January 3, 2020.

Like the other painting, it is unclear who did this originally.

Luke 2:39a **And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord,...**

When a Hebrew couple had a new child—the first child—there were at least two rituals which had to be performed—the Child's circumcision and the redemption of the firstborn. Mary and Joseph have fulfilled these obligations of the Law.

Luke 2:39b **...they returned into Galilee,...**

Galilee is the larger area or the region where they lived.

Luke, although he presents the most thorough and chronological gospel, he leaves out many things (which is true of any biography). Joseph and Mary both fled to Egypt for a time (apparently until Herod the Great died, which would have been when the Lord was perhaps 2 years old). There is also visit from the Magi when Jesus is an infant. Luke does not record any of this; but Matthew does.

Luke 2:39c **...to their own town of Nazareth.**

Nazareth is the city in which the Lord will be raised. This is why He is called a Nazarene in several places (Matt. 2:23 Mark 14:67).

Luke 2:39 **And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.**

Why Luke leaves some things out, we really do not know. Was he simply not told about this? Or, did he not feel that he has more to offer than what is found? Matthew gives a pretty detailed account of Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt. The same is true of the visit of the wise men (found in Matt. 2:1–12).

When writing a biography, there will be information and narratives which are left out. In some cases, this is just a matter of practicality. There is a 5-volume set of books all about Lyndon B. Johnson, a former president of the United States. If you want to know about Johnson, it is likely that it can be found in those books. Nevertheless, even with that massive set of books, there are some very significant events which have been left out (I am thinking about one in particular, which is something that Johnson was rumored to have said).

I would think that Luke primarily wrote his gospel on the basis of direct interviews which he had with eyewitnesses (from what we have studied, Luke clearly had contact with Mary or someone close to Mary). He probably read the book of Matthew and he was probably aware of the Magi and Egypt; but chose not to include those narratives because no one spoke to him directly on those incidents, so he had nothing to add to Matthew's account (I am speculating here). Furthermore, he may not have, in all of his interviews, spoken to anyone who told him about this trip to Egypt.

In this lesson, we will consider the Matthew and Luke accounts together.

Contradictions/Disparities between Matthew and Luke:

At this point, we may want to consider the narratives of Matthew and Luke, because no less than one Christopher Hitchens, who was named after the Lord, makes this bold claim: that Matthew and Luke *flatly contradict each other on the 'Flight to Egypt.'*⁷⁸ The first thing which might occur to you is, *what trip to Egypt?* And that is Hitchens' point—Matthew speaks of an escape to Egypt and Luke does not.

First and most obvious point to make: each gospel has some unique narratives and teachings of Jesus. This does not mean that they contradict each other; it just means that, for whatever reason, one gospel writer speaks of the trip to Egypt—that no other gospel writer writes about—and another gospel writer speaks of Anna at the Temple (which no other gospel writer mentions). Having unique passages is not indicative of a contradiction. Whereas, I believe that Luke had access to the books of Matthew and Mark, this does not mean that he was compelled to include every narrative found in their books in his own. In fact, he may have been predisposed to include material not covered by the other two gospels.

Secondly, we should review the perspectives offered by Matthew and Luke. Matthew concentrates on fulfilled prophecy, and he views the Lord's early life much from the perspective of Joseph. In Matthew, we see Joseph's reaction Mary being pregnant; we are told about Joseph's dream where he is warned to go to Egypt; and we have Joseph's genealogical line—information not found in any other gospel.

Luke, when speaking of the Lord's childhood and before, focuses upon Mary: Mary is visited by an angel, Mary goes to Elisabeth's home, and Mary's genealogical line is presented (these events are all unique to the book of Luke). Furthermore, Luke appears to have gathered his material from the two gospels in existence and from direct interviews of eyewitnesses. When it suits Luke, he may include information found in Matthew or Mark; but his intent was not simply to combine and duplicate those gospels. The answer to, why Luke includes some particular narratives from Matthew and not others—that might be a more complex question. Every biographer has to determine how much to keep and what to leave out. Perhaps in some instances, Luke felt that he had nothing to add to an incident found in Matthew, and did not include it for that reason.

We have been studying Luke for a considerable amount of time. Let us briefly examine the Matthew narrative of the infancy of Jesus:

Matt. 2:1–2 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He Who has

⁷⁸ From <http://christianthinktank.com/infancyoff.html> accessed October 15, 2018. Originally from Hitchens' book, *God is not Great* (2007).

been born king of the Jews? For we saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him."

These wise men may be asking the priests at the Temple these questions. This star that they are following is no longer visible—possibly because it is daytime—and this places the wise men in the very center of Jewish religious activity. They are in Jerusalem.

The way that this is written suggests that the Magi are not Jewish, but that they are aware of the prophecies of the Jewish Scriptures; and they are interested in these prophecies (suggesting positive volition on their part). We have several similar interests expressed by gentiles in various places in the Old Testament.

Matt. 2:3–6 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: " 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' " (Micah 5:2)

The wise men apparently do not go to the palace to talk to Herod; he apparently hears about them and about their questions (Herod seems to have had information gatherers planted all over Jerusalem, which would not be abnormal for a political leader to have).

We also read that *all Jerusalem [is troubled] with him*;... Jesus divides people; there are those who seek Him and those who are troubled by Him. I assume that Herod is concerned because he has sons who will inherit his kingdom. In any case, it is interesting that there are some in Jerusalem who are troubled by these wise men searching out the king of the Jews—and those who are troubled appear to be the chief priests and scribes. All of this suggests a rather complex relationship between Herod and these men, as well as a questionable relationship between the chief priests and scribes and their professed faith.

The chief priests and scribes know about the Messianic prophecies, and they do know where He will be born (which is the issue at hand).

Matt. 2:7–8 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him."

Interestingly enough, the wise men are still there in Jerusalem. The explanation may simply be that it is daytime, so there is no star to follow. Herod apparently has men keeping tabs on them, while they are in Jerusalem. Furthermore, all that is described in these verses may have taken place over a relatively short period of time (a few hours).

We have the interesting phrase, *and he [Herod] sent them to Bethlehem...* Herod appears to take from the chief priests and scribes that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. I would guess that the Magi understood to go that way because of the star.

The magi appear to have been in Jerusalem, waiting for the night, to follow the star—but they are interrupted from their travels by Herod calling them in. Let me speculate that Herod called in the Magi secretly, not revealing this to the chief priests and scribes. Why would he do this? I believe at this point, Herod had already decided to kill the child; so he does not want to have this interfered with by the Jewish religious establishment.

What Herod said to the magi about worshiping the child was a lie. He sent them to Bethlehem, but with the intention of killing the Child they had come to see. Perhaps Herod said, "I therefore give you leave to go to Bethlehem. *Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him.*"

Matt. 2:9–11a *After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him.*

Although it says here that the magi *went into the house*; however, in Luke, Jesus is in a stable, sleeping in a re-purposed feeding trough. How is this explained? A portion of the living area in Jerusalem and surrounding areas was outside and took place in a courtyard. When entering through the gate of many houses in that region, you would be in the courtyard, and there would be the stable right off to one's right. Going through the gate was considered *entering into a house*, even though you are not literally inside of the house itself.

There is a very common house set up in Australia where the first door you go through is a gate, which leads you into an entry courtyard—which, very often, is made completely private by a high fence and gate which is around it. My point being, there is this general concept of coming into a courtyard first, goes back 2000 years ago, which has its evolutionary result in Australia (and elsewhere).

In any case, the magi find the Christ Child, and they worship Him and give Him gifts. I would have assumed that Herod had them followed, but he apparently did not.

Matt. 2:11b *Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.*

I heard a preacher the other day on the radio, and he experienced something that many of us experience—he read a verse in the Bible, and suddenly, a word or a phrase just

jumped out at him: *gold!* Then he wondered aloud, "What did Mary and Joseph do with the gold?" Matthew will actually answer the preacher's question (at least by implication).

Matt. 2:12 *And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they [the Magi] departed to their own country by another way.*

The timing here is a little tricky. Herod has spoken to the magi; and apparently, it has already been determined that the Savior has been born in Bethlehem (Herod hears that from the scribes and priests). Herod allows some time for the Magi to worship the Lord. But then the magi return, intentionally bypassing Herod. At some point, Herod becomes suspicious. I would think that all of this takes place in less than a week—perhaps over a period of 3 or 4 days. So, the magi must have come to Jesus after His circumcision and close to the time when He was taken to the Temple.

In other words, about the time when Herod realizes that the magi are not going to drop in and tell him where the Savior is, Mary and Joseph would have been on the move themselves, traveling from Bethlehem to Jerusalem (which are 2 miles apart, if memory serves). Then, at some point—maybe they had returned to Bethlehem; maybe they were about to return to Bethlehem—this happens:

Matt. 2:13–15 *Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy Him." And he rose and took the Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." (Hosea 11:1)*

Matthew also tells us what happened after they got the gold. An angel told them to go to Egypt, as Herod was about to search for the Christ child to kill Him. Herod would have been near the end of his life, and he had struggled to hold onto power over his kingdom. He was going to divide up his kingdom for his sons and he surely did not want someone to come along and take this kingdom from them.

Meanwhile, Joseph and Mary have taken their Child and are on the road to Egypt. Now, if they are traveling apparently without even a tent, how are they able to have the wherewithal to go to Egypt and stay for a time? They had gold and other valuables which could be used in trade. They have gifts and offerings for their Child (I would guess many of which are not recorded in Scripture).

Matt. 2:16–18 *Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was*

heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more." (Jer. 31:15)

Near the end of his life, Herod the Great, eaten up by various diseases, was heartless and ruthless. Few men could have been capable of such despicable evil. And all of it was simply a end-of-life attempt to hold onto power, even though death was on the horizon for him.

Interestingly enough, 1500 or so years earlier, the male children were not allowed to live in nation Egypt, when Moses was born. They were also being slaughtered as per an edict of the leader of the land, Pharaoh. Moses was saved by being placed into a basket which was set afloat in the Nile. Moses was an infant at this time, and the current would take him into the hands of Pharaoh's daughter.

Matt. 2:19–21 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the Child's life are dead." And he rose and took the Child and His mother and went to the land of Israel.

While all of this was taking place, Joseph and his family were staying in Egypt. Herod's slaughter of the children would have taken place in the last year of his life. God may have taken Herod out specifically for these actions.

Once again, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream, and tells him that it is safe to return to Israel.

As an aside, do you not find it interesting that an angel appears to Joseph and not to Mary; and tells Joseph what to do next? A family has a hierarchy, and the husband/father is at the top of the hierarchy. So the angel appears to him; and then he tells the family what will be done next.

Matt. 2:22–23 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene⁷⁹. (ESV; capitalized; throughout)

You may have noticed in this chapter in Matthew, Jesus prophetically was said to come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 Matt. 2:3–6); but that God would call His Son out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1 Matt. 2:14–15); and finally that Jesus would be a Nazarene (no OT passage Matt. 2:22–23). In Luke, there is a prophet and a prophetess who are named. Could one

⁷⁹ We do not have such a passage preserved in the Old Testament Scriptures.

of them or someone else with the gift of prophecy have stood at Jerusalem and said during this general time period, “And He will be called a Nazarene”?

In any case, this is a fascinating set of fulfillments found in Matt. 2.

We have been studying the Luke narrative, so I won’t repeat it here. However, clearly, the narratives of this period of time in the life in the infant Jesus are quite different.

Let’s boil down these narratives to some basic events:

These are bullet-points that we have already studied, taken from Luke:

A general time frame is given; during the days of Herod.

Joseph and Mary are from Nazareth.

(No mention of Joseph being concerned about her pregnancy.)

They travel to Bethlehem.

Jesus is born in Bethlehem

Shepherds visit Jesus in Bethlehem.

Joseph/Mary/Jesus go into Jerusalem for various Jewish rituals.

(No mention of the Magi—the wise men—or of the family’s flight to Egypt.)

Sometime after the various rituals, they return to Galilee, to live in their own city of Nazareth.

Let’s consider a similar list from Matthew:

A general time frame is given; during the days of Herod.

Joseph and Mary are introduced without reference to Bethlehem or Nazareth.

Mary is with child and Joseph is concerned (Matt. 1:18–25).

Jesus is born in Bethlehem.

(No mention of Shepherds.)

(No mention of family trip to Jerusalem for obligatory Jewish rituals.)

Visit of the Magi (who have previously spoken to Herod.)

There is clear animosity coming from Herod the Great towards a Jewish Savior.

This suggests that he believed these prophecies.

Flight to Egypt, to escape the ill-intent of Herod.

The Family settles in Galilee in the city of Nazareth.⁸⁰

The Christian Think Tank then adds this information:

But notice that Luke does NOT indicate a short trip from Nazareth to Jerusalem (for ritual purposes) at all. Neither M nor L have such a trip in their

⁸⁰ Taken in part from <http://christianthinktank.com/infancyoff.html> accessed October 15, 2018. Some editing.

respective narrative,...But also notice that both authors are only reporting some of the events—they share the key elements (i.e., Jesus born in royal city of Bethlehem, Jesus ends up in a despised town of Nazareth), and they each select a subset of the history for their particular point (e.g., Luke has the ritual-trip to emphasize the law-biding character of the family and the acceptance of Jesus by godly Jews; Matthew has the Flight/Secret-Return story to emphasize the early rejection of—or indifference to—Jesus by the Jewish leadership).

Pretty much, all that we need to do is to shuffle these two narratives together. The end result may or may not be completely accurate—perhaps event A follows event B rather than precedes it—but this shuffling of events eliminates contradictions.

Joseph and Mary have backgrounds and they are from Nazareth.

At some point, it is apparent that Mary is pregnant, and Joseph then considers putting her away quietly. However, an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and tells him to marry her and that the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18–21). This is a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy (Matt. 1:22–23). Note how the first passage focuses on Joseph and the second records a fulfillment of prophecy.

Jesus' birth takes place during the days of Herod.

Joseph and Mary, as a couple, travel to Bethlehem to fulfill an edict of Herod. While they are in Bethlehem, Jesus is born.

Jesus is first worshiped by the shepherds; and later worshiped by the Magi (aka the wise men). I do not believe that they would have all been there on the same night. Given the timing, which we have already discussed, the Magi may have come there perhaps a month later. It is very likely that other groups of people came to worship Jesus, who are not named in either gospel.

The Jewish ceremonies described in Luke take place in between these two gatherings or after them. Throughout this time, various people come and interact with Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus (two of them are specifically named in Luke).

After the Lord's circumcision, after the redemption offered for the firstborn, Joseph and Mary are about to return home to Nazareth. An angel of the Lord warns Joseph to take his family to Egypt; so he does.

We have no idea what takes place in Egypt; but I would not be surprised if Egyptians came up to them randomly just as the people in and around Jerusalem and Bethlehem had. There is no reason to discount that some evangelization took place in Egypt as a result of them being there.

The angel tells Joseph they can return—and so they do. They avoid traveling through Jerusalem.

The family then goes to Nazareth to raise up Jesus there.

This series of events, taken from both gospels, make perfect sense when put together in this way; and allows for both gospels to be absolutely true without contradiction. The only way a contradiction can occur is, someone decides to read into the gospels their own additional thoughts. If one reads these last few verses of Luke and understands this to mean that Jesus as an infant was brought to Jerusalem to observe certain rituals, and then *immediately, without doing anything else*, the family returns to Nazareth, then we would have a contradiction. However, in order to have a contradiction, something must be added to one of the narratives to make them contradict one another.

Lesson 069: Luke 2:39–40

The Doctrine of Kenosis

We now return to the Lukian narrative.

We know that Mary and Joseph have spent time in Jerusalem at the Temple and that Mary gave birth to Jesus in Nazareth. We have been told about some isolated incidents of interactions between various people and the infant Child. We do not know how often this or that group came to worship the infant; or how many individuals knew Who the Lord was while He was an infant. However, we have studied each recorded interaction (more briefly for those in the book of Matthew). Now it has come time for Mary and Joseph to leave the Jerusalem area.

Luke 2:39 *And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.*

As we have already studied, Joseph and Mary did everything according to the Mosaic Law, including the redemption of their firstborn. Then, because of a warning, they went to Egypt to live for a time (according to Matt. 2). At this point in the Luke narrative, they return to the Galilee area to the city of Nazareth. They had completed their ritual requirements, then they were guided by an angel of God to go to Egypt. They have now been given the okay to return to their own city in the Galilee region. During this return, they were warned not to go through Jerusalem (most of this information comes from Matt. 2).

Luke 2:40a *And the Child grew...*

To grow is the 3rd person singular, imperfect active indicative of the Greek word *auxanô* (αὐξάνω) [pronounced *owx-AN-oh*], which means, *to grow, to increase, to enlarge*. The imperfect tense is action which began in the past and continues on into the future—the perfect description of any growing child. This might well have been translated, *and the child kept on growing*.

Quite obviously, all children grow; but the emphasis here is going to be upon the Lord's spiritual growth. Even though, as God, there would be no reason for spiritual growth, in Jesus' humanity, He had to grow in the human spirit just like anyone else. Jesus is going to learn spiritual information (as well as information about the world around Him), which will bring us to a Biblical conundrum: *how does the omniscient Son of God learn anything? Why would He need to?* Nevertheless, the next phrase reads:

Luke 2:40b ...and became strong, filled with wisdom.

This is how spiritual growth is achieved; it is by the increase of divine wisdom in the soul. Or, as R. B. Thieme, Jr. often put it, *by the intake of Bible doctrine* (he also coined the term *epistemological rehabilitation*, which refers to much the same thing).

Again, the imperfect tense for the main verb indicates an ongoing process begun in the past and continued into the present.

You will note that both verbs are in the passive voice, indicating that the subject, Jesus Christ, received the action of the verb. He did not make Himself strong; He did not fill Himself with wisdom; both of these are grace processes which require the person to utilize grace provisions. As a child, Jesus ate food and he did activities that children might do which involved His muscles (which could have included learning His father's trade). These processes are designed by God for a child to naturally grow. Jesus did not make Himself taller; nor did He have much to say about his body type. He accepted the diet at home and the natural growth function of His body—as happens to every child.

Similarly, God provided a way for Jesus to learn wisdom, which would have been, presumably, going to the synagogue and hearing the Word of God spoken and taught. Whereas, we have Bibles and can teach the Word of God to our own children; the ownership of a private Bible would have been nonexistent in a common household during the time of Jesus (although there were some private libraries). However, many families went to their local synagogue where they heard both the reading of Scripture and explanations for what was read. A responsible parent would then bring this home and teach it to their children.

I do not know if one could go into the synagogue and request a specific scroll (much as we can do in the libraries of today). This seems unlikely to have occurred in any synagogue. They believed that the Scriptures were inspired; they believed them to be the Word of God. They would have had limited access to all of the Scriptures (that is, the Old Testament); and they would have had limited copies.

Although it is our understanding that, when a new copy of the book of Samuel was provided through the scribal system, that the old copy was promptly destroyed. It is not impossible that some of these were not always destroyed or that imperfect copies were not always destroyed. Furthermore, there were translations made of the Old Testament—in the Greek, for instance—and these copies would have been maintained and replaced by something other than the scribal system. My point is, it is reasonable to think that some

copies of Scripture to end up in private libraries—the Greek manuscripts for certain, but why not a few Hebrew imperfect manuscripts?

That all being said, this would not have been the likely place for Jesus to have received His teaching. The synagogue would have been the place for Him to learn.

The exact specifics of the Lord's spiritual growth, from a human standpoint, may be guessed at. Mary was well-versed in the Scriptures, as we have previously studied. Recall that when she spoke to her relative Elizabeth, much of what she said had parallels throughout the Old Testament. Joseph himself was obviously open to divine revelation (I believe that there are at least 3 dreams mentioned in Scripture where God speaks to him). So, my assumption would be that both of them taught Jesus; and that His appetite for spiritual information was insatiable. No doubt, Jesus began going to the synagogue at a very early age—perhaps as early as age 3 or 4. Obviously, He would have gone with His mother. We know today that a child may begin to learn how to read at age 3; so I would speculate that Jesus began to actively seek out spiritual information around that age.

But, we have this problem, an apparent contradiction. How can Jesus, as God, be omniscient; and yet, here, He is clearly learning? These two seemingly contradictory facts needs to be reconciled in some way, or we have to question the orthodox tenet that Jesus is God.

This takes us to a study of the concept of *kenosis*.

What is the kenosis? (from Got Questions)

Question: "What is the kenosis?"

Answer: The term kenosis refers to the doctrine of Christ's "self-emptying" in His incarnation. The word comes from the Greek of Philippians 2:7, which says that Jesus "emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (ESV; capitalized). The word translated "emptied" is a form of kenoō (κενῶω) [pronounced *kehn-OH-oh*], from which we get the word *kenosis*.

Notice that Philippians 2:7 does not specify what the Son of God "emptied" Himself of. And here we must be careful not to go beyond what Scripture says. Jesus did not empty Himself of His divine attributes—no such attributes are mentioned in the verse, and it is obvious in the gospels that Jesus possessed the power and wisdom of God. Calming the storm is just one display of Jesus' divine power (Mark 4:39).¹ In coming to earth, the Son of God did not cease to be God, and He did not become a "lesser god." Whatever the "emptying" entailed, Jesus remained fully God: "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

It is better to think of Christ's "emptying" of Himself as a laying aside of the privileges that were His in heaven. Rather than stay on His throne in heaven, Jesus "made himself nothing" (as the NIV translates Philippians 2:7). When He came to earth, "he gave up his divine privileges" (NLT). He veiled His glory, and He chose to occupy the position of

What is the kenosis? (from Got Questions)

a slave.

The kenosis was a self-renunciation, not an emptying Himself of deity. Nor was it an exchange of deity for humanity. Jesus never ceased to be God during any part of His earthly ministry. He did set aside His heavenly glory. He also voluntarily refrained from using His divinity to make His way easier. During His earthly ministry, Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of the Father (John 5:19).

As part of the kenosis, Jesus sometimes operated within the limitations of humanity. God does not get tired or thirsty, but Jesus did (John 4:6; 19:28). God knows all things, but it seems that, at least once, Jesus voluntarily surrendered the use of His omniscience (Matthew 24:36). Other times, Jesus' omniscience was on full display (Luke 6:8; John 13:11; 18:4).²

There are some false teachers who take the concept of kenosis too far, saying that Jesus gave up all or some of His divine nature when He came to earth. This heresy is sometimes referred to as the kenosis theory, but a better term is kenoticism or kenotic theology, to distinguish it from biblical understanding of the kenosis.

When it comes to the kenosis, we often focus too much on what Jesus gave up. The kenosis also deals with what Christ took on. Jesus added to His divine nature a human nature as He humbled Himself for us. Jesus went from being the glory of glories in heaven to being a human being who was put to death on the cross. Philippians 2:7–8 declares, “**Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!**” In the ultimate act of humility, the God of the universe became a human being and died for His creation.

The kenosis is the act of Christ taking on a human nature with all of its limitations, except with no sin. As one Bible scholar wrote, “At His incarnation He remained ‘in the form of God’ and as such He is Lord and Ruler over all, but He also accepted the nature of a servant as part of His humanity” (J. J. Müller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon*, p. 82).

¹ I would disagree with Got Questions that this is necessarily a function of Jesus' Deity. There are many miraculous things which the Lord did. However, there were many seemingly miraculous things that Moses did, and we know that Moses himself did not do any of the miracles which are recorded in the book of Exodus. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that everything (or anything) that the Lord did came from His Deity. That is, He may have said the words which appeared to still the waters (in this particular illustration), but that does not mean that He Himself actually did the miracle.

² It is also possible that the Lord, in His humanity, continued to experience the limitations of humanity; and that God the Holy Spirit revealed some information to Him. We will discuss these things in more detail when we come to them.

Additional resource material: <https://gbible.org/doctrines-post/doctrine-of-kenosis/> (Robert R. McLaughlin, who is an excellent teacher)

The first and second chapters of Colossians deal with this general concept of kenosis. We read in Col. 1:17 *And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together*. We may translate that final phrase, *by Him, all things are held together*. So how does Jesus hold the entire universe together and yet, as a child, He is still learning and growing spiritually?

I can explain this by analogy. We all have bodies and we all have free will. If I choose to, I can blink my eyes; I can close my eyes and shut down my visual access to the world. But, can I stop my heart from beating or stop my blood from flowing, if even for a few seconds? No. There are certain things that our body does automatically—on autopilot if you will—that we have no control over. So, whereas, I can lift up or move my hand; I cannot stop sensory information from being transmitted from my hand to my brain—when I touch something, I can feel it—particularly if that object is hot or cold.

I believe that, in a similar fashion, the Lord's Deity and His function as a Member of the Godhead was put on autopilot. Jesus, even as a child, is holding all the universe together; but not as an act of conscious volition but as an automatic function of His Deity. From before I was born right up to this moment, my heart has been beating. Even though it is a part of my body, I do not have volitional control over it. Now, I can run and my heart will speed up, and I can lay down and sleep, and it slows down. But my volition is involved only in the actions which I take; my volition in and of itself does not speed up or slow down my heart. I believe this is, more or less, how the Lord's Deity functions. I believe that Jesus had, at any time, the power to access His Deity and all that implies; but that He chose not to throughout most or all of His life on earth. Did Jesus *never* access His Deity during his 33 or so years on earth? At this point, I am not able to answer this question; and given what we know, that might even be an unimportant question.

Lessons 070–071: Luke 2:40

Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union

We last studied this verse:

Luke 2:40 *And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor [= grace] of God was upon Him.*

In the previous lesson, we studied the Doctrine of Kenosis, which is the voluntary emptying of the Lord of His Deity. There are certainly discussions to be had as to just how far He went when it came to setting His Deity aside. One might argue that He never accessed His Deity when here on earth; and others will point to Scriptures where His Deity appears to be on display. At this point, I think that such a discussion misses the point.

Let me give the example of the plagues which God did to Egypt, at the hand of Moses. There is some discussion on whether these plagues are complete miracles or if there was a natural progression which took place. Did God create the frogs out of nothing, or did they

appear suddenly, as a result of natural processes? Quite frankly, I don't know, even though I lean towards every plague in Exodus being a natural phenomenon (perhaps excepting the final two plagues). But, in the great scheme of things, this argument yields us little by way of spiritual growth (by *little*, I mean *nothing at all*). Since the Exodus, there have been similar things take place throughout the world—maybe not at the same scale as happened at the hand of Moses—but a large enough event so that we can at least concede that *maybe* what God did in Egypt was orchestrate a great many natural events to end up with plagues that devastated all of Egypt. We don't know for certain; and our spiritual growth is not engaged, no matter how passionate the argument that we form, either for or against the plagues being miraculous.

In the passage that we have been studying, Jesus grows in knowledge; which leads us to the conundrum, *how can He grow in knowledge if He is divine?* If Jesus is Divine, then He is also omniscient. How does omniscience learn anything?

If you have been under good Bible teaching, you know that God never learns anything. He is never surprised by something which we say or do. He knew what we would do in eternity past, and, when necessary, He made perfect provision for it.

We studied one piece of the puzzle, which is the Doctrine of Kenosis, where Jesus has emptied Himself of His right and ability to access His divine nature. Instead, He is operating within the plan of God the Father. Only if God the Father allows Jesus to make use of His Deity, may the Lord access that aspect of His Being.

Jesus is made up of two natures—human and divine—where these natures are not mixed. One nature is not modified by the other, nor does one nature of one change the other in any way. This is known as the Hypostatic Union.

There are several pastors who have done excellent work on this topic. I will quote this particular approach, and provide additional links at the end.

The ESV; capitalized is used throughout (some exceptions).

Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union (from Maranatha Church)

I. Definition of terms

- A. **Hypostatic** is a term taken from the Greek noun hupostasis (ὑπόστασις) [pronounced *hoo-POE-staw-sihç*], which refers to the union of the two natures (the original Greek word, found 5x in the Bible, does not mean this). Strong's #5287. When used of Christ, the English term signifies the union of His two natures, the divine and the human, in His person
- B. **Incarnation** is the term which refers to the act whereby the eternal Son of God "became flesh". It also refers to the whole experience of His human life. It also embraces the fact that Christ bears His humanity forever. The term can be traced to the Latin version of John 1:14. The closest Greek equivalent is en sarki (ἐν σαρκί) [pronounced *ehn-sahrk-EE*], which means, *in the flesh*. 1John 4:2

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- C. **Condescension** means a voluntary descent from one's rank or dignity in relations with an inferior. The verb *condescend* means to descend to a less formal or dignified level. It is used of the willingness of God the Son to assume or to take on the nature of man. Philip. 2:6 (to be studied in more depth later) presents the fact of His condescension.
 - D. **Kenosis** comes from the Greek verb kenoō (κενόω) [pronounced *keh-n-OH-oh*], which means, *to empty*. It is found in Philip. 2:7, and refers to the manner in which Christ chose to restrict the use of His divine attributes during His humiliation.
 - E. **Humiliation** is the term which refers to the action of Christ's humanity by which He voluntarily agreed to submit Himself to the sufferings and limitations associated with His life on earth, including His death on the Cross. Philip. 2:8
- II. The three phases of Christ's existence include...
- A. His eternal preexistence as the Son of God, which is affirmed in Scripture. John 1:1,14 8:58 17:5 Philip. 2:6 Col.1:16,17 Rev.1:8
 - B. His humiliation as the God-Man, extending from His birth to His death. Heb.5:7
 - C. His exaltation by means of His resurrection and ascension as the glorified God-Man into the eternal future. Jesus will remain in this form forever. 1Thess.4:17 1Tim.6:14–16
 - 1. The fact that a Member of the Godhead will choose to remain in this form forever is quite powerful as a concept.
 - 2. This is done, along with the bearing of our sins, in order to provide us with eternal life.
 - 3. Most of us are fully aware of our own shortcomings, lusts and our own rebellings against God—so that God would do this on our behalf is a divine love which can only be imagined.
- III. The humanity of Christ in the hypostatic union. Philip. 2:8a **And being found in appearance as a man**
- A. The doctrine of the true humanity is as indispensable to Christian faith as is the doctrine of His deity (see [Doctrine of the Deity of Christ](#)).
 - B. The evidence for His human body is seemingly even more compelling than the evidence for His deity.
 - C. According to the Scriptures, Christ was born of the virgin Mary, fulfilling in this notable historical event of His incarnation all that would normally be expected of a human birth.
 - D. The Scriptures also testify that His body possessed flesh and blood. Heb.2:14 1John 4:2,3
 - E. The life of Christ subsequent to His birth in Bethlehem reveals the same normal human development and growth, Luke 2:52 **And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**
 - F. He experienced in His life similar feelings and limitations as other human beings and His physical movements were such as correspond to a

Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union (from Maranatha Church)

- G. genuine human nature and human body.
 - G. He, according to Scriptures, was able to suffer pain, thirst, hunger, fatigue, pleasure, rest, death, and resurrection.
 - H. Both before and after His resurrection, He could be seen and felt. His human body was tangible to human touch. John 20:24-29
 - I. His true humanity is also recognized in scripture by the human titles which were given to Him, such as "Son of Man", "the Man Christ Jesus", "the Son of David", etc.
 - J. The Scripture also declares that He possessed a rational human soul and spirit. Matt. 26:38 John 13:21
 - K. For those who accept the Bible as authoritative, there can be no question that Jesus Christ was in all reality true humanity.
- IV. The union of the divine and human natures.
 - A. The evidence from both the deity and true humanity of Christ makes it evident that these two widely differing sets of attributes were brought together into a personal union, which will continue forever.
 - B. Though sometimes Christ spoke and operated in the sphere of His humanity, and in other cases in the sphere of His deity, in all cases what He did and what He was could be attributed to His one person.
 - C. Even though it is evident that there were two natures in Christ, He is never considered a dual personality. He is not a schizophrenic.
 - D. The normal pronouns such as *I*, *You*, and *He* are used of Him.
 - E. The hypostatic union of the human and the divine natures in Christ is given explicit treatment in at least seven passages. Philip. 2:6-11 John 1:14 Rom.1:25 9:5 1Tim.3:16 Heb.2:14 1John 1:13
 - F. These passages make it evident that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself a complete human nature and became a man.
 - G. The act of the incarnation was not a temporary arrangement that ended with His death.
 - H. His earthly body, which died on the Cross, was transformed into a resurrection body suited for His glorious presence in heaven. We will have a body like His at our resurrection. Philip. 3:21
 - I. The continuance of His humanity is reflected in such verses as Matt. 26:64; His post resurrection appearances, Matt. 28:9; and His bodily ascension into heaven.
 - J. The human name Jesus is associated with the final judgment. Philip. 2:10
- V. The relationship of the two natures.
 - A. The two natures are united without any loss of any essential attributes, and the two natures maintain their separate identities.
 - B. Through the incarnation, the two natures were inseparably united in such a way that there was no mixture or loss of their separate identity, and without loss or transfer of any property or attribute from one nature to the other.
 - C. The union thus consummated in a personal or hypostatic union, in that

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Christ is one person, not two.

1. The closest parallel that we have to this is, each one of us is a product of our mother and our father.
 2. The genetic makeup of our father and the genetic makeup of our mother are combined to make one person.
 3. Obviously, this is less than a perfect analogy, given that the parental attributes are clearly intermixed.
- D. It should be clear that the divine attributes must necessarily belong to the corresponding divine nature and that human attributes belong to the corresponding human nature. Furthermore, the attributes of both the human and the divine nature belong to the person of Christ.
- E. Because the attributes of either nature belong to Christ, Christ is theo-anthropic in person, but it is inaccurate to refer to His natures as being theo-anthropic as there is no mixture of the divine and human to form a third new substance.
1. *Theo-anthropic* (or, *theanthropic*) comes from two Greek words:
 2. Anthrôpos (ἄνθρωπος) [pronounced *ANTH-row-pos*], which means, *man*. Strong's #444.
 3. Theos (θεός) [pronounced *theh-OSS*], which means, *God*. Strong's #2316.
- F. The human nature always remains human; the divine nature always remains divine.
- G. Christ is, therefore, both God and man, no less God because of His humanity and no less human because of His deity.
- H. The two natures of Christ cannot lose or transfer a single attribute.
- I. During the incarnation (the phase of His hypostasis from His birth to death), no attribute of the divine nature was changed, though there was a change in the manifestation of His deity.
- J. This is sometimes referred to as the kenosis doctrine or the self-emptying of Christ. I have suggested that the necessary functions of the Lord's essence occurred much in the same way that our various bodily functions occur (e.g., our heart beat, blood flow, digestion, etc.). The brain automatically regulates these aspects of our bodies, apart from human volition. Let me suggest that, this is how the Deity of Jesus Christ functioned. He continued to *hold the universe together* (Col. 1:17 Heb. 1:3); but there was no (human) volition required to make this happen. One might argue that there is no volition, as we understand it to be, as it relates to the function of Deity. However, the humanity of our Lord clearly had volition.
- K. It is clear that Christ, while on earth, following His incarnation, did not manifest the pre-incarnate glory of God except on rare occasions (i.e., transfiguration). Nevertheless, He surrendered no attributes.
- L. This union should not be viewed as deity possessing humanity or humanity being indwelt by deity.

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- M. This union of the two natures was not one of sympathy alone or merely a harmony of will and operation (liberal view).
- N. Jesus, when He spoke, could be speaking from His Deity, from His humanity or from His hypostatic union:
 - 1. John 8:58 **Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."** This is true of His deity only.
 - 2. John 19:28 **After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."** Only Jesus' humanity can thirst.
 - 3. John 6:62 **Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?** This passage describes Christ according to His human nature, but the predicate of ascending up where He was before could have reference only to the divine nature. John 14:6 **Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** Our salvation is based upon the hypostatic union of our Lord (although, quite obviously, we do not possess any sort of sophisticated understanding of the Hypostatic Union at salvation).
- VI. The doctrine of His kenosis as related to the hypostatic union.
 - A. This concept addresses what was involved in the condescension and humiliation of Christ in becoming man.
 - B. How could the eternal God take upon Himself human limitations while retaining His eternal deity?
 - C. The proper interpretation of Philip. 2:5–11 deals with this subject.
 - D. Some have interpreted the significance of His self-emptying (i.e., kenosis) in the sense He gave up part of His deity to become man.
 - E. In opposition to all kenotic views which deny His deity during the incarnation, it must be pointed out that God cannot change His nature by an act of His will any more than any other being can. Just as you cannot will yourself to be taller or shorter; Jesus cannot will Himself to be divested of His Deity.
 - F. What Jesus can do is not make use of His power; just as we may simply shut our eyes, no longer making use of our vision.
 - G. This is inherent in the divine attribute of immutability which is expressly affirmed of Christ, Heb.13:8 **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** This is, quite obviously, not true of His humanity.
 - H. Further, a loss in attributes would mean in effect that Christ was not God at all, which is contradicted by innumerable Scriptures and specifically by the gospel of John (see [Doctrine of the Deity of Christ](#)).
 - I. The humiliation of Christ was the veiling of His pre-incarnate glory.
 - J. It was necessary to give up the outer appearance of God in order to take upon Himself the form of man, Philip. 2:6 **...Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.**
 - K. In answer to the prayer of Christ to the Father (John 17:5), the eternal

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- manifestation was restored in connection with His resurrection and ascension.
- L. The glory was still evident as seen in His transfiguration. Jesus was able to access His glory as God only as the plan of God required.
 - M. Second, during the incarnation, Christ did not surrender the attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience, but He did embark on a discipline to submit to a voluntary nonuse of these attributes. An analogy we might understand is, we can limit the function of our sight either by being in a room without light or by closing both eyes.
 - N. Christ did not exercise His divine attributes to make His way easier, but they had abundant display in His miracles.
 - 1. Let me footnote this point. We really do not know whether the miracles done at the hand of the Lord came from His Deity or not.
 - 2. It is very possible that, most or all of the Lord's miracles were done by God the Father or God the Holy Spirit; and Jesus essentially pointed towards these acts (much as Moses did when God placed the 10 plagues upon Egypt).
 - O. When Jesus commanded the waves to be still and caused Lazarus to be raised from the tomb, this was not necessarily a function of His Deity. God the Father could be the One effecting what Jesus called for.
 - P. Many of the Lord's miracles were performed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Matt. 12:28 Luke 4:14–18
 - Q. The act of kenosis as stated in Philip. 2 may therefore be properly understood to mean that Christ did not surrendered any attribute of deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and under their limitations.
 - R. Given the Lord's self-limitation, does this mean that His Deity was not a part of any miracle which He did? I could not say one way or the other; but I would submit to you that this is likely a non-issue.
 - 1. When I refer to something as a non-issue, this is something which God the Holy Spirit has chosen not to reveal in Scripture.
 - 2. If something is not revealed clearly in Scripture, then this is not something which we need to know during our time on earth.
- VII. The relationship of the two natures to the self-consciousness of Christ.
- A. When did He, within His humanity, become aware that He was God?
 - B. As His human nature developed and with its self-consciousness, He, as a man, became aware of His uniqueness.
 - C. This, of necessity, must have occurred early on, even as a very young boy.
 - D. He had both a divine and human self-consciousness, and these were never in conflict, and He sometimes spoke and acted from one or the other.
 - E. This is also a difficult concept, and a parallel which I can provide is when we, as growing human beings, have God-consciousness. There is a day when a child—often between the ages of 3 and 5—begins to ask a lot of

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questions. This may take place all at once. *Why is that? What is that?* What these questions inevitably lead to is, consciousness of God. That is what the child is asking about, even though he does not know it. The parent can explain things in terms of God; the parent can tell the kid to shut up and stop asking so many questions; and the parent can give the child false information (refusing to cite the Person of God). Jesus would have possibly reached God-consciousness and Self-consciousness simultaneously. I would not be surprised if, when hearing some prophecies from the book of Isaiah, say, "That's Me!" (both of the Lord's parents would have been familiar with the prophecies in Isaiah)

VIII. The relationship of the two natures to the volition of Christ.

- A. Each nature had its corresponding will.
- B. The human will of Christ was subject to real temptation, Heb.4:15 **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.**
- C. The divine will of Christ was not subject to temptation. James1:1
- D. Because Divine will is, in fact, sovereignty, it is difficult for our minds to understand it. God does not will Himself to be intrinsically good as we might will ourselves to walk from point A to point B.
- E. The question among orthodox theologians is not whether the humanity of Christ was really tempted, but whether, as a man, He was capable of sinning.
- F. All agree that He remained sinless and had no sin nature, but there is a division over whether He could have sinned or not.
- G. If Christ could tap into His deity and have infinite power to resist temptation, then He is not really on an equal standing with those He is supposed to sympathize with.
- H. Infinite power to resist temptation is called impeccability, while the ability to sin through temptation is called peccability.
- I. With regard to all angels and all of mankind from Adam, temptability presumes peccability. Why should the humanity of Christ be the exception?
- J. If, for instance, Christ was tempted at the end of the forty days, but could not have sinned, then He was not our equal in temptation.
- K. In Gethsemane, it was His human will which was tempted to avoid the Cross. Matt. 26:39
- L. To argue that since Christ is now impeccable in heaven, therefore He must have been impeccable while on earth does not follow, since believers are peccable on earth but impeccable in heaven (elect angels also seem to have gone from peccability to impeccability).
- M. To argue that God would not have risked the whole plan of grace on the peccability of Christ ignores the doctrine of foreknowledge.
- N. Certainly the humanity of Christ, possessing no sin nature, had all the

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- resources not to sin short of a total inability to sin no matter what.
- O. The deity of Christ did not, in any fashion, override His human volition in the face of temptation by giving Him infinite power to resist.
 - P. There is no passage in Scripture which declares that He could not sin, only that He did not sin. 1John 3:5 2Cor.5:21
 - Q. So why postulate that which is not the pattern for other free moral agents? (I have not seen a compelling reason or passage).
- IX. The interpretation of Philip. 2:5–8:
- A. Philip 2:5 **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,...** V.5 exhorts believers to have the same mental attitude as was in the God-Man.
 - B. Philip 2:6 **...Who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,...** V.6 presents the example with reference to Christ's deity as seen in the condescension phase "**who, although He existed in the form of God** (this addresses His eternal preexistence as the second person and the pre-incarnate glory of that existence, John 17:5) **did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped** (His deity specifically did not so regard itself as being above entering into an incarnate state. This is the condescension of Christ)".
 - C. Philip 2:7 **...but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.** V.7 presents the example from His humanity. **...but emptied Himself** (this refers to a decision over the course of His life on earth not to exercise the independent use of His divine attributes to make His way easier and so circumvent the sufferings and limitations of the incarnation), **taking the form of a bondservant** (His deity agreed not only to associate with an inferior, but with one who was from the lower classes), **and being made in the likeness of men** (Christ looked just like true humanity).
 - D. Philip 2:8 **And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** V.8 continues the example as viewed from His humanity: **And being found in appearance as a man** (His contemporaries recognized Him to be a normal man like themselves), **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross** (the humiliation of Christ constituted His willingness to undergo whatever was necessary to provide salvation for mankind, including the shame associated with the Cross).
 - E. Philip. 2:9–11 **Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** Vv.9-11 constitute the reward for His condescension and humiliation.
 - F. **He existed in the form of God [i.e., He shared God's very nature], but did not consider [remaining] equal with God something [to continue] to hold**

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onto. Instead, He gave up what He had and took on the form [*i.e., the nature*] of a slave, becoming like a man, [*and even*] His appearance was found to be like a man's. He humbled Himself [*by*] becoming obedient [*to God*] to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God also exalted Him to the highest position and gave Him the name [*i.e., "Lord."* See verse 11], which is superior to every [*other*] name. [*This was*] so that, in [*honor of*] the name of Jesus, everyone's knee in heaven, on earth and under the earth [*i.e., all rational creatures*] should bow [*i.e., before God*], and that everyone's mouth should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philip. 2:6–11; AUV)

- G. The Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union clearly involves a great mystery that we must accept by faith, 1Tim.3:16 And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Beheld by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/hypostaticunion.html> accessed January 10, 2020 and edited. Some references below were also used.

Some of these men used the information which they learned from R. B. Thieme, Jr.; and some developed this doctrine from scratch. R. B. Thieme, Jr. may have learned much of what he taught from L. S. Chafer.

Links to the Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union

Robert McLaughlin	https://gbible.org/doctrines-post/doctrine-hypo-static-union/
Maranatha Church	http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/hypostaticunion.html
Got Questions?	https://www.gotquestions.org/hypostatic-union.html
Stan Murrell	https://stanmurrell.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/doctrine-of-hypostatic-union.pdf
James Allen	http://www.aliveandpowerful.com/pdf/Doc%20of%20Hypo%20stasis-Kenosis.pdf
Wm Wenstrom, Jr.	https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/doctrines/christology/hypostatic_union.pdf
Herman Mattox	https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Colossians/notes/2016-09-11Sunday_Morning.pdf

These are all very reputable and accurate sources and pastor teachers.

Luke 2:40a-b And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.

Our study of this verse has led us into the doctrines of Kenosis and the Hypostatic Union. How do we briefly describe what Luke is saying here? God the Son *chose* to set aside His attributes of Deity and to grow physically, mentally and spiritually just as any other believing child would.

Luke 2:40c **And the favor of God was upon Him.**

The word *favor* here is *charis* (χάρις) [pronounced *KHAHR-ic*], which means, *grace, graciousness; acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, joy, liberality, pleasure, thanks*. I prefer translating it *grace*. Strong's #5485.

God the Father watched over Jesus and provided Him with logistical grace, protection and guidance.

Jesus, in His humanity, acted like the humanity of anyone else. He had to grow physically; His brain developed and grew; He had to grow spiritually. In His Deity, Jesus was omniscient; but in His humanity, He had to learn Bible doctrine. When functioning as a man in this world, Jesus accessed the doctrine in His human spirit, doctrine that He had learned from the Word of God.

Furthermore, Jesus used the same grace assets that we do when it comes the spiritual growth. We are given the filling of the Spirit when we name our sins to God (obviously, Jesus never lost the filling of the Spirit). Then we are able to hear and understand Bible doctrine as it is being taught by a well-qualified pastor; and we are able to make the free will choice to believe that we are being taught. This results in spiritual growth. Jesus grew in His humanity in exactly the same way that we do.

Luke 2:40 **And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor [= grace] of God was upon Him.**

As Jesus grows, He becomes strong, and He is filled with wisdom, having God's grace upon Him. This is one of the few passages on Jesus growing up as a young boy. However, the emphasis is upon His being filled with wisdom, which is Bible doctrine in the soul that functions as a part of a person's daily life.

R. B. Thieme, Jr. had an excellent approach to this. He taught that Jesus Christ test drove the spiritual life of the Church Age. He was the first Person to have a spiritual life with all of the spiritual operating assets which we as believers enjoy today. He began with the filling of the Holy Spirit and the teaching of God's Word. One primary difference is, Jesus lived during the Age of Israel; and because of this, many believe that His life was a separate dispensation, the dispensation of the Hypostatic Union. He was still under the Law; Israel was God's client nation; but the Church Age was on the horizon. So Jesus had all of the spiritual assets which we have today, but He grew by learning the Old Testament (we have both the Old and New Testaments to grow by).

Luke 2:41a **Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year....**

Jesus' parents were devout and they attended the feast days in Jerusalem. The imperfect tense indicates that they did this habitually; and the plural indicates that they attended these feasts together.

The entire family attended the Feast of the Unleavened Bread followed by the Feast of the Passover every year.

Luke 2:41b ...at the Feast of the Passover.

The specific feast being referred to is the Passover. So we may reasonably assume that Mary and Joseph attended every Passover together, taking Jesus with them.

Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem each year to the Feast of the Passover, indicating that they took their faith very seriously. This was required in the Law. It would make sense for them to take Jesus with them, probably from his youngest years.

The ESV; capitalized is used below.

It is a good idea to understand what this feast is all about.

Doctrine of the Passover

- I. The historical beginnings of the Passover:
 - A. Although the sons of Israel had moved willingly (and by invitation) to Egypt.
 - B. However, their descendants were caused to become slaves in Egypt.
 - C. At some point, Moses came before Pharaoh of Egypt to ask him to let God's people go into the desert-wilderness to worship their God. Moses did this at the command of God.
 - D. When Pharaoh refused, God brought great plagues upon the land of Egypt at the hand of Moses. God brought 9 judgments upon the land of Egypt, and still, despite the heavy toll on Egypt taken by these judgments, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let God's people go and worship their God.
 - E. The final judgment was to be against the firstborn; and this judgment was potentially against everyone in Egypt and in Goshen (which was the part of Egypt, where the Hebrew people lived). God warned that every family would potentially suffer the death of their firstborn.
 - F. There was only one way to protect one's family—whether Hebrew or Egyptian.
 1. A year-old lamb would be taken and watched and, before that night of judgment, sacrificed.
 2. The blood of this lamb was to be painted on both sides of the door sill and on the top of the door frame.
 3. God's angel would see this blood and pass over that house.
 4. Where there was no blood, the angel would kill the firstborn of that household.
 - G. The symbolism of the Passover:
 1. The lamb represents Jesus Christ, Who is called the Lamb of God.

Doctrine of the Passover

2. The blood of the lamb represents the Lord's spiritual death for our sins (which was accomplished while He was physically on the cross being punished on the basis of false charges).
3. The sins of all mankind were laid upon Jesus during the event of the cross and paid for by Jesus. He took on Himself the punishment for our sins.
4. When a house was seen to have the blood on its doorway, it was considered under the blood. The firstborn of that house had been redeemed by the blood of the lamb.
5. Similarly, when we believe in Jesus, we are under the blood of the Lamb having been redeemed by Him.
6. Jesus Christ, our Passover offering, was sacrificed for us. 1Cor.5:7 John18:28-29 19:14

When I see the Blood (a verse and graphic); from [Juniper Tree and Beyond](#); accessed January 30, 2020.

II. The Passover as later observed by Israel.

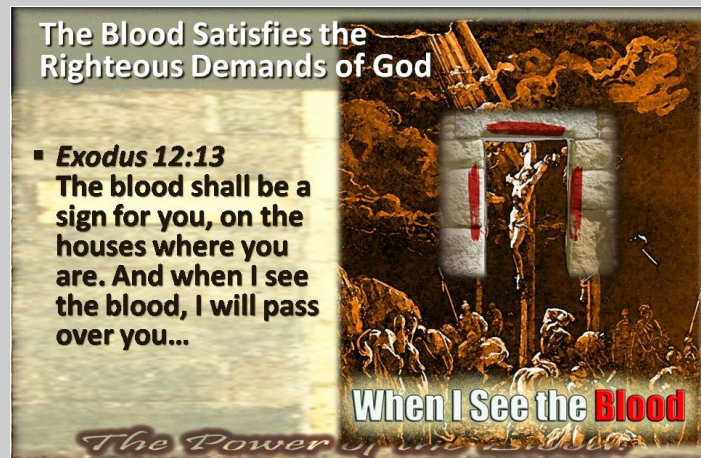
A. From this point forward, Israel was to observe the Passover as a yearly celebration, a memorial to what had come before. Exodus 12:14 "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a

feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast." (ESV)

B. This celebration of the Passover was to be done at the end of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, where the people of Israel were to not use any leavening in their bread making for a week. This commemorated the fact that, they were so suddenly asked to leave Egypt, that they did not have time to allow for their bread to rise. Exodus 12:15–20

C. Israel viewed its Passover as a memorial to what God did for them in bringing them out of Egypt. They would have not have appreciated its typical meaning.

1. The word *typical* is a theological term. A *typical* event or person would look forward so a parallel concept in the future. Typology was essentially unknown to Israel. However, it would be taught in the New Testament.



Doctrine of the Passover

2. The Passover is an example of a type.
3. That the Passover looked forward to the sacrifice of our Lord for our sins was not understood by the Israelites. They understood the Passover to be a commemoration of what God had done for them; they did not understand that the Passover looked forward to Jesus on the cross.
4. So for hundreds of years, millions of Israelites participated in the Passover ritual, yet none of them fully appreciated what the Passover was about.
5. Types were to be understood and appreciated *only* after the fulfillment of the type. The reaction of a believer being taught a particular example of typology, might be, "Oh, I see what You did there."

III. The Passover and the Lord:

- A. The passage we are studying is Jesus attending the Passover with His parents. This was something that they did every year. Luke 2:41
- B. John mentions 3 Passovers attended by the Lord during His formal ministry:
 1. John 2:13–23 appears to be the first Passover that Jesus observed during His public ministry, where he cleansed the Temple of the moneychangers.
 2. John 6:4 mentions the Passover as an aside, which occurred soon after the feeding of the 5000. John 6:4–13
 3. The final Passover is attended by the Lord, at which time He is seized by the Roman soldiers and the Temple guard. He will become our Passover Lamb, crucified for us. John 11:55–12:1 13:1 18:28–19:14¹

IV. The Eucharist and the Passover:

- A. Jesus, in His last meal with His disciples, instituted the Eucharist (or communion), which ritual He enjoined them to continue to observe. Mark 14:22–25 Matthew 26:26–29 Luke 22:14–20
- B. The Eucharist is the NT version of the Passover.
- C. We observe the Eucharist as a memorial to look back upon what Jesus did for us on the cross. It is the one ritual observed by the church since the death and resurrection of our Lord. 1Corinthians 11:23–26

¹ This is, incidentally, why we know that the Lord's public ministry was at least 3 years in length.

Excellent resources for additional information:

<https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/doctrines/israelology/passover.pdf>

<http://www.versebyverse.org/doctrine/passover.pdf>

Luke 2:41 Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

The Passover is one of the most significant feasts of Israel. The fact that Mary and Joseph attended Passover each year suggests that they carefully followed the requirements of the Mosaic Law.

Although it was only a requirement that the males attend these feasts in Jerusalem, this did not mean that women were not allowed to go. Joseph, the adopted father of Jesus, took his entire family to celebrate Passover.

This is a lead-in for something significant which happened when the family attended Passover when Jesus was a young man.

Luke 2:42a **And when He was twelve years old,...**

This is only narrative of Jesus as young boy. We know about Him around the time of His birth (in the biographies by Matthew and Luke). Here, we suddenly jump ahead to Jesus at age 12.

Luke, the author, will now focus on a particular Passover, when Jesus was 12 years old. This is the only recorded story of the Lord's youth that I can recall.

Most of what is recorded about the Lord is His formal teaching ministry, which took place over a 3–4 year period of time.

Luke 2:42b **...they went up according to custom.**

The word *custom* is *ethos* (ἔθος) [pronounced *ETH-os*], which means, *custom, manner, usage prescribed by law or habit, institute, prescription, rite*. Strong's #1485.

Perhaps, they are simply going up each year as it states; and that is according to their own practice. The word used here can simply mean, *as required by law*. Or perhaps there is more to this phrase than that. We will come back and revisit this phrase.

Luke 2:42 **And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.**

When Jesus was 12, they were going up to Jerusalem, as the Passover schedule demanded. This appears to be the yearly practice of Joseph and Mary.

Lesson 073: Luke 2:41–46

Jesus at Age 12

Luke 2:41 **Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.**

Everyone in the family went to Jerusalem for the Passover. Even though the Law specifies that all males were to attend this celebration, families could be brought as well.

Luke 2:42 **And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.**

I think all this means is, Jesus went up this year as a man; as required by the Law of Moses. Joseph was required to go up 3x a year; and now Jesus, at age 12, was also *required* to go up.

Now, even though today, a Jewish boy enters manhood at age 13, I would guess that Jesus, because of His knowledge of Scriptures, was considered a man; or considered to be entering into manhood. This is an assumption which I make, but it is related to what will happen at this Passover.

Luke 2:43a *And when the feast was ended,...*

Attendance of these feasts was central to the lives of Israelites. In the United States, our family celebrations tend to center around Thanksgiving and Christmas (two wonderful holidays because of what they mean). Israel's holidays were all related to their God; they celebrated their God. These festivals are: Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks or Pentecost), and Sukkot (Tabernacles, Tents or Booths). Think of these 3 feasts as their Thanksgiving and Christmas. A chief difference was, they gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate these feasts, whereas we generally gather with family to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas.

When the feast was over, they would return home.

Luke 2:43b *...as they were returning,...*

This particular Passover concluded, and Mary and Joseph began their trip to return home. As we will find out, this was not simply something which only Joseph and his small family attended; but that he went with a rather substantial group. In fact, the group is large enough so that, their son Jesus could be lost in the return home.

Luke 2:43c *...the Boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem.*

Unknown to His parents, Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. That He is missing from the group that Mary and Joseph traveled with suggests that it was a fairly large group, perhaps with several wagons.

As an aside, Luke is the only biographer to include this incident in the Lord's biography. All of Luke 1 and much of Luke 2 is not found anywhere else in the biographies of Jesus. Given the particulars found in these two chapters, it would be my hypothesis that Luke learned all or most of this information from Mary. There are at least two reasons for this: (1) there are some things than only Mary would be aware of (her visit to Elizabeth's home, her words spoken there, etc.).⁸¹ (2) Secondly, we have the phrase, *and Mary remembered*

⁸¹ Recall that Elizabeth was much older and would have been dead by the time Luke is converted.

this incident (Luke 2:19, 51). Finding this particular phrase in the book of Luke makes perfect sense if Luke is speaking to Mary and she said this to him.⁸²

So, Joseph and Mary have gone to Jerusalem, taking Jesus with them. However, when they begin to return, Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem.

Luke 2:43d **His parents did not know it,...**

Joseph and Mary were unaware that Jesus chose to remain behind in Jerusalem. As we will find, they traveled with a very large group; so they assumed that, when it was time for everyone to go, that Jesus just naturally joined back up with their group and was simply in a different wagon or with some different people. They were used to Jesus being quite conversant with other adults.

Luke 2:43 **And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it,...**

You may wonder, how can they not know that Jesus is not with them? This group is large enough and spread out enough that a head count was not necessarily made. Furthermore, I would make two assumptions: (1) Jesus had never given His parents any cause for concern; so that, when He was supposed to do this or that, He did it. (2) Given that, His parents simply assumed that He knew when everyone was leaving, and that He was expected to have joined up with the group. Given Jesus as a young boy, Mary probably never spoke to Him saying, "Now, we are meeting up at 9 am sharp tomorrow. I want You to make sure You are with us at that time. We will meet up over there and leave at 9:15 am. Now, what time was it that You need to be there?" This conversation would have never taken place.

Jesus was Mary's firstborn, and parents, when they have a child, have no idea what they are doing with their first child. They often make it up as they go along, as prompted by the behavior of the child and their own personal needs. Jesus would have never been disruptive; they would never have had to discipline Him; He always knew the right thing to do. Mary and Joseph would have given very few directives to their Son Jesus for these reasons.

Luke 2:44a **but supposing Him to be in the group..,**

The Lord's parents simply made the assumption that Jesus was with the caravan (He knew when they would leave).

This suggests that there was quite a large caravan (possibly even a hundred or more), where friends, neighbors and relatives would band together and make the trip together.

⁸² Although Luke certainly could have spoken to someone who spoke to Mary; but my reading of this material leads me to think that Luke learned this information from Mary.

It would make sense for a family and many of its neighbors to travel together to the three great feasts.

No thought was given to where Jesus was, because He was sinless. So, Mary and Joseph found out early on that they never needed to worry about Him. Some children require that you begin to lay down the law with them at age 3 or 4; but this was not necessary with Jesus. His perfect behavior was, very likely, taken for granted by His parents. It is highly unlikely that they had a great many boundaries which they imposed upon Jesus, as He was a naturally good child.

Luke 2:44b ...they went a day's journey,...

They were gone for a day, when they realized that Jesus was not in the caravan with them. Mary, like any mother, would have noticed that she had not seen her Son for the past 8 hours (or, whatever); and when she purposely went to find Him, she was unable to locate Him.

Luke 2:44c ...but then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances,...

In this caravan would be relatives, friends and acquaintances of Mary and Joseph. It was assumed that Jesus was elsewhere in the caravan with them, as apparently He was very sociable and mingled. However, it turns out that He was not among them.

We do not know how much time was devoted to this search; but, clearly, that depends upon the size of the caravan and in how many places Jesus could have been.

Luke 2:44 ...but supposing Him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances,...

They have all traveled in a pretty large group. Perhaps there was a core group of friends, relatives and neighbors; and as they continued on this journey, people that they knew would join up with them. The gathering for Passover was a very big deal; a very large number of people attended this. On a trip like this, there would have been safety and fellowship in numbers. For many of them—given the hard work that they did as farmers and ranchers—this was a great celebration of fellowship for them.

Luke 2:45a ...and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, ...

Even though the word for *Him* is not found in v. 45a, many translations include it. In the Greek, when the direct object is obvious, the Greek does not always include the word. Since it is obvious, it is understood.

When Jesus' parents realized that Jesus was not in the group, then they returned to Jerusalem (I have made this assumption as the word *parents* is used twice in this passage,

which seems to correspond to the word *they*). It is logical that both Joseph and Mary would have gone back together.

Luke 2:45b ...searching for Him.

The caravan was a day out from Jerusalem. They had a bit of road to cover (I believe I read that the trip of 65 or 68 miles; I suspect that they might be maybe a third of that distance from Jerusalem). The number of people who are in this group who return to Jerusalem are not specified. Obviously, both Joseph and Mary; whether anyone returns with them or there are any other sons there with them, we are not told.

Luke 2:45 ...and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for Him.

Joseph and Mary had to return to Jerusalem to find Jesus. Given the details of this incident, I would suppose that this is the first time anything like this has happened.

Luke 2:46a After three days they found Him in the temple,...

His parent apparently scoured much of Jerusalem looking for their son Jesus. It was not until 3 days that they found Him in the Temple area. Whether this was the 1 day trip of their return and 2 days of looking, we don't know. At bare minimum, they returned (1 day); looked for a day, could not find Him; and then looked the next day in the Temple, where they found Him.

It is interesting that they did not know where to look for Him at first. One explanation for this is, some other parents went back with Joseph and Mary and gave their suggestions as to where Jesus might be (based upon their own experiences with their own children). That is certainly reading into the text. In any case, Mary and Joseph do not go to the Temple first.

On the third day, they find Jesus at the Temple. Now, Jesus is not in the Temple proper, but in one of the courtyards designed for people to go and worship (which would have included teaching and Scripture reading).

Could this 3 days be prophetic? Would this be typical of the Lord being in the tomb for 3 days after the crucifixion? I am probably making too much of this little detail.

In any case, His parents did not think to look for Him at the Temple in the first place.

Again, these are small details found in this passage which would not have been known by many people. These are things which Mary would have known.

Luke 2:46b ...sitting among the teachers,...

Mary and Joseph find their Son. Jesus is sitting with a group of theological teachers. These would be rabbis, priests, scribes, pharisees—or some combination thereof. These were learned men in the Law of God, and Jesus is in their midst speaking with them.

It is reasonable to suppose that there were synagogues in the Galilee area that Jesus attended. Whether He got into any theological conversations is unknown (even His attendance in His youth is unknown); but that does seem reasonable to assume. That He would have taken every opportunity to learn the Word of God is exactly what we would expect. What you ought to be thinking is, *If Jesus is God, did He really have to learn anything?* The short answer to that question is, yes. Jesus in His humanity had to learn the Word of God; He had to learn Bible doctrine. There is, apparently, no direct pipeline between His Deity and His humanity through which all truth flowed.

Jesus heard the Scriptures read and explained throughout His young life; and the words of His Father remained in His soul.

Jesus Sitting Among the Teachers (a painting by Vasily Polenov 1896); from [Wikiart](#); accessed February 21, 2020.

Luke 2:46c ...listening to them and asking them questions.

So Jesus is at the Temple, sitting amongst a group of teachers. He is listening to them and questioning them. He is not necessarily doing a lot

of speaking; nor does He appear to be teaching the Law to them; but He listens to them and questions them. This suggests that, He is politely questioning their interpretations and doctrines which do not line up with the Scriptures. I say *politely*, because it is clear that no one here is getting mad at Him. The teachers would have found this young man to be both extraordinary and engaging.

I see this as an informal teaching session—perhaps even one designed for young believers—and questions were clearly allowed. I can imagine Jesus saying, “And what of this passage? What do you make of these words of Scripture?” And He would say the passage from memory (the adults there would have spent many years learning and memorizing these same passages). The learned men there—not necessarily the same sort of men who would later persecute the Lord—would then be forced to consider what they said when hearing other Scriptures presented.



Mary and Joseph took Jesus, at age 12, to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. When they left, Jesus remained behind, apparently without telling them.

Luke 2:43–45 And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing Him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for Him.

Luke 2:46 After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

We can make reasonable guesses as to exactly how Jesus advanced spiritually in His humanity at this age. He advanced by means of Bible doctrine in His soul, but we do not know the exact nuts and bolts of it. Did he attend the synagogue regularly? Did He have access the Scriptures as a private person? Jesus, although He is God, must advance spiritually in His humanity as well. In fact, there is no public ministry by Jesus without Him growing spiritually. His omniscience is not just poured out into His human soul. I actually have a pretty good theory on this.

Jesus would have had a great advantage in one way—when He heard the Word of God, he knew it and He accepted it as authoritative—and most importantly, Jesus retained this information—all of it. Jesus did not have a sin nature. Therefore, He was just as God had originally created man. This would have give Him a perfect brain, untouched by sin (there is a great deal of evidence that, despite being fully human, Jesus was, to say the least, an unusual human being).

I saw a [special on 60 minutes](#) about people who could not forget anything (it is called *Superior Autobiographical Memory*). This actually made their lives quite difficult. When people sin against us, we have a two things which allow us to deal with that: (1) as believers, we can choose not to react, but remain filled with the Spirit instead. That is, we do not respond with a negative mental attitude or with verbal sins. Ideally speaking, we choose to forgive that person (and I say, ideally, because it is not too difficult to hold a grudge). (2) Because remembering each and every wrong done against us is not healthy, God allows us to forget things which have happened in our lives. In my own life, interestingly enough, I do not tend to remember hurtful things that others have said or done to me, but I do tend to remember some of the lousy things I have done to others. I remember many of those.

These people on 60 Minutes had memories which were incredible—you could name a specific day and a year, and they could remember things which happened on that specific day and year. However, this meant that they were unable to take things from the past and let them drift from their memories, such as hurtful things which friends and family members have said to them. For this reason, this sort of mind did not provide these people with any sort of happiness or well-being. Every argument and every hurtful thing said to them, they remembered, as if it were yesterday. So these things weighed heavily on their souls.

I believe that Jesus simultaneously remembered all that had taken place in His life (including the sinful things that others said to Him); but that He was also able to lay those things aside by means of God the Holy Spirit, Who indwelt Him. He might remember some hurtful or unjust thing which happened in his life, but He *chose* not react to it—even though He may have retained that memory for His entire earthly life.

What I am saying is, even though Jesus is fully human, He also lacks a sin nature. Furthermore, He chooses each and every day not to sin. So, physically and mentally, there are some differences between you and Jesus. This does not mean that His life was super-advantaged. Again, when your memory is perfect, you remember everything, including the evil which was done against you. Every single day, the pressure from that would have increased. You see, you not only have every wrong thing said or done to you from the previous years in your memory; but you continue to accumulate more and more things in your memory that have been done against you. By the time that Jesus got to the cross, He was carrying a massive burden of things said against Him which He chose *not* to react to. I taught for nearly 30 years, and kids can be cruel, and kids have said some pretty mean things to me. But, I continued to teach because, as time goes on, I forget these things which were said. I cannot imagine if the memory of such things remained with me, each and every year.

It is an interesting area of speculation, and my assumption would be that, Jesus chose *not* to think about all of the wrongs done against Him. This was a choice that He could consciously make (again, this is mostly speculation).

Now, I realize that it may be strange to consider Jesus, His mentality and His not having a sin nature. However, we find Him here, just outside of the Temple, holding His Own with a group of theological experts. He did *not* come by His theological knowledge from His omniscience (something which we have discussed), but through the intake of Bible doctrine. By age 12, Jesus knew enough of the Old Testament to interact even with the theological experts of that day.

Here, the New Testament narrative seems to indicate that Jesus had an amazing mind, being that it had not been compromised by a sin nature (that is the part which I take by implication). There will be other passages where it is clear that His body was capable of some extraordinary things (He will fast for 40 days in Luke 4); which I would attribute to His lack of a sin nature as well.

Luke 2:46 **After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.**

Bear in mind that the teachers at the Temple would have been a mixed bag. Some trusted implicitly in the Word of God; others trusted implicitly in the traditions of Judaism, which were related to the Scriptures, but with a legalistic spin placed upon them.

Jesus is among the teachers who have devoted their lives to studying the Word of God. He is asking them questions, and let me suggest that, He may be asking questions in order

to gain knowledge; but He may also be asking questions to get them to reconsider their incorrect points of view. "In the light of what you just said, how do you explain Isaiah 53?" He might ask one of them.

Luke 2:47 **And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.**

These questions went two ways. Jesus questioned the teachers, but it came to a point where they, apparently, questioned Him. They may have been simply testing Him; or they may have been searching for actual insight. In any case, what Jesus says impresses them; and when they put a question to Him, His answer amazes them.

In His public ministry, Jesus often questions the pharisees and they often question Him. When Jesus questions them, He is not searching for knowledge, but allowing them to reexamine their false points of view. When they ask Him questions, some of them are not searching for knowledge, but they are trying to trip Him up (bear in mind that all of these teachers have a sin nature and there are different levels of their knowledge and trust of the Word of God⁸³).

Everyone who is there hearing Him is astonished. The imperfect tense means, they began being astonished in the past and they continue being astonished. He does not just say one or two clever things and that surprises them. His questions themselves astonish them, as do His answers to their questions. Let me suggest that, in very short order, these men understood that they were dealing with a spiritual intellect like no other. At this juncture, it appears that there is no animosity towards Jesus.

It is very clear that He understands the Scriptures. The word for *understand* is *sunesis* (σύνεσις) [pronounced SOON-es-is], and it means *mentally putting together*, that is, *understanding, intelligence, the intellect, knowledge*. So, he is taking a variety of Scriptures and putting them together, and looking at things from a larger theological perspective which goes beyond the individual verses.

Emphasizing a particular group of Scriptures:

What is so very common is, a person will read and know a series of verses, and they put a great deal of emphasis upon those verses, excluding others (intentionally or lacking a full knowledge of them). It is from this approach that we get many of the false doctrines which are accepted as true (particularly those articulated by various cults and denominations). It would be easy to read the Bible and see God's sovereignty as being the end-all, be-all, to the point where man's volition is irrelevant. I could give you a half dozen verses right now, and it would seem, by these verses, that God determines everything in its entirety whether we believe in Him or not (also known as 5 point Calvinism).

⁸³ Which would have been the Old Testament.

However, one may also go into the Word of God and pull out a half dozen Scriptures which place our free will as the highest level of our being, to where, just by exercising our free will, we can be saved and then lose that salvation—perhaps many times. This is known as Arminianism (I am not presenting either of these positions as true, but as opposing theological positions with an abundance of Scriptural backup).

What the believer who wants to advance must do is, allow these verses and approaches to Scripture to complement one another. These things that we read about God's sovereignty must be true; but, simultaneously, we also must believe what we read about our own free will. Somehow, our theological understanding must reflect both sets of verses, which, to some, would seem even contradictory.

Where an emphasis on a limited number of Scriptures stands out is, in the Christian cult (and there are many of them). A teacher may have 25 or 50 Scriptures embedded in his mind, and they are his *go-to theology verses*. So his explanation for anything places these particular set of verses above everything else.

One of the great examples of this is the Jehovah Witnesses. They do not believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ (and you may be wondering even yourself, right at this point, what I think, as I have been emphasizing *Jesus the young man* in this passage—because that is what this passage speaks to). What the JW's do is, they have those go-to verses (which is sometimes even greater than 25 or 50 verses); but they have to explain away so many more other verses as a result. I can tell you from personal experience that, they learned canned answers for this or that objection to their theology, but that they cannot go beyond that canned answer (part of their training appears to be, if they get hung up on issue X, then move on to issue Y⁸⁴).

Many, many decades ago, I discussed the Deity of Jesus Christ with a couple of JW's—they do not believe that Jesus is God. However, rather than jump from verse to verse (for each verse, they had their canned answer), I focused upon John 1:1–3, 14 and the Greek of that passage; and I would not let them move me off of that passage. In this passage, Jesus is clearly called *God*; but the JW's understand this to mean a *god* (hence, not equal to God the Father).

Their training allowed them to give their canned explanation to that passage, and then they were ready to move onto another passage. But I stayed with the passage and explained to them why their canned answer was insufficient. Obviously, they had not heard that before. So, they brought in an *expert*; and we ended up at the same impasse. He had the exact same canned answer, but could not go beyond that explanation. The earnest JW's who first knocked on my door assumed that a person who had been in that cult longer could more easily defeat my argument (my argument was simple—the JW's themselves did *not* consistently translate the anarthrous construction of *Theos* as a *god* everywhere

⁸⁴ I have actually observed this myself.

else). Their expert only knew the canned answer. He did not know about the inconsistency of the JW Bible regarding the anarthrous construction of Theos⁸⁵).

I knew what the Greek was in that passage and I knew their incorrect interpretation of the Greek, and it was quite easy to show them that they were inconsistent at this very point. The JW's have their own translation of the Bible (one of the few Bibles translations that I will *not* refer to), and in John 1, they translate *God* as *a god*, because there is no definite article in the Greek. However, they are not consistent on this point. There are many other passages with the same anarthrous construction (= without a definite article) where they translate it *God* (rather than *a god*) in their own translation. So, even though they can explain why their Bible translates the reference to Jesus as *a god*; they are unable to explain why they are not consistent even in their own Bible translation. Their canned explanation is good for this passage and this passage alone. And few, if any JW's, could look at the Greek and recognize an anarthrous construction on their own.

Now, the depth of this *expert's* knowledge was not any deeper than those who called him to come explain the passage to me. He knew their very short, canned explanation. Then they went to get another *expert*, at which point, I decided not to take this discussion any further.

In short, you must be willing to set aside a theology based upon 25 or 50 verses, when it becomes clear that theology is Scripturally wrong.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple (a graphic); from [Blogspot](#); accessed February 21, 2020. I am not drawing any parallels to my discussions with the JW's with the inclusion of this graphic).

One should bear in mind that, not all of the scribes, pharisees, Levites, etc. are evil. There was a religious hierarchy and some of those in that group were there for power and/or approbation, but there is no reason to



⁸⁵ This simply means that we have the Greek word *Theos* without a definite article. Even a person who does not know Greek and has never read a Greek sentence in his life can be shown how this looks. Then, they can be shown that the JW Bible—which makes a big deal of this interpretation—does not hold to their own rule consistently.

paint all of them with the same broad brush.

So, when these adults are teaching and discussing the Law with Jesus, there is no reason for them to feel any animosity towards Him *at this time*. Now, later, when Jesus throws all of the moneychangers out of the Temple, that will change the attitude of some in the religious hierarchy.

Lesson 075: Luke 2:46–49

Young Jesus at the Temple

Here is where we are in this narrative: Jesus' parents walk into the Temple courtyard and they find Him, at age 12, speaking to great theological experts.

Luke 2:46 *After three days they [Mary and Joseph] found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

Jesus is 12 years old, at the Temple, and engaging the theologians of His day. His parents believed Him to be in the caravan which was returning to Nazareth, but He was not. So they returned to Jerusalem to find Him (not having any idea where He would be).

Luke 2:47 *And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.*

The Greek word used here, translated *understanding*, is *sunesis* (σύνεσις) [pronounced *SOON-es-ic*], and it means *mentally putting together*. Jesus was able to take Scripture from here and there and all over and cohesively put it altogether into a consistent theological approach which had no internal contradictions. This approach would have been sometimes in conflict with many of the traditions of Judaism. On the other hand, for the teachers there were truly interested in the Law, and speaking to Jesus would have been a revelation. I am assuming that there were some teachers there who greatly benefitted by this interaction with a young Jesus, and it helped some of them to pull together concepts and doctrines which they did not fully appreciate before.

The religious hierarchy by that time had developed a very specific theology which was not altogether Biblical. They focused on some aspects of the Old Testament and ignored others. Jesus was able to integrate the passages which they ignored and to correctly explain the passages that they favored.

Based upon what we read here, Jesus is not just asking questions (v. 46), He is providing answers (v. 47). So He is likely using the Socratic approach—which is reasonable for Jesus to do, as He would later offer up His Own life for that of Socrates (and of all mankind). He is leading those teachers who are with Him with questions, and, when they are unable to follow the question out to its logical answer, then He provides the answers for them.

Also, sometimes the proper mix of questions and answers can seem very non-threatening, which is sometimes can be an excellent way to get a point across. Furthermore, remember

that this is the Word of God which they are discussing—the Word of God is able to change people and to change their thinking and opinions.



Jesus Speaking with the Teachers
(a graphic); from [Main Street UMC](#);
accessed April 3, 2020.

What I like about this picture is, Jesus and the teachers are clearly outside of the Temple on the steps. Access to the Temple was very limited to specific priests.

This is much better than one [artist's rendition](#), where Jesus has long hair and several in the picture have a book on their lap (I would guess the KJV Bible). Another [picture](#) has scrolls in the hands of the teachers, but they are all apparently sitting on wooden pews.

Luke 2:46–47 **After three days they [Mary and Joseph] found Him [Jesus] in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding [sunesis] and His answers [which means that the theology experts there are asking Jesus, a 12-year-old boy, His opinion].**

It should be clear that the focus of Jesus' early life was on the Word of God. He knew it well enough to discuss it with the great teachers of His day—men who had devoted their lives to the study of the Word of God.

This does not mean that Jesus did nothing else. I would assume that He learned a trade from His adoptive father, Joseph. Jesus would have known how to work with wood and how to build (which vocation would have involved a great deal of strength and skill). This is speculation on my part, but it would have been common for a father to teach his son his skills.

Luke 2:48a **And when His parents saw Him, they were astonished.**

On day 2 (or 3) of their search, Jesus' parents go to the Temple and they find Him speaking with the teachers there, and the teachers are having difficulties fielding His questions or handling His objections to their phony doctrines (obviously, I am reading some things into this).

Rather than *astonished*, I would suggest *surprised*, *taken aback*. The verb here is the 3rd person plural, imperfect middle indicative of *ekplêsomai* (ἐκπλήσομαι) [pronounced *ehk-PLACE-ohm-ī*], which means, *to be struck with astonishment; to be amazed, to be astonished (surprised, taken aback); to be struck with panic, shock or fear*. This word is a combination of Strong's #1537 (*out, out from, away from*) and Strong's #2476 (*to stand, to take a stand*). It literally means, *to stand outside of oneself, to stand beside oneself*. Strong's #1605. Young people of the 1960's used to express this emotion verbally with the word, *whoa!*

The teachers are taken aback by His age and knowledge; and His parents are astonished to find Jesus there. The imperfect tense in the Greek means, the Lord's parents go into the courtyard and see Jesus from a distance, talking with the teachers. They begin *to be astonished* or *taken aback*; and as they move closer to where they are able to hear what is being said, they continue to be surprised. They can hear their Son speaking to these learned men as an equal.

Whatever the Lord was saying, asking, or postulating, He certainly had the attention of the teachers there. There is no indication that they formed a search party to find His parents; they found the Lord to be too engaging to simply treat Him as any other 12 year old kid. He appeared to be quite mature with an amazing theological perspective. Even if these teachers at first thought, *where are this Boy's parents?*, no doubt they became so engaged in their theological discussion as to set such questions aside.

There may be some additional background for this passage which was not recorded. Traditionally, Jewish boys become men at age 13 and Jewish girls become women at age 12. Whether this has been a hard-and-fast rule from the beginning, I could not say. The reason for the difference is obvious to any person who has met a young woman and a young man—girls tend to mature before boys do.

Let me suggest that Jesus' parents, before this incident, began to consider Him a man at age 12, and I would suggest that remarks were made by both of them explicitly to confirm this. This would further help to explain the verse:

Luke 2:42 *And when He was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.*

The custom is, all (adult) males were to go up to Jerusalem for 3 specific feasts (Exodus 23:14–17), also known as the pilgrimage feasts.

Exodus 34:23 [God is speaking to Moses] *"Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God, the God of Israel."*

Deuteronomy 16:16 [Moses is speaking to the people of Israel] *"Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed."* (ESV)

Babies were not required to come before the Lord these 3 times; I would suggest to you that boys were not required to come before the Lord either. The inference here in Luke 2:42 is, Joseph and Jesus (*they*) are going to Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which included the Passover) according to the Law of Moses. Jesus is considered an adult acting in obedience with Exodus 34:23 and Deuteronomy 16:16. Joseph and Mary are not the ones going up according to the custom, but Joseph and Jesus are (Mary is going up to Jerusalem for the celebration, but not in obedience to the Mosaic Law).

The point I am trying to make is, Jesus is considered by His parents as an adult and the Scriptures more or less confirm this (at least by implication, but certainly not conclusively). However, based upon this incident, Mary will change her mind about the freedom which they had given Jesus.

Luke 2:48b *And His mother said to Him,...*

It says that His mother speaks *face to face with Him*, meaning that she addresses Him directly.

Mary speaks to Jesus as a reprimanding mother, setting aside what she is seeing (meaning that she does not fully appreciate what Jesus is doing at the Temple).

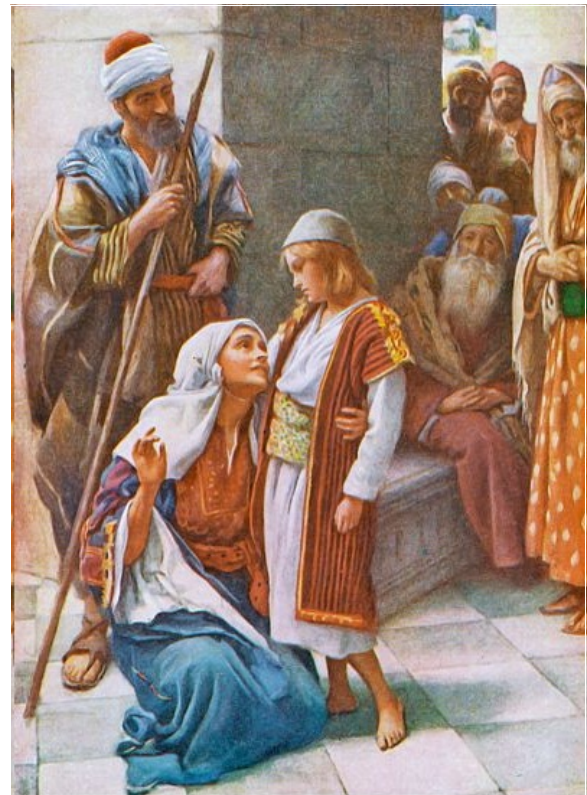
Luke 2:48c *..."Son, why have You treated us so?"*

Mary, His mother, asks why He has done this to them. Why did He not return with them; and why did they have to come looking for Him?

Mary takes what Jesus has done personally; but His actions were not in disobedience to her or Joseph. Jesus was acting as an independent adult—which He was.

Luke 2:48d *Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress."*

No doubt, the Lord's parents were anxious about realizing that He was missing. They returned to Jerusalem in order to find Him. They were very concerned because they did not know where He was.



My Father's Business by Harold Copping

My Father's Business (a picture by Harold Copping); from [Pinterest](#); accessed April 3, 2020.

Luke 2:48 And when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us so? Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress."

I have to assume, based upon the sinlessness of the Lord, that all of this took place without the Lord sinning. He would not have disobeyed His parents at this point, and He may have even told them what He would be doing and where He would be going. Or He may have told someone else in the caravan where He would be. We really don't know any more of the backstory than what we are told in this narrative, but given that Jesus is sinless, we must assume that what He did was not a sin.

In my opinion, it is very likely that Mary never previously sat Jesus down and said, "Now listen, Son, You need to tell us exactly where You are going to be at every minute of the day." There was no training which had to take place; no talks of correction and guidance—not ever prior to this moment.

When training a child, parents often react to what a child does, and teach the child after the fact. "This is what you did; what you did is wrong; and here is why it is wrong." With Jesus, none of this was necessary.

I think that we may further assume that Jesus had been considered, at age 12, an adult by his parents and I would suggest to you that they actually said things to Him to indicate that.

We cannot look upon Jesus at age 12 as being a 12-year-old today. I think that His age would more roughly correlate to children in the 18–21 years of age today, in terms of maturity level, interests, etc. He probably worked harder than most 18 year olds today (in his father's business) and was certainly far more mature than the average 12 year old then (probably more than the average 18 year old, who would be an adult in that era).

Now, I recall being a 12 or 13 year old (and I was anything but mature); however, in that era, I would hop on my bike and ride out to the Roseville Auction on a Saturday—usually with a friend of mine. The ride itself would take about an hour and we might spend 2 or 3 hours there and then ride back. At that time, this was more or less normal. The reason that I bring this up is, if I, as a very immature young man in the 1960's could do this sort of thing, then we cannot look at Jesus in the perspective of our present era and think that what He has done here is way, way out of line.

Our assumption must be that Jesus had not sinned by being there at the Temple, separated from His parents.

Lesson 076: Luke 2:48–52

Jesus at the Temple at Age 12

After the Passover celebration, Jesus remained behind and was discussing the doctrines of Scripture with the learned men of the Temple. Mary and Joseph, when they realized

that Jesus was not with the caravan returning to Nazareth, they went back to Jerusalem to find Him. When they found Him in the Temple courtyard discussing theological issues with the priests, scribes and teachers, it is clear that Mary was upset.

Now, even though I would allege that Jesus was completely without sin in what He did, Mary and Joseph were still upset that He did not return with them in the caravan.

Luke 2:48 And when His parents saw Him [speaking with the spiritual intellects of that day], they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us so? Behold, Your father and I have been searching for You in great distress."

There were a great many ways for the feelings of Mary and Joseph to be described: *relieved, upset, angry, frustrated*; but they were, overall, *astonished*. Did they not appreciate the level of learning that Jesus had achieved up to the point in time? Or, perhaps they had observed their son discussing Scriptures with a local teacher, but surprised to find Him being treated as an equal by the learned teachers at the Temple? It is one thing to discuss philosophical notions with your local community college adjunct faculty staff; but a whole other thing to discuss the same material with a Harvard professor (it might not really be that much of a big deal, but it would seem that way).

Despite being astonished, Mary reprimands the Lord. Even reading Mary's voice—does this not sound like every parent whose child has wandered off? But, bear in mind, the Lord is much older in the realm of maturity. Mary may have been distressed, but there was no reason for her to be.

Luke 2:49a And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me?"

Jesus stops what He is doing and speaks directly to His parents, and He asks them, "Why are you both looking for me?" Why are you doing that?

From a 12-year-old child—even a very mature one—this question may seem to be somewhat impertinent. Jesus will explain further.

Luke 2:49b Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"

There are at least two words that Mary used that Jesus uses to answer her. The main verb is repeated here, along with the word *father*. Mary spoke of Jesus' earthly father (His step-father), but Jesus speaks of His True Father, His Heavenly Father. Obviously, Jesus should obey His Own earthly father; but if His Heavenly Father requires Him to do something else, then Jesus must obey His Heavenly Father first. The requirements of His Heavenly Father will always trump the requirements of His earthly father.

Just as there are family requirements (to which Jesus will adhere), Jesus has family requirements with God the Father.

It is possible—even reasonable—that Jesus taught this to His parents previously. Certainly, His Own parents taught Him, but there would have been a point of time where He began to teach them.

God the Father has a plan for God the Son; and Jesus is simply fulfilling that plan. God the Father is the authority over Jesus, just as Joseph is the authority in their home over Jesus.

Furthermore, I believe that, prior to this trip to Jerusalem, Jesus was recognized by his parents as an adult Son. I believe that they said things which explicitly indicated that (which we have previously discussed).

Luke 2:49 **And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"**

What Jesus says here suggests that He did not simply wander off without telling them. Nor were they to divine, by whatever means, that He would be in His Father's house. Jesus had to convey to them at some time where He was going or what He was going to do in Jerusalem or something along those lines. They heard Him, but they did not really hear Him. Or, in the alternative, Jesus began to act as an adult, making His Own adult decisions. Although Jesus may have been aware of the time that the caravan was leaving Jerusalem, it is certain that Mary nor Joseph told Him that He must leave Jerusalem with them. My point in this discussion is, Jesus has not sinned in His actions—even at age 12.

Luke 2:50 **And they did not understand the saying that He spoke to them.**

Joseph and Mary did not fully appreciate Who Jesus was. They did not fully understand all that He said to them.

What Jesus said made perfect sense, but His parents did not really understand Who He was or what He was doing. Recall that this is their first son, and He would have been quite different from other boys—but did they fully appreciate that? Despite all that happened prior to the Lord's birth, all of the people who came to see Him, and all of the attendant activity, that all seems to have subsided by the time that they left Jerusalem for Egypt. Since then, the Lord was simply living a normal life (as His parents perceived it). Because Jesus is perfect, His parents would have never had to lay the law down for this or that infraction, as there were no infractions. They never had to teach Jesus the difference between right and wrong because He seemed to implicitly understand the distinction. Because Jesus is perfect and because Jesus is their first son, it is likely that this rebuke given by Mary is the first rebuke that she had given to Jesus.

Jesus said that He must be about His father's work in His Father's house—but that did not fully register with His parents. He may have said this to His parents earlier as well (during the feast celebration). Despite the amazing circumstances of the Lord's birth, I would guess that most of the past 12 years was normal family life. Normal, except that Jesus had not sinned as a child.

It is possible that understanding this verse helps us to better interpret the previous verse. Or does this better help us understand the Lord's earthly parents? Let's put them together and read them as a contiguous whole:

Luke 2:49–50 *And He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that He spoke to them.*

Despite all of the amazing incidents which took place immediately before and after the Lord was born, Mary, Joseph and Jesus had been a fairly normal family. So when Jesus said these words, His parents did not really understand what He was saying to them.

Luke 2:51a *And He went down with them...*

Even though Jesus was there in the Temple with good reason; and that He was learning (as were the teachers there); He agreed to return with them.

They went down in elevation, which is why the word *went down* is used here (that is one word in the Greek). Jerusalem is on a mountain.

I believe that there was a change in dynamics. Whereas, his parents may have explicitly or implicitly recognized Jesus as an adult at age 12; they seem to be going back on that position. It appears to me that they have decided—just at this point in time—that Jesus is their young Son Who needs to be obedient to them.

Luke 2:51b *...and came to Nazareth...*

Jesus returned with them to Nazareth. This is where the Lord was raised. This is where His family lived.

Luke 2:51c *...and was submissive to them.*

What might explain Jesus having not sinned is, His parents had never insisted on strict obedience to them before. They had no reason to. They never had to tell Him, "Because I said so." They never had to tell Him to stay nearby, to not go out of their sight, etc. (or whatever a parent would typically tell their child in that era). Being perfect, He would not have been the typical child who gets in trouble all of the time; Jesus would never have been in trouble at any time. Being their first child, Mary and Joseph may not have fully appreciated the sort of child that Jesus was.

However, this time, Jesus separated from their company—possibly without telling them (we do not really know one way or the other). In any case, they laid down the law at that point. As a result, Jesus was then willingly subordinate to them. Whatever they decided, that was the way it was going to be. This was their legitimate authority to apply; and Jesus submitted to their authority. As a child under their roof, Jesus was required to be obedient to them, whether their demands were reasonable or not.

Application: Ideally, this should be the attitude of any child in the care of parents.

What I believe was the case was, Jesus' parents never had to discipline Him or tell Him what to do. However, at this young age of 12, He began to act as an adult, making some adult decisions. I would not be surprised if His parents saw Him in that light, recognizing Him as an adult, and even expressed that to Him (on previous occasions).

However, since He was still under the care of His parents—living under their roof, as it were—Jesus willingly submitted to their requirements. Parents, when raising children, discuss quite a number of things. Can you imagine Mary and Joseph speaking quietly to one another, trying to determine a set of rules that they would expect Jesus to comply with?

Luke 2:51d *And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*

Even though His mother did not fully appreciate what Jesus was saying—that He must be doing the work of His Father—she continued to store these things up in her memory. How much did she believe and how much did she understand? On several occasions, it is clear that neither she nor Joseph fully understand or appreciate what is happening. However, Mary goes out of her way to remember these things which occur. It is logical that, sometime in the future, she shares these stories with Luke.

Luke 2:51 *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*

It appears as if Joseph said, “It is time, we are going now.” And Jesus obeys them and goes with them.

On several occasions, we have the Mary *treasures up all these things in her heart* (see Luke 2:19). Every mother pays attention to what her Son does—whereas, the father may be oblivious.

When Luke speaks to various people in order to gather material for this gospel, I believe that this suggests that Luke directly interviewed Mary for much of this information. First of all, there is no better person in this regard to get this information from; and this wording suggests that this is something that Mary put aside and remembered about Jesus.

From this very specific incident, Luke makes a general observation about the Lord as a young man. This would have been an observation that Luke made, based on several interviews; and also, as inspired by God the Holy Spirit when he wrote his gospel.

Luke 2:52a *And Jesus increased in wisdom...*

The verb used here can mean *to advance* or *to increase*. One seems to work well in one place; and the other works well in another (this verb is properly applied to all of the 3 nouns which follow).

Jesus increased in knowledge, meaning that He learned the Law of Moses; and He learned the prophets; and that He properly understood these things. Obviously, this increase in knowledge occurs in His humanity. The omniscience of His Deity does not bleed through to His humanity. The Doctrine of Kenosis ([Lesson #69](#)). Jesus learned the Word of God much in the same way that we do.

Luke 2:52b *...and in stature...* Or, *...and [Jesus increased] in stature...*

Even though I placed the word *in* in brackets, it is a legitimate translation because of the locative case here (all of three nouns are in the locative case).

Physically, Jesus matured or aged just like any son would. He would have gone through puberty; His brain and His body would have grown and advanced.

His human spirit also advanced, as He continued to take in Bible doctrine.

It is reasonable to suppose that Jesus was the healthiest man alive, his body not having been beset by sin.

Luke 2:52c *...and in favor....* Or, *...and [Jesus increased] in grace...*

Jesus advanced and increased in grace. This meant that He made critical use of God's grace system to advance spiritually. He used every opportunity available to Him to learn the Scriptures and He concentrated when they were read in the synagogues.

Even though the Bible says nothing of Jesus going into the synagogues as a child and a young man, I would assume that He did, considering that He went to the synagogues throughout His public ministry.

If a person is functioning on positive signals towards God after believing in Jesus Christ; then God must provide that person the opportunity to take in His Word.

His discussions with the teachers at age 12 suggests that He took the opportunity to partake in similar discussions at other times. Again, the Bible does not specifically confirm this, but Jesus would have been hungry for Bible doctrine from His earliest age. God the Father gave Jesus opportunities to take in Bible doctrine. It is logical to assume that Jesus wanted to discuss this information with learned men.

Luke 2:52d *...with God and man.*

Both God and men observed these changes taking place in Jesus. God was pleased with the Lord's progress spiritually (again, He advanced in Bible doctrine); and men were also engaged by Him. People liked Jesus. There will be a change here; and it is reasonable to try to figure out, *how did that happen?* Here, people are said to favor Jesus; but Jewish people will, in the end, clamor for Him to go to the cross (and the Romans were willing

participants in His murder). Jesus did not change during this time; but there would become a point where the religious hierarchy of Jerusalem would turn against Him.

Luke 2:52 **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**

This is the spiritual growth of Jesus in His humanity. He grows in wisdom; and He also grows physically. He is favored by God and man.

Just as a person's physical growth is imperceptible from one day to the next, the same is true of one's spiritual growth. Most of the time, after attending a Bible class, you feel about the same as you did when you walked in (once and awhile, you might feel better). But, in terms of spiritual growth, you would be unable to really quantify any actual changes from day to day. However, after a year of accurate Bible teaching, you ought to notice some differences in your life, those differences being good. As you have more and more years of Bible teaching, you can see more of a spiritual arc to your own life (just like your parents marking off your height on a door sill each birthday).

One thing that you might do, after a year of learning Bible doctrine, is attempt to apply the doctrine which you have learned.

Lessons 077–079: Luke 2:52

Grace Apparatus for Perception

This final verse of Luke 2 is one of the most important verses in the book of Luke. This verse caused us to consider one of the most important doctrines in Christianity—the doctrines of kenosis and of the Hypostatic Union. We learned that Jesus was much more complex than God wandering about in a human body. And, for as believers, there is something found here that is fundamental to our Christian walk—learning Bible doctrine.

Luke 2:52 **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.**

R. B. Thieme, Jr. used to say, “Jesus test-drove the spiritual life for believers in the Church Age.” That is, we grow spiritually in much the same manner as Jesus did. We are filled with the Holy Spirit through rebound (through naming our sins to God); and we take in Bible doctrine on a regular basis (I believe that daily intake is key for every believer's spiritual growth). Jesus did not have to rebound, as He did not sin; but He grew spiritually in His humanity in the same way that we do. Jesus did *not* access the omniscience of His Deity in order to grow spiritually (that is an application of the doctrine of kenosis). He heard Bible doctrine (that is, the teaching of the Word of God), He believed the Word of God when He heard it, and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, grew spiritually in His humanity as a result.

Just as Jesus consumed food and grew physically (that is, He increased in stature), He took in spiritual food and grew spiritually (that is, He increased in wisdom).

Although Jesus had access to all the divine attributes of His Father, He willingly set aside that access to function on earth as a true human being (which we learned in the Doctrine of Kenosis).

When it comes to spiritual growth, we as believers look to Jesus Christ, Who set the precedents for us as Church Age believers. Even as our physical bodies grow, so our spiritual life should grow, and that can happen in one way and one way only—the intake of Bible doctrine while we are filled with God the Holy Spirit (which is the result of naming our sins to God⁸⁶).

This is the grace system which R. B. Thieme, Jr. called the grace apparatus for perception (gap) and later he used the term *Operation Z* to describe the basic mechanics of the grace apparatus for perception.

This doctrine was originally developed by R. B. Thieme, Jr.; and this iteration of it comes from Ron Snider, the pastor of Makarios Bible Church. It is apparent to me that the pastor developed this doctrine on his own, having learned Bob's doctrine of GAP. I integrated in some additional notes from Maranatha church and added some original material as well. Ultimately, R. B. Thieme, Jr. deserves the credit for his original development of this doctrine.⁸⁷

There is a lot to take in concerning this doctrine. You may not have the background to appreciate some or most of this particular doctrine. Do the best to understand what you are able to understand. If you stay with Bible doctrine, all of this information will become perspicuous to you.

Do not expect to read and understand this doctrine in one sitting. I would think a minimum of 3 or 4 sittings would be required.

Basically, GAP means, the believer, regardless of his IQ, can grow spiritually. Your IQ can be low, it can be right in the middle or it can be high; but every believer can grow spiritually. If a person has a high enough IQ to be able to understand the gospel and then believe in Jesus Christ, then that same person can advance spiritually just like anyone else.

There are a great many theological terms found in this doctrine; therefore, I have also included a list of definitions for many of the technical vocabulary used. This list will follow the doctrine of GAP. I have set up this dictionary to integrate perfectly with the doctrine of GAP. So when you come across a technical term, it will be hyperlinked to its definition; and then the definition will be hyperlinked back to its first occurrence in the doctrine. This way, you might easily link back and forth between the doctrine and the definition list.

⁸⁶ We all have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from the point of salvation.

⁸⁷ Bob learned a great deal from L. S. Chafer; so we do not know how much his contribution is.

This doctrine primarily comes from 1Cor. 2:9–16. I have used several translations of this passage so that you can see that this important information can be discerned in many translations.

Doctrine of GAP (The Grace Apparatus for Perception)

- I. Introduction and preliminary considerations.
 - A. As one observes the world, it quickly becomes evident that believers and unbelievers view the world around them in very different ways.
 1. This is said with the caveat that the believer in [reversionism](#) often sees the world as an unbeliever does.
 2. The believer with some [spiritual growth](#), even if it is minimal, will see things differently from the unbeliever.
 - B. The fact that these two sets of perceptions are quite dissimilar may be observed in the ways in which believers and unbelievers operate and conduct their lives.
 - C. It is further evident that there are significant theological differences among the various groups in Christendom, which this doctrine is designed to explain, at least in part.
 - D. This doctrine is foundational to effectively living the Christian way of life, since an understanding of it is theologically critical to having a sound biblical anthropology. In fact, you are not really living the spiritual life apart from the application of this doctrine (for those who have never heard of GAP before, you may actually be growing spiritually, but not understanding exactly how and why).
- II. Definition and description of terms.
 - A. Pertinent vocabulary and definitions.
 1. Dichotomous is a technical term that describes the status of all unbelievers, who are in possession of only a physical body and [soul](#). The soul is the immaterial part of man which allows us to be able to interact with the world and with other men. You work with a guy named Charley Brown, and you have an understanding of who he is (which understanding takes place in your soul), and you interact with him based upon what you know about him.
 2. Trichotomous is a technical term that describes the status of all believers, who possess the physical body, soul, and [human spirit](#), the human spirit being the immaterial part of us which allows us to perceive, understand and commune with God.
 3. Psuchikos (ψυχικός) [pronounced *psoo-khee-KOSS*] is an adjective that is used 6 times in the New Testament; it refers to the natural physical life that is possessed by both men and animals. Strong's #5591.
 - a. It deals with physical life, which is manifested in breathing, and pertains to the natural world and what belongs in it; this is in contrast to the spiritual world and the realities in it.
 - b. It is used once as a technical term to refer to the unbeliever,

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- who is governed by the physical realities of life, and not by the Spirit of God. 1Cor. 2:14 (which passage we will take up further down in this doctrine).
- c. The acrostic NAP is used to refer to the natural apparatus for perception, which can only perceive those things that come through the five senses; the natural man cannot perceive or understand spiritual things.
 - d. Even when the unbeliever hears spiritual information (like [gospel](#) information), it generally does not remain with them for any amount of time. The unbeliever hears it; God the Holy Spirit makes the gospel real to the unbeliever, and the unbeliever then decides what to do with it. If the unbeliever rejects the gospel, then it is quite possible that they lose their understanding of the gospel as well.
 - e. Let me give you a personal example of spiritual information which the unbeliever may lack. I grew up in a normal household, I went to church (not a doctrinal church) and we celebrated Easter at my public school. When I was saved by believing in Jesus Christ, one piece of information which I lacked was, *what happened to Jesus after the crucifixion?* I was unaware of that, even after living for 21 years where this information was not exactly a secret. Soon after I believed in Jesus Christ I became aware that He was resurrected and that He interacted with His disciples for many days on earth, and then He was taken up by God the Father into heaven. When I heard this information, I believed it. Now, I was not saved a second time, after I heard, understood and believed in the resurrection. Furthermore, it would be wrong to say that I was really saved when I understood and believed in the resurrection. All believers have limited knowledge of Jesus when saved. My limited knowledge was, I read John 3 and said to God (or thought to God), *I hold You to this promise—that I believe in Jesus and I will be saved.* After salvation, I learned a great deal about Jesus, and I grew spiritually when I heard things about Him and believed them (I was practicing GAP at that time without knowing it).
4. Sarkikos (σαρκικός) [pronounced *sar-kee-KOSS*] (Strong's #4559) is an adjective that is used 7 times in the New Testament; it means that which belongs to the flesh.
- a. It is derived from the Greek noun sarx (σάρξ) [pronounced *sarx*], and refers to the physical substance that covers animal and human bodies. It is usually translated *flesh*. Strong's #4561. 1Cor. 15:39

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- b. The adjective is used to refer to the believer that lives under the influence and/or control of his [fleshly nature](#). 1Cor. 3:3
 - c. Since the [sin nature](#) is located in the genetics of the [flesh](#) (Rom. 7:18), this term is used to denote a believer that is under the domination of the old sin nature. This is the believer who lives after the sinful trend of Adam.
- 5. Pneumatikos (πνευματικός) [pronounced *nyoo-mat-EEK-oss*] is an adjective that is used 26 times; it refers to that which is [spiritual](#). When used of believers, it refers to one that is spiritual, one that is in [fellowship](#), guided by the Holy Spirit, with the sin nature isolated from one's life (until we break fellowship with God and choose to sin). Strong's #4152. We enter into fellowship with God, a spiritual state of being, when we name our sins to God (1John 1:9). The moment that we sin, we are out of fellowship (which requires us to name our sin/sins again to God).
- B. The acrostic GAP is an abbreviation for the [grace apparatus for perception](#); it is used to refer to the internal constitution of believers following salvation, as well as the entire system for the [perception](#) and [metabolization](#) of Bible doctrine.
- C. [Grace](#) is not only the title and policy of God's plan, it is the basis for the perception of God's Word.
- D. Grace is the method by which the believer receives God's blessings. Man's requirement for apprehending God's grace is positive volition expressed through the system of faith, which is a non-meritorious system of thinking in which the merit lies in the object. Furthermore, all men perceive things based upon *faith*; this is a system of perception employed by believers and unbelievers alike.
- E. Since God operates through a system of grace and faith in order to reveal Himself, human systems of perception that rely on factors other than grace should be dismissed.
 - 1. This specifically refers to human systems of learning that are based on human intelligence alone.
 - 2. If a high IQ was required in order to perceive and understand Bible doctrine, then logically only those with a high IQ could learn the truth and make the maturity adjustment.
 - 3. Paul makes it quite clear that cosmic systems of wisdom were of no value when it comes to perceiving and apprehending the truth of God. 1Cor. 2:1,8
 - a. 1Cor. 2:1 **And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.**
 - b. 1Cor. 2:8 **None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (ESV)**

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4. In fact, as we will document, the very nature of unbelievers makes it impossible for them to perceive and believe the truth, apart from Divine provision and intervention.
5. All humans use 3 systems of perception:
 - a. Faith. Faith means you hear something and you believe it. What you hear may be perfectly reasonable or completely crazy; but you choose, from your own volition, to believe what you hear (*why* you choose to believe something can depend upon many factors). About 70–95% of what we *know* in life is based upon faith. This is every person's primary way to perceive the world.
 - b. Empiricism. We see something and we believe that it is true. Bear in mind that we see many things and draw incorrect conclusions about what we see, based upon our understanding of life, which comes from what we have already believed. An evolutionist can find bone fragments in the ground the come to one set of conclusions regarding those bones; and a non-evolutionist can see the same bones and form a different set of conclusions.
 - c. Logic or rationalism. We may begin with several assumptions and/or observations, and them logically follow this to a conclusion. Thinking based upon logic and reason is certainly the least used system of perception among those in the human race.
 - d. Empiricism and rationalism always have some element of faith mixed in with them; or faith is essential or a basis for what one believes.
 - e. Empiricism and rationalism both have some amount of merit attached to them. We do not all see the same things; and even when we do, we do not always interpret what we see in the same way.
- F. The grace apparatus for perception consists of two elements, coupled with one mechanic for growing spiritually.
 1. Every believer has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which he (or she) received at the point of salvation as part of the salvation package. 1Cor. 6:11, 19 12:13 2Cor. 5:5
 2. The human spirit, which is regenerated at the point of salvation (Titus 3:5). The function and interaction of the body, soul and spirit restores the trichotomous state that Adam had prior to the fall. 1Thess. 5:23 speaks of our *body, soul and spirit*.
 3. The rapid recovery system of [rebound](#) provides us with spiritual cleansing and instantaneous forgiveness of sins (which sins we commit after salvation). We name our sins to God and we are instantly forgiven and cleansed for forward movement in the

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- spiritual life. 1John 1:9
4. This mechanic is the means by which one regains fellowship with God, which puts the Holy Spirit in the position of rulership, and isolates the sin nature (the sin nature remains isolated until the point that we choose to sin again).
- G. God provides the grace apparatus for perception so that each believer might learn those things that are freely given by God, and come to a complete knowledge of the truth. 1Cor. 2:12 1Tim. 2:4
1. 1Cor. 2:12 **Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit Who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**
 2. 1Tim. 2:3–4 **This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.** (ESV; capitalized)
- H. We also use the term/acrostic GAP to refer to the process of a believer in fellowship, functioning under the grace apparatus for perception, and learning Bible doctrine,
- I. The believer is able to GAP the truth, but the unbeliever can only NAP the truth, which makes the true perception of God an impossibility.
- III. The documentation for this theological position is found in the book of First Corinthians (1Cor. 2:9–16). Therefore, let us launch into an exegetical study of 1Cor. 2:9–16:
- A. Introductory notes:
1. I have found that, when an extensive passage lays out the framework for a particular doctrine, then the believer is more apt to believe the doctrine (as opposed to simply seeing a set of points).
 2. I have used [Syndein's notes](#) here of R. B. Thieme, Jr. translation of this passage (with considerable editing). We will view other translations as well.
- B. V. 9: **But, in contrast, as it stands written** [with the result that it remains written forever—perfect passive indicative of the verb] [quoting Isaiah 64:4]: **Things which the eye has not seen** [see point 1 below] **and the ear has not heard** [see point 2 below] **and which have not entered the heart** [or, *right lobe*] [a reference to rationalism] **of man all that God has prepared** [see point 3 below] **for those who love Him.** [see point 4 below]
1. *Seen* is the aorist active indicative of *eidō* (εἶδω) [pronounced *Ī-doh*], which means, *to see, to perceive, to discern, to know*. Strong's #1492. This is a reference to empiricism.
 2. *Heard* is the aorist active indicative of *akoúō* (ἀκούω) [pronounced *ah-KOO-oh*], which means *to hear; to hear and pay attention to; to listen to; to hear and understand*. Strong's #191. This is also a reference to empiricism.
 3. *Prepared* is the aorist active indicative of *hetoimázō* (ἐτοιμάζω) [pronounced *het-oy-MAHD-zoh*], which means, *to make ready, to*

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prepare; to make the necessary preparations, to get everything ready. Strong's #2090. What God has prepared for us is a part of the [divine decrees](#) made by God in eternity past; and we understand these preparations as God's plan for our life. The aorist tense means that this was done one time in eternity past. God does not revise His plan as he goes along.

4. The present active participle of *agapaō* (ἀγαπάω) [pronounced *ahg-ahp-AH-oh*], which means *to love, to esteem, to regard with strong affection; to love and serve with fidelity; to regard with favor [goodwill, benevolence]; to delight in.* Strong's #25. This is a mental attitude love which we develop through positive volition and the learning of Bible doctrine. There are many believers who reject the plan of God and they do not move forward in God's plan (but they do remain eternally saved). Agape is the form of love based on who and what you are apart from any merit in the object of your love. Many parents have points in their lives when they love some of their children, but they may not like them very much.

C. V. 10a: **Moreover God has revealed them** [see point 1 below] [His Plans for those who love Him] **to us by means of His Spirit.**

1. *Revealed* is the aorist active indicative of *apokaluptō* (ἀποκαλύπτω) [pronounced *ap-ok-al-OOP-toe*], which means, *to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up; disclose, make bare; to make known, make manifest, disclose what before was unknown.* Strong's #601. The aorist tense is the iterative aorist, where God's plan is made known to us at various points of time in our lives.
2. What is *revealed* to us are these things which the eye has not seen, the ear has not heard; the things which have not entered into the thinking of man.
3. All that we know about the essence of God and the plan of God is revealed to us by God. We do not go out and search for this knowledge, it is found within the covers of Scripture. And, for those who want to know God's Word, God will provide a way for them to know it.
4. The Holy Spirit reveals these things to us. This is a part of the function of GAP. The well-prepared pastor-teacher teaches Bible doctrine and the congregant hears this information and the Holy Spirit makes it real to the hearer. When we hear accurate Bible doctrine and believe it, we advance in the spiritual life (that is, we grow spiritually).
5. Physically, when we consume a protein or nutrient rich food, that aids to our growth; whereas drinking a soda provides us nothing but empty calories. Some pastors do nothing but provide soda (empty doctrines) for their congregants. Or some pastors provide milk, but

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never provide any meat. 1Cor. 3:2

- D. V. 10b: **For the Spirit investigates** [see point 1 below] **all things, and the deep things** [see point 2 below] **of God.**
1. *Investigates* is the present active indicative of *ereunaô* (ἐρευνάω) [pronounced *er-yoo-NAH-oh*], which means, *to search (out), to inquire, to seek (out), to investigate, to examine*. Strong's #2045. The Holy Spirit is always available to us to reveal divine truth (but, *only* through God's revealed Word).
 2. The plural of the noun *bathos* (βάθος) [pronounced *BATH-oss*], which means, *depth, height; of "the deep" sea; metaphorically; deep, extreme, poverty; of the deep things of God, profundity; mystery; the extent*. Strong's #899. The most profound information of God's plan is available to us.
 3. After salvation, our success in God's plan means for us to apply our faith to information provided for us in the Word of God (as taught by a well qualified pastor-teacher). The Bible is the Mind of Christ; and when we learn Bible doctrine, we are learning His thinking. When we expose ourselves to accurate Bible teaching, then God the Holy Spirit will make real to us the truth which is the basis of our spiritual growth. The final step is to then apply doctrine in the soul to life. Then, since it is His Thinking, Jesus lives through us!
- E. 11a: **For what man understands** [with results that last forever; see point 1 below] **the things of man except [by] the spirit of man** [this is a reference to the human soul] **which is in him?**
1. *Understands* is the perfect active indicative of *eidô* (εἶδω) [pronounced *I-doh*], which means, *to see, to perceive, to discern, to know*. Strong's #1492. The perfect tense indicates something which occurs in the past with results that continue forever.
 2. Strictly speaking, the *soul* is related to man's immaterial being which relates to the world and to other men; and the *spirit* is man's immaterial being which relates to God. However, on occasion, these terms may be interchangeable, which is made clear by the context. The point being made here is, man understands other men by means of the immaterial part of his being; similarly, he understands God by means of the immaterial part of his being (v. 11b below).
 3. This verse means all men are from the earth and understand the earthly things through experience. But there is a failure of this rationalism to understand spiritual information—they simply have no frame of reference.
- F. 11b: **Even so the things of God no one understands** [perfect active indicative of *eidô* (εἶδω)] **except the spirit of God.**
1. Only by means of God the Holy Spirit is man able to understand the things of God. This is an invisible process.

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2. Verse 10a says spiritual things are revealed through the instrumentality of the Spirit. Without a human spirit, unbelievers find spiritual things to be *foolishness*—they just do not understand.
- G. 12a: **Now we have not received** [see point 1 below] **the spirit of the world** [see point 2 below].
 1. *Received* is the aorist active indicative of lambánō (λαμβάνω) [pronounced *lahm-BAHN-oh*], which means *to take, to receive, to have, to hold; to obtain; to get a hold of*. Strong's #2983. We did not receive (in a point of time) the spirit of the world; but we received the Holy Spirit from God. We received *the spirit of the world* in a point of time (at birth); at which point, this *spirit* begins to function.
 2. *World* is the masculine singular noun kósmos (κόσμος) [pronounced *KOSS-moss*], which means *world, world order, arrangement, order, organized world system*. By far, most of the uses of kósmos are to simply this world which we inhabit. This word is also used with a negative connotation. Strong's #2889. Kosmos refers to *worldly thinking*. This goes further than simply being human viewpoint thinking; this incorporates Satan's evil thinking as well.
- H. 12b: **But, in contrast, the spirit which is out from the source of God, for the purpose that we might know with the result that we know forever** [the perfect active subjunctive of eidō (εἶδω)] **the things being freely given** [see point 1 below] **by grace** (no strings attached) [see point 2 below] **to us under** [the principle of grace from] **God**.
 1. This appears as though we have the verb *to give* followed by some word for *grace*, but that is not what we have here.
 2. *Grace given* is the aorist passive participle of charizomai (χαρίζομαι) [pronounced *khar-ID-zohm-ahee*], which means, *to do something pleasant or agreeable (to one), to do a favour to, gratify; to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent; to grant forgiveness, to pardon; to give graciously, give freely, bestow; to forgive; graciously to restore one to another; to preserve for one a person in peril; to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrongdoing, forgive, pardon*. The root is charis, which is grace or kindness. Strong's #5483. The grace aspect of this verb is found twice in the translation above. What we are given from God in order to understand Him and His plan is given to us graciously—meaning, we do not earn or deserve what God has given us. What God has given to us is the mechanics of studying and learning Bible doctrine
- I. 13a: **Which things** [Divine viewpoint thinking/wisdom] **also we speak** [Paul refers here to his teaching and to the teaching of the other Apostles], **not in words taught by human viewpoint thinking/wisdom**. [see points 1, 2 & 3]
 1. *Taught* is actually the masculine plural adjective didaktos (διδακτός)

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- [pronounced *dihd-ak-TOSS*], which means, *that can be taught; taught, instructed by one, that which is communicated; teachings, precepts*. Strong's #1318.
2. *Human* is the feminine singular noun *anthrôpinos* (ἄνθρωπινος) [pronounced *anth-ROH-pee-noss*], which means *human, humankind, applied to things belonging to men, the things of man, things common to mankind, after the manner of mankind*. Strong's #442.
 3. *Wisdom* is the feminine singular noun *sophia* (σοφία) [pronounced *sohf-EE-ah*], which means, *wisdom* [spiritual, human, cosmic]. Strong's #4678.
 4. A good contemporary example of human viewpoint wisdom is the liberalism and socialism which is being taught as truth in many American colleges.
- J. 13b: But [in contrast] that [which is] taught by the Holy Spirit [see point 1 below] explaining/interpreting/putting together/comparing [see point 2 below] spiritual doctrines" [with] spiritual doctrines. [see point 3 below]
1. This is a similar set of words to those found with v. 13a, except that instead of *human wisdom* we have the *Holy Spirit*. In v. 13a, we have *taught by human viewpoint wisdom*; and in v. 13b we have, *taught by a Spirit of Holiness*.
 2. *Comparing* is the present active participle of *sugkrinô* (συγκρίνω) [pronounced *soong-KREE-no*], which means, *to joint together fitly, compound, combine; to interpret; to compare*. Thayer definition only. Strong's #4793.
 3. The dative neuter plural followed by the accusative neuter plural of *pneumatikos* (πνευματικός) [pronounced *nyoo-mat-EEK-oss*], which means, as a plural, *spiritual things, spiritual matters*. Strong's #4152.
 4. The Bible only has one method stated of how to study itself. See Isaiah 28:10—line upon line, precept upon precept, a little here and a little there—building and comparing one doctrine with another.]
- K. 14a: Howbeit the soul-ish man ["psuchikos man"] [see point 1] does not receive to himself/accept [see point 2 below] the things of the Spirit of God.
1. *Soulish* is the masculine singular noun/adjective *psuchikos* (ψυχικός) [pronounced *psoo-khee-KOSS*], which means, *soulish; natural; unregenerate; of or belonging to breath; having the nature and characteristics of the breath; the principal of animal life, which men have in common with the brutes; governed by breath; the sensuous nature with its subjection to appetite and passion*. It is the *breath, life, immaterial substance* of man. Strong's #5591. Because unregenerate (unbelieving) man lacks the human spirit; he only has a soul and body. This refers to the immaterial part of man

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- (that is, his soul).
2. The verb found here is the present middle indicative of *dechomai* (δέχομαι) [pronounced *DEKH-om-ahee*], which means, *to receive, to accept; to take*. Strong's #1209.
 3. **The soulish man**—the man lacking a human spirit—**cannot receive [or take in] the things of the Spirit of God**.
- L. 14b: **For they are foolishness to him**. The unbeliever is an unbeliever because he is negative towards God. Therefore, the things of God appear to be foolish to him. It is not often that you might present a passage to an unbeliever and for him to comment, *that is pretty amazing; tell me more!*
- M. 14c: **And he is not able** [see point 1 below] **to obtain knowledge** [see point 2 below] [of spiritual matters—Divine Viewpoint-type wisdom] **because they are discerned/examined/judged** [see point 3 below] **from the source of the Spirit**
1. The verb is the present middle/passive indicative of *dunamai* (δύναμαι) [pronounced *DOO-nam-ahee*], which means, *to be able, have power whether by virtue of one's own ability and resources, to be able to do something; to be capable, strong and powerful*. Strong's #1410. With the negative, he lacks this ability.
 2. *To obtain knowledge* is the aorist active infinitive of *ginōskō* (γινώσκω) [pronounced *gih-NOH-skoh*], which means *to know, to learn to know, to come to know, to get a knowledge of perceive, to feel; to become known; to understand, to perceive*. Strong's #1097.
 3. The final verb is the present passive infinitive of *anakrínō* (ἀνακρίνω) [pronounced *aw-nah-KREE-noh*], which means *to examine in order to pass a judicial sentence, to examine accurately or carefully, to inquire, to ask questions*. Strong's #350.
 4. V. 14c is all about the perceptive ability of the Spirit-filled person.
- N. 15a: **But he that is spiritual** [pneumatikos] **truly discerns the all things**. [spiritual matters—the things of God]
- O. Divine Viewpoint thinking/wisdom: 15b: **However, he himself is judged by/under no one**.
1. This means that someone without Divine viewpoint thinking is not equipped to judge someone who has Divine viewpoint thinking. This becomes important particularly since apparently believers of the day were taking disputes to the courts and were being judged potentially by unbelievers.
- P. Conclusion: 16a: **For, who has known** [see point 1 below] **the mind/thinking of the Lord...**
1. The verb is the aorist active indicative of *ginōskō* (γινώσκω) [pronounced *gih-NOH-skoh*], which means *to know, to learn to know, to come to know, to get a knowledge of perceive, to feel; to become known; to understand, to perceive*. Strong's #1097.
 2. V. 16a asks the question, *who knows divine viewpoint thinking?*

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Who is able to understand wisdom?

Q. 16b: ...that he can instruct Him?

1. The verb is the future active indicative of *sumbibazô* (συνβιβάζω) [pronounced *soom-bihb-AHD-zoh*], which means, *to unite (in association or affection), (mentally) to infer, to show, to teach, to instruct, to prove; to gather, to knit together*. Strong's #4822.
2. What man fully understands the thinking of God that he might instruct God?

R. 16c: Nevertheless, we have [see point 1 below] the thinking/mind of Christ.

1. The verb is the present active indicative of *echô* (ἔχω) [pronounced *EHKH-oh*], which means *to have [and/or] hold; to own, to possess, to adhere to, to cling to*. Strong's #2192.
2. Paul is saying that he and the other Apostles keep on having and holding onto the mind of Christ. Today, we have the mind of Christ; it is the Scriptures.
3. We do not have any other access to divine viewpoint thinking. We cannot go into a monastery and starve ourselves and pray fervently and receive special knowledge of God. All of that comes through the teaching of the Word of God.

IV. A theological study of 1Cor. 2:9–16, using the Analytic-Literal Translation:

A. 1Cor. 2:9 But just as it has been written, "What [things] an eye did not see and an ear did not hear and did not enter into the heart of humanity, [fig., no person thought could happen], which [things] God prepared for the ones loving Him." [Isaiah 64:4]

1. Paul loosely quotes Isaiah 64:4 to document his position that Divine wisdom, and the perception of that wisdom, does not come from human sources.
2. Man does not know or fully appreciate, apart from divine revelation, what God has prepared for those who love Him (and we love God by being *in Christ*).

B. 1Cor. 2:10 But God revealed [them] to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all [things], even the depths of God.

1. Paul logically moves on to say that God must choose to reveal what He thinks. Mankind is unable to perceive God's wisdom on his own.
2. Revelation from God is our only means of understanding God. God the Holy Spirit, as a Member of the Godhead, is able to reveal divine truth to us, as He knows even the depths of God.
3. The [anthropopathism](#) of searching is used to indicate the omniscience and veracity of the Holy Spirit, Who faithfully and accurately communicates the thinking of God to the human race. John 16:13–15

C. 1Cor. 2:11a For who among people knows the [things] of the person,

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except the spirit of the person, the [one] in him?

1. Paul points out the fact that only the real you knows at any given time what you are thinking.
2. This gnomic expression (short sayings that express basic truths) is one with which a thinking person would not argue.
3. While a man knows what he thinks, no one knows what another person is thinking, unless that person chooses to reveal his thoughts.
4. Anyone can cover his true thoughts with an overt façade, which may simply be designed to disguise his thinking and motives. Prov. 26:24–26

D. 1Cor. 2:11b In the same way also no one knows the [things] of God, except the Spirit of God.

1. If Charley Brown is the only person who really knows what Charley Brown is thinking, then the logical conclusion is that the only one that can truly know what God thinks would have to be God Himself.
2. Going back to v. 10, the Holy Spirit is not only privy to what God thinks, He is the One whom God has appointed to reveal that information to mankind.

E. 1Cor. 2:12–13 But we did not receive the spirit of the world, but the Spirit, the [One] from God, so that we should know the [things] having been graciously given to us by God; which [things] also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in [words] taught by the Holy Spirit, interpreting spiritual [things] by spiritual [words] [or, combining spiritual [ideas] with spiritual [words]].

1. The spirit of the world refers to the thinking that dominates the fallen world—the world manipulated and deceived by Satan.
2. The cosmic/human systems of education, wisdom, and philosophy, which are based on human systems of intelligence, are not sufficient to provide mankind an accurate understanding of God and His plan.
3. The natural apparatus for perception is the only means of perception that unregenerate humanity has available.
4. However, the NAP system is contaminated with the genetic sinful trend of Adam, which can only distort the truth, and tends to reject the things of God.
5. Therefore, those dominated by the spirit of the world and the natural apparatus for perception cannot accurately perceive or understand the things of God.
6. While the principle of human intelligence is not bad in itself, those that have only cosmic wisdom tend to be arrogant and reject spiritual realities. v. 14
7. Percentage wise, not many of those with great human intelligence possess positive volition. 1Cor. 1:26

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8. One of the primary reasons each believer received the indwelling ministry of God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation was so that he could learn the thoughts of God. 1Cor. 2:12 (**Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.**—ESV)
 - a. The fact that we have received the Spirit who is from God is documentation for the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. This Spirit from God is distinct from and antagonistic to the spirit of the cosmos, governed strictly by human systems of thinking, who see [Divine viewpoint](#) as foolishness. 1Cor. 2:14
 - c. The purpose clause is introduced by hina (ἵνα), which is followed by the subjunctive mood of the verb know; this is designed to convey the fact that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not the only issue in learning God's truths. v. 12
 - d. Other factors that must be considered are the volition of the student, his willingness to orient to God's system, humility, consistency, having a qualified teacher, and whether or not he understands and uses the mechanic to isolate the sin nature.
 - e. The doctrines that comprise the faith are freely given to us by God through the teaching ministry of God the Holy Spirit, which indicates that grace is still a most important aspect of learning the thoughts of God.
 9. Although God the Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of doctrine, He has chosen to communicate to [Church Age](#) believers through human communicators. 1Cor. 2:13
 10. Those that reject the authority of the [pastor-teacher](#), who was established in his canon by the Holy Spirit, manifest a rejection of the very system that the Holy Spirit has established. Acts 20:28 1Peter 5:2
 11. Verse 13 also documents the fact that God has chosen to communicate His plan using a particular vocabulary, which is designed to communicate spiritual doctrines by means of technical spiritual language. Paul's teachings are filled with technical vocabulary.
- F. 1Cor. 2:14 **But a natural [or, unspiritual] person does not receive the [things] of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know [them], because they are spiritually examined.**
1. The natural man (the soulish man, the dichotomus man) is unable to understand the things of God. In fact, accurate theology seems foolish to him.
 2. He has no Holy Spirit to teach his human spirit because he has no human spirit. Therefore, the soulish man is unable to learn and

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- take in Bible doctrine.
- G. 1Cor. 2:15 **But the spiritual [one] indeed examines all [things], but he himself is examined by no one.**
1. The spiritual man (the trichotomous man, the believer) is able to evaluate both spiritual and human matters, because he has a soul and spirit. He is able to understand the things of man by means of his soul; and the things of God by means of his spirit.
 2. No soulish man is able to evaluate and understand the believer.
- H. 1Cor. 2:16 **"For who knew [the] mind of [the] LORD? Who will instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.** [Isaiah 40:13]
1. What man is there—what dichotomous, unbelieving man exists—who knows the mind of God? What soulish man thinks he has anything to tell God?
 2. Paul, and those who traveled with him, and the other Apostles, all have the mind of Christ. They understood Who Jesus is; what He did for mankind; and how all of this is well-integrated with the Old Testament (hence Paul quoting from the OT).
- V. The natural man. 1Cor. 2:14 **Now the natural person** [Note: Since this person is contrasted with the spiritual person of verse 15, it is taken here to mean the person without the Holy Spirit] **does not receive the things [i.e., truths] revealed by the Holy Spirit of God, because they are [considered] foolishness to him. And he cannot understand them because they must be discerned by using spiritual judgment** [i.e., judgment aided by the Holy Spirit]. (An Understandable Version, which includes the bracketed comments)
- A. The natural man is a term that is used by Paul to refer to the unbeliever who resides in the realm of spiritual death, ruled by the genetic sin nature. Rom. 5:12, 21
 - B. Since he lacks the grace apparatus for perception (he has no human spirit and is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit), he is incapable of discerning or assimilating spiritual information.
 - C. Paul makes it clear that the natural man cannot understand spiritual things. Therefore, he cannot come to the knowledge of the truth since he is incapable of receiving, learning, or grasping the significance of spiritual information.
 - D. The only exception to this reality occurs at the point of gospel hearing, when the Holy Spirit acts to present the issues related to salvation. John 16:7–9
 - E. Therefore, it is not productive to attempt to discuss any area of Divine viewpoint with an unbeliever; the gospel is the only doctrine that he can grasp. Everything else would be, at best, a matter of debate for him.
 - F. While an unbeliever may have a predilection for religion, philosophy, science, psychology, or any other discipline, he ultimately views Divine viewpoint as foolishness.
 - G. He may cover his thoughts with polite and measured responses;

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- nevertheless, he finds the information to be lacking in truth or credibility, since he does not possess the ability to evaluate spiritual matters.
- H. The wisdom of the natural man is linked to natural life on earth, dependent upon human abilities and IQ, and tied to the fallacious thinking of demons. James 3:15 (**This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.**)
 - 1. The “wisdom” that permeates the cosmos is called earthly, indicating that the organized systems of human wisdom are tied to the earthly scheme of things; it is contrasted with the wisdom that comes from Heaven.
 - 2. The fact that it is natural demonstrates that it comes from the realm of unbelievers, unregenerate men that are dominated by their sin natures.
 - 3. The final adjective, demonic, documents that the earthly systems of wisdom and philosophy are consistent with the thinking of fallen angels (also known as *the doctrine of demons*). 1Tim. 4:1–3
 - I. He is finally contrasted with the spiritual man, the regenerate man, the believer possessing the grace apparatus for perception and who metabolizes doctrine.
 - J. The natural man cannot effectively question/evaluate/judge the spiritual man, since he lacks the frame of reference or the internal apparatus to do so.
 - K. Further, neither the natural man, nor the carnal believer, can effectively judge the positive, advancing believer, since the sinful trend of Adam always prejudices the evaluation.
- VI. The grace provision for learning the plan of God in the Church Age.
- A. In order to communicate His thoughts to the human race, God has chosen to record His revelation in the objective words of the Scripture. There is no learning about God or God’s plan apart from the Bible. For most people, this then requires a well-qualified teacher of Bible doctrine.
 - B. Therefore, the first aspect of God’s grace provision for learning His plan is the formation and preservation of the completed canon of Scripture.
 - 1. The thoughts of God were communicated, through the principle of revelation, to positive men that were enabled to record the Divine revelation without any error or imperfection. Exodus 17:14 Jer. 30:2 Rev. 1:11
 - 2. This mysterious process was not as simple as mere dictation; it did not override the volition, personality, history, or any other aspect of the human author. The human author’s vocabulary, background, and personality are found throughout the Scriptures.
 - 3. This process resulted in an inspired text that was free from human error (doctrine of inerrancy), and whose inspiration extended to the very words of Scripture. 2Tim. 3:16
 - 4. Throughout the course of human history, other positive believers

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- gathered the inspired material, and rejected that which was spurious. For the New Testament, this process took about 300 years, but there came to be universal acceptance of the New Testament canon.
5. The final result was the completed canon of Scripture, which has been preserved in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments in accordance with the promise of Jesus Christ. Matt. 5:18 24:35
- C. God has provided the only authorized environment for the dissemination and teaching of His Word in this [dispensation](#).
1. The local church, not any other organization, is the medium, which God Himself has chosen and established to advance His plan. 1Cor. 4:17 1Tim. 3:15
 2. Face-to-face teaching is the format that God has ordained, and is superior to all other forms of communication. 2John 12
 - a. The apostles recognized that their own epistles to local churches were not the ideal; they simply served to encourage believers in the interim until the [apostle](#) could be personally present. 1Thess. 2:17–18 3:2,10
 - b. If the written correspondence from the highest ranking authority in the Church Age was an inferior form of communication, where does that leave other forms of communication like books, television, radio, etc.?
 - c. Beyond that, apart from active personal participation in a local church, one cannot effectively fulfill many of the Royal imperatives. Heb. 10:25 (...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.—ESV)
 - d. This does not mean that alternate forms of taking in doctrine are forbidden. It simply means that they are not ideal. I have personally observed people who have listened to doctrine apart from the assembly with others, and the negative results are often obvious.
 - e. This is not to mean that electronic methods are to be rejected or that reading and studying are out of bounds; it just means that those methods are not ideal. Most recently, our church, due to the Corona virus, [has gone online](#) and the pastor (R. B. Thieme, III) has been teaching online to an empty auditorium. There is a time and place for technology; and this was the proper approach. However, there will come a time in the near future where we will gather as a local church once again to hear his teaching face to face.
 3. The independent, autonomous local church, with a pastoral form of government is the norm that is promoted by the New Testament;

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- denominations are not.
 - a. Denominations (as well as other aberrations) undermine the principle of authority, and the Royal Chain of Command.
 - b. Denominations often pressure the pastor-teacher to parrot the doctrines of that denomination, rather than teach all the doctrines contained in the Word of God.
 - c. The fear of excommunication from the denomination has led most to avoid the truth of certain matters, and teach only the doctrines that are accepted or approved by the denomination. A pastor fears this because being removed from the denomination would remove its branding; and this would reduce his congregation size.
 - d. Sound ministries have left the denominational camp; they are willing to bear the reproach of teaching the whole purpose of God. Heb. 13:13: Acts 20:27
- 4. Those that reject the principle or function of the local church are obviously out of touch with the very dispensation in which they live (the Church Age), and cannot ultimately be successful spiritually.
 - a. Spiritual mavericks, loners, or renegades, who become a law to themselves, reject authority, and reject God's system, often continue to manifest the delusion that they are pleasing to God. 2Tim. 3:8–9,13
 - b. Such people often hold to a small set of verses (perhaps 10, perhaps 50, perhaps 100) which they consider to be the entire spiritual life. Everything else is interpreted in terms of those verses. This is how some cults manage to separate individuals from their family and friends. Cults cannot afford to have their teachings questioned by neutral outside parties.
 - c. Further, false teachers will find out at the [Bema seat of Christ](#) what the positive, adjusted believer has learned and embraced in time.
 - d. One must compete according to the established rules of his dispensation. 2Tim. 2:5 (**An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.**)
- D. For the vast majority of the Church Age, God has provided each local church with precisely one spiritual leader as part of grace. Eph. 4:7,11 Rev. 2,3
 - 1. As is consistent with the pastoral analogies in the New Testament, each flock (congregation) can only have and respond to one shepherd. John 10:4–5 1Tim. 3:1
 - 2. Although no size is ever specified for a local church, I would think that more than 3 would make the most sense. A pastor who teaches a small congregation (of say, 5–15) has to be particularly

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faithful to his calling. The size of one's church, whether it is fewer than 10 or more than 3000, is irrelevant. Each pastor has his own set of challenges and difficulties.

3. The pastor-teacher is selected by God the Holy Spirit, established in the appropriate canon, and supported throughout his ministry. Acts 20:28
 - a. This principle demands that any man that is prepared for the ministry not resort to inappropriate tactics in order to obtain a congregation. He must be humbly willing to wait until such time as the Holy Spirit brings him together with his right congregation.
 - b. This also indicates that the pastor-teacher is not simply an employee that may be hired and fired like other employees; believers need to understand the principle that lifting a hand against God's appointed leader is not only wrong, it can be dangerous. 1Sam. 24:6 2Cor. 10:7–11 12:21–13:2
 - c. Although the pastor-teacher is the ranking authority in the local church, God has provided deacons to support him in the administration of the local church. Every pastor-teacher requires support. Acts 6:1ff
 - d. While the pastor-teacher may rely on the insight of other positive believers (deacons and those in the congregation at large), he alone is responsible for shepherding and teaching the congregation. 1Pet. 5:1–4
 - e. Not every congregation is able to sustain all of the financial needs of its pastor-teacher. Even Paul constructed tents as a side business in order to make ends meet (when that was necessary—Acts 18:3). Just because a congregation is small and cannot support their pastor, this is *not* a reason to disband that local church.
 - f. The response of people will vary with the times. There was a time in Berachah Church where one could not find a seat. However, guaranteed that, if R. B. Thieme, Jr. were still alive, that would not be the case today.
 - g. Therefore, a pastor must concern himself only with the teaching of the Word of God. He congregation may be large or small; he may lose members, he may gain members. He must focus on his responsibility, and let the chips fall where they may.
4. God supernaturally supports, sustains, and guides the positive pastor-teacher; the pastor teacher that diligently seeks to fulfill his ministry before the Lord will be blessed with insight, understanding, the knowledge of where to teach, what to teach, and how to teach (Matt. 7:7–11). In a few individual cases, a pastor-teacher will be

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- required to work another job in order to make ends meet. Such a pastor needs to thank God for his small congregation and for his supplementary income.
5. It is my opinion that the needs of the pastor-teacher should be foremost in the minds of his congregation. This is far more important than the purchase of land and a building. There is no shame for a small doctrinal church to meet in a public building, in the pastor's home, in the home of a parishioner, in a rented building, etc. I have known doctrinal churches which have rented out space in other churches in order to meet.
 6. God has always used human communicators in every dispensation, each of whom was different in personality, style, experience, etc.; however, each of them possessed an active sin nature. James 5:17
 - a. The great illustration of this is Moses. God spoke the Ten Commandments directly to the people of Israel, and they totally freaked out. They asked Moses to stand between them and God; to hear what God said and to teach it to them (instead of hearing God's voice). However, Moses did far more than simply repeat verbatim the words which God spoke to him (although he did repeat word-for-word what God said to him). Moses was also able to organize and develop spiritual information and teach it directly, which is the book of Deuteronomy. It is his set of sermons from this book which informed the [generation of promise](#) before they entered into Canaan to take it.
 - b. One man is not only responsible to feed the flock and look after their spiritual well being; he is fully capable of providing sufficient doctrine to get his sheep to maturity. 1Tim. 4:16
 - c. Those that reject the principle of one, spiritually appointed pastor-teacher often do so with the arrogant suggestion that one man cannot teach them the truth and take them to maturity.
 - d. This type of believer often manifests his spiritual instability and inconsistency with the assertion that only he can really determine what the truth is; therefore, he becomes his own teacher!
 - e. How can any believer know that he can trust one man with his spiritual well-being? Ask Noah, Moses, Elijah, or Paul.
 - f. All communicators must be evaluated on the content of the teaching; other factors such as personality, likes, dislikes, hobbies, etc. are not part of that criterion.
 - E. As stated previously, there is one mechanic provided in the GAP process; God has provided the rapid recovery system of rebound. 1John 1:9
 - F. This is the only method by which a believer with a functional and active sin

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nature can regain fellowship with God, learn His plan, and be prepared to execute within that plan.

VII. The stages of GAP.

A. The first stage of GAP begins with the pastor-teacher and the study-teach routine; this is comprised of private study and public proclamation. 2Tim. 2:15

1. The pastor-teacher must himself be a positive believer, who desires to know the truth, and seeks the necessary wisdom. James 1:5
2. He must be prepared spiritually, intellectually, and academically to interpret the word of God; this involves knowledge of the languages of Scripture, biblical history, sound hermeneutics, and a good doctrinal foundation.
3. The acrostic ICE (isagogics, categories, exegesis) has been commonly used to refer to the proper approach; however, in terms of actual order EIC is more accurate.
 - a. The first step in this process is the study of the Scripture from the original languages in which they were written.
 - b. This allows the pastor-teacher to ascertain the correct translation he must determine the meaning of every word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and book in the context in which they were written.
 - c. The second step, isagogics, refers to the fact that one must understand the historical context in which a particular passage was written. How did the people of that era understand what was being taught to them; how did their experiences and culture inform them when reading/hearing the words of Moses, Isaiah or Paul?
 - d. The final step is the categorization of the individual doctrines that are taught throughout the Bible; all doctrines must be harmonized, since Scripture does not contradict Scripture.
4. The pastor-teacher must be intellectually honest with respect to his doctrinal grid; he should not be inordinately bound to his own thinking, but must be willing to let the text speak for itself.
5. It would be difficult for a pastor-teacher to teach much false doctrine if they teach verse-by-verse, book-by-book in the Bible. He would find himself over-and-over saying, "Now, this does not say what it appears to say." Congregants are allowed to consider the words of Scripture and compare them to what their pastor is teaching them.
6. Following his prayer for wisdom and preparation in the study, the next step in this process involves teaching the Divine viewpoint to his congregation.
 - a. This is to be done in the authorized environment of the local church.

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- b. A careful study of the New Testament demonstrates that teaching was done via monologue, which is still the finest way to communicate information to a receptive audience.
 - (1) Jesus largely executed His teaching via monologue, and did not respond kindly to interruptions. Matt. 5:1–7:27 Luke 11:28
 - (2) Paul executed his teaching ministry via monologue. Acts 20:7–11
 - (3) The very Greek term *kêrux* (κήρυξ) [pronounced *KAY-roox*] is most often translated preacher, and denoted an official that was charged with delivering public monologues or proclamations for kings, magistrates, or military commanders. Strong's #2783.
 - (4) Each pastor in Revelation 2 and 3 was evidently to read the message from the Lord, and deliver it to his congregation.
- c. While the physical location of the assembly is not the critical issue, the pastor-teacher should seek to establish and maintain an environment that is as conducive to learning as it can be.
 - (1) The environment should be as free from external distractions as possible.
 - (2) The pastor-teacher is not to tolerate distractions from those that are assembled; he is to enforce good manners, poise, and overt humility.
- B. The second step in this process is for believers to take in the Word of God in the authorized environment.
 - 1. This begins with believers assembling together. Heb. 10:25
 - 2. Each believer is responsible to comply with the overt decorum necessary for conducting Bible classes. Every believer is to supply his own true humility. James 1:19–21
 - 3. Each believer is responsible to judge himself rightly, ensuring that he is in fellowship with the sin nature isolated. James 1:21 1John 1:9
 - 4. The objective at this stage is to get the information into the analysis center of the soul, so one can accurately evaluate the information apart from sinful trend of Adam. This is why rebound is necessary, in order to avoid the discoloration or contamination of the sin nature.
 - 5. Each believer should be positive, assembled, humble, in fellowship, concentrating on the information, and seeking to comprehend it.
 - 6. Each believer must then consider the information and documentation, reflect on it, and determine if it is sound.

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- a. A believer should not reject information simply because it is new, or because he has not heard it previously.
 - b. Believers should not reject information based on the absurd notion that another pastor- teacher has not taught it.
 - c. Each believer must be very careful not to reject information that goes against him personally; each believer has his own sinful trend of Adam problems, and the pastor-teacher is to reprove, rebuke, and exhort from time to time.
 - d. The goal is to simply evaluate the information in an intellectually honest fashion, see if the documentation is sufficient, and if it harmonizes with other truth.
 - e. If the pastor says something which you question, then set it aside for the moment. Over time, his point may sink in; he may teach it in the future with more of an explanation, or you may develop the necessary understanding of other doctrines in order to understand and believe what the pastor has taught.
 - f. Sometimes the pastor will teach something that you do not understand. Similarly, set that doctrine aside for future examination.
- C. The third stage of this process is applying faith to the doctrine taught.
 1. The first thing each believer must do is listen to the entire teaching with an open mind before attempting to evaluate it or pass judgment on it. Prov. 18:13
 2. Positive volition places its faith in the truth that is taught; negative volition rejects the truth and may seek to rationalize rejection of the doctrine.
 3. As a believer applies faith toward the truth, he reprograms the brain computer with the Divine viewpoint of life. Prov. 3:3, 7:3 Rom. 12:2
 4. The believer uses this information to form a new frame of reference (Eph. 4:23), a new conscience that is programmed with God's norms and standards (1Tim. 1:5,19), and the new man grows. 2Cor. 4:16
 5. The ability to understand doctrinal concepts grows in proportion to one's frame of reference and level of spiritual advance.
 6. R. B. Thieme, Jr. summarized stages 1–3 with the designation [Operation Z](#).
- D. The fourth stage in this process is the application of the doctrine learned.
 1. All doctrine that the believer learns will be tested. 1Peter 1:6–7
 2. Failure to apply the doctrine learned not only results in sin (James 4:17), but will hamper spiritual progress toward the maturity adjustment. Heb. 5:12–14
 3. Application of the doctrine one has learned is called justification by works (James. 2:14– 26); however, it must be recognized that this

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- does not refer to [Phase 1](#) justification, which involves the imputation of God's righteousness apart from works. Rom. 3:24,28
4. It should be evident that each of the previous three stages is necessary for one to produce Divine good and accrue the attendant [supergrace 3](#) (abbreviated SG3). In that regard, eternal rewards are contingent upon the doctrine one learns in Bible class.
- E. The fifth stage of GAP is the maturity adjustment. Mark 4:28
1. It is important to recognize that spiritual maturity is a goal, but it is not the end for the positive believer.
 2. The final objective for the mature believer is to complete his course by running his race to the end of his [Phase 2](#). 2Tim. 4:7
 3. Maturity is a state of spiritual growth that is attained over time as a result of faithfully hearing and applying the Word of God. Eph. 4:13 James 1:25
 4. The goal of all adjusted communicators is to present mature believers before the Lord at the Bema Seat. Eph. 4:12–15 Col. 1:28
- VIII. Various forms of negative volition are capable of undermining the entire GAP process.
- A. Since the process for each believer begins with the proper instruction, any believer that places his faith in an unbelieving pastor-teacher will suffer loss. Matt. 24:45
 - B. Those that fall prey to unscrupulous teachers that have gone negative, such as Hymenaeus and Alexander, will not ultimately grow to maturity. 1Tim. 1:19–20
 - C. The believer that refuses to assemble manifests that he is unwilling to hear the truth. I have known believers who had the opportunity to gather with a group of doctrinal believers and they chose not to. This did not bode well for their spiritual lives. Heb. 10:25
 - D. The believer who assembles but fails to isolate the sin nature by means of rebound will distort the truth of doctrine along the lines of his sinful trends, and will not grow spiritually. James 1:21
 - E. The arrogant believer makes himself an enemy of God. This is manifested by an unwillingness to receive the Word being implanted with humility. James. 1:21 4:6
 - F. The believer who assembles but does not apply faith toward the truth manifests a refusal to believe. which will hinder or destroy spiritual growth. Matt. 21:32 Jude 1:5
 - G. The believer that assembles and believes the doctrine, yet does not follow through and apply the doctrine, comes under temporal and operational death. James 2:17–20
 - H. Negative volition at any point in the GAP process effectively destroys the process of spiritual growth, which may result in the appropriate form of Divine judgment. 1Cor. 11:31–32 2Thess. 2:12

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Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 1Cor. 2:12–13

From <http://makarios-online.org/notes/doctrine/GAP%2010-18.doc> accessed April 3, 2020 and edited.

The terms below are hyperlinked to their first occurrence in the Doctrine of GAP.

Theological Terms from the Doctrine of GAP

[Anthropopathism](#) = A characteristic of man which is assigned to God; a characteristic which God does not actually have. This often makes God's actions or motivation easier to understand, as it brings God down to a level which we are familiar with.

[Apostle](#) = this is the highest gift of authority in the Church Age. An Apostle has authority over more than one local church. Many Apostles wrote the inspired documents which make up the New Testament.

[Bema seat of Christ](#) = the Judgment Seat of Christ; this is where Church Age believers will be evaluated by Jesus Christ (along with all other believers). Our human good will be burned and our divine good will be rewarded. Even the believer who has only produced human good in his lifetime will be preserved, despite all of his works going up in flames. 1Cor. 3:12–15

[Church Age](#) = is the period of time from Pentecost to the rapture of the church. God works through individual believers, groups of believers, and nations with significant numbers of believers. Spiritual growth primarily takes place in the local church. God no longer works nearly exclusively with nation Israel.

[Dispensation](#) = a period of time during which God has a specific program going on. Between the time of Abraham and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ, was the Age of Israel. At this time, God primarily worked through nation Israel. From Pentecost until now is the Church Age, where God works through the body of believers.

[Divine decrees](#) = the chosen and adopted plan of God designed in eternity past for all of His works (which includes His creation of mankind and angels).

[Divine viewpoint](#) = the way that God sees things; also known as truth.

[Fellowship](#) = having a functional relationship with God the Father. During our lives as believers, we can either be in fellowship or out of fellowship. We are in fellowship when filled by God the Holy Spirit; out of fellowship after we sin.

Theological Terms from the Doctrine of GAP

Generation of promise = although there are many references to the Exodus generation throughout Scripture and sermons, there are actually two very different generations. There is Gen X, those who were adults (20 and older) at the time of the exodus. Although these Israelites were saved, they were in constant rebellion against God and against Moses and God wiped out that generation in the desert (Heb. 3:7–11, 15–19). The follow-on generation (who I call the generation of promise) were those who were either children when leaving Egypt or those who were born in the desert during the *desert wandering*.⁸⁸ The generation of promise marched into Canaan and took the land in 7 years. See the first half of the **book of Joshua**. ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Gospel = This is the information that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that we have access to God if we believe in His Son (or trust that Jesus died for our sins). We may not fully understand the entirety of the gospel when we first believe in Him.

Grace = all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the cross. Apart from the cross, we are fallen creatures, unable to have any sort of relationship with God. But because Jesus died for our sins, we may apprehend a relationship with God through faith in Christ. God's plan and policy is based upon grace; and all that God does for us we do not earn and we do not deserve. Because grace is based upon the cross of Jesus Christ, God does not violate His Own character by interacting with us on the basis of grace.

Grace apparatus for perception = the system set up by God in the human soul and spirit whereby Bible doctrine might be understood by all believers. This is dependent upon the believer being in fellowship (by means of rebound); and having a well-qualified pastor-teacher teaching accurate Bible doctrine. If any believer wants to know the truth God will supply him with truth.

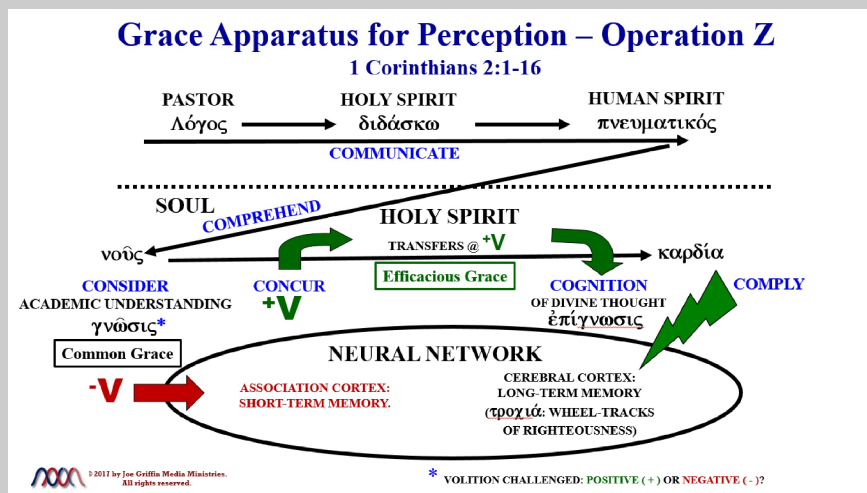
Human spirit = the immaterial part of man where information about God and God's plan are stored.

Metabolization (of Bible doctrine) = You hear Bible doctrine taught; you understand it; and you believe it. Doctrine which has been metabolized becomes a part of your human spirit and a part of your thinking.

⁸⁸ Moses was not just wandering about the desert. He knew where he was at all times.

Theological Terms from the Doctrine of GAP

Operation Z = the pastor-teacher teaches sound Bible doctrine to a congregation. They hear the doctrine and then believe it, converting it from gnosis to epignosis (this conversion makes the doctrine in the believer's soul useable).



Operation Z (graphic);
from [Joe Griffin](#); accessed April 11, 2020.

Pastor-teacher = is the authority in a local church. Usually the pastor-teacher is hired (or recognized as the authority) by a board of deacons or by a vote of the congregational members themselves. He is not appointed by an organization which oversees more than one local church because such an organization is not recognized by the Word of God. Denominations are the result of human viewpoint thinking; they are not found in the words of Scripture.

Perception (of Bible doctrine) = This means that you simply hear Bible doctrine taught accurately. You have a frame of reference for the information being taught and it makes sense to you.

Phase 1 = is a step in the Christian life. Phase 1 is exercising faith in Jesus Christ.

Phase 2 = the Christian life after salvation. Phase 3 is our life after death.

Rebound = the act of naming one's sins to God. Since Jesus Christ died for the sins which we name, they are temporally forgiven (not *temporarily*). This puts us back into fellowship with God and we are filled with the Spirit (until the next time that we sin). 1John 1:9

Reversionism = the life of the believer who is retrogressing spiritually. That is, his rate of forgetting is exceeding his rate of learning. He rejects various concepts of Bible doctrine or he rejects Bible doctrine altogether, and, therefore, begins to think like an unbeliever. Just as spiritual growth is a process, reversionism is also a process. Spiritual growth is advancing in the spiritual life; reversionism is retrogressing in the spiritual life.

Theological Terms from the Doctrine of GAP

Sin nature = fleshly nature = the flesh = the distorter of the human soul; this is an integral part of our soul which leads us to sin (but when we sin, that is fully a function of our own volition).

Soul = the immaterial part of man

Spiritual = this term is often used in a very technical way in the New Testament, indicating that a person is filled with the Holy Spirit. This is accomplished by naming one's sins to God (rebound). Only a believer can be spiritual.

Spiritual growth = advancing (or growing) as a believer.

Supergrace 3 (abbreviated SG3) = Paragraph SG3 (Supergrace Three) contains the surpassing grace rewards and blessings over and above the usual blessings reserved for all believers in phase three. **In order that in the ages to come [phase three] He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness [generosity] toward us in Christ Jesus.** (Eph. 2:7) When a believer possesses supergrace or ultrasupergrace capacity, God pours out fantastic blessings which glorify Him in time and eternity. Spiritual maturity is the goal for every believer. In supergrace, you reap what God sows, not what you sow.⁸⁹

Fellowship and *spirituality* are two sides of the same coin. *Fellowship* views our state of being in relationship to God the Father; *Spirituality* views our state of being in relationship to God the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 080: Luke 2:52 and 3 intro

Loose Ends/Introduction of Luke 3

We have one more loose end to tie up from Luke 2:

Luke 2:52 **Throughout His life, Jesus increased in wisdom; He advanced in age and maturity; and He increased in grace, both with God and with man.**

The doctrine of GAP and Jesus' relationship with the Father (God) are so monumental, that it is easy to lose track of the fact that He increased in grace with man. What does that mean?

Jesus no doubt was raised in Joseph's profession as a carpenter (Matt. 13:55 Mark 6:3). Despite His love of the Word, I do not see Jesus as studying full time each and every day preparing for His public ministry. My estimation is, He likely studied the Scriptures way more than most. This was enhanced by what I believe was a perfect memory (Jesus' mind was not corrupted by sin). At my age, I meet someone for the first time, hear their name;

⁸⁹ This definition comes directly from R. B. Thieme, Jr. I took it from versebyverse.com accessed April 4, 2020.

and then hope that they do not ask me 2 minutes later, “What is my name?” Jesus did not have this problem. Similarly, when He heard the Scriptures read, He remembered them.

He is associated with his father, being called *the carpenter’s son* in Matt. 13:55. It would seem reasonable and logical that He would have learned to be a carpenter. After all, Jesus is said to be submissive to His parents in v. 51. Since He is not from the tribe of Levi, He would have not have been able to dedicate His life to the Word or to Temple service (of some sort).

My reason for pursuing this tangent—some of which is logical supposition—is that Jesus would have had relationships with people that, as a young man, would have been different from His public ministry. Exactly what these relationship were would have been related to His training to be a carpenter under the guidance of His step-father, Joseph.

As a man, Jesus enjoyed many things in life: eating a good meal, companionship and friendship with others, having a glass of wine (well, they did not use glasses). It is reasonable the a portion of His life was devoted to carpentry work. Might He have assisted in some way in the local synagogue? Perhaps; but I think, given this mention of obedience to His parents, that training under Joseph would have been expected. Furthermore—and some of you may not grasp this—work is a beautiful and wonderful thing which God has given to man. I believe carpentry work is something which the Lord did and enjoyed. There are few things more wonderful in this world than working with wood.

In this profession, Jesus would have interacted with many people. What exactly did Joseph do? Did he build houses? Again, we only have logic and reason to go by—I am assuming that Joseph was able to do any sort of wood working and that these skills were taught to His step-Son Jesus.

We do not know any of the details, but as an apprentice and a workman, Jesus would have come into contact with many people, and His honesty, His forthrightness, His skill, and His willingness to work would have been a joy to see and to interact with.

In my various professions, I have worked with hundreds of people in a variety of capacities; and those who are underhanded, who talk behind your back, who do things to harm you in one way or another—these are people one tends to avoid whenever possible. But those who are hardworking, who are honest, who, when they say something to you, mean it; those are the kinds of people that you want to work with and to interact with. Jesus, as a carpenter, would have been a joy to work with (again, I am assuming that a portion of his life was given over to carpentry).

As an aside—even though much of what I wrote above is speculation (except for Joseph being a carpenter and Jesus being submissive to His parents)—man far too often loses sight of the importance of work. Some doctrinal teacher added this to R. B. Thieme, Jr.’s list of divine institutions, and I wholeheartedly agree with this addition, and wish I could remember who it was to give him credit for this addition. In the Garden of Eden, man, in an undefiled state, had work to do. When man sinned and left the garden, he was

promised work of a different sort—where man would have to work extremely hard to eke out a living. That work would be hard and sometimes very taxing is part of the curse of man—and I daresay everyone can point to times in their life where work was exactly that.

However, work can also be a wonderful thing. In recent weeks, most of us have been without work or with limited work because of the COVID19 pandemic; and I believe that many people have come to realize the importance of their own work. Obviously, people understand this from a monetary point of view (one needs to work to make money to pay for life's requirements); but for many people, work provides them purpose and structure. There are so many people I have talked to whom this has taken a toll, where so many of their days are extremely boring. How many people have become sedentary and have spent much of the past month or so overeating? This is not every single person; but this is a significant portion of any population which had to remain in place during this pandemic. I don't know that we have any stats from this yet, but I would not be surprised to find out that suicides increased over this period of time.

At this point, we leave chapter 2 and begin Luke 3. Jesus is age 12 at the end of Luke 2 and He will be about 30 years old when He makes His appearance in this chapter (v. 21). There is only one thing that we know about Jesus and his life during these unrecorded years: He continued to grow spiritually from age 12 to age 30 by taking in the Word of God (Luke 2:40, 52).

Let's return to the book of Luke, chapter 3.

An Introduction to Luke 3 (Dr. Dan Hill)

In Hampton Court near London, there is a grapevine under glass; it is about 1,000 years old and has but one root which is at least two feet thick.

Some of the branches are 200 feet long. Because of skillful cutting and pruning, the vine produces several tons of grapes each year.

Even though some of the smaller branches are 200 feet from the main stem, they bear much fruit because they are joined to the vine and allow the life of the vine to flow through them.

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord is the vine, and we are the branches.

And when we need pruning, the goal is always more fruit.

We are going to look at the ministry and the message of John the Baptist and at the center of his message we find the statement - bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/luke/luke.pdf> accessed March 13, 2020.

There are so many churches and teachers who try to get us out there and doing great things for God right after we are saved. Yet Jesus, the Son of God, prepares for over 25 years prior to His public ministry. That is a long time in preparation; but His ministry was the most significant 3 or 4 year period in human history (apart from the cross, which occurred nearly at the end of His ministry).

The cross—where Jesus took upon Himself the penalty for our sins—is the entire foundation for our relationship with God. The Lord's very short 3–4 year ministry provided us with the bridge between the Age of Israel and the Church Age (His disciples founding the church in the book of Acts).

Whereas some chapter divisions make little sense; Luke 2 ended where it should have, and chapter 3 began where it should have.

Luke 3 may be divided into two disjoint sections: the ministry of John the Baptizer (vv. 1–22) followed by the genealogical line of the humanity of our Lord (vv. 23–38). This is an outline for section on John the baptizer.

Outline of Luke 3A

Vv. 1–3	This historical context of John's ministry.
Vv. 4–6	The prophecy of John's ministry.
Vv. 7–18	John's teaching ministry.
Vv. 19–20	John is shut up in prison by Herod the tetrarch.
Vv. 21–22	John baptizes Jesus.

John ben Zacharias has been known as, for 2000 years as *John the Baptist*; and, more accurately, *John the baptizer*. However, let me suggest to you that he is better labeled as *John the Herald*, or *John, Herald to the King*. It is his relationship to Jesus that is far more important than his having baptized a few thousand people.⁹⁰

Two things are being done in vv. 1–2: (1) Luke is setting the historical stage for all that is about to happen (as he did at the beginning of chapters 1 & 2); and (2) Luke is setting up a dramatic contrast between what people think is important and what God thinks is important.

We should add to this that the doctor/historian Luke spends more time giving us a secular historical context than any of the other gospel writers. This is exactly what we should expect, being that Luke focuses upon the humanity of Jesus more than any of the other biographers.

⁹⁰ As an aside, I originally believed myself to have come up with this title myself; but at syndein.com, he makes at least one reference to *John the Herald/Baptist* in chapter 3.

Bill O'Reilly wrote a book, *Killing Jesus*; and he was criticized by some because it concentrated on what we know about the man, Jesus. It has been several years since I read this excellent book, but the divine aspect of our Lord was either downplayed or non-existent in O'Reilly's book. Similarly, Jesus' humanity is also very much the emphasis of Luke's book. We will know Jesus the Divine, the Son of God, in the book of Luke; but primarily, we come to know Jesus, the man, often called the Son of Man by Himself and by Luke (that is, Luke took note of this and recorded it).

Lesson 081: Luke 3:1a

Which Historic Figures are Truly Important

Luke gives us some historical context of this period of time and place, which includes some of the important people of that day (just as he did at the beginning of Luke 1 & 2). But most of his text in the first half of this chapter will center on John the baptizer. We have had many examples throughout the Old Testament of such a contrast, where the importance of God's man is far and above the importance of any political leader of that day and time.

From the Voice (a Bible translation with some commentary): More than any other Gospel writer, Luke wants to situate the story of Jesus in secular history. In particular, he gives details of the emperor, governor, and other client rulers. With a toxic mixture of cruelty and might, these authorities lord their power over the common people. Yet these high and mighty are—as Mary's poem describes—destined to be brought down in the presence of a new kind of king and a new kind of kingdom. Jesus will exercise His authority in a radically different way—not through domination and violence, but through love, healing, compassion, and service.⁹¹

Most of us know who Abraham is and perhaps we also know a few things about him. Perhaps minimally, most people correctly associate him with the founding of the Hebrew race. Or, as the father of the Jewish people. He lived around 2100 B.C. Can you name a single king or prince from that same era, give or take a few hundred years? Most people have heard Abraham's name and many know, to some degree or another, who he is. These same people could not name a single political leader of that era. Yet Abraham is just a shepherd who moved from one place to another. There is no reason for us to know anything about the historical Abraham and, at the same time, not know the Pharaoh of Egypt at this time, or any of the leaders of city-states in Canaan, or any leader in Assyria. We know Abraham because God has shown His light on him; we do not know these other people because God has not shown a light on any of them (with the exception of the few who found their way into the pages of Scripture).

As an aside, many critical of Scripture have disputed Abraham's history and said, "Well, you can't find Abraham in any other historical book." And that is true, despite there not being a surfeit of history books from 3000 years ago. But, let's say that we had all of the

⁹¹ From <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+3&version=VOICE> accessed March 13, 2020.

history books from that era, do you really think that there would be a chapter on a shepherd who moved from point A to point B? Don't be ridiculous! Abraham is a VIP in the plan of God; but in the cosmic system, he is a nobody. No historian would have known about Abraham and thought, "I ought to devote a few paragraphs or a chapter to this man."

It is like you—it is highly unlikely that any historian is going to be aware of your life and think, "I really need to put Charley Brown in my *New History of the United States*." But, if you execute the Protocol Plan of God for your life—and God has a plan for every believer—then you will find your name (and the divine good that you produced) recorded in the permanent annals of history.

With man, it is always the short game; with God, it is the long game. How many politicians are willing to do whatever is necessary in order to be elected? How many of them will have unsavory political partners in the background? All of them? 99% of them? How many politicians expound on this or that problem, but when they get into power, that problem—sometimes a centerpiece of their campaign—ends up getting put on the back burner?

Many people are worked up about the coming American election in 2020 (or whatever year this happens to be for you), and there is the incumbent (or incumbent party) and there is the challenger and most people you know have a passionate opinion about one or both candidates. One candidate is often portrayed as the worst person ever to walk the earth (which may not be too far from the truth); and the other is seen as the savior of America (in most cases, this *is* far from the truth). Yet, the people who make the difference for the United States and God's dealings with the United States are those who are growing spiritually, day by day, year by year (or the one who should be, but they are not). The great blessings enjoyed by the United States is not based upon who the president of the United States is, but upon the spiritual state of this country's citizens—99.99% of whom would never be thought to be historically important by the secular historian.

At most, a president will reflect the spiritual state of the United States; but he is far less important than you might think.

There were a number of caesars to rule from Rome, and their power and influence at the time seemed overwhelming. So many of them could arbitrarily order the death of any person that they chose; and often exercised that power. But, even when the secular historian looks back at this period of time, it is clear that Jesus has far more of an effect on human history than all of the caesars put together.

We know some of the people in these next two verses primarily because of their interactions with John the baptizer or with Jesus or with some other saint in the Bible. For instance, many people know about Pontius Pilate and his interactions with Jesus before our Lord was crucified. But do you know anything about Pilate except for that which is found in Scripture? Do you even know how long he reigned over Palestine? Most of us do not.

Luke names the most important people of that time period—and in that day and age, most people thought that these men were pretty big deals. They were feared and obeyed. In that day, you might live or die based on the whim of one of these men. Furthermore, these political leaders risked all for their power. We know them, because they emerged on top. How many other such potential leaders fell by the wayside? But, do you know who is far more important than any of these world leaders? John the baptizer.

John the baptizer, at least for a time, was living a rather isolated and eccentric life out in the desert-wilderness. People should not even know that this man exists; yet people went out to him the desert-wilderness to hear him and to be baptized by him.

Name Recognition, Celebrityship and the Christian Life:

I write this in 2018 and 2020, and most people reading this know the names of the current president and the previous president. These two men have virtually 100% name recognition in the United States. People think that their presidencies were/are very big deals. You probably have very strong opinions about either or both men.

However, in this day and time, you may not know the names of the men who are truly important to God. You may not know, right now, the names of those doing God's work. But in eternity, you are going to find that there are thousands—and maybe tens of thousands—of men—your contemporaries—in the United States doing God's work according to their guidance by the Word of God and God the Holy Spirit.

There may be a prayer group of 3 or 4 little old ladies—women who may have lost their husbands (or not), who gather one or more times a week, and bring various things before the Lord in prayer. These are people that, if you saw them in the store or walking along the way, you would not give them a second thought; you might not even see them. Yet, these people, if they are mature believers operating under God's protocol plan, are doing far more for the United States than Presidents Obama or Trump could ever think of doing.

There may be a church with a congregation of 7 (on a good day) who meet 4x a week; and the pastor studies and teaches them with great excellence. They may not be able to afford a church building; they may not have enough to pay the pastor. That pastor may sell used cars, for all we know, in order to make ends meet. Maybe he paints houses or mows lawns in order to survive. But these 8 people, by their spiritual growth and witness, could be partially responsible for the direction that the United States is moving in.

There are human celebrities; and there are God's people. The former may have high name and facial recognition; and the latter may be people that we intentionally ignore. But God knows what's up. God knows His Own plan. He knows those who are moving ahead spiritually and accomplishing His mission on earth; and He knows the people who love being recognized and admired by others.

The works of the spiritually advancing believer will be known to all eternity; and the human works of the human celebrity—if they are believers—will be burned up as human good. If they are unbelievers, their end is too terrible to imagine.

The men we will briefly study—the men whose names are found below in our passage—they were the political celebrities of that day. The men in the first couple verses in this chapter would be like a mention of Obama, Trump and perhaps some of their more celebrated cabinet members.

At the same time, from the human perspective, John and Jesus appeared to be men of little distinction. Both men had very short ministries; both men had very limited ministries (in terms of time and location). Yet, far more people know about John the baptizer and Jesus our Lord than any of the men listed in the first couple verses of Luke 3—the secular rulers and the religious leaders. It is exactly opposite of what most men of that era would have expected.

And, interestingly enough, the names of these political leaders are known simply because they are referenced in the book of Luke (throughout the book of Luke and Acts, the author will continue to speak of the intersection of political power and God's power).

If you were to ask—or post—*who is more important to human history, Jesus the Christ or Julius Cæsar?* I occasionally meander to a facebook page which features debate between Christians (sometimes others) and atheists (or agnostics). The answer to that question is simple, and any honest person would be able to answer it in exactly 2 seconds. However, most of the responses were deflections; a few opted for Cæsar; a few wanted to know if they could select someone else. At the point that I had left and there had been 30–50 responses, not a single person answered, “Jesus, obviously.” None of them could say this because this goes against everything that they believe (one might remark, “That would be like saying Dumbo or Daffy Duck are important men in human history”).

As I expected, virtually everyone who responded had a very strong opinion about Jesus; and all who provided a reason for Cæsar being more important, went to the internet to find an article to cite. How many of them knew anything about Cæsar prior to this question is but a small minority; but even that fact did not inform them of their answers. But, almost guaranteed, everyone with a comment would have a clear opinion about Jesus, and they would be going to Wikipedia to find out what their opinion ought to be about Cæsar (which opinion would be based more about what they thought about Jesus than Cæsar, who, prior to reading/hearing that question, would not have been thought about at all).

This is because the true celebrity of human history is Jesus Christ and not any of the political figures named by Luke.

Luke 3:1a In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,...

At this point, we begin the narrative of the public ministries of John the baptizer and Jesus the Christ. John the baptizer is the herald of the King; so we will study him first in this chapter. The first half of this chapter will focus upon John; the rest of this chapter of Luke will focus upon the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

We have a great contrast here between the rulers of that day—both secular and religious—and John and Jesus. We tend to get caught up in a world of politics and voting and hoping for one candidate, and fearing the damage wrought by his opposing candidate.

In this first verse, we hear about the most important political figures of that day; and at the beginning of v. 2, the most important religious figures of that day. But, who is more important than them? John the baptizer, the Herald of the King. And Who is more important than John? The King, Jesus Christ.

Most people who know a little history know the name *Cæsar*; but far fewer know who Tiberius Cæsar is.

Luke 3:1a **In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,...**

This being the 15th year of Tiberius places the date somewhere between A.D. 26 and 29 (someone else suggests A.D. 27–29, as Tiberius was the Roman emperor between A.D. 14 and 37 (there apparently is some wiggle room in these numbers). The Easy English Bible presents some slightly different dates: Tiberius is the second man to rule over all of Rome, beginning in A.D. 11, indicating that John began proclaiming the Kingdom and the Messiah in A.D. 25–26 (these dates are approximate).⁹²

Tiberius succeeded Augustus, who is mentioned in Luke 2:1.

According to Wikipedia, there is a very ancient history of the first 12 Caesars. This is a good list, as it covers the time that the Apostles and the first followers of Jesus began to teach Jesus. Apparently, this *book* was published part way through the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 76–138; emperor A.D. 117 to 138).

The 12 Cæsar's	
1. Julius Cæsar (46–44 B.C.)	There is apparently a history of the 12 Cæsar's published in A.D. 121. This picture is from an ancient manuscript dated A.D. 1477. Apparently the material is not necessarily accurate history, but includes some gossip and overly-dramatized histories.
2. Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14)	
3. Tiberius (A.D. 14–37)	
4. Caligula (A.D. 37–41)	

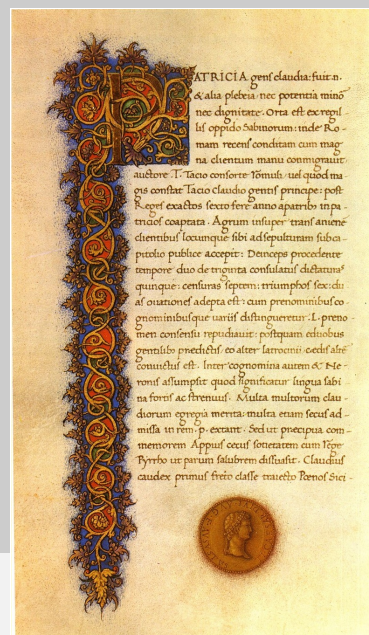
⁹² Although the modern calendar was set up to celebrate the birth of Jesus as the beginning of the new era, there were chronological errors made, so that Jesus was born between 6–4 B.C.

The 12 Cæsar's

5. Claudius (A.D. 41–54)
6. Nero (A.D. 54–68)
7. Galba (A.D. 68–69)
8. Otho (A.D. 69—3 months)
9. Vitellius (A.D. 69—8 months)
10. Vespasian (A.D. 69–79)
11. Titus (A.D. 79–81)
12. Domitian (A.D. 81–96)

Take note of the short amount of time that these men reigned. How fleeting is human fame and power.

12 Caesar's Graphic from [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Twelve_Caesars); accessed November 4, 2018.



The dates of Tiberius' reign is found in quite a number of places.

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Twelve_Caesars accessed November 4, 2018. Some of the information was gathered from other links in Wikipedia. Reigning dates came from Wikipedia.

Lesson 082: Luke 3:1

Historic Figures Around A.D. 30

For the 3rd and last time, Luke presents to us the political leadership of that day. Since the public ministry of Jesus is relatively short, these are the men in charge (politically speaking) during His public ministry.

Luke 3:1a **In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,...**

We have already discussed Tiberius Cæsar.

Luke 3:1b **...Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea,...**

Pontius Pilate is named next. He ruled over Judæa as their governor.

According to the Disciples' Literal New Testament, Pilate was a military officer put in charge of keeping order in Judæa. His servitude in this position was relatively short, from A.D. 26–36.

Of the people named in this verse, the one best known today is Pontius Pilate; but we know Pilate only because of his interactions with Jesus at the end of our Lord's life on this

earth. Many of us know 3 things about him: (1) he warns Jesus, “Don’t You know I have the power over Your life?” (2) Pilate went to the Jews and asked them, “Should I release Jesus or the heinous criminal Barabas to you today?” (The Jews called for Barrabas) (3) In the end, Pontius ceremonially washed his hands of what was happening. Many people know these things about Pilate. But to name a 4th item about this man, separate from Jesus—most people would be hard-pressed to do that.

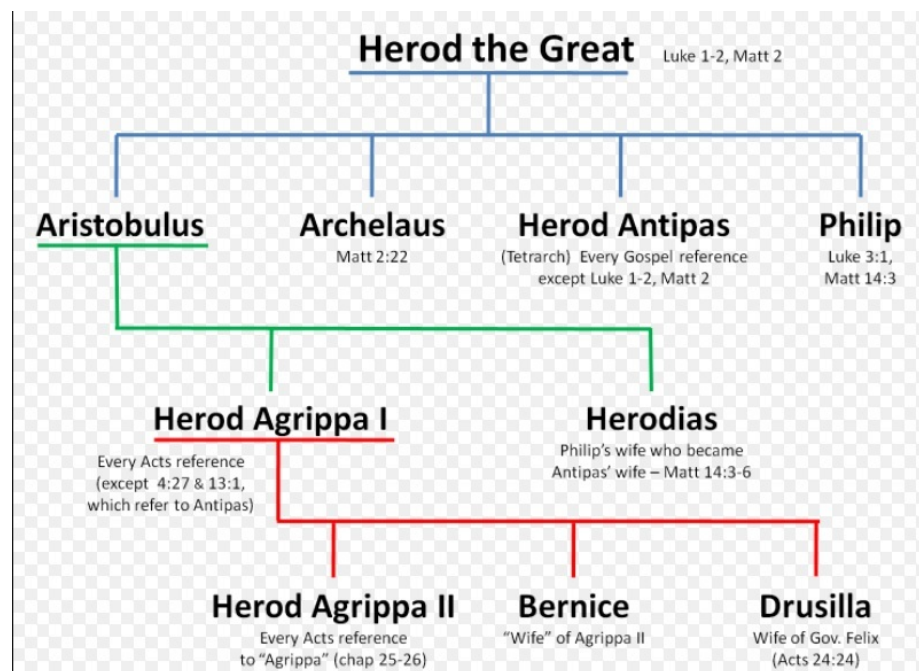
Luke 3:1c ...and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee,...

This ruler named here is not Herod the Great, who has died by this time (about 30 years previous), but this is Herod Jr., one of his sons. He is often referred to as *Herod Antipas*.

We will briefly study these sons of Herod; primarily when their lives intersection with God’s men of this era.

You just cannot know or appreciate the men here without knowing something about their father, Herod the Great and who was descended from him (and how).

The Line of Herod the Great (a chart); from [WordPress](#); accessed November 4, 2018.

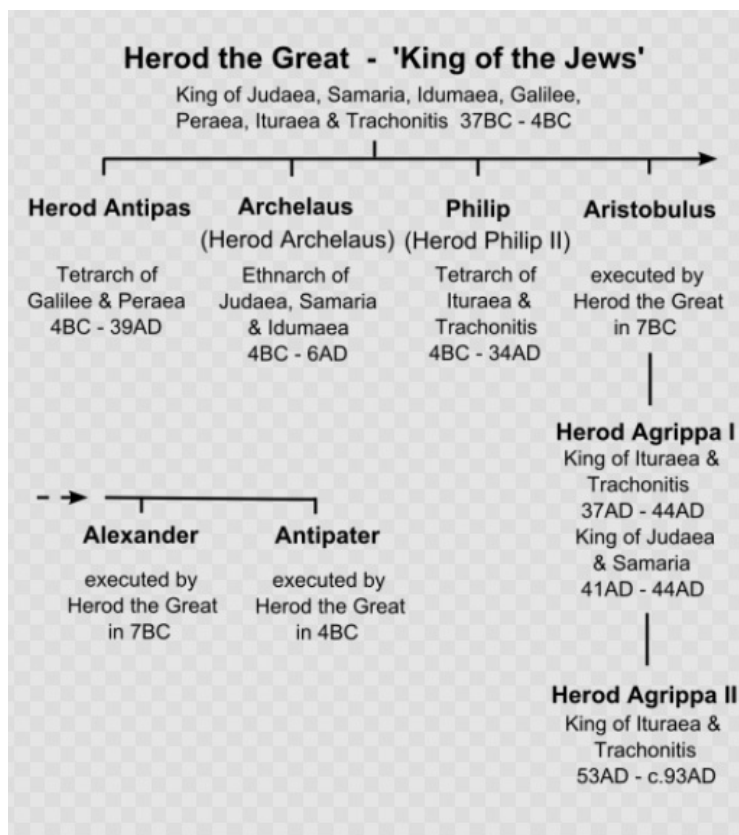


We associate Herod the Great with the birth of our Lord, Herod Antipas with John the herald and later with Jesus. Herod Agrippa I and Herod Agrippa II interact with the disciples of Jesus as they participate in the growing of the church in the book of Acts.

Herod the Great’s Genealogy (a chart); from [The Bible Journey](#); accessed November 4, 2018.

Herod the Great is an Idumæan whom we studied briefly in Luke 1. He has 4 sons (of Biblical note); and one of them has a son and daughter of Biblical note.

We will refer back to this chart as we move further along in v. 1.



As an aside, Herod's genealogy is much more complex than this. We are simply concentrating on those related to Herod who are spoken of in Scripture. This chart does not take into account all of his wives or other children or grandchildren.

Herod ruled over a land which he apparently split into 4 districts, and his sons ruled over each of those districts (the reading I have done seems to suggest that Herod divided up this land himself).

We do not know exactly how this division of Herod's kingdom was set up, but for these men to have assumed rulership at the time that their father died suggests that Herod the Great was a very organized and determined man. He split up his kingdom into 4

parts for 4 sons to rule.

However, before you nominate Herod for father of the year, Herod the Great executed 3 of his sons. Augustus remarked "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son." (I am assuming that Herod did not eat pork as per his adherence to the Jewish faith, so that his pigs were relative safe.) Also, to be fair, it was not unusual for a ruler's sons to plot the death of their father, thus giving them access to the throne (I believe that [Wikipedia](#) lists 15 such instances from history; and how many such plots by sons were frustrated by their fathers?).

Herod Tetrarch is Herod Antipas, sometimes known simply as Antipas. He is the 1st son listed in the genealogy chart, born to Malthace, Herod's Samaritan wife. He reigned over Galilee and Peraea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. Galilee is the region where Jesus primarily presented Himself as the Messiah (although He revealed this fact only a very few times) and as the Savior of mankind.

Herod Antipas will see to the beheading of John the Herald (Matt. 14:1–12). He will be referred to as a fox by our Lord, which is an insult. Whereas we think of a fox as sly and cunning, in the ancient world, sometimes a ruler was understood to be a lion (a strong ruler) or, by way of contrast, a fox. There are several quotations from ancient history contrasting these two animals. “The lion you mentioned turns out to be a [mere] fox.” (Babylonian Talmud, Bava Kamma 117a). Most of the quotations from ancient history concerning lions and foxes are references to scholarship; but we take from it the contrast of the two animals. Herod Antipas would be one of the men who presides over one of the illegal trials of Jesus (Luke 23:7).

We have an interest in Herod Antipas, as he ruled over the land where Jesus primarily taught the Word of God.

Throughout, we may have mostly negative views about these rulers. Bear in mind that, without them, there is no Christianity, despite these people being negative toward the Word of God and behaving viciously towards the disciples of Jesus. On the positive side, these rulers provided law and order. They made it possible for Jesus to walk from point A to point B in Galilee in relative safety; where the people could follow Him and listen to Him as well. On the other hand, Herod and his sons many times exceeded their earthly authority as rulers.

Luke 3:1d ...and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,...

Another of Herod the Great's sons is Philip. He is also referred to as Herod Philip II.

Whereas, you might have some idea about where Galilee is and where Jesus lived; you may not be able to figure out Ituraea or Trachonitis. The Galilee region is mostly west of the Sea of Galilee (and the northern river feeding into the sea); Ituraea and Trachonitis are east.

According to the Disciples' Literal Translation, this Philip II was a half-brother of Herod Antipas. His capital was Philip's Caesarea (mentioned in Matt. 16:13). He reigned from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34, making him almost an exact contemporary of Jesus. He is also called Herod Philip II and Philip the Tetrarch.



Herod the Great's Kingdom (a map); from [God's Word First](#); accessed November 4, 2018. All of these specified areas were once ruled by Herod the Great.

Herod divided his kingdom into 4 parts, hence the words *tetrarchy* (a fourth of a kingdom) and *tetrarch* (a ruler over a fourth).

In grey, you see Galilee and Perea, regions ruled by Herod Antipas. Philip rules over the regions northeast of the Sea of Galilee called Ituraea and Trachonitis. When Jesus sailed across the Sea of Galilee, this would have placed Him in Philip's territory (or in Decapolis).

Prior to the public ministry of Jesus, Archelaus, another son of Herod, ruled a region known to

us as Judæa, Samaria and Idumea. However, he only reigned between 4 B.C. and A.D. 6. However, during his relatively short reign, we find this comment in Matthew: **But when he [Joseph] heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.** (Matt. 2:22; ESV) This circumspection on the part of Joseph fulfills Old Testament prophecy. **And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene.** (Matt. 2:23; ESV) Interestingly enough, we do not have an Old Testament passage to correlate with this.

According to the NET Bible, Archelaus was banished in A.D. 6 and died in A.D. 18.

This region, first ruled over by Herod the Great and then by his son Herod Archelaus; was the region that Pontius Pilate ruled over during the earthly ministry of Jesus.

Luke 3:1e **...and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,...**

This guy is somewhat interesting because he is mentioned here and nowhere else in the Bible. Furthermore, we do not have historical confirmation on him as we have on the other rulers in this chapter. There was another ruler by this name, but he was put to death by Mark Anthony in 36 B.C. (Obviously not the same person)

Given Luke's accuracy on all other historical matters, it is unlikely, from a human perspective, that he is wrong here, even though we do not have the proper confirmation either of this man or this territory. Furthermore, we do not know when (or if) this confirmation will come. Throughout man's history, this and that Biblical name, region or event is confirmed by secular history, through documents and artifacts which are unearthed.

As an aside, just because there is no confirmation from history of this person or that person; that does not in any way disprove the Bible. It is simply an indication that, our historical knowledge of that era is spotty (there are limited documents from that time which survive today). The most well-preserved set of documents from that era is, unsurprisingly, the New Testament (and the Old also continued to be preserved).

Lessons 083–084: Luke 3:1–2

More Historic Figures and John the Herald

So far, this is what we have studied in Luke 3:

Luke 3:1 **In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,...**

Luke, more than the other gospel writers, sets the historical stage for us. No other gospel writer includes all of this historical information, which places these events into an historical context.

Luke 3:2a **...during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,...**

You may recall that there were two high priests during the time of King David. At this point, we do not have two *official* high priests, but a high priest, Annas; and his successor, Caiaphas, his son-in-law. We do not know exactly the reason for this, but given the passages in the gospels featuring both men, it is clear that Annas continues to exercise great influence in this religious/political domain.

According to the NET Bible, Annas was the chief priest from A.D. 6-15, apparently removed from power by the Romans. Although relatives were brought in, Annas appears to have continued with the power and authority of a high priest,. At some point in time, his son-in-law Caiaphas came to power in A.D. 18 and remained there until A.D. 36, which is a remarkably long time.

Wilbur Pickering presents a point of view different from the opinions of most commentators. He believes that the Romans required a new high priest each year in order to reduce the power and influence of the high priest. He writes, *in this particular year, it was Caiaphas*. This puts him at odds with other historians. The fact that some assign a period of time to his reign as high priest goes against Pickering's view. Whatever the exact circumstances, there were two high priests at the time that Luke focuses upon. Recall that

there was to only be one High Priest; as his was the highest religious authority; and he represented the Lord.

Annas is found 4 times in Scripture; always in conjunction with Caiaphas (Luke 3:2 John 18:13, 24 Acts 4:6). Caiaphas—and perhaps this indicates greater power or more independence from Annas—is found by himself in Matt. 26:3, 57 John 11:49 18:14, 28.

John Knox claims that Caiaphas is the actual high priest, but that Annas continues to wield considerable influence regarding religious and civil matters.

Sometimes, it can be very instructive to know the backgrounds of these various men. After all, there are clearly parallels which we may draw between personalities in this era and today's era.

Annas

1. Annas was appointed High Priest in A.D. 7, at age 37 by Quirinius, the imperial governor of Syria.
2. Annas was obliged to give up his position to Ismael by Valerius Gratus, the procurator of Judaea, in the beginning of Tiberius' reign, A.D. 14.
3. Annas being removed from office did not appear to lessen his influence or authority.
4. Several High Priests were appointed after him, while he was still alive: Eleazar, son of Annas; Simon; and Joseph Caiaphas, son-in-law of Annas (John 18:13.), who remained the High Priest until A.D. 37.
5. It appears that Annas never fully relinquished his power, as Annas and Caiaphas, are both called *high priests* in Luke 3:2 Acts 4:6.
6. Annas apparently used his position to bolster his wealth, establishing and maintaining money-making enterprises at the Temple and the Mount of Olives. One revenue stream was provided by the selling of approved animals for sacrifices to be offered at the Temple. There were specific requirements of animal sacrifices specified in the Law. Annas apparently extrapolated the authority over these sacrifices, providing Temple-approved sacrifices at a price (I do not know when this practice was begun). Is it not human nature for those who have power and wealth try to use one in order to increase the other? In any case, this practice was condemned by Jesus in no uncertain terms (Matt. 21:13).
7. Annas was known by many as the High Priest, as we see in John 18:19, 22.
8. In the pre-dawn morning prior to the crucifixion, Jesus' case was first heard by Annas (John 18:19–23), who appeared to fully wield the power of high priest's office. Some interpret this to be a set of formal questions, which information might be summarized and sent along to Caiaphas. Others see this as a hearing (or perhaps a preliminary hearing). It is possible that Annas made a decision of what was to happen to Jesus, and somehow passed this decision along to Caiaphas.
9. That Jesus was first taken to Annas is significant.
10. In any case, Jesus was then formally tried before Caiaphas. Matt. 26:57–68

Annas

11. Some believe that the power and influence of Annas was the driving force behind the final persecution of Jesus. From ISBE: *Renan's emphatic statement is substantially correct, "Annas was the principal actor in the terrible drama, and far more than Caiaphas, far more than Pilate, ought to bear the weight of the maledictions of mankind" (Life of Jesus).* In support of this, ISBE reads: *Caiaphas, indeed, as actual high priest, was the nominal head of the Sanhedrin which condemned Jesus, but the aged Annas was the ruling spirit. According to John 18:12–13, it was to him that the officers who arrested Jesus led Him first.*
12. Nevertheless, it is futile to try to find any single person to blame for the crucifixion. Ultimately, it was the sins of us all that placed the Lord on the cross.
13. Annas lived to an old age, having five sons high priests.
14. He did not live long enough to see his fifth son, Annas (or Ananus II) become High Priest. Ananus II will cause James, the half brother of our Lord, to be stoned to death circa A.D. 62.
15. Interestingly enough, Annas and his family are cursed *in the Talmud*, "*Woe to the family of Annas! Woe to the serpent-like hisses*" (Pes 57a). (ISBE). Hastings understands this to mean: *they exerted private influence on the judges and perverted justice for their own ends.* You would think this quote was about some contemporary politician.

Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Annas.

James Hastings, D.D., *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels; Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*; © 1918.

By Charles Scriber's Sons; (from e-sword); topic: Annas.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Annas.

Both Annas and Caiaphas are called high priests in Luke 3:2 Acts 4:6. The way that their names are used in John 18:13, 19, 22, 24 indicates that both men had that office and that title—and were clearly recognized by others with that office and authority—but there does not appear to be any sort of power struggle or competition between them. Our only exposure to them as working together is at the trials of Jesus, and they seemed to be cooperative or possibly in collusion with each other.

In our society, some men retain their political office titles long after they retire; but that is not what is happening here. Josephus refers to various men as High Priests after they have left office, but simply retaining a title is not what is happening here.

How exactly are there two High Priests at the same time?

1. We do not know the exact answer to this question, so all of the answers offered below are speculative.
2. It is important to note that, this office of High Priest was, at one time, to have a particular man represent the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a type of Christ. However, over the years, this became more of an office of political power and influence.¹

How exactly are there two High Priests at the same time?

3. The most natural explanation is, Annas, as the father, has a number of sons who are high priests and one son-in-law (Caiaphas). The authority of a father is strong, and it is possible that Annas retained some real authority as a High Priest and some psychological authority over his adult sons.
4. One commentator suggested that the powers-that-be did not want the same High Priest to remain in office and continue to increase his power and authority in office, so that it was mandated that there be a new High Priest (either yearly or often enough).
5. ISBE's explanation: *The explanation seems to be that owing to age, ability and force of character Annas was the virtual, though Caiaphas the titular, high priest. He belonged to the Sadducean aristocracy, and, like others of that class, he seems to have been arrogant, astute, ambitious and enormously wealthy. He and his family were proverbial for their rapacity and greed. The chief source of their wealth seems to have been the sale of requisites for the temple sacrifices, such as sheep, doves, wine and oil, which they carried on in the four famous "booths of the sons of Annas" on the Mount of Olives, with a branch within the precincts of the temple itself. During the great feasts, they were able to extort high monopoly prices for theft goods. Hence, our Lord's strong denunciation of those who made the house of prayer "a den of robbers" (Mark 11:15-19).*
6. From Hastings: *At the time of our Lord's trial he was merely high priest emeritus, and his son-in-law Caiaphas, the acting high priest, presided ex officio over the meeting of the Sanhedrin (John 18:24, Matt. 26:67). Nevertheless, since the high priest emeritus retained not only his title (cf. John 18:15-16; John 18:19; John 18:22, Acts 4:6), but all his obligations and many of his prerogatives, it is not surprising that the masterful Annas took an active and independent part in the proceedings.*
7. That Jesus was first taken to Annas is significant. I see him as making the ultimate decision which Caiaphas later ratifies (that, like much of what is in this doctrine, is opinion).
8. If Rome did require a change in the high priesthood, a natural recognized authority could have been vested in Annas simply in rebellion to Rome.
9. It is not completely clear the term length for the high priestly office. It was passed along from father to son, but even in the Old Testament, there were times when a different line would assume that office. As Rome began to take over, the political power in Judæa began to select the high priest, as Herod the Great [chose](#) 6 of them. I had assumed that the Mosaic Law vested lifetime authority in the High Priest, but I have been unable to verify that. Given that the political leaders began to select the high priests, there may have been some quiet rebellion among the Jews, asking, *who do we obey, man or God?* This could account for the continued power of Annas.
10. Given that Annas has held this position for a very long time, there may have been a group of men who looked to him as their leader (Fausset suggests that Annas was the president of the Sanhedrin).
11. It is not impossible to imagine an older group of men giving their allegiance to

How exactly are there two High Priests at the same time?

- Annas, resulting in an amiable split in the spiritual authority.
12. Perhaps Annas was the true power, and those in his family who became priests were figureheads.
 13. More than one of the possible ways that Annas and Caiaphas were high priests suggested above could be true; and some of these theories could be true in part.
 14. When David was king, there were two high priests, which was the result of Saul killing off nearly all of the priests at the Tabernacle (Saul did not personally kill them, but a general under him did). The young man who escaped became the High Priest; but there was another man who became High Priest who probably functioned in or near Gibeon so that Saul could keep an eye on him.

¹ Throughout human history, it has become clear that there was not to be a melding of political and religious power. Saul once tried to assume the prerogatives of Samuel the prophet, a move that turned out badly for Saul. King David, on the other hand, was voluntarily subject to spiritual authorities. When Nathan the prophet excoriated David for his immorality, David took it to heart. In this instance above, Annas wields both religious and political power, but to no good end. The Catholic Church, despite its promising beginnings, soon became corrupt, using its considerable religious influence to wield political power. At least one man with strong religious influence in the United States properly and carefully maintained political neutrality—the evangelist Billy Graham. Although he was often seen in the company of presidents of both parties, he offered advice and spiritual guidance without violating the separation of church and state (whether presidents listened to him and took his advice is quite another matter).

Much of this doctrine was original. Some came from:

Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Annas.

James Hastings, D.D., *Dictionary of the Bible*; © 1909. By Charles Scribner's Sons; (from e-sword); topic: Annas.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Annas.

Caiaphas's name occurs more times in the New Testament than Annas's. The ESV; capitalized is used below.

Caiaphas

1. Caiaphas is also known as Joseph Caiaphas. He married the daughter of Annas in A.D. 25; thereby becoming the son-in-law of Annas. John 18:13
2. He was appointed to the office of High Priest between A.D. 26–37. This would have been for the entirety of governorship of Pilate.
3. Most authors believed him to be under the authority of Annas, even if that authority structure was ill-defined (both he and Annas are called high priests in Luke 3:2). We might understand him to take his cues from his father-in-law.
4. Caiaphas had to have been a wily politician, being able to hold onto his position for such a long period of time. This suggested that he was able to work both with the Romans over him and the priests, Levites and sadducees under him. Boyd in Hastings' NT commentary suggests that Caiaphas's willingness to set aside both justice and religion made this possible. W. F. Boyd: *Caiaphas is a type of the wily ecclesiastical opportunist, who places the success of himself and the*

Caiaphas

institution he represents before all claims of truth or justice. Part of this is seen in his evaluation of Jesus. He did not want to anger the public who followed Jesus; but, he also believed that if Jesus's movement became too big, Rome would crush it and Judæa along with it.

5. He presided over the Jewish Sanhedrin and pronounced Jesus guilty of blasphemy. Different sources had Annas or Caiaphas as presiding over the Sanhedrin. I did not come across any single source which told me that both men presided over the Sanhedrin at one time or another. Therefore, I don't know if both were leaders of the Sanhedrin or not.
6. It is quite fascinating that Caiaphas's words concerning Jesus were unintentionally prophetic.
 - 1) John 11:47–48 *So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this Man performs many signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."*
 - 2) John 11:49–50 *But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one Man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."*
 - 3) John 11:51–53 *He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put Him to death.*
 - 4) These words of Caiaphas may be the reason he receives so much attention in the gospels.
7. The idea was, the Sanhedrin would wait for the right time, and grab up Jesus to put Him to death. John 11:45–53
8. When Jesus was apprehended the night before His crucifixion, He was first taken to Annas and then to Caiaphas. Both trials were illegal, bringing forward false witnesses, holding court in the middle of the night, attempting to drum up some false charge to take to Pontius Pilate (as only Pilate could pronounce a sentence of death).
9. Caiaphas asked Jesus straight out if He was the Messiah, and when Jesus answered directly, Caiaphas tore his clothes, saying, "What more do we need?"
 - 1) Matt. 26:62 *And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?"*
 - 2) Matt. 26:63 *But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest [Caiaphas] said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God."*
 - 3) Matt. 26:64 *Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."*
 - 4) Mat 26:65–66 *Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has*

Caiaphas

uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard His blasphemy. What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."

- 5) This gave them only the charge of blasphemy to take to Pilate.
10. Since the Hebrew people could not execute anyone, so Caiaphas sent Jesus to Pilate in order for Him to receive the death sentence. Matt. 27:1–2 John 18:28
11. Caiaphas also persecuted the Apostles as they began to establish the church. Acts 5:14–18
12. According to Fausset, Caiaphas was the end of the earthly priesthood. However, another commentator suggests that another of Annas's sons became High Priest after Caiaphas.
13. Fausset on Caiaphas: *Unscrupulous vigor, combined with political shrewdness, characterizes him in the New Testament, as it also kept him in office longer than any of his predecessors.*
14. There are 3 specific incidents involving Caiaphas in the Bible.
 - 1) Right after the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Caiaphas realized that he would have to deal with this Jesus fellow. However, because of the Lord's popularity with the people, Caiaphas knew that he had to wait this situation out.
 - 2) Caiaphas is one of the many who presided over an illegal hearing of the Lord prior to His crucifixion.
 - 3) Caiaphas also went after the Apostles of Jesus in Acts.
 - 4) Boyd further suggests that Caiaphas imprisoned Peter and John, presided over the trial of Stephen, and gave Saul of Tarsus letters to enable him to apprehend Christians in Damascus. See Acts 5:17-21, 27 7:1 9:1

M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Annas.

Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Caiaphas.

James Hastings, D.D., *Dictionary of the Bible*; © 1909. By Charles Scriber's Sons; (from e-sword); topic: Caiaphas.

James Hastings, D.D., *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels; Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*; © 1918. By Charles Scriber's Sons; (from e-sword); topic: Caiaphas.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Caiaphas.

One of the reasons why we study Caiaphas and Annas is, there are men with power like them today. What is right and true rarely enters into their thinking. They concern themselves primarily with whatever retains their power. Power is of the utmost importance to them. What puts coin into their pockets is also of the utmost importance to them

Illustration: Men who have power and wealth often use one of those possessions to gain more of the other. Have you ever seen a politician appear to sell out everything that he professes to believe in? That is called Tuesday in Washington D.C. Whereas, there are some

Men who have power and wealth often use one of those possessions to gain more of the other.

politicians who truly believe the things that they say (whether naive or brilliant), most of them will say whatever they believe is necessary to hold onto their power and wealth. And, if necessary, they simply obfuscate, giving 100 word answers to simple *yes or no* questions.

We have set the historical context, and now we proceed with the historical narrative that Luke will concentrate on:

Luke 3:2b ...the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

This is John the baptizer (or, John the Herald), the son of Zacharias, who we studied in the first chapter of Luke.

Bear in mind that 400 years have gone by since any Scripture has been written; and the Jewish people might even be thinking, *is God gone? Has He left us entirely?* There was no direct communication from God to anyone in Israel (insofar as we know); and there was no future promise of Israel's independence. But then, the Word of God comes to John. Only biographer Luke associates John with the prophets of old, where the Word of God has come to him.

So, we have acquainted ourselves with those who wield political power in this area, operating under the auspices of Rome. We also have the religious hierarchy, which seems to be headed by Annas and Caiaphas. All of the people mentioned in vv. 1–2a were human celebrities. They were thought to be very important in that era so many people knew who they were. However, no matter how important these human celebrities think they are or others think they are—the ones that we studied in the first two verses—the real important stuff is occurring out in the desert-wilderness by the Jordan River. The political leaders were right in the midst of everything that was happening—in their own minds—but John is out in the middle of nowhere, out by the Jordan River. And that is where God is.

We are not told how or why John is in the desert-wilderness. It would seem to me that the Word of God would have come to him first, and then he would have gone into the desert-wilderness. In any case, it appears that the speech, discourse, direction of God comes to John in while the wilderness.

If you will recall, John was born to very aged parents and I would hypothesize that John lost his parents at a very early age. We know very little about John, other than events which took place prior to his birth; and his life out in the desert-wilderness. Did he learn, at a young age, how to survive in the desert-wilderness? Are the descriptions of him that we find in Scripture—his eating habits and the odd clothing which he wore—something which were a matter of necessity? Did his parents pass away while he was young, and John did all of this to survive? All of this seems reasonable; but this is still conjecture on my part.

Notice how this reads:

Luke 3:2b ...the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

The Word of God does not come to John, and then John, in obedience, goes out into the desert-wilderness. It comes to him *while* he is in the desert-wilderness. This suggests that, for a time, John lived in the desert-wilderness. Whether this was most of his life or something which is recent, we do not know.

On the one hand, God could have come to John and told him, “I want you to go out to the desert-wilderness near the Jordan River;” however, this verse seems to indicate that this is where John has have been living when God’s Word comes to him.

Luke 3:2 ...during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

We are not given any actual mechanics by which John receives the Word of God, when it does not come by means of the written word.

Jesus is a King; and He will require a herald to speak of Him. Surely, you have seen a president give the State of the Union address at one time or another. He walks into a very crowded House, and suddenly, there is this loud booming voice, “The President of the United States, Donald J. Trump”⁹³ The man who introduces the president is known as the herald. He announces the president’s entry into the House of Representatives. In part, that is John’s very important function.

Lesson 085: Luke 3:3–6

John, Herald to the King

So far, this is what we have studied:

Luke 3:1–2 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. (ESV)

Luke sets the historic stage for John’s entrance onto the scene. He speaks of the human celebrities of that era; and then he mentions John—a man who had a celebrated birth, but a man about whom only a few people gave thought to some 30 years later.

Luke 3:3a And he went into all the region around the Jordan,...

John, at some point, was moved by God the Holy Spirit to go out into the Jordan valley. Apparently, he moved around, as it says *all the region of the Jordan valley*. So, he did not

⁹³ Who is president as I write this.

establish himself an exact place where everyone knew to go. He went wherever, and God provided the people.

Application: This does not mean that if you have the gift of pastor-teacher, that you go to a variety of buildings, subways, and malls, and begin teaching; moving to a new place every day. But this does mean that, if you have the gift of pastor-teacher, and you allow yourself to be led by God, then wherever you end up is the right place with the right congregation, no matter how many or few there are.

Application: The most difficult church to pastor is a congregation of 5 or 10 people who are positive towards doctrine. Such a pastor probably has to meet either at a rented building, in the home of a parishioner, or at a place that can be used rent-free (there are some public spaces which allow for this—I have seen them). And then that pastor-teacher must have a job in order to support himself. This is quite difficult and a pastor-teacher with that assignment is called to a very important assignment. Only a pastor with a soul filled with doctrine is able to recognize that, he is in the right church at the right time, doing God's will.

Application: I mention this because we are in a country where negative volition seems to on the increase, but that does not mean that God has forgotten or neglected His people—the people who have believed in Him and want to know Him. Just as some missionaries go out to a place where they might speak the gospel to a few hundred people each year; and maybe only witness the conversion of 10 or so each year; so a pastor-teacher with a limited congregation must act with faithfulness directed towards God.

Application: Many of us enjoyed attending Berachah Church during its heyday; during a time when it was hard to find a seat in a large auditorium; and the Colonel was teaching 8 or 9 lessons a week. This was a tremendous blessing for all who were graced-out by attending Berachah during that period of time. But God calls a variety of men to a variety of pulpits; and you do not reject a pulpit that God has placed you in charge of.

God told John—in some way or another—go out into the Jordan valley and teach there. Move around. And God provided the hearers.

You may recall that the birth of John was very unusual, and many of the people in that region wondered, “What manner of man will he become?” How did John get people to come out to listen to him? John did nothing; he simply began speaking and baptizing people. Did some of the people come out to see him because they recall his unusual birth? No doubt, those who first came to him knew him from that period of time. Did some hear about where he was and go out to see him as a result? That seems very likely to me. Did some of them come back and tell others? Also, that seems likely to me. Were there people who were simply traveling through and they came upon John? That is very possible as well. In whatever way, God provided the hearers.

Why did God not send John to the Temple, to proclaim the truth outside the Temple walls? Let me offer up two reasons: (1) John would have been persecuted and perhaps killed

even more quickly than he was; and (2) God did not want him to be too closely associated with the apostasy that filled Jerusalem. Even most of the Lord's ministry took place far from Jerusalem.

Luke 3:3b ...proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The word *repentance* means a change of mind. The people of that era were inundated with a false form of Judaism—a very legalistic misinterpretation of the Law and the Prophets.

The baptism offered by John, in and of itself, did not make a person change his mind; nor did it provide forgiveness of sin. The baptism was for those who were positive towards God; who were awaiting the revealing of God's Messiah. John spoke of a number of things, including the Messiah. In the future, Jesus Christ would be the Person about Whom they would change their minds. By offering Himself on the cross, Jesus provided the means by which our sins would be forgiven; and through which we would be cleansed before God.

John very much functioned as a herald; he would announce the Coming Messiah.

Luke 3:3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

For many centuries, it appears, that the word repentance has been misused. It simply refers to a change of mind. The change of mind was not about John but about the Messiah, about to come on the scene.

Luke 3:4a As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,...

This is a fascinating quote, because we don't know if Luke is inserting it here as apropos; or whether this would be the passage that John recited for those who came to hear him. In any case, these words of Isaiah were speaking of John, the herald of the King.

As an aside, these things that are quoted from the Old Testament often have a double-meaning. When these things were originally spoken, there was something happening to the author of these words; or something to which the author was speaking different from the way than we see it today (Psalm 22 is an excellent example of this). The author and his audience (if this was spoken aloud) had one understanding of these words; but, as time progressed, it was recognized that these words had a different and future application; or a spiritual application, if you will.

Let me state this in a different way: Isaiah, in Isa. 53, had something in mind. He was not thinking of the crucifixion; he did not have a full and complete understanding of the suffering of the Messiah. In fact, for many, this was a very unusual passage—it was hard for anyone to read this and think, "This is God's Messiah." But, after the fact, after the public ministry of Jesus Christ, after His rejection by the people of Israel, culminating in His

crucifixion, it became clear to many that Isa. 53—regardless of its original meaning—was about the suffering of our Lord and His payment for our sins. In fact, there is no chapter anywhere, Old Testament or New, which better describes the crucifixion than Isa. 53.

Back in Gen. 22, we studied Abraham offering up his only son, the son whom he loved, to God—the only time that God ever called for a human sacrifice (apart from offering up His Own Son). Abraham trusted God and was willing to offer up his son in obedience—and, for many centuries, this willingness on Abraham's part was understood to indicate great faith and obedience by Abraham. But, we understand this today to refer to God offering up His Only Son, the Son Whom He loves, in our place, for our sins. Abraham did not know this; Abraham did not realize what his actions actually meant. He was simply obeying God. For hundreds of years, what Abraham did was understood to be an act of great trust and obedience—and nothing more. But when we read this passage today, we understand that this is telegraphing the idea that God would offer up His Son on our behalf.

Now let's look at this quotation taken from Isaiah.

Luke 3:4b ...*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:...*

The word *crying* does not mean *crying*, but it means, *calling out [in a loud voice]*.

We understand in this context, that this voice crying out in the desert-wilderness is John's voice. He is herald to the King. He will announce the King.

Luke 3:4c ...*'Prepare the way of the Lord,...*

John is the herald of the Lord. John comes before the Lord and tells us, "The King is about to appear; make yourselves ready." Here, this is all very metaphorical. John is the one making ready the way of the Lord; but then, the hearts of those who hear John are also to make themselves ready for the Lord. They have to be willing to change their minds (that is, *repent*). They believed that they were related to God by birth and by obedience to the Law, but Jesus would require them to change their minds about that. Their relationship to God could be established in only one way: faith in His Son.

These must be the words that John is speaking, because the verb is the 2nd person plural, meaning that he is speaking to a group.

I say metaphorical, because John did not turn his congregation into a road crew that fixed up the road that Jesus could access and easily walk down. What did they do, exactly? They made themselves ready; they prepared themselves to be able to see God's Messiah for exactly as He would present Himself. They had to be willing to believe in a Messiah who did not fit their pre-conceived notions exactly.

Luke 3:4c ...*'Prepare the way of the Lord,...*

Although the *way of the Lord* can be used in a technical sense in the Old Testament; here, it simply indicates that the Lord is coming and the people before John are to prepare His way (and to prepare their own hearts—by which, I mean, prepare their thinking).

Luke 3:4d ...make His paths straight.

Again, there is no road crew being organized by John here; they need to view Jesus unencumbered by human viewpoint or by false impressions or distorted teachings.

If there is a smooth path between yourself and the Lord, then you can see Him exactly as He is. He approaches you and there are no impediments between you, to slow Him down, or to confuse you concerning what you are seeing.

Luke 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Obviously, the one calling out in the desert-wilderness is John. This prophecy is about him. John is out in the desert-wilderness, baptizing people and telling them about the Messiah.

The quotation from Isaiah is continued into vv. 5–6:

Luke 3:5a Every valley shall be filled,...

Since the previous two phrases are clearly metaphorical; then it is reasonable to assume that what follows it also metaphorical. Although this very much describes the work of a road crew, that is not what is being referred to.

The valley here is the empty spirit. Often in Israel, these valley were cut through by rivers and torrents; and, in many cases, those rivers and torrents no longer exist (they exist only during the rainy season). There is no water, but there is the valley—empty of water.

Our human spirit at salvation is empty; there is nothing in it. God wants to fill our human spirit with knowledge of Him. He wants to take the chasm in our souls and fill it with His Word.

It is logical to assume that John the Herald, standing before them, is, with his words, helping to prepare them for the coming Lord.

Luke 3:5b ...and every mountain and hill shall be made low,...

When building a road, sometimes what stands between point A and point B is a mountain or a hill, at too great a height to walk or ride over; so that hill or mountain needs to be reduced in size in some way so that one could travel around or through it.

Our attitudes of arrogance need to be brought down; we need to abandon our too-high opinion of ourselves. This is particularly applicable to the religious crowd in that day, who saw themselves at a whole other level above the people whom they served.

So you understand exactly what was happening, the various priests and scribes were more than learned men—they had developed some power, respect and adoration. These things can be quite dangerous to the soul of a man, particularly when combined with religion.

Luke 3:5c ...and the crooked shall become straight,...

Our lives are made crooked by our sin nature and our bad decisions. God wants to straighten us out, to guide us to the straight path.

I do not mean that, we need to reduce our number of sins in order to come to the Lord; but we should not allow our sin nature to cause us to deviate this way or that when coming to the Lord.

To be sure, we do not deserve a relationship with God; nor can we make ourselves more deserving by sinning less.

Luke 3:5d ...and the rough places shall become level ways,...

In this life, it is obvious that many of us walk down a rough and rocky road; that it seems that over and over again, things are thrown into our path intentionally to throw us off course. God wants this path to be made into a flat and smooth road. Sometimes He will remove the rocks from our way; sometimes He will make it possible for us to maneuver around these obstacles and difficulties.

Luke 3:5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways,...

Whoever divided up the verses in Luke made a mess of things. Over and over again, we come across verses which are split up mid-sentence (this is particularly true of the book of Luke, who wrote some very long sentences).

Luke 3:6 ...and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

This has a double meaning. At the time that John was teaching, the Messiah would come and reveal Himself to all Judæa and Galilee. He is the salvation of God. The people to whom He would come would see Him and believe in Him and learn about what had been written in the Law and the Prophets.

This also applies today. None of us will ever, in this life, see some physical visage of Jesus. But we understand what God has done on our behalf; and we see in our souls the salvation of God.

Luke is quoting Isaiah 40:3-5. 3 of the gospel writers will present this verse as a prophecy of John. Not too far in the future, we will find out that John also applied this verse to himself (essentially, we have the witness of 3 gospel writers and of John himself that he is the man prophesied in that passage from Isaiah.

Lesson 086: Isaiah 40:1–12

The OT Prophecy of John

This is what we have been studying:

Luke 3:3–4 And he went into the whole surrounding region of the Jordan [River], proclaiming a baptism [or, immersion, and throughout book] of repentance to [or, for; or, because of] forgiveness of sins, as it has been written in a scroll of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, "A voice of [one] shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the LORD; be making His paths straight!'"

Luke 3:5–6 'Every valley will be filled and every mountain and hill will be leveled, and the crooked [roads] will be [made] into straight [roads] and the rough [roads made] into smooth roads. And all flesh will see the salvation of God!'" [Isaiah 40:3-5] (Analytical Literal Translation)

The magenta color represents a quotation that Luke is taking from the Old Testament.

Let's go back to the Old Testament and take a look at the entire context of this passage (I will use Green's Literal Translation for this):

Isa. 40:1 Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God. (Green's Literal Translation throughout)

We do not know the occasion for this sermon. At the end of Isa. 39, Isaiah is speaking with King Hezekiah, but we do not know if this is a continuation of that conversation. Isaiah does not appear to have been written in chronological order; and the context of a passage is not always given.

It is my opinion that prophets did not always fully understand all that they write; and how they came to write these things is unknown to us. In narrative, the human writers write what they see and what they have done—and many times these things have meaning which is only understood hundreds of years later (like Abraham offering up his only son, the son whom he loved).

The prophet's writing is different. Sometimes, there are circumstances and things taking place that the prophet writes about. However, the prophet appear to be inspired and then they write something. Is this unconnected to their lives altogether? Or is there some connection which we do not see?

In this passage written by Isaiah, we do not know if he heard or sensed these words from God and wrote them down; or if there was something very specific on his mind. In any case, today, we understand that these things as spoken by John the Herald, speaking about the coming of the Lord.

Isa. 40:1 **Comfort, O comfort My people, says your God.**

The people of God are the Jewish people; and, in the historical and dispensational context, God is speaking of comforting them. It is not clear to whom (Whom) God is speaking. I would understand this as God the Father speaking to God the Son; but Isaiah would not have fully understood this (at the same time, I should point out that there are a number of passages in Isaiah which are hard to explain apart from the Trinity). It is possible that Isaiah understood this to be God speaking to His Messiah.

Isa. 40:2a **Speak lovingly to the heart of Jerusalem; yea, cry to her that her warfare is done, that her iniquity is pardoned;...**

The wars which Jerusalem was often engaged were to be ended; the iniquity of her peoples is forgiven. Many times, prophetic messages had a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment. Sometimes the near fulfillment was conditioned upon the response of the people to the message of the prophet. The people of Israel could have peace; they could have a pardon from God—but they had to turn away from their sins and faithlessness towards divine establishment living and God.

In today's United States (I write this in 2020) we have little appreciation for what it means to be at war. We have not been, as a country, directly attacked, since the War of 1812. There was the Civil War, between the north and the south, in the 1860's. However, generally speaking, people in the United States never worry about their homes being blown up or attacked by some invading force. On the other hand, there were periods of time in Israel's history where nearly every year, there was a new war taking place, against another aggressive enemy of Israel.

There are Islamic nations in the Middle East today where one or more generations have known war on their own soil more often than peace. How their people yearn for peace! In the United States, we have no idea what that is like. At any given time—often without warning—a person's own neighborhood might be reduced to rubble. The closest experience that we have to that is rioting and looting, which affects some businesses, but rarely a neighborhood.

In this passage, there is a clear link between the enjoyment of peace and Israel's iniquity being pardoned. This suggests that war on a nation's soil can indicate God's discipline or His displeasure.

National unrest is something that we as a nation often bring on ourselves, through arrogance and self-righteousness.

Isa. 40:2b ...for she has taken from the hand of Jehovah double for all her sins.

It says that she has taken from Y^ehowah double for all her sins. Let me suggest that, because Jerusalem is the holy city, then when they go astray, God brings severe discipline down upon them.

Application: We need to heed this warning. There is no nation in human history which has enjoyed the great blessings that the United States has. But, with great blessing comes great responsibility. This responsibility falls upon the church; and those churches who depend upon gimmicks rather than upon sound teaching, could lead to warfare on our own soil. (I wrote these words prior to the demonstrations, riots and looting which has taken place across the United States in May and June of 2020.)

Application: Because we have little understanding about what war is, we live under the delusion that war is the army of one nation fighting against the army of another. We think that warfare takes place on the battlefield. However, when a war draws to a close, the nation which is losing then suffers great military strikes on the civilian population. In order to defeat a nation, the people themselves—not their military—must be cowed. If a people are not completely and totally defeated, then there is no peace.

Isa. 40:3 *The voice of him who cries in the wilderness: Prepare the way of Jehovah; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

The desert highway is made straight for Y^ehowah; for Israel's God. This is another reference to the Deity of Jesus Christ. John the herald speaks these words concerning Jesus; whereas, Isaiah writes these words about Y^ehowah.

The Old Testament prophecies concerning Messiah make little sense unless He is also Y^ehowah, the God of Israel.

The voice of the wilderness is calling for the way to be prepared *not* for a messenger of Y^ehowah, but for God Himself.

Isa. 40:4 *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the knoll shall be a level place, and the rough places a plain.*

We have all driven along rough roads, and we have wanted to see the valleys filled, in order to save our \$250 tires.

Peter Pett: The picture is of a great king making a journey, with his people going ahead so as to prepare the road and make the way smooth for him. Mountains were to be levelled off, valleys were to be filled in, crooked roads were to be straightened, rough places were to be made flat so that the king could take his journey with ease (this was often literally done).⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Isa. 40:3–5.

Isa. 40:5 And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken.

The Glory of Y^ehowah is the Lord Jesus Christ; and He would be revealed. For Isaiah, this was far into the future; but for John who speaks these words, a few weeks or a few months into the future.

This is more than God appearing in the flesh. This is the glorification of the Lord. Jesus appeared originally as a babe growing from a child into a man. He presented Himself as the fulfillment of the Law, as the Messiah. That is the 1st advent (= the first appearance of Jesus Christ). When Jesus returns from heaven to take down Israel's enemies, at the end of the Tribulation, He will be glorified, and we, His saints, will be with Him. That is the 2nd advent in v.5 (that is, the second appearance of Jesus Christ).

This passage in Isaiah that we are studying is an example of what is known as intercalation. The 1st and 2nd advents of the Lord are presented together as a singular event (this happens many times in the Old Testament).

The 1st advent is when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and lived on this earth for some thirty-plus years; and the 2nd advent is when Jesus will return to judge the nations and to save Israel (which is future from today).

What belongs in between these advents is the Church Age, the time period during which we now live. However, since the Church Age was a mystery age, it was not known to the original readers of the Old Testament. (Rom. 11:25 16:25 Col. 1:26–27) As a result, the 1st and 2nd advents appeared to be a singular event throughout the Old Testament, even though there are thousands of years between them (a fact not revealed in the Old Testament). So there are many prophetic Old Testament about the Lord which appear to be a singular event; but when human history continues, between those two events will be inserted (or, *intercalated*) the Mystery Age, the Church Age.

With that in mind, let's look at this passage in Isaiah as a whole: **The voice of him who cries in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of Jehovah; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley will be exalted, and every mountain and hill will be made low; and the knoll will be a level place, and the rough places a plain."** And the glory of Jehovah will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken. The lighter blue represents the 1st advent and the darker blue represents the 2nd. Some might quibble as to where this ought to be divided up. In any case, the first words are spoken by John about the near future; and the final sentence speaks of all mankind as seeing the glory of Y^ehowah—something which has not yet taken place.

See the **Doctrine of Intercalation** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) for more Old Testament examples of this.

Isa. 40:6 A voice said, Cry! And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all its grace as the flower of the field!

Again, the word *cry* means *to cry out, to call out*. Calling flesh *grass* suggests a very temporal existence for mankind. Even though you and I may live seventy-odd years; that is nothing in the realm of the history of creation (which could be millions of years).

Isa. 40:7 *The grass withers, the flower fades because the Spirit of Jehovah blows on it. Surely the people is grass.*

Our beauty as the flower of the field, here today, but gone tomorrow. Both James and Peter refer back to this verse (perhaps after studying the earlier part of this chapter) (James 1:10–11 1Peter 1:24); and it appears that the LORD may have made reference to it as well (Matt. 6:30). It is a common theme found throughout the Word of God.

We all have lives on this earth where we enjoy some peak years. Our energy, our attractiveness, our work, our family—these things all peak for a period of 10 years or 40 or 50 years (depending upon the individual). That peaking is the flower of grass, where we feel young, we look young and our lives are productive. However, that flower will fade.

Interesting that the flower fades because the Spirit of Y^ehowah blows upon it; but I think that simply refers to the wind, which eventually dries out and removes the very temporal flowers (analogous to the shortness of our peak years).

Isa. 40:8 *The grass withers; the flower fades; but the Word of our God shall rise forever.*

The grass withers away in the summer and the flower fades, but the Word of God *stands forever*⁹⁵ (which is a better translation than what the LitV has here).

For me, I feel that I have lived a wonderful, productive and energetic life—but that will come to an end. The Word of God was here when I was born; the Word of God will be here after I die. I understand that my divine good production must be in association with the Word of God, which lives and abides forever.

Isa. 40:9 *Go up for yourself on the high mountain, one bearing good news to Zion; lift up your voice with strength, one bearing good news to Jerusalem. Lift up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, Behold! Your God!*

The good news here is not the gospel but the return of Jesus Christ, the 2nd advent of our Lord. This will be very good news to the people of Jerusalem, who will find themselves surrounded on all sides by angry armies (Rev. 16:16 17:14 19:15–19).

And, Jesus returning (vv. 4–5, 9) again confirms His Deity. Isaiah says here, “Behold! Your God!” Who is this Isaiah is telling his audience to behold? It is Jesus Christ at His 2nd advent. Jesus returns to deliver Israel. Jesus is Israel’s God.

Isa. 40:10a *Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come with strength, and His arm rules for Him.*

⁹⁵ As per the ESV, Webster and WEB.

In the 2nd advent, the Lord will be very different from the meek and mild Jesus of the 1st advent. He will return to this earth with power and strength and great authority.

The Lord Y^ehowah is a reference to God the Father; and *His Arm* is a reference to His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus will rule over this earth personally for a thousand years.

Isa. 40:10b Behold, His reward is with Him, and His wage before Him.

When Jesus returns, He is prepared to reward believers for the divine good which they have produced.

Isa. 40:11 He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather lambs with His arm; and carry them in His bosom; those with young He will lead;...

The Lord is still gentle; He shows grace to His Own. Here, He is gathering up the people of Israel, from all over the world, bringing them back to the land which He has given them. The people of Israel will always be scattered throughout the earth. There may be a few million living in the land of promise today; but most Jews will remain scattered.

Great affection and care is indicated by the words used in this verse.

Isa. 40:12 ...He who has measured in His hand the waters and the heavens by a span meted out; and enclosed in the measure the dust of the earth, and weighed in the balance the mountains, and the hills in the scales,

The amount of water on this earth and the atmosphere which we have is all crucial to our existence. Jesus measured this all out. He determined the amount of ground there would be, and how many mountains and hills there would be. After all, without there being ocean valleys or mountains, hills and plateaus, there would be no balance on this earth. If the earth was flat, we would all be underwater.

God knew the exact balance to strike among the elements of this earth, so that it would be able to support humankind for thousands of years.

Isa. 40:13 Who has meted out the Spirit of Jehovah, or a man His counsel taught Him?

Who made these judgments? The Spirit of Y^ehowah or some man to counsel Him? The answer is obvious. No man has the ability to take all of the complex structures and combine them as they have been to form the earth so that it would last and provide a place for mankind is long as God needs for that to be. There are a huge number of scientists today who believe that it is their duty to somehow *save the earth*. Could we be more foolish (and arrogant)?

There are a smaller number of men who believe that the future of mankind is ultimately on Mars, and that we need to plan to send colonies of men to live there. Mars was *not* made

for human habitation, and anyone sent to that planet will die there—possibly by their own hand.

Isa. 40:14 With whom did He take counsel, and who trained Him and taught Him in the path of justice; and taught Him knowledge, and made known to Him the way of discernment? (LitV)

V. 14 appears to go back to the 1st advent and the Lord's spiritual progression in His humanity.

Lesson 087: Matt. 3:1–4 Mark 1:1–4 Gospel References to the Prophecy of John

There are very few things found in all 4 gospels, the ministry of John along with the quoting this passage from Isaiah is covered by each of Jesus' biographers.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:

John the Herald Quotes Isaiah (found in all 4 gospels)	
Scripture	Text/Commentary
Matt. 3:1–2 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."	Matthew devotes about the least amount of text to this aspect of John's ministry. John's message to the people was to change their minds (about their legalistic religion, about their perception of the Messiah to come). The Kingdom of Heaven indicates that Messiah will come to the Hebrew people and offer them the kingdom. The Jewish people will be faced with a real decision.
Matt. 3:3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" (Isaiah 40:3)	Isaiah's message about John is summed up in a single sentence (Matthew provides many citations from the OT). The one crying in the desert-wilderness is John the Herald. He is the one speaking of the coming Messiah. John is the only individual, apart from the Lord, who is prophesied about in the Old Testament (there is a prophecy about the return of Moses and Elijah). Matthew does give more of a description of John's ministry; but I wanted to simply compare the citations of Isaiah found in each gospel.
Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.	Mark begins his biography of Jesus with the ministry of John. John is the herald of the Lord, so it is logical for at least one biographer to begin with the herald.

John the Herald Quotes Isaiah (found in all 4 gospels)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>Mark 1:2–3 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,'" (Mal. 3:1 Isaiah 40:3)</p>	<p>Mark cites the prophecy from Isaiah even before mentioning John's name. This makes sense as, Mark's gospel often places us right into the middle of the action from the beginning.</p> <p>Mark cites Malachi 3:1 as well. Malachi speaks of the 1st advent in this verse; but, specifically, Malachi is speaking of John, who is God's messenger sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.</p> <p>Mark's citations are not clearly demarcated. He cites Malachi first, and then, without taking a breath, cites Isaiah.</p>
<p>Mark 1:4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.</p>	<p>It is likely that John would have cited the Old Testament throughout his short public ministry (which I believe is somewhere between a few weeks and a few months). The Messiah does not set aside the Old Testament; He fulfills the promises of the Old Testament.</p> <p>John's baptism involves a change of mind (= repentance) as well as forgiveness of sins (those who believe in Jesus are forgiven for their sins)</p>
<p>Luke 3:2–3 ...during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.</p>	<p>Luke gives us the historical context first. He is setting up a contrast between those who are human celebrities and those who speak for God. Historians know the names of the people cited by Luke, but the average person does not.</p> <p>Luke mentions the high priests of that era (usually, there is supposed to only be one). The High Priest should be the religious authority of his time, but Annas and Caiaphas are caught up in a lust for power.</p> <p>Then Luke speaks of John (whose conception and pregnancy he had already discussed in a previous chapter; information not found in the other gospels).</p>

John the Herald Quotes Isaiah (found in all 4 gospels)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Luke 3:4–6 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" (Isaiah 40:3-5)	<p>Luke gives the longest citation from Isaiah. Even though Luke is doing the proper citation of this passage, it is reasonable to suppose that John cited this and many more Old Testament passages.</p> <p>As we have studied, the passage quoted here by Luke takes in both the 1st and 2nd advents of our Lord. Later on in the book of Luke, Jesus will make a distinction between His two advents. This passage that we will study in the future is a very well-known passage, but not one which is understood by many.</p> <p>The phrase <i>all flesh will see the salvation of God</i>; is equivalent to, <i>every knee shall bow</i> (Isaiah 45:23 Rom. 4:11)</p>
In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), the quotation provided from Isaiah appears to be a citation from the authors (Matthew, Mark and Luke), rather than a quote directly from John. However, in the book of John, John the Herald clearly cites this passage and applies it to himself.	
John 1:19 And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"	<p>When John the herald's ministry began to catch fire, there were men sent out specifically to speak with him, to gather information. Priests and Levites were sent out to watch John and to ask him some very pointed questions. In this verse, they ask John specifically, "Just who are you?"</p> <p>This reveals that the pharisees were a very suspicious lot, and they feared losing their power and influence. It is possible that there were more <i>messiahs</i> in this era (one could ascertain from the book of Daniel that this would be the time of the Messiah).</p>

John the Herald Quotes Isaiah (found in all 4 gospels)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
John 1:20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."	<p>John makes it clear that he is <i>not</i> the Christ (the Greek word for <i>Messiah</i>).</p> <p>Based upon my own reading of the gospels, which are written in Greek, Jesus, the disciples, and John all appeared to speak in the Koine Greek language (there are a few exceptions to this, which are clearly pointed out in the gospels).</p>
John 1:21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."	<p>The Levites and priests then further interrogate John, asking him if he is Elijah (who is supposed to return at the 2nd advent). John replies that he is not.</p> <p>There is also the Prophet, spoken of by Moses, who is equivalent to the Messiah. When the priests and Levites ask John whether he is the prophet, they might be testing him; or they might not realize the Prophet and Messiah are One and the Same.</p>
John 1:22 So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"	<p>It appears from this passage in John, that John the Herald was closely questioned as to his identity and his purpose.</p> <p>"You are obviously somebody," these men appear to be saying, "Just who exactly would that be?"</p>
John 1:23 He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." Isaiah 40:3	<p>When men began to more closely question John the herald, he replies with Scripture. John makes a rather surprising claim. He claims to be the fulfillment of a passage in Isaiah. This would be quite disconcerting to the religious crowd.</p>
John 1:24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.)	<p>The pharisees, the legalistic religious group who were in charge of preserving Judaism (in their own minds), knew that something was up with John. They sent scouts out to determine just what that was.</p>

I have kept this area of study confined just to the 4 gospel writers and their quotation from Isaiah.

I used the expression *catch fire* in reference to the ministry of John. We really have no idea how many went out to see him. Were there 10 or 20 at a time? Or was his audience in the hundreds? His ministry, whatever its size, was influential enough to attract the attention of Rome and of the religious hierarchy.

When considering the pharisees and John, we have to be careful not to make this about style. John, given his unusual lifestyle from that time, was an unusual personality; and his *sermons* (for lack of a better word) may have been rather animated. Someone today might say, "That was some strong preaching, brother." But, *it is not his style* that is important. It is John's message. The content of what the pastor has to teach is always what is important; his demeanor, cadence, animation (or lack thereof) are not issues.

It is fascinating, seeing the references and views that each gospel writer presents of John the baptizer. Many events in the life of our Lord are discussed in 2 or more of the gospels, and it is always interesting to see how each man reports it.

Lesson 088: Luke 3:7–8

The Wrath to Come

We now return to John the baptizer out in the desert, speaking to those who have come to him. There were some pharisees and religious types who have come out to see him, as well as to evaluate him.

John has two sets of messages: the first set is for the legalists who are more interested in Jewish religious traditions than they are in a relationship with God (vv. 7–9); the second set of messages is directed towards those who are willing to turn away from the cold legalism of Judaism (also known as the traditions of man) (vv. 10–14).

John's message in the book of Luke can be divided into three sections:

John's Message (an outline)

vv. 7–9	John warns the religious and the legalistic about the judgment to come.
vv. 10–14	John gives guidance to those willing to turn away from their false religion.
vv. 15–17	John tells the people plainly that he is not the Messiah.

This may be a particular day in John's ministry; or culled from several days.

Luke 3:7a **He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him,...**

That are all types of people who are coming forward to be baptized by John the baptizer. My guess is, based upon what is being said here, that many of them are religious types who have come out into the desert to see what is going on. They have heard about John, and he seems to be pulling people away from their legalistic religious services. The pharisees are hearing about John, out in the middle of nowhere, baptizing and speaking

of the Messiah. Therefore, the people coming forward are a mixture of regular people and Levites, pharisees and/or sadducees.

Luke 3:7b ...**"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"**

John calls them a brood of vipers, which is not necessarily the best way to endear yourself to your new congregation. The religious types before John are not just vipers, but sons of vipers. Jesus will use the exact same sort of language in Matt. 23:33.

*The Cambridge Bible: [John is describing] the venomous hypocrisy which turned religion itself into a vice, and hid a deadly malice under the glittering semblance of a zeal for orthodoxy.*⁹⁶

"You know about the wrath to come—who warned you about that, you offspring of vipers?" This is very harsh language. People would have come from a distance away during a time when this sort of travel was not easy. But John does not welcome them to his assembly; he does not present a visitor's card for them to fill out.

John poses an interesting question: "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Although this is left as an open question, these warnings to Israel go as far back as Moses and the 5 stages of national discipline (found in Leviticus 26). All of the prophets warned of the wrath to come. Prophets came onto the scene when Israel turned further and further away from God.

Many times, what the prophets warned of was discipline coming to the Jewish nation in the near future; and these warnings seemed to speak of a final day of wrath as well.

Luke 3:7 **He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"**

So, not only is John the Herald baptizing people out in the middle of nowhere, but he excoriates some of those who come out to see him. Now, I believe this that was specifically directed to the religious authorities among them and those who hold to their hypocritical and legalistic teachings (the passage in the book of John tells us that some from the pharisees were sent to check out John the herald).

It is difficult to match this with language today, because our language of insult has considerably coarsened over my lifetime. A politician who become prominent might be called Hitler on certain *news* stations. The President himself is subject to a litany of slurs and insults, many of which are filled with angry and vicious language. On some late night shows (well, on all of them), it is considered funny to string together such a long list of

⁹⁶ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Luke 3:7.

insults of the President, that the host almost runs out of breath saying them all at once (I write this in 2018 and 2020).

This wrath that John is speaking of refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, which will come in A.D. 70. Does John know this? Is he aware of what his warning specifically refers to? I doubt that. A pastor-teacher today might address the judgments which appear to be coming upon the United States (as well as upon other nations), and talk about God increasing divine discipline on our nation. That pastor-teacher would be speaking based upon principles found in the Word of God; not upon a future knowledge of a specific disaster to come. Many teachers have warned about the discipline which is going to come to the United States. The original pastor of the church which I go to had warned for years of coming judgment to these United States, given the actions of our government (which are representative of the people). Did he know that, after his death, the United States would face the COVID19 pandemic followed by a massively high unemployment rate, followed by rioting and looting? Certainly not. However, such things can be found in the warnings of Moses, written specifically for Israel, but applicable to us in the 21st century.

“...when you are gathered together within your cities I will send the pestilence among you...” (Leviticus 26:25b)

“...you shall eat and not be satisfied...” (Leviticus 26:26d) Have we ever known a more well-fed yet dissatisfied people than Americans in the 21st century?

Yet there remains this warning: **“And if you walk contrary unto Me and will not hearken unto Me, I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.”** (Leviticus 26:21; Niobi Study Bible)

Regarding John’s ministry, I believe that the people coming out to the desert to hear him have no idea that the destruction of Jerusalem is coming—for many of the people there, this destruction will take place in their lifetime. They are quite concerned about the control of Rome, but it will get far worse than they can imagine. Do we want this for our own nation? We have people who think that 2020 is the worst year of disaster every; yet, 2020 could be a walk in the park compared to what could happen in the future. The United States has clearly strayed from the teachings of the Word of God. That is not a very smart thing for a Christian people to do.

There have been many cartoons about the United States in 2020 and what we have faced. **Is ET coming back?** (a graphic); from [Powerline Blog](#); accessed July 3, 2020.



Kids in 2055 (a graphic); from [Power line Blog](#); accessed July 3, 2020.

I believe that, because John is a prophet and guided by the Holy Spirit, that he had some limited understanding of the national judgment to come (to be clear, I believe that we in the Church Age have a much fuller view than even the prophets themselves had; but we do not know what specific events are coming next). For instance, I believe that a pastor-teacher who knows the Word of God can tell—and has understood for years—that the United States faces great discipline in the future.



In the book of Leviticus, chapter 26, God gives the five stages of discipline that Israel could be subjected to. This would be hard for some to believe and understand, because they believe that their legalistic religion of Judaism is legitimate—they are not worshipping the gods of the Romans (or of any other group in that area). But, they are not truly worshipping their God. They did not worship a God of grace; they were worshipping a God of legalism.

The Jews in general were negative towards the Lord at this time; and John warns them of the wrath to come.

Luke 3:8a **Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.**

The people there are encouraged to bring forth production (here called *fruit*) which is in line with a change of heart (or mind). That is, the people there need to change their thinking. They think that they are able to do something which impresses God; and there is nothing that we do that impresses God. Only the person who has faith in the Revealed God, in His Messiah, is able to produce divine good. John the Herald is about to reveal that Messiah to the people of Israel.

Luke 3:8b **And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.**

As John says some of these things, the people there began to speak to one another, saying, "We are Abraham's offspring; we are related to God because we are Abraham's. Does John not know this?" This would be the natural response of someone just being called the offspring of vipers. No doubt, this is a wonderful thing to have the genes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But, there must be more than a genetic relationship to Abraham. They must make the same spiritual decision that their father Abraham made (**He believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness—Gen. 15:6**).

Luke 3:8c **For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.**

“You think that you are so great,” John tells those who pride themselves in being descendants of Abraham. “God can make better descendants out of these rocks.” This is not a threat; this is John speaking in hyperbole. God does not make people out of rocks. God does not look at believers in the United States, throw up His hands, and start making rocks turn into people. This statement tells us just how far these Israelites have strayed from their original faith.

Again, bear in mind, the John is speaking to a mixed crowd. Many in this crowd of skeptical of him and his odd appearance; but some are listening to what he has to say and taking it to heart.

Luke 3:8 **Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.**

The fruit that they bear should be in keeping with a change of mind (towards their sins, towards the religious sensibilities of that day, and towards the Messiah). Simply being related to Abraham is not enough.

Lesson 089: Luke 3:7–11

John the Herald's Ministry

John the Herald continues to speak to those who have come out to the desert-wilderness, both to hear him and to be baptized. Some are positive towards what he has to say; many are, apparently, skeptical. Many there may even view John as a heretic.

What John is saying here could be taking place on a particular day; and it could be a compilation of various things which he has said. So far, this is what John has said:

Luke 3:7–8 **He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.**

This is very harsh rhetoric. Only by comparing parallel passages in the book of John do we find out that many from the religious establishment came out to see John. These are John's words to the religious types who are there.

Luke 3:9a **Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees.**

This is judgment. When a tree stops producing fruit, a farmer will remove that tree to allow room for other trees to grow and use those resources. It is of no use to a farmer to have a fruit-bearing tree which bears no fruit. The parallel is, when the Jews stop producing children who believe in Y^ehowah, then God will remove them.

The dead and dying trees refers to individual Jews who no longer respond to grace, but act in legalism.

John is saying that there are things in motion—right at this time—which will remove those not bearing fruit in Israel. The axe is just beginning to strike the base of the tree.

As an aside, does John fully appreciate what those forces are? Does he know what is going to happen? In my estimation, he does not. He knows that God will bring judgment against Israel, but I don't think that he knows what it will be.

For the past 50 years, it has been clear that America will fall under a great divine judgment (or many). Many people believed in Jesus in the 1950's, as a result of the Billy Graham crusades. However, even though the United States is filled with churches, there were few churches able to foster that faith and to lead many of these same people into spiritual maturity. Many doctrinal pastors have warned of a judgment to come. Do we understand why God will judge America? Most do. Do we have any idea what that judgment will be? That we do not fully understand; and I believe that the same is true of John the Herald.

Luke 3:9b **Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down..."**

We have to be careful here; this is not salvation by works. Legalist Jews believed that their connection to Abraham combined with their religious devotion qualified them to be saved. They were the people of God living in the land of Canaan.

John, by speaking of cutting down a non-producing tree, is telling them that they are wrong. These people are not the children of God. The energy of the flesh does not produce fruit. They are not producing fruit; they are producing human good (at best); and God will cut them down.

Paul sends a very similar warning in the book of Romans, where he speaks of pruning off branches of a tree which do not produce fruit. The branches which were originally pruned were Israelites; they had rejected their Messiah, and God had removed their branches, making way for gentile branches to be grafted in. However, the gentiles were not to glorify themselves over being grafted in, because they might be pruned out just as Israel's branches were pruned. Rom. 11

Luke 3:9c **...and thrown into the fire."**

Being thrown into the fire is more than being burnt up—this is judgment by God against them. The fire speaks of judgment by God and God would judge this and the next generation of Jews.

John is guided to speak prophetically by the Holy Spirit. Given his general language, let me suggest that he does not know when exactly this is going to take place nor does he know exactly what will happen in Israel's future; but he knows that the generation that he is a part of is a corrupt and evil generation; and unless they turn things around, they will

face great judgment. Does he know for a fact that this generation or the next will suffer great judgment? In my opinion, I believe that he understands it to be a possibility—even a probability—but nothing more.

Application: Personally, I have no magic visions of the United States in the future. However, based upon the rise of atheism, the rise of drug usage, the huge number of abortions being performed, the demand by so many people not to be judged for their evil actions—we know that the United States is headed for national discipline. In the last election (I write this in 2018 and in 2020), so many elections throughout the United States were won by such razor-thin majorities, even when the contest was clearly between good and evil. The momentum appears to be going in the wrong direction; and this is indicative of a nation about to face national judgment. So, I can predict, based upon national trends, that we will encounter dozens of national judgments over the next few years or decades—some of them being quite intense (I wrote these words before the pandemic and recession of 2020). However, I have no idea what these acts of divine discipline will be or exactly when they will occur (I wrote this in the year 2018; and now, it is 2020).

Application: I am not a prophet; but I can read historical trends and I can recognize mass degeneracy. This tells me that we in the United States are in for a rough ride for the next few decades—and it will likely go from bad to worse. Unless our country turns itself around—and by this, I mean, more people turn to God and more Christians turning to the teaching of the Word of God—the minor pandemic and economic difficulties that we are experiencing today in 2020 will seem like a walk in the park by comparison. It is possible that the 20's and 30's may have much in common with the Great Depression of the previous century.

John the Herald was guided by God the Holy Spirit in making these statements, but I do not believe that he fully understood what would come to pass or when that would occur (no more than I did, back in 2018, when I suggested that the United States would likely face future judgment).

After John's ministry ended, and after the earthly ministry of the Lord, the Church Age began. There would be tremendous pressures brought to bear against the newly formed Christian church; and soon after that, against the Jewish citizenry and religious establishment in Judæa. Did John foresee the Christian church and its persecution? He did not. Did John see the destruction of Jerusalem? I don't think that he did.

Luke 3:9 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

The trees are the people of Israel, and God will cut them down if they do not produce good works (or divine good). This is not a salvation by works passage; but works are a natural result of salvation + spiritual growth. A person who is not saved cannot produce divine good.

These people might produce fruit, but it is not good fruit. As wicked branches from the tree of Israel, they will be cut down and thrown into the fire. God has no need for a people who produce bad fruit (and this is true for the United States in 2020).

At this point, we get the message directed to those who are willing to turn away from their legalistic religion and to listen to John (that is, John is looking to those willing to change their minds—that is, *to repent*).

Luke 3:10 **And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"**

The people in general ask John about what they should do; what should they be doing?

There were a crowd of people. John the baptizer is out in the desert-wilderness, at the Jordan River; and there were a lot of people who joined him there.

In every *service* offered by John where he pronounces some sort of judgment against Israel, the people would ask him, "What should be do?"

John the baptizer is going to give different answers to different groups of people.

People there are paying attention; and some of them believe John and they want this renewal which he is offering. Others are looking carefully to find problems with his message, and to either challenge him or to report back to the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem to determine what the official response should be.

I believe that this question in v. 10 represents a sincere desire to do what is right.

Luke 3:10 **And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"**

Luke 3:11a **And he answered them,...**

John listens to their questions and he gives them an answer—one which is inspired by God the Holy Spirit (an assumption that I am making, based on the fact that God placed John out in the Jordan Valley with a special ministry).

Luke 3:11b **..."Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none,..."**

A few passages like this are misused to claim that the Bible preaches some sort of socialism. Socialism is where the government determines who gets what and how each business is run. John is suggesting nothing of that sort. He is saying that, if you have more than you need, and you come across someone who has nothing, you give to them. We who have been blessed during this recent pandemic followed by a recession, we have to be open to sharing what God has blessed us with. This is sometimes a very difficult thing for a believer to do.

Probably John does not realize it, but there is very little time remaining for Jerusalem and the Jewish people. He is speaking around A.D. 25, and in 45 years, the Romans will come in and crush the Jewish people. God, in His Son, will be offering the Kingdom to His people, and they will reject His Son, thereby, rejecting the Kingdom of God as well.

Such actions of voluntary sharing will be necessary to keep people of the Lord alive.

Application: During times of judgment, there is national suffering. When you are under national discipline or you know those who are suffering, without enough to get by, then you should share of your substance with those in need. This can be with those of your own nation or with people from other nations.

Application: You will notice that John is not saying, “As soon as you get super rich, this is what I want you to do.” Instead, he says, “If you have two tunics, and you come across someone who does not have a tunic, then give your extra one to him.” Having two tunics does not make a person super-rich.

Application: We do not know what sort of future we face in the United States, but it could involve great judgment. In difficult time, you, as an individual, ought to share your resources with those who have little. This is an individual choice which you will make; not a choice that the state will make for you (when the state makes this choice for you, that is socialism; when you make this choice yourself, that is Christianity).

Luke 3:11c ...and whoever has food is to do likewise."

The same thing will be true of food; in times of difficulty, we should share our food as well.

Another possible interpretation is, there may have been a combination of people who are relatively prosperous and those who are quite poor—and there may have been a great deal of resistance on a part of those who have against sharing with those who had not.

Application: Encouraging people to be generous with that with which God has blessed them is *not* the same as socialism. We have a generation of young people in the United States who believe that socialism works and that it is a fair system. This is incredibly confused thinking which denies the last 120 years of human history.

Application: The Bible does, on the other hand, require the collection of some taxes for the desperately poor who have no family. The amount which was collected for this, under the Jewish economy, was to be 10% every third year (or, 3.3% per year). Family should take care of family; but *widows and orphans* (spoken of in the Old Testament) are those without remaining family.

Application: Right now in the United States, about half the people receive some kind of payment from the government. That is insane! That is bribery for power. That is a political party saying, “I will take money from X, keep some and give what remains to Y, as long as

Y votes for us.” And we have a considerable number of people willing to make that trade. This is exactly the opposite of our nation’s founding principles.

Application: There is no such thing as a *free education* (or a *free* anything). This simply means that the person who receive that benefit does not work for it; but someone else does. This does not mean that I am anti-public education or against the government doing anything, but our U.S. government has gone way overboard on such things.

Luke 3:11 **And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."**

Those who are wealthy, and they have contact with someone who is not, they are to share their wealth. I should not have use the word *wealthy*; because this really applies to people who have a little bit more than what they need. They should be willing to share God’s blessings with others.

Do not mistake this for socialism. John the baptizer is not suggesting to the government become a socialistic, redistributor of wealth. He is encouraging instead individuals to act with compassion and generosity because of their own excess.

Lesson 090: Luke 3:10–11

Socialism and Communism

The passage that we are studying is:

Luke 3:10 **And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"**

Luke 3:11 **And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."**

It would be easy to read this and think that the spiritual life in that era would consist of wandering about looking for people without shirts or food to eat and then supply them. John, whether he fully appreciates it or not, is speaking of a time in the near future where every Jew in Jerusalem is going to be facing great persecution. When this happens, they will need to look to one another for help. There is not going to be a super-wealthy Jew who helps everyone out; but there will be a man with two tunics who shares with a man who only has one. Food and clothing are two of the most basic items; but whatever is necessary to live, those in Jerusalem must be willing to supply it to fellow Jews or fellow believers. Also, even before that, those who follow the Messiah—those who are dubbed Christians—would be at the receiving end of great persecution, both by Rome and by the Jewish religious hierarchy.

Application: During a period of judgment, individual believers need to act to alleviate the suffering of others. Some people are naturally givers; and many are not. This is a part of your service to God; particularly if you find yourself in the midst of a great judgment.

In the book of Acts, the church at Jerusalem will share all things in common. Again, this is not a call to socialism, as what was done was completely voluntary among a very specific and limited group of people. This was required due to the great persecution which they faced (many Christians in Jerusalem and throughout the Roman empire would face persecution).

It is possible to voluntarily subject a country to socialism through voting (we appear to be doing that very thing right now in the United States). However, socialism is handing over complete and total control of a nation to a small group of men (those at the top of the socialist party); and over all of them will be a single person. His power will be dictatorial. How is this any different from an all-powerful king? It really isn't, except communists have figured out a way to sell their political system as brand new.

Because people are being led astray when it comes to socialism and because socialists will quote Bible verses in order to support their views, it is necessary for us to understand what this movement is all about.

One problem with discussing socialism and communism is, most people do not really know what these terms actually mean. Some may think that communism is socialism on steroids; or that communism results by a violent overthrow of the government, while socialism is a peaceful overthrow, etc. These words actually have very specified meanings, and what they mean is key to selling this governmental dictatorship to ignorant and unsuspecting populations.

Distinguishing between Socialism and Communism

1. Most people have no idea as to the actual difference between socialism and communism, and they often believe that it is a matter of degree.
2. There is some degree of socialism in nearly every industrial country (and non-industrial ones).
3. There is no such thing as a true communist government, even if the government is so described as a communist state. Even if Freedonia was called the Communist Paradise of Freedonia, it would not be a true communist state. It would be socialist. Bear in mind, I am making this statement regardless of the actual government which exists in Freedonia.
4. Before I begin to distinguish these concepts, let me start out by stating, there is no such thing as theoretical socialism or theoretical communism. How Karl Marx described these systems does not exist today and has never existed.
5. Karl Marx describes socialism and communism:
 - 1) Socialism is when the means of production belong to the people. So, let's say that there is a factory and it sits on land and there are machines in this factory which are used to produce whatever it produces. If these all belong to the people, then this would be theoretical socialism.
 - 2) What truly takes place under socialism is, the people at the factory do not own this factory, but it belongs to the state. Anytime when socialism says, *such and such belongs to the people*, this means, in reality, that *such and*

Distinguishing between Socialism and Communism

- such belongs to the state.* Either the state owns that business and oversees its operation; or some private or governmental group (or individual) owns the factory and/or the land; but the government still controls and administers the function of the factory.
- 3) The idea that the people own the factory and the means of production sounds great and fair and equal, but that is not what happens in practice. For instance, if you worked at a factory *owned by the workers*, could you build a lean-to next to the factory? Could you erect a house on the land of the factory (which you *own*)? Of course not! That is because you really do not own that land. The workers never own the land where the factory is, and they never own the factory or the means of production; the state does (when a nation is full-on socialist).
 - 4) The way that Karl Marx sells communism goes like this: for a relatively short period of time, there is the state which oversees all of these things; but, at some point in time, the state will disappear—apparently because it is no longer necessary—and you will just have workers working in factories that they themselves own. Once all of the state authorities disappear, then the country is a full-on, theoretical communist state. Under his theory, when the authorities disappear, then each factory, owned by people working in that factory, then the state has become a full-blown example of communism.
 - 5) This final phase of going to true theoretical communism *never* happens; and that for a very simple reason. When a person has power, most of the time, they desire *more* power, not less. Furthermore, they want more perks for being the person in power. No matter how Castro or Stalin dressed in public (they dressed as common people, often in a military uniform), they had great privileges and wealth compared to the people. Millions of people in Russia and Cuba starved; communist leaders in both countries were never in danger of starving.
 - 6) Another reason why communism never happens is, people do not work unsupervised. Now, if they truly own something (like a landlord owns a house, like a farmer owns his land), then they will work unsupervised because it is theirs—and, in most cases, they will work hard. But, no factory worker really believes that the factory belongs to him, so he has little motivation to work hard.
 - 7) Now, there are small collectivist communal businesses and farms; and those working in those places more or less own a piece of it. But this is an agreement which can legally take place in a free enterprise system (such a private agreement *cannot* happen under socialism without the state's permission).
6. I do not know my history of Karl Marx well enough to know if he really believed all of the crap that he wrote or not, but his writings have been embraced by many modern dictators in order to make their dictatorship seem palatable. No man can propose to a people, "I will rule over you with an iron fist and I will kill anyone who

Distinguishing between Socialism and Communism

opposes me.” Such a man would never have any support. But if that same man says, “You will all be equals and participate in a society which looks out for itself. You will all be guaranteed a job, medical care, education, etc. You, the workers of this socialist paradise, will truly own and personally benefit by the factory where you work.” Well, that sounds like pretty good stuff. But the defacto form of government being proposed is a dictatorship.

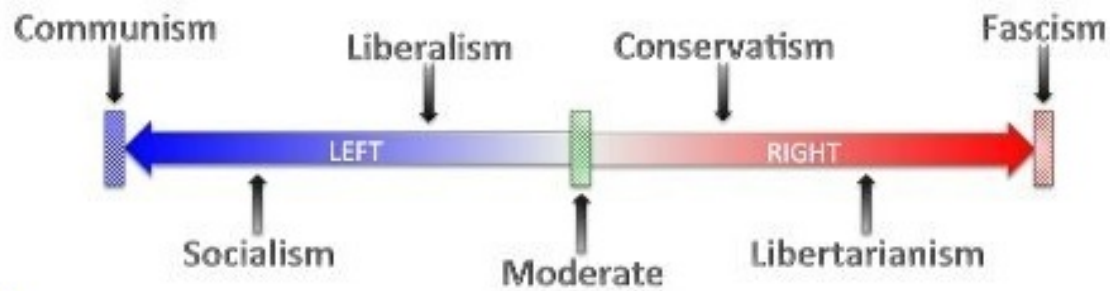
7. There are some collectives and cooperatives throughout the United States and elsewhere, and these are entered into by voluntary contract. However, in most cases, there are actual owners of the property and the means of production; and there are actual supervisors. The end result is exactly the same—the leader essentially has dictatorial powers. This does not mean that the owner ignores the suggestions and opinions of its workers—every business needs to have an ear to the ground, just in case there are good ideas coming from the workers (in many cases, some workers can provide excellent suggestions).
8. Students are dishonestly exposed to communism and socialism in the classroom, and they are given this continuum with communism on one side and fascism on the opposite side. That is completely ridiculous, as Hitler ruled over a socialist state (NAZI stands for the *National Socialist German Workers' Party*). A true continuum has anarchy on one side and complete government control on the opposite side (whether a fascist or socialist government). The word *communism* should not appear on the continuum, as that is a theoretical system which will never exist. There is a continuum which is valid has free markets at one end, government control of the market on the other.

What I have done here is presented the actual theoretical difference between socialism and communism. How many people are aware of this distinction made by Karl Marx? I would guess, not even 1 out of a 100. Yet people of all political persuasions toss those terms *socialism* and *communism* out as if they know that there is a difference and what that difference is.

When it comes to the actual use of these terms, most people, if pushed, would agree that communism is socialism on steroids; or communism = super socialism. That is pretty much a defacto definition.

I did not take any sort of a survey of opinions, but I would not be surprised if some thought that communism was the result of a violent overthrow of government; and that socialism was the result of a vote.

Again, neither approach is accurate, historically speaking; but the term *communism* is used constantly, so we need to recognize what the speaker/write means by their use of that word. Most of the time, they mean one or the other of the definitions above.



Traditional Political Spectrum (a graphic); from [OER2Go](#); accessed May 16, 2020

This is how I was *taught* the political spectrum in school, not realizing that it is pure-dee propaganda. In this false model, conservatives are more closely associated with fascism; and libertarians even more so. The idea that we progress from conservatism to libertarianism and then to fascism is completely illogical. Fascism is logically at the opposite end of the spectrum from libertarianism; these two philosophies could not be further apart. Libertarians (and I am not a libertarian) want as little government control as possible, leaving as many decisions as possible in the hands of the general public. In fascism, the government reigns supreme; and they make most of the decisions for their people and their economy.

The whole purpose of presenting such a false view of politics is to try to *sell* socialism to people who cannot think (also know as the *useful idiots*).

The True Political Spectrum (a graphic); from [Meme](#); accessed May 16, 2020.

THE TRUE POLITICAL SPECTRUM



his is a far more accurate view of the world. Total government control on one end; no government control on the other.

It should be clear to any person who pays attention that no government is strictly one thing or another; but there are elements of most everything you see above, depending upon where you happen to be.

One of the absurdities of today's world is, many of those in the American anarchy movement today also favor socialism. They claim to represent anarchy—which is no government—but what they truly support is a socialist state in charge of everything. Those groups who often confront the police, destroy property, steal and hurt people that they do not like—they are oblivious to their own absurd approach to politics.

When it comes to political power, it is not unusual for a person or movement to promise "X", even though they know that they cannot provide that. They make such promises because that will gain them more support, which leads to them having power. Many politicians will promise "X" even though they have no intention of delivering on that promise; or they know that they have no ability to deliver on that promise.

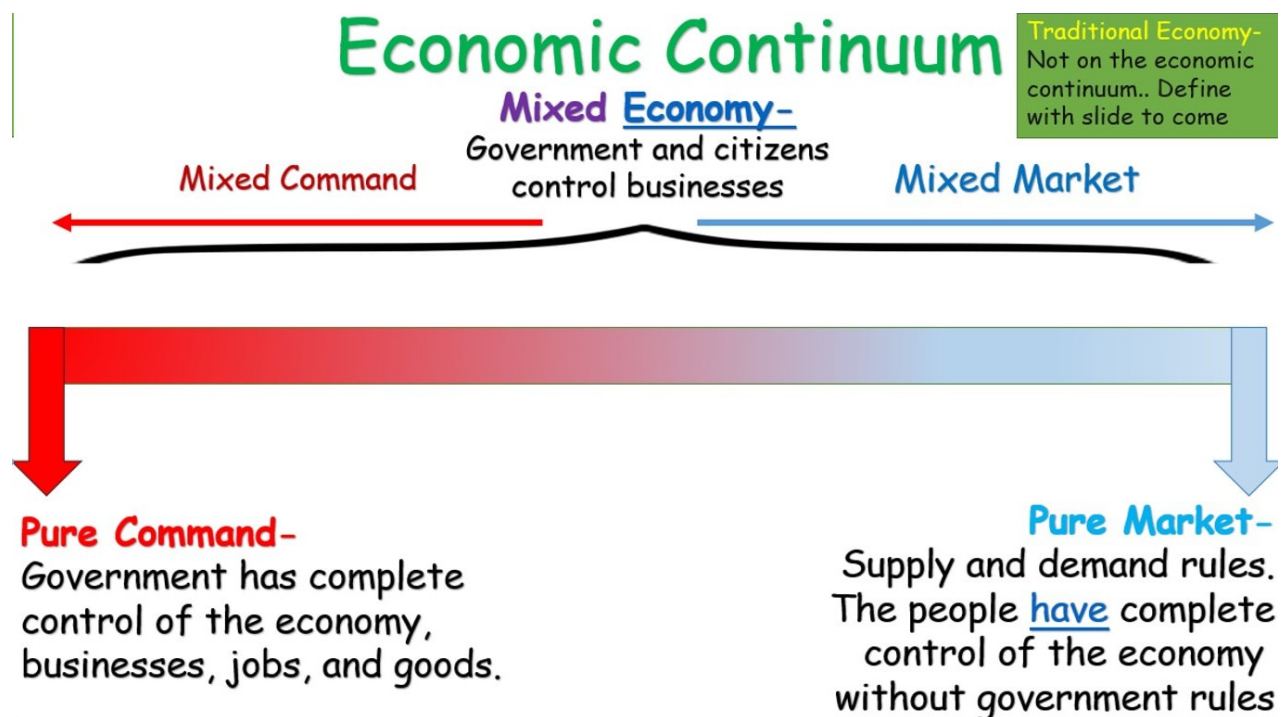
The laws of divine establishment favor things which can be found under every form of government (although a tyrannical leader can change that overnight). Even though the exercise of freedom is a wonderful thing, that is quite rare in world history. The freedom which we enjoy in the United States is an amazing blessing; a blessing which puts us far ahead of most people who have lived on this planet.

We have to be careful, as Christians, not to get so caught up in this or that movement. It is fine to enthusiastically belong to a political party and to enthusiastically support a candidate; but, like everything else, it should never take the place of Bible doctrine. Furthermore, it is not our job to whitewash the devil's world. Political devotion is not necessarily going to accomplish a single important thing in this life. You may think that you got your candidate elected—and he might even be a great candidate—but God is still in charge.

Even more important, a missionary should avoid politics as much as possible. Political points of view should never be an issue to people who come to Jesus Christ. The missionary in the worst, most oppressive government ever needs to concentrate on bringing people to Jesus Christ; not to changing the government. Those who come to the Lord under the ministry of a missionary should not have the slightest idea as to his politics.

One last graphic:

Economic Continuum (a graphic); from Naylorlork.Weebly.com; accessed May 16, 2020.



There were quite a number of different continuums out there; and this particular model stood out as important enough to throw into the mix. A socialist government wants as much control over the economy as possible.

Lessons 091–092: Luke 3:10–11

Socialism and Scripture

The passage that we are studying is:

Luke 3:10 *And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?"*

Luke 3:11 *And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."*

This passage and others have been used by socialist propagandists to claim that the Bible teaches socialism. This is patently untrue.

I will use the term *socialism* below, rather than *socialism and communism* because there is no such thing as true communism and there never will be.

Socialism as a political system is sold in such a way as to make total government control over life seem palatable.

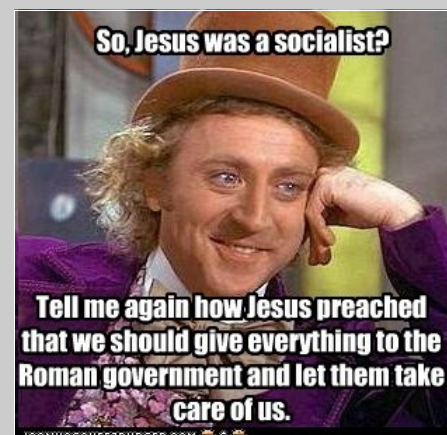
The ESV; capitalized is used below:

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1. Jesus is not a sandal-wearing, long-haired hippy, spreading free love, free government healthcare and socialism. The only thing true about this statement is, Jesus wore sandals, which were the common footwear of that era.

So Jesus was a Socialist (a meme); from [Cheezburger](#); accessed July 16, 2020. There are a myriad of memes about Jesus and socialism; many of which allege that He was a socialist.

2. Socialism is sold as a cure-all, no matter what the disease. When a country is impoverished, socialism is sold as helping the poor (which is why socialists who know the Bible will be quick to point out passages where the word *poor* is found). When a country is rich, where poverty, for the most part, is relative; then socialism is sold as a cure for wealth-inequality (which is a term recently brought into American society to sell socialism to those are relatively poor—there was a recent presidential candidate who continually



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spoke disparagingly about *millionaires and billionaires who were not paying their fair share of taxes*).

3. Because of this propaganda presentation of socialism, every time the word *poor* is found in the Bible, socialists take this as a proof positive of the socialist leanings of the Bible. However, God's concern for the poor is one of a benevolent God, not a socialist God. God is not trying to get every government to be all-powerful and benevolent.
4. One of the greatest enemies of socialism is religion, because to socialists, the state is the reigning entity over all else. The government wants to determine what is good and bad, or right and wrong. They cannot have people who believe in a power higher than the state. That is where limitations on the power of government come from.
 - 1) This is why suit was filed against the Little Sisters of the Poor, when they refused to supply their staff with free birth control. The Supreme Court [ruled 7-2 in their favor](#). The government had determined that any and all forms of birth control should be provided by all employers, and the Little Sisters of the Poor, which I believe is a Catholic-based organization, balked at such a requirement.
 - 2) The idea is, if the state decides to require something, then no exceptions should be allowed, even in the case of religious objection.
 - 3) People who favor socialism believe that the government can overrule any religious teaching.
 - 4) In other words, you can do or believe whatever you want and do whatever your religion prescribes, unless the state says otherwise.
5. Socialist proponents have found out that direct opposition to Christianity can often doom their movement, so they often take a different approach to Christianity. Initially now, socialists propose that socialism is a basic tenet of Christianity (even though, privately, they find Christian doctrine to be distasteful; and they will work to remove it after socialism has been established).
6. Although Christianity is more compatible with a free society, this does not mean that the believer should be working incessantly to establish a constitutional republic wherever he lives. We are not here to whitewash the devil's world. In the United States, we are given the freedom to vote, and it is reasonable for the believer to consider the issues and the candidates in light of the laws of divine establishment and then to cast his vote with those things in mind.
7. Furthermore, it is not wrong for a Christian to lobby for a candidate or for a bill (or proposition); and it is not wrong even to be a politician or to be part of the campaign of a politician. However, if it is ever a choice between Bible doctrine and politics, the growing believer must choose Bible doctrine. We need to grow spiritually, rather than to think that our chosen political movement is the end-all, be-all solution to the world's ills. God did not give Christians life after salvation in order to cure the world's ills.
8. When politics in any form interferes with taking in Bible doctrine, you set the politics aside. If it interferes with evangelization, then you set the politics aside.

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9. The attempted association between Christianity and socialism is a relatively recent thing (just as socialism is a recent thing). This happened because direct opposition to Christianity did not work.
10. If you understand socialism for what it is—propaganda designed to make a free people choose to live under a dictatorship—then the incorporation of Christianity into socialism as a propaganda tool makes a great deal of sense. It is the smart thing for the socialist to do, albeit dishonest.
11. The believer must realize that socialists attempt to use the Bible and the words of Jesus in order to sell socialism to people who believe, at least in part, in both. It is a propaganda tactic, nothing more. No socialist paradise can allow for free thought, life after death, or a power higher than the state. As the state has more and more power, they will regulate and control the local church more and more. In many cases, they will outlaw Christianity (for instance, they may allow churches to stand, but they will not allow evangelization to take place).
12. Socialism and the false dichotomy between wealth and socialism:
 - 1) Socialism often sets up a false dichotomy. You are either in favor of a few men having great wealth; or you favor socialism. By the meme below, Jesus made some harsh statements about some rich men; therefore, according to the meme, He must be a socialist.
 - 2) All men have a sin nature. Some wealthy men have enough wealth and power to take advantage of others, and they do. Jesus spoke against such men. It was not their wealth that was the problem; it was their behavior (they use their wealth unjustly). This is not true of all wealthy men. We have seen men of great wealth, particularly near the end of their lives, scramble to figure out what to do about their wealth—since they come to the realization that they cannot take it with them.
 - 3) Jesus' public ministry took place over a very short period of time. Those who wanted to take part in it—like the 12 disciples—needed to commit to Him and His ministry above all else. One man spoke to Jesus, and it was clear to Jesus that his commitment was not complete—in fact, he was not even a believer. Jesus proved this by telling the man to sell all that he had, give to the poor, and to follow Him. The man was certainly not going to do that.
13. Jesus had some association with wealth or with that which approximates wealth. Jesus showed no animosity towards those who were wealthy nor did He explicitly disapprove of extravagant acts.
 - 1) Mary took a pound of very expensive perfume/ointment and oiled the feet of Jesus. Judas was concerned about such a great waste of expensive ointment, but Jesus disagreed with him. John 12:1–8
 - 2) Both Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea saw to the burial and anointing of the lifeless body of the Lord. Both men would have had wealth and influence in order to do this; and some of their wealth was used to place the Lord in a tomb. This was the right thing to do and could not have been accomplished apart from their wealth and influence.

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- 3) If you happen to have some wealth, then there are times when you must make a choice between Jesus and your wealth (most often, this is making a choice between attending Bible class or not).
- 4) In Luke 19:1–10, Jesus accepts a meal at the home of Zacchaeus, a wealthy man; and Jesus does not berate Zacchaeus for his wealth. Jesus does not tell him to give his money away to the poor.
- 5) In fact, in a parable, apparently spoke in his home, Jesus praises that man who receives some money and by shrew investment, parlays that money into much greater wealth. Even though the point of the story was not about money, the person who did the best in that parable was the person who made the most money. That is certainly not the view of a socialism. Luke 19:11–27

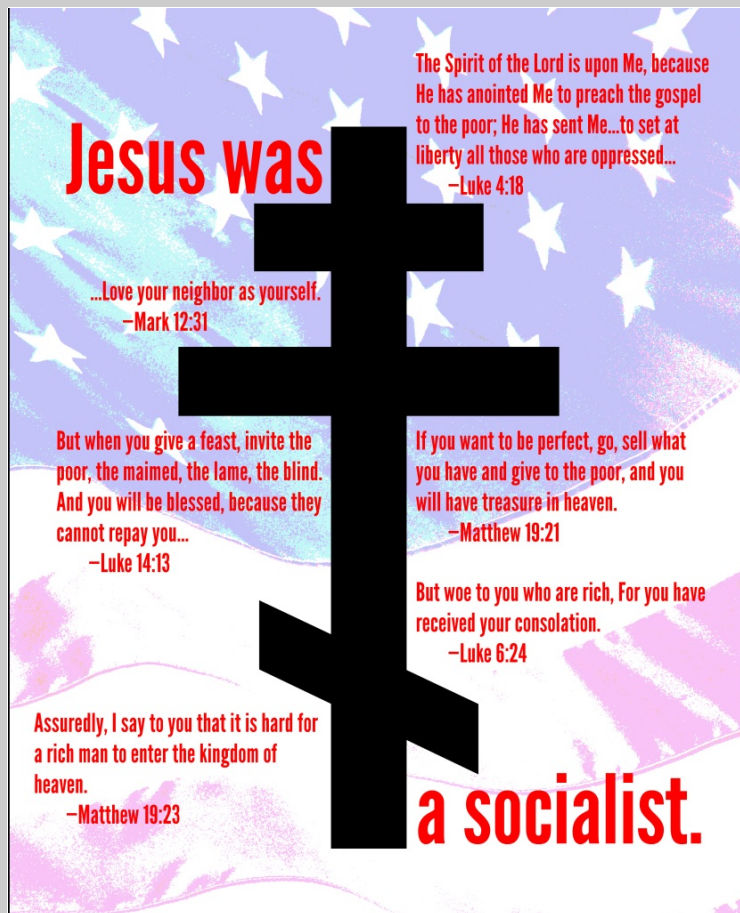
Jesus was a socialist (a meme); from [Pinterest](#); accessed May 16, 2020.

14. We will look at each and every passage quoted in this meme. These particular quotations are supposed to *prove* that, *Jesus was a socialist*.

- 1) Mark 12:31b [Jesus is speaking] **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** This is the correct attitude for all believers to have. This maxim has nothing to do with socialism or with emotionalism. We are to have a relaxed mental attitude towards those around us. We do not think evil thoughts about

them and we do not say bad things about them. No government is able to remove a person’s mental attitude sins from their day-to-day existence.

- 2) Luke 4:18–19 **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to**



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proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus is speaking and He is quoting Isa. 61:1–2.

- (1) First of all, every time socialists come across a verse which mentions the poor, they tout this as some sort of affirmation of socialism. That is ridiculous!
- (2) Here, Jesus is quoting an Old Testament passage, and there is a great deal of complexity here which I will not delve into until we get to Luke 4. Jesus is presenting this passage as if it is all about Him (which He later says, "**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**" —Luke 4:21b) So the emphasis is far more upon Jesus here, rather than upon *the poor*.
- (3) The good news that Jesus is proclaiming to the poor (and to everyone else) is called the gospel, which is the news that, if you want a relationship with God, you may have it. All you need to do is believe in Jesus Christ.
- (4) The liberty which Jesus proclaiming is from enslavement to the sin nature. Jesus is not calling for some new governmental system here. Jesus never touted any particular political system; He never urged his disciples to *march for change*; Jesus never touted revolution as the answer to Roman oppression. Most importantly, Jesus never taught socialist tenets.
- (5) Although Jesus gave physical sight to blind people, this is analogous to giving sight to those who were blinded by religion. One might also apply this to people who have been blinded by socialist propaganda.
- (6) Those who are oppressed are oppressed by the cosmic system; and Jesus gives them liberty from the cosmic system. This is not some sort of socialist solution.
- (7) The year of the Lord's grace is the period of time during which Jesus is speaking, because He is there before the people, speaking directly to them, as God in the flesh.
- (8) The things which are said here are in direct contrast to socialism and communism. Socialism is not good news for the poor; socialism does not lift up millions of people from poverty. Look at even China today where people are eating rats and bats; look at Venezuela today, where this once very rich nation is in an economic free fall. Cuba has never regained its position as a small but reasonably wealthy nation. Almost all Cubans today live in poverty.
- (9) It is people under communism and socialism who are captive to that system and who are oppressed. When you are controlled by the government economically, then you have lost your free will.
- (10) Medical innovation in communism is almost nonexistent. During

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the current pandemic, China is doing everything possible to hack into American computer servers of various medical groups to find information and cures which they can use there for COVID19. They know that free scientists in the United States are better equipped to find and develop a cure.

- (11) Socialism and communism actively harass Christianity and people who believe in Jesus. That is the exact opposite of what Jesus is speaking about here. All socialist governments disparage Christians and the Bible. The very Bible which they claim supports socialism in their propaganda is often banned or restricted in socialist countries.
- 3) Luke 14:12–14 He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."
- (1) The Bible does make many references to the poor. This does not mean that the Bible is anti-wealth or pro-socialism. It means that God is concerned for the welfare of the least among us. A person who is unimportant because of their financial status is of great importance to God. Throughout the Old Testament, God provides for those in Israel who *cannot* provide for themselves. This involved the largess of landowners as well as a special tax for the poor which was collected (which amounted to 3.3% per year). Contrast this to the federal budget of the United States where about half of it is some kind of payment to various people, including much for the poor. The United States has gone overboard in an experiment to end poverty (which no government can do, as poverty is a relative status).
- (2) The believer is to give of himself to those less fortunate than him. This is clearly taught in the Bible. This is private and personal giving, unrelated to government.
- (3) Dinners and banquets are often reciprocal social pleasures. They were offered often to retain one's status on the dinner and banquet circuit. The bigger picture is, much of what is done in life is done with the idea that, there would be some reciprocity in social functions and in economic collaboration. It may *seem* like you are giving, but you are giving to get.
- (4) Jesus is suggesting that one gives where there is no possibility of return. The banquet for the poor is an illustration, not a mandate.
- (5) The good that we do in the Spirit is rewardable in heaven. There are times when we are called upon by God to give where we expect no short-term reward. This may occur in a myriad of ways.

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- (6) In the Christian life, make certain that you are filled with the Spirit when you give (that is, you have named your most recent sins to God). Then, not only is your largess a blessing to others, but you receive reward in heaven for your generosity.
- 4) Matt. 19:21 **Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**
 - (1) Again, I hope you can see how socialism takes a passage like this and removes it from all context in order to try to *prove* that the Bible is a treatise on socialism. The immediate context is, *so that you will have treasure in heaven*; is that a socialist tenet? Of course not! They do not believe in heaven and hell.
 - (2) First of all, Jesus did not tell every single potential disciple who came to Him to sell everything that they owned. Jesus interacted with at least two wealthy men, and did not tell them to divest themselves of their wealth or even suggest that was a better way for them to behave.
 - (3) This happened one time with one particular person. This person was trying to become a disciple of Jesus by claiming obedience to the Law (no one is saved by obeying the Mosaic Law). The entire context of this passage makes that clear. Jesus point was to show this man that he was not keeping the Law as well as he thought he was.
 - (4) The idea is, no one is justified by the Law because no one can keep the Mosaic Law perfectly. Rom. 3:20 Gal. 2:16 3:20
 - (5) When Jesus told this man to sell what he has and give to the poor, this was not a general principle that we should all follow (if we did that, all of us would become poor overnight). This stated requirement proved to the man that he did not completely conform to the Law; and, therefore, he could not be saved by the Law.
 - (6) Like the other passages, I will not completely exegete it, because there is a lot to teach from the overall passage. But, suffice it to say that, this rich young ruler came to Jesus from the perspective of legalism. **And behold, a man came up to Him [Jesus], saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"** (Matt. 19:16) Or, rephrasing this, "You seem to be pretty smart about all of this religious stuff, what good thing is there left for me to do in order to be saved?"
 - (7) If this man is going to be legalistic, Jesus approaches him from that particular point of view. "There is just one thing necessary for you to do in order to be perfect," Jesus tells him. "Sell everything, give it to the poor and then follow Me." The man sought to be proclaimed perfect under the Law, and Jesus suggested the one thing that there was one thing that man would not do. This is

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because we are *not* justified by our deeds.

i As an aside, this was not the only shortcoming that this man had regarding the Mosaic Law (that is revealed when this passage is thoroughly exegeted); but it was the most demonstrable shortcoming, which even the rich young ruler had to admit to.

5) Luke 6:20–24 And He lifted up his eyes on His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation."

(1) Jesus is teaching His disciples here, as well as those who have come to hear Him speak.

(2) If you allege that it is good to be poor and bad to be rich, based upon this; then you must also assume that it is good to be hungry and bad to be filled, it is good to be weeping but bad to be happy, it is good when people hate you but bad when they love you. Context is everything.

(3) The Lord's disciples—particular from that point forward for the next few decades (many of them, to the end of their lives), they would suffer hardship as followers of Jesus. They would be poor, they would be persecuted, they would weep on occasion and they would be hated. God is watching all of this and taking all of these things into consideration. People who have faced such difficulties as believers—particularly at this point in time—would be greatly rewarded in heaven. Does socialism promise that to poor people that they will be rewarded in eternity? Of course not! There is no eternity for them (in the view of socialism)! So, again, a few words are taken out of context in order to sell the false concept that being poor is good, being rich is bad (therefore, become a socialist).

(4) At any given time, there are rich and there are poor. If the rich depend upon their riches; if the rich believe that their riches are the end-all and be-all (or if they believe that this is the result of God blessing them for being so good)—but they do not seek Jesus Christ as their Savior—then the wealth which they have—that is their reward. That is the sum-total of all that they will get. If they have not believed in the Lord, they will spend eternity in hell.

6) Matt. 19:23–24 And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a

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rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

- (1) Again, what does this have to do with socialism? What socialism government is selling, "Do what we tell you so that you might enter into the kingdom of God"? There is no other kingdom for socialism apart from the state, and the state is to be all-powerful. Under most socialist regimes, churches are outlawed or heavily regulated. Often when churches are allowed, the believers are not allowed to proselytize (or they might be imprisoned, disappeared or executed).
 - (2) The concept of this passage, in the time that it was written, is that people who had money in Jewish society believed that this indicated God's blessing and that they were, therefore, acceptable before God already. This approach to life is very much akin to those who believed that they had a relationship with God simply because they were Jewish.
 - (3) We are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ; and not by any other means.
 - (4) Wealth is *not* necessarily an indicator of God's blessing.
15. There are other passages in the Bible which are supposed to be supportive of socialism. As was clearly demonstrated, Jesus was not a socialist; He was not selling socialism; He did not believe in or teach any socialist principles. Furthermore, socialism does not embrace Jesus or Christianity. It tries to use what it can in order to sell their brand of tyranny to the masses. Socialism believes in whatever propaganda helps install a socialist government.
16. Throughout the Old Testament, there are verses which indicate that God is concerned for the welfare of the poor and helpless, and that He expects His client nation Israel to provide for them.
 - 1) Lev. 19:13 "You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning."
 - (1) The owner of a business or the employer of others must take into consideration the needs of those who work for them.
 - (2) Sending a man home without any pay often was equivalent to sending him home without the means to purchase food.
 - (3) The modern-day employer should take into consideration the needs of his workers. This is not the same as giving into any demand given by a worker.
 - (4) The modern-day employer, boss or manager needs to see his workers as more than cogs in a great machine.
 - 2) Lev 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.
 - (1) This would be the exact opposite of socialist dictatorships who take control and often kill their enemies; sometimes they kill millions of them (this has been documented in Russia, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and North Korea).

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- (2) When it comes to interaction with your neighbor, consider what their point of view is. So often, it is instructive to mentally change places with your neighbor and think, "What if this situation were reversed? What would be my point of view here?"
- 3) Deut. 10:18–19 **He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.**
 - (1) This speaks of personal giving; and personal respect for others.
 - (2) This is not something which can be mandated by government. One's mental attitude towards others is a matter of choice; not of government mandate.
 - (3) There is a form of welfare found in the Bible, and this is rarely quoted by socialist propaganda. Socialist governments often collect 50–90% of a person's income (and even higher). The tax for the poor found in the Bible is only 3.3% each year.
- 4) Deut. 24:19–22 **"When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.**
 - (1) There was a land and crop requirement in Scripture of individuals who owned orchards and fields of grain. They were not to harvest the corners, but allow that to remain for the poor to harvest for themselves.
 - (2) The poor had no ownership in these fields, but they were allowed to work the fields for what remains in order to eat.
 - (3) This is analogous to food banks today (except for the fact that food banks rarely require work from those who come to get food there).
 - (4) Let's say that you are a very successful Christian businessman. Does this mean that you open up part of your store, your farm or factory for the poor to come in and take what they want? Of course not! However, someone who is smart enough to have a successful business is smart enough to figure out how to serve the community and to help the poor.
- 5) Psalm 112:1, 9 **Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who greatly delights in his commandments! He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever; his horn is exalted in honor.**
 - (1) Distributing freely is the free will gesture of a person with wealth. In fact, it does not necessarily refer to a wealthy person; just a

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- person who has enough to share. This act promises eternal rewards.
- (2) Under socialism, a person works for the state; accepts from the state whatever the state is willing to give them. There are no eternal rewards.
 - (3) Do you see how this passage has nothing to do with socialism?
 - (4) **Socialism does not mandate that we give to the poor; socialism mandates that we give more to the government.**
- 6) Interestingly enough, socialist propagandists do not quote Psalm 112:3 *Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.*
- (1) In the middle of the passage quoted above in point #5, we have this verse. Those selling socialism will quote vv. 1 & 9; but not v. 3.
 - (2) It promises wealth and riches to the house (family) of a mature believer. So here, wealth and riches are not treated as a bad thing or as a thing to be scorned.
 - (3) Furthermore, such a person blessed by God will have righteousness which endures forever (that is, there is eternal blessing for the man of Psalm 112).
- 7) Isaiah 1:15–17 *When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.*
- (1) A person who is out of fellowship is not going to be heard by God.
 - (2) A person who takes advantage of the poor is not going to be blessed by God.
 - (3) God's concern for the poor, as expressed here, has nothing to do with socialism. In the past few decades, Venezuela, one of the richest countries in the world, become a socialist nation. Now, almost the entire nation is in extreme poverty. Socialism is wrong and it does not work.
17. There are a handful of verses to be found in the New Testament which are quoted by socialist propagandists as well:
- 1) Acts 2:42–45 *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.*
 - (1) Twice in the book of Acts, there is mention of newly converted believers selling all of their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to those in need.

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- (2) There are two important considerations in the historical context of these passages: (1) The people believed that Jesus was going to return soon, so that they needed no possessions. (2) The early church was persecuted greatly for many decades, which financially ruined many believers in the church. Fellow Christians would have died from starvation had not other Christians stepped in to help.
- 2) Acts 4:32–35 **Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.**
 - (1) When the Church Age began, Jesus was expected to return quite soon; therefore, this seemed to be the thing to do.
 - (2) Christians were in a very odd place—they were not Jewish and they were not heathen—but they had placed their faith in Jesus. This was all very new to all of them. Even the Apostles did not have a complete handle on what was taking place (the Age of Israel had given way to the Church Age).
 - (3) Because of the persecution of the early Christian church, this sharing of resources was very helpful to those who were in need in Jerusalem.
 - (4) The church in Jerusalem was always on shaky ground, subject to persecution by both Romans and Jews. At one point in Paul's ministry, he took up a collection for the church in Jerusalem. So they were always in difficult straits. Paul gathering such an offering from the local churches was not done on the basis of legalism or coercion; but people gave based upon their free will.
 - (5) Based upon Acts 5:1–4, it is clear that selling one's land and giving all of the proceeds to the church was not a requirement. Ananas and Sapphira pretended to give all the proceeds from selling their land, but they held back some, and both died the sin unto death as a result. The problem was not that they kept back some of their profit, but that they pretended to give all of the proceeds to the church (Acts 5:3–4).
 - (6) This sort of arrangement was completely voluntary and it is possible that this kept many saints in Jerusalem alive. We are not aware of other churches doing this. However, if a church was heavily persecuted, this would not necessarily be a bad thing to do. It would not be socialist if a wealthy church in the United States sponsored several poor churches in other countries (which has happened in some places).

(Alleged) Socialism in the Bible

- (7) There is nothing parallel in the New Testament epistles. It is in the epistles where we find our guidance for life in the Church Age. There are no commands for us to continue this practice.
- (8) In the United States and in other free nations, finite collectives can be established, where the workers of a farm both have a say in the direction that the farm goes in and they share in the profits as well. This is perfectly legitimate, and if some like this sort of business model, there are no laws preventing them from developing a business like this (or from becoming a part of an already established collective).
 - i As an aside, when you become a part of a collective, you often do not begin as having an equal say or equal remuneration with others who established the collective in the first place.
 - ii Those who have established a collective or became a part of the collective early on have a real stake in the collective. If you have just shown up with nothing in your hands, then you have far less to lose than those there from the beginning.
 - iii Based upon this, many such collectives bring you in as a provisional worker or as probationary worker. It is possible to join a collective and have no say and no established rights.
- 3) James 5:1–6 **Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.**
 - (1) The problem is not the wealth per se, but the mental attitude one has towards his own wealth.
 - (2) If you use your wealth in such a way as to help further the plan of God (giving to your church, to a missionary group, to the poor), then you have the right approach. If God entrusts you with wealth, then use your wealth responsibly.
 - (3) If you would do virtually anything to gain money and use that for self-indulgence, then that approach to wealth is a problem.
 - (4) Furthermore, James here is railing against unfair business practices, such as, not paying your workers. No Christian should ever be guilty of withholding wages from his employees.

(Alleged) Socialism in the Bible

18. Encouragement to give money to the poor; and giving money to the poor are activities which are in direct opposition to socialism. Socialism allows for high taxation and the redistribution of this wealth by way of services. This is all accomplished by government force. The taxation is required; the programs and means of redistribution is government determined. When you give money to the poor, it is voluntary and you are making the decisions of who to give to and how much to give totally apart from any government agency.
 - 1) Let's say that you really don't know any poor people; you must be within driving distance to poor neighborhoods.
 - 2) Whereas, socialism is not Christian; driving to a poor neighborhood and handing out a few hundred dollar bills is (provided that you are filled with the Spirit when you do this).
19. Again, all propaganda aside, socialism is all about high taxation which goes to the government; it is not about giving to the poor.

This is information which is very important for believers to know and understand, so that they do not find themselves getting caught up in various forms of social action and thinking that they are doing *the Christian thing*.

The best cure to counteract socialist propaganda is the accurate teaching of Scripture. Many of the passages briefly discussed above will be more fully examined as we continue our study in the book of Luke.

Lesson 093: Luke 3:10–11

Final Conclusions About Socialism and the Bible

As an aside, R. B. Thieme, III has recently been teaching a lot about socialism (June–August 2020). This particular study does not represent a rehashing of his teaching, nor am I following his lead in this subject area. I made a decision to make a study of socialism when we came to this part of Luke well over a year ago, and much of this material was written months ago.

The passage that we have been studying is:

Luke 3:10 **And the crowds asked him** [John the herald], **"What then shall we do?"**

Luke 3:11 **And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."**

Passages like this have been taken by propagandists for socialism to make the argument that, "The Bible teaches the virtues of socialism."

Socialist propagandists figured out that opposing Christianity head on is a tactical mistake. So, when it comes to interacting with Christian doctrine, they quote a few passages from the Bible, out of context, and present them as if the Bible teaches socialism as a basic tenet.

Throughout, I use the terms *socialism* and *communism* interchangeably. The difference between them was explained previously.

Final Points on Socialism and the Bible

1. It is very hard to sell the population of a country on the idea that all the people of that country should submit themselves to a tyrannical government run by a few people.
2. It is even harder to sell that form of government, if it is known, in advance, that this new government will persecute, incarcerate and eliminate those who disagree with or act contrary to their policies.
3. The Marxian theory of socialism and communism have given dictators a relatively new way to sell their product—a totalitarian government—to a large population who believe that they will be taken care of by a benevolent government.
4. The end result, in a violent overthrow is, a particular military leader will also, in the end, run a very autocratic government.
5. When dealing with an autocratic system which is already in place, socialism sells itself as providing guaranteed rights. Unlike the current autocratic system, they would promise to do specific things for the people (such as, free education, free healthcare, guaranteed employment).
6. We had a president of the United States who spoke of the *negative rights* found in the Constitution and he proposed it would be better for us to promise what the government would do for the people (positive rights).
 - 1) This revealed a complete lack of understanding of the founding of our country.
 - 2) These so-called *negative rights* are limitations placed upon the government. The Bill of Rights tells us what the government *cannot* do. This historical background for this is, England took advantage of individual citizens of the United States in a variety of ways; and our Bill of Rights was designed to see that our new government did not do that. Our founding fathers did not want to exchange one form of tyranny for another.
 - 3) Our founders actually endured some of the worst aspects of a controlling government, and hoped to design a government which was constrained, to keep it from acting directly against the will of the people.
 - 4) Filling up the Constitution with promises from the government (*positive rights*) sounds great; but it simply grants more and more power to the very few who are in charge of the government.
 - 5) Many presidents have made many promises in the past to do things for their people—promises that many of them have tried to keep—but what has happened has removed freedom and given greater power to government. Education, social security, medicare are all examples of such things. I am not proposing a debate on these topics, nor am I saying they

Final Points on Socialism and the Bible

- are of the devil; I am saying that, the result of these *benevolent* programs is more government power and, therefore, less freedom (there is always this dynamic between the people being ruled and the people who rule).
- 6) In a capitalistic economy, money is representative of freedom; the more money a person has, the more freedom they have. If the government makes a promise to give a free program, that free program costs a huge amount of money, and the money will be taken away from people who have it. Therefore, their freedom is reduced, as their money is being used to provide some politician's program. Now, even though many politicians make a big show about taking money only from millionaires and billionaires, they could take *all* of the money of the top 1% and it would not even pay for the government deficit for a year or two. That means, there is not enough money right now to pay for the wonderful programs already in place.
 7. When dealing with a very poor country, socialism tries to sell itself as the government providing all of the necessities to the population. Essentially, such a government is promising to be the peoples' god. Because socialism tries to sell itself to people who are religious, they will not call government *god*, but that is, to some extent, their intent (their primary goal is *power*).
 8. When dealing with a very prosperous country, often the concept of wealth inequality is used. The relatively small amount of money which the majority of people have is compared in a variety of ways to a few people who have an incredible amount of money. Great effort is given over to influencing the large majority of people who are middle class or below, and turn them against people who have an incredible amount of money. This approach, if done right, always has the majority siding with the socialists. This is because, in any society, those who are rich are going to be in the minority (even in socialist societies).
 - 1) As an aside, the more free a nation is, the more likely there will be a great variety of economic situations. This is because freedom is all about choosing one's own vocation, one's place in that vocation, and the amount of effort one might devote to his vocation.
 - 2) The same is true of every other aspect of a person's life.
 - 3) That same person will also decide which material items are important to have, which can have a great effect upon a person's economic condition.
 - 4) Person A may decide that driving an incredible automobile is his top priority; person B may want a large house in an expensive neighborhood; person C may want the best healthcare insurance; person D may want a lot of disposable income; etc. A superficial glance at such people is going to look like they are unequal because of their choices and values. However, their lives may look very different simply because they make different choices of what to accumulate and what to put off to another day.
 - 5) The less disposable income a person has, the less freedom they have. In most nations, people fight just to have basic food, shelter and clothing necessities.

Final Points on Socialism and the Bible

9. People are led to believe that somehow, if the wealthy are sufficiently plundered, then things will be better for everyone, economically speaking. This is *never* true. If memory serves, we could take all of the money away from the richest top 1% of Americans and it would not even pay for the government's yearly deficit.
10. When dealing with a democracy, then these ways to sell socialism to the masses make up the fundamental propaganda points. Recently, in 2016 and 2020, Bernie Sanders, an unabashed socialist, became a serious contender to run for president of the United States. This was the first time that this has occurred in American history. In the past, there were other socialist candidates, but they generally expected to get about 1% of the vote. The fact that Sanders was a serious candidate for president marks a great turning point in the thinking of the people of the United States.
11. One thing which has kept socialism at bay in the United States is Christianity. There is no call for socialism in the Bible. Furthermore, socialism is a godless economic system. I remember working in some Hispanic neighborhoods in the 1970's where there were signs in the resident's windows, Christ, yes; Communism, no (except that this was in Spanish: *Cristo sí, comunismo no*). The socialist/communist movement figured out, after many years, that if they villainized Christianity, then communism would lose. So, instead, they tried to show that Christianity was an early form of communism. Many Christians who lack doctrine will actually fall for this.
12. Let us consider the Christians in Acts who held all things in common:
 - 1) This took place in Jerusalem, where the church was persecuted both by Jews and by the Romans.
 - 2) This was completely voluntary; not all Christians were required to do this.
 - 3) The church was not a government agency; nor were the believers encouraged to develop a nation-wide (or empire wide) system of *sharing all things*.
 - 4) This seems to have been an organic movement from people who were grateful and who expected to see the return of Jesus soon.
 - 5) This approach is far more similar to joining a farming collective than it was to government-imposed, top-down socialism.
 - 6) In the United States, any church (or non-church entity or group) can choose to do something like this; any farm can choose to operate as a collective. This is freedom of choice; it is not socialism.
 - 7) Such agreements can be entered into between free people; and these same people may void their agreement and exit the communal agreement when it suits them. That is not possible under socialism.
13. There is certainly the truism that, a nation might vote socialism in as their form of government; however, to return to free markets and freedom of choice, that usually requires a blood-letting revolution. This is one of those things which a society can be convinced to do; but the end results will end up being far different than what is originally promised.

Communism is, strictly speaking, a theoretical concept of a socialist society without a government. Therefore, there will never actually be a true communist government.

For the final doctrine in this realm:

Some of the Chief Problems of Socialism

1. Socialism, in theory, is a very materialistic view of society, where the highest authority for man is the state. This places the government in natural opposition to the Christian faith, where God is the highest authority. The purging of religion from socialist states is very common. Sometimes it proves to be impossible, so the state does everything possible to regulate what a church does and the government tries to then restrict what a church can do. In most socialist governments, members of a church are not allowed to evangelize.
2. A previous president spoke of the United States as offering up *negative rights*; and that he believed we needed to have more of what the government would do for the people in the Constitution.
 - 1) That particular president seemed to have little understanding or appreciation for the United States Constitution.
 - 2) When a government provides a service of some sort—say, free education or free medical services—then that government taxes in order to pay for these *free* things, thus reducing the options of the workers (who may want similar services, but not in the way that the government provides them).
 - 3) Let's say the government provides 10 free things specifically. What they offer often uses up the entire government budget, which is based upon heavy taxation.
 - 4) There are two problems with this approach. The first is, the government can never provide what it claims that it will provide. Therefore, no matter what is promised to the people, the actual result is going to be far less.
 - 5) The second problem is the heavy taxation. The less money that you have, the less freedom that you have. In a free society, people have much more to choose from. One young person may choose to go to college, another may choose to start a business, another may choose to start work for a business. A very important consideration to a young person is, *Can I afford to move out of my parents' home now?* With some modicum of income, such choices can be made. Remove much of this income, these things are no longer options open to a young person.
 - 6) Free college education sounds wonderful; but it is not free. It is paid for by taxes taken from others, from those who attend, attended or have never attended college.
 - 7) For every free thing which is offered, there are fewer and fewer choices which can be made by individuals in their lives.
 - 8) I have watched many television series from other countries, and I have noticed that, the more a country offers by way of free services to its people, the less freedom the population has regarding what they will do with their lives. For instance, in the United States, for decades, it was a

Some of the Chief Problems of Socialism

natural thing for a young man or woman (at age 16–21) to buy their first car—in many cases, with their own money. Do you know that is almost unheard of in most countries? Do you realize that sometimes families will go in together and buy a vehicle which may be used by 2 or 3 or 4 different people—often people from different families?

- 9) Here is why. Let's say that a government offers a free college education and free medical care. What is being offered is determined entirely by the government and everyone partakes of just the options offered by the government. I may, as a young person, want to have a high deductible medical insurance policy and use the money I save to put elsewhere. I may, as a young person, want to attend a less expensive college (or not attend college at all), so that I can put my funds towards something else. When something is provided by government, those options no longer exist. We simply take what the government offers, whether it is good, bad or mediocre (and, when government is in charge of something, odds are that the product offered is mediocre—how many cars are built in Russia and China?). How many cars are built in Great Britain—which has moved very far left—for that matter? And, yes, I am aware that there are car companies in Great Britain and I am aware also of their lack of quality. But since Great Britain is less socialistic than Russia and China, it provides a better product.
3. Socialism never does what it proposes to do. It does not eliminate poverty, as socialist states are well-known for mass starvation.
4. Freedom of thought is discouraged, and often illegal, because that could lead to a critical view of the government, and socialism cannot stand up to scrutiny. We see this playing out in Hong Kong, where China has control, and they do not appreciate the freedoms enjoyed by the citizens of Hong Kong (I write this in 2019–2020). Over the very short period of time that I have been working on these lessons, Hong Kong has gone from having a great many freedoms to the point where, they can no longer criticize the Chinese government (without suffering dire consequences).
5. One simple problem with socialism is its fundamental dishonesty. Many things are done in order to sell the concept of socialism; but what is promised and what is delivered are two very different things (remember Obamacare and all of the promises versus the reality?). If you think that is too political, consider social security and medicare. These two programs threaten to destroy the United States because of their costs. And how many people treat social security as their full retirement (when SS was never designed to be one's entire retirement)? The whole idea of social security (in theory) was to make sure that older people had money guaranteed to supplement their income. However, in reality, a huge percentage of Americans enter into retirement with little more than their social security payments. This means that they face the end of their lives without enough money to cover their basic needs—exactly the thing that SS was supposed to cure.

Some of the Chief Problems of Socialism

6. In the same way, Socialism must be dishonest in order to sell a dictatorship to an unsuspecting public.
7. A socialistic government is sold as a cure all for so many problems; but it is not. Further, there is no workers' paradise; there is no utopia that results from government trying to do too much.
8. During one of the Obama campaigns, there was an interactive piece of propaganda called *the Life of Julia* (I do not believe that the original version is available anymore). This follows the life of a woman who, at many points in her life, must look to the government to provide this or that. The chief problem is, our government is unable to provide all of these things for 300 million people. There is not enough money in the world for every person to live the life of Julia.
9. The greatest nation in human history is the United States. It is based upon a foundation of freedom as being God-granted. Freedom—the basic function of the human soul—is the most fundamental of the divine institutions. Any nation which encourages the divine institutions is a nation which will prosper and be prospered. If you could choose between the life of Solomon or the life of a lower middle class worker in the United States, the choice is easy—be a lower middle class worker in the United States. Right there, you have far more conveniences and far more options than Solomon had; and with about a hundredth of the responsibility of a king.
10. If you have some understanding of the Angelic Conflict, you would understand why Satan would like to end the United States with all of its freedoms. He much prefers a socialist dictatorship (where religion can be outlawed); or an unstable government in the middle east (where Christians can be killed); or even a socialist-leaning government in Europe (where the church appears to be dying). Moving away from freedom to socialism often goes hand-in-hand with moving away from Bible doctrine.
11. Whereas, the United States is a wonderful example of freedom and Christianity, there is no socialist government that comes close; or a welfare state that comes close to what we have here, in terms of freedom and economic prosperity. If there were—despite all of the internet articles to the contrary—people would be moving in droves to a different *paradise*. However, if given the choice to move to a different country, a majority of people in the world would choose the United States. It is in this country where freedom and opportunity are greater than anywhere else in the world.

So there is no misunderstanding, if you are a missionary in a socialist nation or a nation moving in that direction, it is not your job to try to stop such a progression. The missionary is to provide the gospel and then, some basic doctrine to get new Christians started. It is the missionary's job to establish a local church and to guide them to the point where one of their own will be able to pastor that church.

As I worked on the next two verses (which are all about a tax man), I kept hearing this song in my head. The Beatles were *not* always the ultimate liberals.

Some Lyrics to Taxman (by George Harrison)

Let me tell you how it will be
There's one for you, nineteen for me
'Cause I'm the taxman, yeah, I'm the taxman

Should five per cent appear too small
Be thankful I don't take it all
'Cause I'm the taxman, yeah I'm the taxman

If you drive a car, I'll tax the street,
If you try to sit, I'll tax your seat.
If you get too cold I'll tax the heat,
If you take a walk, I'll tax your feet.
'Cause I'm the taxman
Yeah, I'm the taxman

Don't ask me what I want it for
(Ah, ah, Mr. Wilson)
If you don't want to pay some more
(Ah, ah, Mr. Heath)
'Cause I'm the taxman
Yeah, I'm the taxman

Now my advise for those who die
(Taxman!)
Declare the pennies on your eyes
(Taxman!)

'Cause I'm the taxman
Yeah, I'm the taxman

And you're working for no one, but me
(Taxman!)

From <https://genius.com/George-harrison-taxman-lyrics> accessed November 10, 2018.

Before going on a tangent about socialism, we were studying John the Herald's ministry out in the desert-wilderness of the Jordan River. Despite his ministry taking place *off the beaten path*, as it were, quite a number of people came out to hear John.

You may recall that John's birth was quite remarkable, and that a great many people wondered, *who will this infant become?* John the Herald became a very unusual figure in

Judæa. No doubt, there were some who were adults, when John was born, who found out that he was speaking in the desert, and went out there to hear him. His birth was very unconventional; and his life appeared to be rather unconventional as well.

Several groups of people have come before John, both to be baptized and to hear what he has to say. John gave them quite the shock when he warned them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Luke 3:7b–9; ESV)

Some individuals asked John, “What should we do?”

John answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” John was warning them of a judgment soon to come to Jerusalem in his answer.

Next, there are two particular groups at this point who have questions for John—tax collectors and soldiers. We do not know if all of this occurred on one afternoon or if these words were collected from several interactive *sermons* given by John.

Luke 3:12a Tax collectors also came to be baptized...

In that era, tax collectors were considered to be the lowest of the low. They taxed their own people, the Jewish people, to then turned around and give that money to the Roman government (or representatives of the Roman government). This was considered darn close to treason. They are often ranked with prostitutes on the social hierarchy of Judæa; and there are many verses where they are spoken of together (*publicans and sinners* in the King James vernacular; meaning, *the tax collectors and prostitutes*).

These tax collectors had an incentive to over-tax their Jewish brothers, as they would keep the overage for themselves. Some tax collectors were reasonably well off as a result. In fact, one of Jesus’ disciples is a reasonably well-off tax collector (we have not yet discussed the Lord’s disciples, by the way).

Despite their low social standing, these tax collectors were interested in the spiritual life; they were interested in the Messiah. Apparently, they were generally reviled, so coming to the Temple was not necessarily a good experience for them (they often found themselves shunned and whispered about). Therefore, they had come to John to see if their vocation could be compatible with the spiritual life. What about their vocation and their spiritual life?

Luke 3:12b ...and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”

The tax collectors plaintively ask John the baptizer, "What should we do?" They apparently know that John knows who they are; and they ask this question apparently without any qualifiers. If any Jew might be considered unsaved from the standpoint of Jewish religious traditions, it would be this group.

Many of these tax collectors were torn between their lives and income; and between the ideals of their historic religion. However, at a festival, these men would have been persona non grata. If anyone accidentally talked to one of these men or a family member, someone else would come up and quietly inform the uninformed that they were conversing with a tax collector (or one from a tax collector's family). As a result, even the most spiritually curious of the tax collectors would be rebuffed and isolated at any Jewish celebration.

Even from their own point of view, these tax collectors probably see themselves as being in a hopeless state. Financially, they are too well-off to want to leave their chosen profession; and there are no verses in Scripture which explicitly condemn them. But then, how to access the faith of their fathers? Often, this sort of life allows a person to more easily turn towards God.

Luke 3:12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

Tax collectors came to John, and asked him what they should do.

There was probably a great deal of hidden grief in this question; and many words unsaid. Nevertheless, John had a quick answer for them.

Luke 3:13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

No doubt that John is filled with the Spirit; but I don't believe that he is acting as a non-thinking conduit any more than you or I when performing acts of divine good.

We do not know from where John is answering. I would guess that he is giving good, common sense, honest answers; guidance which was not being given at the Temple. These men were simply ostracized at the Temple. There was no place for them there. Yet they were concerned about their spiritual lives, as their appearance before John reveals.

It is my assumption that John is filled with the Spirit, but that he is not in some trans-state or embodied in such a way that his own brain is shut off; but that he comes to these correct conclusions in his own thinking, which is compatible with the Holy Spirit.

Tax collectors had a specific job to collect a specific amount of money. Dishonest ones collected more and pocketed the excess. Being a tax collector was not an illegitimate vocation, even for Jewish men. But John warns them not to overcharge for the taxes in order to line their own pockets (which was, apparently, a common practice).

Illustration: When you work for the government, your ethics and morality and business practices should be under the same laws/regulations that private businesses are subjected to. I once had a contract with a government office, and all parties had agreed verbally to the contract. This particular government office never returned signed contracts to anyone, as a matter of practice. A few months later, when I called for payment (payments were month's overdue by that time), the woman explained to me that they would reimburse me immediately, but at a lesser amount than specified on the contract. I complained, "This is not what we all agreed to—including you. This is not the contract that we signed." She replied, "You don't have a contract in hand, right?" The implication being, whatever she said the contract was, it was; and my options were to accept what she offered or simply go unpaid for those months. She had me over a barrel. She may have believed that she was doing what was best for her government agency—she may have believed herself to be a shrewd governmental employee—but, in the private business world, what she did was completely unethical, if not illegal. Simply not returning a completely executed contract to all parties involved was unethical to begin with. Changing a contract after the fact was also unethical. After this happened twice, I stopped working with this governmental agency.

All government employees should exhibit honest and ethical behavior. This is the message of John.

So that there is no confusion, we are never saved by works or behavior; we are saved by grace by exercising faith in Jesus Christ. However, God allows us to live after salvation and He expects us to grow and live a proper life. Those who believe in Jesus ought to be the best employees and employers.

In the dispensation of Israel, citizens of Israel were to reveal the wisdom of God by means of their own actions and the function of nation Israel (whether free or under the rule of another nation).

Luke 3:12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

Luke 3:13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do."

Application: You may not immediately understand how this applies to us today, 2100 years later. There are two points to be taken from this: (1) Although a local church can certainly regulate behavior and decorum within their church, they should never ban those who come into the church (as long as they are willing to follow the limited dictates of the church while inside). (2) A church has to have information and application for all people who come to that church. John is providing these outcasts with real life, applicable information. I have been to all sorts of churches, and listened to quite a number of sermons; but I have found churches which emphasize the teaching of the Word of God to have the most applicable information for one's life. Churches which emphasize devotion, singing (even rocking out), praying, giving, tongues, or ritual offer very little of importance to the believers who attend. But the church which carefully teaches the Word of God—that is where spiritual growth occurs.

Application: Let me give two examples of people who may attend a church. Charley Brown may be a man who has cheated many people in his business. He is still able to come to a local church to learn and to grow spiritually. How might the church limit him? If he attempts to defraud members of the local church, then he might find himself barred from attending.

Application: Let's take the example of Lucy Van Pelt, a prostitute. There is nothing wrong with a prostitute attending a church, even if prostitution is her actual vocation. Plying her illegal profession in the parking lot would certainly be a reason to ban her from attendance. But, if such people attend a local church—as long as they obey a set of rules while on church property—there is no reason to ban them from attending.

Lesson 095: Luke 3:14

John Speaks to the Soldiers

John the Herald is out in the Judæan desert, near the banks of the Jordan River, teaching and baptizing those who come to him. Previously, he gave advice to tax collectors; here, he will give advice to soldiers.

Luke 3:14a **Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?"**

What soldiers? Are these military types Roman soldiers? Is this a detachment from the Jewish Temple guard? It is possible that both sets of people posed this question; but these are not natural allies and they would not have come together to ask these questions. The Roman soldiers have lived and worked among the Jewish people, and some of them may be interested in the Messiah. This question, whomever it is from, indicates positive volition.

If these are Roman soldiers, this would have made for a fascinating scenario. Here they are, showing up to a very Jewish gathering, but one in which they are apparently accepted (just as the tax collectors are).

In the alternative, this could have been men from the Temple guard, which would have been a much smaller group of men to come out of.

A third possibility is, these are Jewish soldiers, but employed by the Roman government. That would make a great deal of sense, as Rome would want to expand its empire, but without having to deal with rebellion on every front. Having Hebrew soldiers supporting the Roman government would make a revolt less likely. However, I am not aware of this actually having occurred.

A fourth possibility is, these are soldiers which belong to Pilate or to Herod Antipas. It is certainly likely that some of their soldiers come from the Jews.

So, given all this information, we actually have no idea who these men are, apart from being soldiers. This particular verb, translated *soldiers*, *military types*, is found 7 times in

Scripture; but it refers to military types and/or to actual warfare 3 times (Luke 3:14 1Cor. 9:7 2Tim. 2:14). In none of these references do we find a clear reference to Roman soldiers or to the Temple guard (or to any other specific group of soldiers).

Although we can certainly deal with the passage as written, there is certainly the question, *who are these soldiers? Are they Jews? Soldiers for what or whom?* Many commentators have asked this exact same question, but without a clear answer:

Just who are these soldiers? (various commentators)

Barnes: *Whether these were Jews or Romans cannot be ascertained. It is not improbable that, as Judea was a Roman province, they were Jews or Jewish proselytes in the service of Herod Antipas or Philip, and so were really in the Roman service.*⁹⁷

The Cambridge Bible: *They cannot have been Roman soldiers, and were certainly not any detachment of the army of Antipas marching against his injured father-in-law Hareth (Aretas), ethnarch of Arabia, for their quarrel was long subsequent to this.*⁹⁸

Adam Clarke: *They were either Roman soldiers, or the soldiers of Herod or Philip.*⁹⁹

Boles: *The "soldiers" were probably Jewish troops; for if they had been Gentiles, John would doubtless have enjoined upon them the worship of God: such worship is here taken for granted. However, we cannot know just who they were; they could have been Jewish soldiers of the Roman province of Judea; it matters not who they were; they came under the class of bearing fruit worthy of repentance.*¹⁰⁰

Dr. John Gill: *Some think these were Gentile soldiers, since it does not look so likely that the Romans would employ Jews as soldiers in their own country; though it is more probable that they were Jews, in the pay of the Romans, who belonged to Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, or to Philip of Iturea, whose dominions lay near the place where John was.*¹⁰¹

Dr. Bob Utley: *Were these Jewish soldiers? Jews often served as mercenaries (Elephantine Papyri), but most Jews under Roman occupation would not serve. The verbs used imply a heavy-handed treatment of the populace. Would Jews living in the same community treat fellow Jews this way? Rome gave Jews an exemption from serving in the military. It is possible that these were Jews who served in Herod's service and collected his taxes.*¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Luke 3:14.

⁹⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Luke 3:14.

⁹⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Luke 3:14.

¹⁰⁰ Commentary on the Gospel of Luke by H. Leo Boles from E-sword, Luke 3:1-20

¹⁰¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Luke 3:14.

¹⁰² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Luke 3:14.

Just who are these soldiers? (various commentators)

Vincent considers this question purely from the standpoint of language: *Soldiers* (στρατευόμενοι): Strictly, “soldiers on service”: hence the participle, “serving as soldiers”, instead of the more comprehensive term στρατιῶται, “soldiers by profession”. Some explain it of soldiers engaged in police inspection in connection with the customs, and hence naturally associated with the publicans.¹⁰³

Although I did not check every source which I have access to, none of these men that I personally checked suggested the Jewish Temple Guard. The High Priest was appointed by the Roman governor (between A.D. 6–41); and second in authority to him was the Captain of the Temple Guard who was *in charge of the armed temple guard who maintained law and order under the authority of the high priests*.¹⁰⁴

Were there Jewish soldiers whose authority extended beyond the Temple? Vincent seems to suggest that there was. Nevertheless, despite the fact that we are not being certain of the national origins of these soldiers or their specific duties, we know that they are military types and probably in charge of maintaining some sort of order in Jerusalem (and possibly in Judæa). In this way, we are probably speaking more of a police force (but, again, there is no consensus here).

Luke 3:14a **Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?"**

Now that you get the gist of what is happening, John's teaching might make more sense. He is providing practical answers for those who come to him to be baptized.

There are often anti-war people who think that all war is wrong, bad, or evil; and that soldiers are, in part, to blame. And, more recently in our society, people who are anti-police. However, John does not say, “Put down your weapons. Shake the hand of the man in front of you. Tell him that you love him.” There is nothing wrong with being a soldier or being a policeman. These are, in fact, very noble professions.

John spends considerable time with this question; and his answer comes in 3 parts.

Luke 3:14b **And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats..."** (ESV)

I disagree with the translation here by the ESV. I think this ought to read: **And he said to them, “None [of you] should do [unnecessary] violence;...”**

What he said was this: there is the 2nd person plural, aorist active subjunctive verb diaseiō (διασείω) [pronounced *dee-as-ĭ-oh*], which means, *to do violence to; to intimidate; to extort using one's office*. Strong's #1286. With this verb is the masculine singular adjective; accusative of *none, nobody, no one*. That translates to, *you should not do violence to*

¹⁰³ Vincent's Word Studies; by Marvin R. Vincent, D.D.; from e-sword; Luke 3:14.

¹⁰⁴ From [The Bible Journey](#); accessed July 3, 2020.

anyone; or, you should intimidate or extort no one. John is telling these soldiers, *do not do any of these things.*

A soldier's job involves violence, as does the job of a policeman. John is not telling these men that they need to become pacifists. But a soldier, because of his rank and authority and physical prowess, would sometimes use violence in order to get a desired result which is not a part of a military (or law enforcement) objective.

We had this at one time with our police force in the United States. Some policemen used their authority to intimidate others, to coerce confessions, to gain information. This is, for the most part, a part of our past. But imagine the worst stereotype of a rogue racist cop in America from the 1950's and multiply that by 10, and that would describe the actions of some Roman soldiers (and, possibly, some Jewish soldiers as well).

It is fair to add that, not all citizens made their lives and jobs easy. In this particular era, the Jews were very resistant to Roman rule, even though they had no real way of changing that. Even if these were Jewish soldiers acting as policemen, there would have been push back from their own community.

Most people today understand that their relationship with a cop is a two-way street. You show respect and deference as the citizen who gets pulled over, no matter how lousy your day has been. The cop has been well-trained to respect you, no matter how lousy his day has been. However, he is not going to take any guff either. As the [tee-shirt](#) of one off-duty cop proclaimed, "It is my job to protect your ass, not to kiss it."

John continues with his guidance to those charged with maintaining order:

Luke 3:14c *...or by false accusation,..."*

I believe that the proper translation here ought to be: *...and none should accuse [others] falsely [or extort from others];...*

This is just two words here: a negative conjunctive particle followed by the 2nd person plural, aorist active subjunctive of the verb *sukophanteō* (συκοφαντέω) [pronounced *soo-kof-an-TEH-oh*], which means, *to accuse falsely, to take by false accusation; to defraud, to exact unlawfully, to extort.* Strong's #4811.

Because of their position, the Roman soldiers might use their authority to extort money from some; probably not much different from protection rackets which are found in a few large cities today. Some soldiers wanted their cut.

A soldier could take someone to court over a crime, whether or not that crime had been committed, and then charge the person with a crime that demands some remuneration. The soldier was able to pocket some of the money from this arrest.

Application: Even if you are in a position where it is easy to abuse others because of your position; you should not do so.

John is giving these soldiers good solid applicable advice.

The third part of John's solicited advice:

Luke 3:14d ...and be content with your wages."

Soldiers were paid for their work. It may not have been a lot, but that is what they signed up for; and John is telling them to be satisfied with their legitimate income. They should not use the authority of their position to coerce additional monies through illegal or unethical acts.

It is worth noting that the soldiers who crucified the Lord were not doing these things which John said they should do.

Application: In life, nearly everyone believes that they ought to be paid more. No matter how much money you make, you probably would still want and even believe that you deserve a better wage (I may be the exception to this rule). However, when you take a job, you are agreeing to the terms and conditions of employment, which includes the wage. You are agreeing to that wage. It is much better for you to live within your means than to spend time being upset over not making enough.

Application: At this time (and for some time, in fact), our government officials have been spending money like there is no tomorrow. For this reason, the United States has a very unwieldy and dangerous amount of debt. What the government does with our money should be an example to us as to what *not* to do with our own money. I just heard a news story on the radio today, where one of the unexpected things to occur in the late Spring of 2020 is that the savings of average Americans is way up. That is a good thing. Nothing could be more opposite of what our federal government is doing.

Luke 3:14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

John does tell these men to be honest in their dealings. He tells them not to extort money by threatening to arrest someone. Some soldiers could use intimidation to extort money from citizens, and John tells them not to do that. "Behave honorably and without covetousness" might be another way of saying this.

This indicates that a very wide range of people came to John with questions. Interestingly enough, given these two groups, these appear to be men who may not find any acceptance at the Temple.

I want you to notice that military types have come forward with their questions; tax collectors had their questions; and people in general had their questions. These questions indicate positive volition. These are people concerned with their spiritual lives; they are concerned about their relationship with God.

Do you notice which group is not asking any questions at all? The scribes, pharisees, sadducees, priests and Levites—those from the religious hierarchy of Israel. Groups of these men are there as well, but they have no questions. None of them appear to come to John saying, “Where do we have it wrong? What are we doing wrong?” They are hanging back and developing arguments about John’s theology. Or they wonder what the big deal is. There is nothing there for them. Messiah might be coming (which is one of John’s key messages); but this does not really interest them.

Remember when John addressed the people as *sons of adders*? (v. 7) Those are the ones who had no questions.

Now, later, when Jesus begins His public ministry, then these religious types will become even more engaged with His ministry, but not in a good way.

Lesson 096: Luke 3:15–16

John Speaks About the Messiah

At this time, John the Herald is out in the desert-wilderness, near the Jordan River, teaching and baptizing those who have come to him.

There is an underlying reason for people’s interest in John’s ministry, beyond asking him, “What should we do about this or that?” That reason is found in v. 15:

Luke 3:15a **As the people were in expectation** [of the Messiah],...

At various times in Jewish history, men have thought that perhaps the Messiah would come. Interestingly enough, that does not appear to be the sentiment of the Hebrew people today; but around A.D. 30, they believed Messiah would come.

The verb found here is the masculine singular, present active participle of *prosdokaō* (προσδοκάω) [pronounced *pros-dok-AH-oh*], which means, *expecting (whether in thought, in hope, or in fear); anticipating, awaiting, waiting for, looking for, watching for*. Strong’s #4328. This is a masculine singular verb because *people* is a masculine singular noun.

How many modern-day Jews have fallen away from their historic faith, simply based upon that, they do not believe that Messiah has come to them? One cannot study the Old Testament without recognizing a clear promise of a Messiah to come. The Old Testament is filled with promises about *David’s Greater Son* or about *a Prophet like unto Moses*. How many Jews begin to study their historic faith, and begin to see this promise throughout their Scriptures, and decide, “God did not send us a Savior”? There are many things that a Jew

can accept about his historic faith, except for the question of the promised King. If they refuse to recognize Jesus, then where is the Promised One? Where is David's Greater Son? Where is the Prophet like Moses raised up by God? 3500 year later, where is He?

In the era that we are studying, such an expectation exists; but today, in the 21st century, what Jewish synagogue continues to proclaim the Messiah? Only Jews who have believed in Jesus Christ have discovered their True Messiah.

Luke 3:15a *As the people were in expectation* [of the Messiah],...

We are not given any information here as to why this seemed to be the thinking among some of the people. Had God placed this in their hearts? Had some of them considered the prophecies of Daniel, thinking that this might be the time? (Daniel does give a actual timeline.) Did some remember some of the odd events 30 years previous, many of which are described by Luke in the first two chapters of this book (and I don't believe that all these unusual early events were recorded in the gospels). Perhaps they felt terrifically imposed upon by the Romans, having no autonomy anymore. Where was *their Moses*? Perhaps this had been the topic of many synagogue readings throughout the northern and southern kingdoms¹⁰⁵? In Luke 2, we read of many incidents which took place when Jesus was born where He was recognized by many as the Messiah, so this could be a contributing factor as well. Whatever the reason (and there were probably many), there were quite a number of people at that time who anticipated the coming Messiah; and numerous others who gave a great deal of thought to this subject.

In fact, let me even suggest that, Luke personally spoke to some of John's disciples who remember this particular event; and that they then told Luke of the events that had happened 30 years previously. So it may have been from some of these interviews that Luke received some of the information found in the first 2 chapters (although there is every indication that Luke extensively interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus; so much of these first 2 chapters may be mostly or fully attributable to her¹⁰⁶).

In any case, there is a popular anticipation of a Savior, a Messiah, to lead the people of Israel. Unfortunately, many of them had a somewhat distorted view of Who the Messiah might be.

Luke 3:15b *...and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John*,...

They are there, being baptized by John, and they consider their anticipation; and they consider John and who he is and what he is doing, out here in the Jordan River wilderness.

Luke 3:15c *...whether he might be the Christ*,

¹⁰⁵ Given that Jesus operated primarily in the northern kingdom, we may accept that it is, to some extent, reconstituted, but yet, under Roman rule.

¹⁰⁶ Even though Mary is not a key player in every incident, she would have been aware of these historical events having taken place.

These people had the Old Testament; they had been to their synagogues on many occasions. They knew the prophecies of the Messiah. So, they considered these prophecies and they considered John. They asked themselves, *could he be the Messiah?*

It occurs to some of them that, maybe John is the Messiah. He is there baptizing people out in the mostly uninhabited region of the Jordan, speaking extemporaneously to them. John is an amazing figure. He is nothing like any of the staid and legalistic religious types which they have known all of their lives. Now, how openly or how often they speak of this—asking themselves if John is the Messiah—we do not know. Remember, there are those from the religious hierarchy there as well, and how much are they taking note of?

I have heard, but have not yet done a study of this, of the several *messiah-like* figures of that era. Men who were not, obviously, the Messiah, but who either claimed to be or were perceived to be. Was this one of the reasons why the religious spies came out to see John and make a report to the religious hierarchy? This makes a great deal of sense and helps to explain the animosity of religious types for John and for Jesus. The Hebrew people were very religious, and the priests and Levites pretty much had complete control in that realm.

John is clearly aware of what they are thinking and saying. He responds to these thoughts.

Luke 3:15 *As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,...*

Christ is transliterated from the Greek word *Christos* (χριστός) [pronounced *krees-TOSS*], which means, *anointed, anointed one, Messiah, Christ*. Strong's #5547. *Christ* is the Greek word that matches up with *Messiah*, the Hebrew word (*Messiah* is also a transliteration).

Some of those who had come to be baptized were expecting to see the Messiah; or believed that the Messiah would come soon to Israel. What was happening at the Temple seemed staid to some of these men; and many of them were ostracized there. John was a very unusual man; and that no doubt got the attention of many. I expect that he was an outstanding public speaker as well.

In v. 15, these people are questioning *in their hearts* whether John is the Messiah. This means that they are thinking these thoughts, but not expressing them. In the book of John, they will ask John straight out if he is the Messiah (see John 1:19–23).

Luke 3:16a *...John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water,..."*

In the context of Luke 3, it does not appear that people asked John directly, "Are you the Messiah?" However, based upon John 1:19–23, it appears that people, at other times, straight out asked John this question. They might have asked individually or there might have been a small group who are discussing it among themselves and they approach John as a group. And, apparently, as is the case in John 1, those who asked this question may

not have been John's supporters. John 1:24 (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) (ESV)

There is no contradiction here. On one occasion, some people asked John straight out if he was the Messiah; but, at another time, they were simply asking this question in their own minds or quietly talking to one another. In the text of Luke, we are told that this was in the thinking of the people.

There were times that there were no questions coming from his audience and John perceived that this was on their mind (that is, "Is this man the Messiah?"). However, there are clear instances where these same questions were posed directly to John (see John 1:19–28).

Based upon what the people were thinking, John gives the following explanation:

Luke 3:16a John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water,...

John tells that what is quite obvious—that he baptizes them with water. They are out in the Jordan Valley, next to the Jordan River; and part of John's ministry includes him baptizing them—immersing them in the Jordan River.

It is even possible that these are the words that John spoke while performing a baptism (not with every baptism, necessarily, but perhaps with some of them).

Although the parents of Jesus and John were relatives, they lived quite a distance apart; and we do not know how much interaction there was between them as they were growing up. Even though John and Jesus are close in age and related, that does not mean that they spent any amount of time together. The distance between them would have precluded frequent visits. We have no idea whether John and Jesus met as children at, say, a religious gathering in Jerusalem. It seems logical that they did; but there is nothing recorded in Scripture to indicate this.

We do not know how God revealed to John that the Messiah had been born. Is there enough interaction between John and Jesus in their youth for John to know this? Or has God revealed this information to John in some other way?

I had cousins growing up who lived in another state. I saw them twice in my youth (if memory serves) because that sort of a trip was quite expensive for my family to make. For that reason, I did not really know my cousins in Ohio very well.

Also, there is no indication that Jesus and John interacted as adults until Jesus showed up to be baptized. In fact, what takes place in this chapter (and later) implies that there was little or no contact between them as adults.

Luke 3:16b ...but He Who is mightier than I is coming,...

By these words, John is clearly an humble (grace oriented) man, knowing his place in the plan of God, as the herald of the King. He has no inclination to step outside of that role or to pretend that he is something more than that.

Application: How many assistant pastors or Sunday School teachers have bucked the authority of the pastor of their church by teaching things they knew to be in opposition to what the pastor is teaching? John the Herald was just the opposite of that.

Luke 3:16a-b John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but He Who is mightier than I is coming,...

At some point, Jesus—the Messiah—will come on the scene. He will appear. John was aware that this would happen. How did he know this? Prophets knew and understood things in a number of ways. There were times when God spoke directly to prophets, such as Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel (their writings are filled with direct quotes from God). Samuel established a school for prophets, so they would have understood God and God's thinking through studying the Word of God. In whatever way prophets understood God's will, we can be assured that there was some sort of interaction between the Word of God and the human mentality of the prophet (through the human spirit). So that there is no confusion about divine revelation, I do not recall any circumstances where a prophet becomes an empty, unthinking vessel, through whom God speaks or writes (which is common among false human prophets).

John continues to speak of the coming Messiah:

Luke 3:16c ...the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.

This is a statement of great humility. John is not even worthy to unlace the Lord's sandals—the job of the lowliest servant. This would be a chore that he is not good enough to do. He is not fit, he is not worthy to be the Lord's lowest servant.

By the way, that is true for us as well. None of us—including the greatest evangelists and pastor-teachers of our day—are worthy of the Lord. God made us, in Christ, worthy to be His servants. But, apart from His death on our behalf, no one is able to even fulfill the duties of a servant to Jesus. We are servants of God only through His grace.

Luke 3:16d He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John then contrasts his baptism with water to the baptism of the Christ. John baptizes one person after another in the water of the Jordan; however, Jesus will baptize them all with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

There would be two distinct groups. One group would be baptized with the Holy Spirit (those who believed in Him); and the other group would be baptized with fire (signifying judgment for those who did not believe).

Throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ, there is always a great distinction made between these two groups of people (between the wheat and the tares; or between the sheep and the goats). Those in the Church Age, who have believed in Jesus Christ, will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Those who reject Jesus Christ will be baptized with fire, dying in eternal separation from God. Fire connotes judgment.

Lesson 097: Luke 3:15–18

John Speaks About the Messiah

We are still studying the teaching of John the Herald. He has been in preparation for much of his 30 years; but his ministry will be relatively short. What the Bible records appears to be a ministry of a few weeks or perhaps a few months (he did have disciples).

The question on the minds of many, while observing John the baptizer was this:

Luke 3:15 As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,...

John knew that this was on their minds, and addressed this question.

Luke 3:16 ...John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John says that he is not the Messiah, but the Messiah is coming. It is my opinion that John knew that Jesus, his cousin,¹⁰⁷ was the Messiah. Whether they had any interaction or not, we do not know. However, Luke has revealed enough information about John's mother and Jesus' mother to indicate that these women knew that Mary's child would be the Messiah of Israel.

Having this knowledge, the parents of John the Herald would have taught him about the Messiah, and about what the Old Testament had to say about the Messiah. It seems only logical that John had impressed on his soul accurate teaching and guidance from his parents which provided the basis for the things that he knew and taught. John was no doubt empowered by God the Holy Spirit, but that does not mean that John was simply an empty vessel, speaking words that he did not understand. God the Holy Spirit appears to work within the souls of men who have doctrine. Twice near the end of Luke 2 there were references to Jesus growing in knowledge in His humanity. Surely, John experienced spiritual growth through learning Bible doctrine as well. There was no doubt teaching that John received from both parents (yet, given their advanced age, they would have been off the scene very early in John's life).

¹⁰⁷ They are related, but it is unclear how close they are.

In v. 16, John speaks of Jesus baptizing believers with the Holy Spirit and unbelievers with fire. In v. 17, John will speak of the Lord separating believers from unbelievers. These concepts are directly related.

Luke 3:17a **His winnowing fork is in His hand,...**

John illustrates this distinction in another way, giving an analogous situation. Jesus is like the man holding a winnowing shovel. This shovel is used to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Whereas, we might not get what John is saying (apart from an explanation), the people who heard him understood him perfectly. They knew exactly what John was talking about.

Luke 3:17b **...to clear His threshing floor...**

A threshing floor was set on top of a mountain or in a high place, because the key to separating the wheat from the chaff is wind. The stalks of grain might be crushed and mixed together. A pile of the crushed stalks would be set upon the threshing floor. Then the man with the winnowing shovel will throw all of this into the air. The chaff, the stuff which is of no use, is lighter than the wheat kernels and it is blown away by the wind. The heavier grain falls back down to the threshing room floor. The grain is what the man gathers up at the end.

Luke 3:17c **...and to gather the wheat into His barn,...**

Jesus will gather the grain, after being separated from the chaff, into the granary. This is analogous to those who have believed in Him. We who have trusted in Jesus, we are the grain. Jesus wants to keep us. Jesus wants to preserve us. Not because we have deserved it, but because of His matchless grace.

Luke 3:17d **...but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."**

Those who have not believed in Him are the chaff, the waste; and they will be burned up with fire—here called an unquenchable fire, indicating eternal judgment.

Even though there is clearly hellfire and eternal damnation found in the Bible, there are very few modern pastor-teachers who spend any amount of time teaching this doctrine. In fact, in Scripture, Jesus speaks of an eternal judgment more often than anyone else. I believe that part of the problem is, it is just a very difficult doctrine to come to terms with. We can intellectually understand it; we can say the words of a soul spending eternity in pain and suffering and judgment; but we do not want to imagine or consider people that we have known being in that place. That is very difficult for any believer to consider, assuming that he has had unbeliever friends during his life (and who hasn't?). For me, the horror and sadness of this are incomprehensible; and it is not something that anyone wants to think about. I have known people that I care for very much who have passed away, and I fear that some of them are under God's fiery judgment now. One friend I am

thinking of, I talked to him on his deathbed. I spoke to him of God, but, in retrospect, I wish that I had made the gospel more clear than I did. Another friend that I can think of, I can remember times where I should have made the gospel clear to him, and I did not.

So there is no misunderstanding, I understand full well that I am not at fault for them dying in their sins. That was the choice that they made. Nevertheless, I still do not feel that I did all that I could as a friend and as an ambassador for Christ.

This is a place where most of us must accept God's justice as being perfect and as being completely just. We must understand that, people who have chosen not to believe in Jesus have been given every opportunity to do so. Like many other believers, I wish that there were another way, that all of this would not be so final—but that is not the teaching of Scripture.

A person who fully realizes the alternative for the unbeliever, often becomes a more passionate and aggressive witness in his own personal evangelism. When we speak to an unbeliever—under any set of circumstances—it should not be far from our minds that this is a soul for whom Christ died. This is a person who may spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. That ought to be some strong motivation for us to present him with the gospel.

Luke 3:17 His winnowing fork is in His hand, to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

John the baptizer is speaking of Jesus and about the separation of believers from unbelievers at the end of the Age of Israel. The wheat gathered into the barn are believers; but the chaff burned with unquenchable fire are unbelievers.

Luke 3:18a So with many other exhortations....

I would translate this part of v. 18 like this: Indeed, therefore, he was exhorting many others;...

We place the words *many* and *others* together because they have the same morphology (in the Greek, there are 3 particles in between those words). Having the same morphology can indicate that we are speaking of two things which are the same (when connect by *to be*); or that one modifies the other—particularly, when one is an adjective and the other is a noun (which is the case here). The 3 particles are translated variously, *so with, indeed therefore, indeed then, indeed with, so then, consequently, and with*. The ESV translates these words, *so*; I have translated them, *indeed, therefore*.

Some translations give us something like, *many other exhortations*; but the problem with this approach is, *exhortations*, which can be used as a noun, does not match the morphology of *many others*. In the previous 5 verses, we have different groups of people that John exhorts; so we may reasonable assume that he is exhorting various groups of people during his ministry, since several examples of this are given.

When exegeting a book in this weekly study, I generally choose a translation to go with—in the case of the book of Luke, I chose the English Standard Version, which is an excellent translation, striking a nice balance between accurately translating the original language into English, and yet still producing a readable translation (unfortunately, the old English King James Version is not longer readable for most people). Also, prior to working through the exegesis of any chapter, I have already translated each chapter myself into 3 original translations (an ultra literal translation, a reasonably literal translation and a paraphrase). If the translation I have chosen for these weekly lessons does not really match the original language as well as I think it should, then I insert enough information about the Greek to explain why there is a more accurate way to translate a passage.

As we have just studied, people had questions for John the baptizer, and he answered those questions and gave them practical guidance.

This has been taken in two basic ways: (1) there are many ways that John was exhorting the people; or (2) John is exhorting many other people. Morphologically speaking, #2 is the correct interpretation.

Now, one group of people that John will be exhorting is the king and his mistress (which we will read about in v. 19). But let's first cover these people who are wondering whether John is the Messiah or not.

Luke 3:18b ...he preached good news to the people.

V. 18a is a subordinate clause. V. 18b tells what John did as he exhorted these various groups of people—he proclaimed the gospel to the people to whom he was speaking.

The gospel or the good news is that the Messiah is coming, and He would be among them soon. This is the greatest news that the Jewish people could ever hope to hear. This is right in line with v. 15, where people are expecting the Messiah (which had been a long wait for nation Israel).

Now, when I say that the people are expecting the Messiah, I don't mean that, sometime, in the future—whenever—Messiah would come to the Land of Promise. Here, they are expecting their Messiah soon—many people expected to see the Messiah while they are alive. They expected to see Him with their own eyes.

You may recall that, when we began this study of Luke, there were several examples of older people who saw the Christ child with their own eyes, and this gave them both peace and strength.

One of the sad but necessary changes to the modern incarnation of the Jewish faith—those who have not accepted Jesus as their Savior—is the dropping of Jewish Messiah from their theology. Now, the teaching about the Messiah is still there—in the Scriptures—and they will still read passages about Him in their synagogues. However, the promise of the Messiah, which once was the central thrust of their faith, is no longer front

and center in modern-day Judaism. How many Jewish people today look forward to the coming of David's Greater Son? No doubt, there are some, but they make up a small percentage of the Jewish people today (many of whom have simply abandoned their ancient faith).

How many young Jews, when reading their Scriptures, recognize all of this talk about a Messiah, and yet, here they are, 3500 years later, but with no Messiah? Do you think that may account for their loss of faith?

This may also explain why some modern-day Jews, who, upon believing in Jesus Christ, find themselves becoming *more Jewish* or *more fully Jewish*. If they knew anything about their original faith, then accepting Jesus is the natural next step of what they have learned in the past. There is really no alternative for a faith that ought to be centered on that great promise of God.

Back to the exegesis of this passage:

This is John's function as a herald to the Lord; he is announcing that the appearance of the Messiah is near.

Luke 3:18 **So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.**

Luke 3:18 **Indeed, John exhorted the many; he kept on proclaiming the gospel message to the people.** (Kukis paraphrase)

John is exhorting the people to be the wheat and not the chaff. He presents the Messiah to come, and those who believe in this Messiah were saved.

So that we understand the gospel, as up to about A.D. 25, no one uttered the words, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Prior to this, men were exhorted to believe in the Revealed God (and I use this as a descriptive phrase, not an historic one). That is, God revealed Himself to the Hebrew people during the Age of Israel and whatever a person understood from the Scriptural revelation of God, the person was to believe in that God. Such a faith is proclaimed back all the way to Genesis 15:6 (**And he [Abraham] believed the LORD, and He [God] counted it to him as righteousness.**). God made Abraham righteous, not because Abraham was this perfect human being who almost never sinned; Abraham was made righteous because he believed in the Revealed God. Abraham's faith in how God revealed Himself to him was credited to Abraham's account as righteousness.

So that no one is confused at this point—God does not personally reveal Himself to everyone by an apparition of some sort using a speaking voice. Who God is, is revealed in the Scriptures; and He reveals Himself in His Son. Today, we believe in Jesus Christ, through Whom God most fully reveals Himself. We do not fully apprehend the Person of Jesus Christ at salvation—that is, we know very few things about Him. But whatever amount is revealed to us through God the Holy Spirit and the Word, that is what we believe

and that is what is required in order to be saved. Positive volition *after* salvation determines whether we learn anything more about God's Messiah than we did at the moment of salvation.

One friend who recently passed away, knew the gospel message, believed in divine establishment principles; but never pursued accurate Biblical teaching. He is saved and face to face with God today.

Before I get too sidetracked, my point was, Jesus was revealed in one way in the Old Testament and up to about A.D. 25. The Old Testament gives us the revelation of the Messiah, David's Greater Son, a Prophet like unto Moses; and the person who believed that—who believed in that person—was saved. Throughout my own work, I have used the expression *the Revealed God* in order to encompass all of that. Those who believed in God, as He was revealed in the Old Testament, was saved. But, with the advent of Jesus Christ, things changed. Jesus began His ministry around A.D. 25, and He said, "Believe in Me, and you will be saved." That is the requirement of human history following the Lord's earthly ministry.

The book of Hebrews describes this change of revelation in this way: **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed the Heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world.** (Heb. 1:1–2; ESV; capitalized)

God spoke to the fathers of the Hebrew people by the prophets—that is the revelation provided by the Old Testament. People had God revealed to them through the reading of the Old Testament (as well as through the sacrificial system that was established). At some point, they considered all of this information that had been revealed to them, and they believed that. It might occur at age 4 and it might occur at age 44.

What we are studying in the book of Luke is how the revelation of God in the Old Testament became the revelation of Jesus Christ, during the short frame of time that we are studying (primarily, we will study Jesus for 3 or 4 years of His life). Men first understood Who God is through how He revealed Himself in the Old Testament; but now, in the new era, God reveals Himself through His Son, the LORD.

Lesson 098: Luke 3:18–19**John Speaks About Herod Antipas**

We are with John the Herald out in the uninhabited region of the Jordan. He is baptizing people, answering their questions and speaking to them about the coming Messiah.

Luke 3:18 **Indeed, John exhorted the many; he kept on proclaiming the gospel message to the people.** (Kukis paraphrase)

We learn a lot about dispensations from John the baptizer's role in the gospels. He is born before Jesus; he will die before Pentecost. Jesus speaks of John as the greatest prophet; but then tells His Own disciples that they will be greater than John.

In the book of Acts, when disciples of John are discovered by the Apostles of the church, they are re-baptized with the Christian baptism. This very act tells us that there is something different about the time of John the baptizer in the gospels, and what takes place in the book of Acts. There are fundamental differences, and this indicates that Dispensationalism (that God has different programs for different times) is a real thing.

V. 19 introduction:

First of all, let's just see what this verse says, so that we can see what is being introduced:

Luke 3:19 **But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprov'd by him [John] for Herodias, his brother's wife [the wife of the brother of Herod the tetrarch], and for all the evil things that Herod had done,...**

John apparently speaks about Herod the tetrarch at some point in time, criticizing him for his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife (and for a number of other things). This seems to be an odd thing for John to just blurt out, in the midst of baptizing his disciples.

"By the way," John announces, "you've heard about this Herod guy? Well here is what I think." To me, that strikes me as being out of place. I just do not see John as approaching the people in that way. Does it make sense that John, nearly apropos of nothing, deciding to talk about Herod? "Oh, and don't let me get started on this Herod fellow."

We are told in the previous few verses that John the Herald spoke to many groups of people; and among those groups of people were their local royalty.

What appears to be the case—and this is conjecture on my part—Herod Antipas shows up before John—perhaps as a total lark or a matter of curiosity—and he asks John, "I am Herod, your governor; what should I do?" There are other options, of course: messengers from the king could have been sent to observe and ask questions. The reason I think that John is asked for his opinion and then he gives it is, all the previous examples. Also, in the examples given, people asked for John's guidance to them. There is not the example of the local carpenter's union showing up and asking, "What do you think about the pottery makers in Galilee?" People asked questions about their own station in life.

John the Herald is gives divine establishment solutions to the problems and questions which these groups of people present. Despite the Law of Moses being the very essence of divine establishment, the Jewish people had drifted away from God's way of doing things, in part because they were so angry at being dominated by the Roman government.

Before we study John's interaction with Herod the tetrarch, bear in mind that people with great influence should be circumspect about their lifestyle. In our era, movie stars and sports figures and even some politicians receive far too much attention; but in the era of our Lord, the human celebrities of that era were the political leaders and the Jewish religious leaders (remember Luke 3:1–2?).

As an aside, we know, on the one hand, how crazy athletes and celebrities have been acting, as of late. They have taken positions and points of view which are in direct opposition to divine establishment. Have you noticed how negatively COVID19 has impacted these groups of people? How long can the NFL pay these ridiculously high salaries to athletes who can no longer fill a stadium and no longer draw an audience on television? God certainly takes notice of what is taking place down here in client nation USA.

Another aside: I should say a word about speculation, as I often speculate. My purpose, in most cases, is to set the scene or to provide some sort of context for what is happening; or simply to make sense out of what is happening or what is being said. I have several rules which I have followed: (1) when I am speculating, I make this known (many commentators do not). (2) What I am speculating about is interesting to me, so I hope that it is interesting to the reader. (3) My speculations have no effect whatsoever upon the fundamental orthodox doctrines of the faith. I can recall only one speculation which could have led to some doctrinal conclusions: an angel (Angel) appears to the shepherds in the field before Jesus is born. There are many things in that context which suggest that this is the divine Angel of the Lord. But, given the time frame and sequence of events, Mary is simultaneously pregnant and about to give birth any day. If this is a manifestation of the Second person of the Trinity (speculative), then that particular event does have some interesting doctrinal implications. However, none of these are going to shake your doctrinal foundation.¹⁰⁸

Let's return to our text.

Luke 3:19a But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife,...

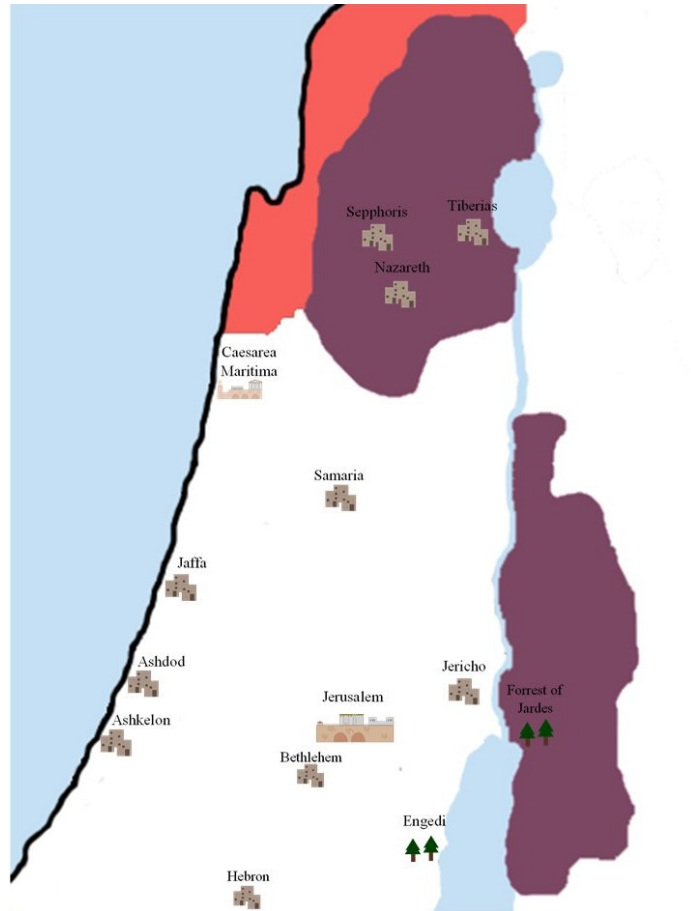
The Domain of Herod Antipas (a map); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed June 4, 2020. Herod the tetrarch (also known as, *Herod Antipas*, *Herod Antipater*¹⁰⁹) ruled over Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. to A.D. 39. This map represents is the region over which Herod the tetrarch ruled. Therefore, he would have been aware of John baptizing at the Jordan River (which bordered his territory in Perea).

¹⁰⁸ R. B. Thieme, Jr. has taught that soul life begins at birth when God breathes life into the person being born. If this is true, that would allow for the Angel to the Shepherds to be the Lord.

¹⁰⁹ This is not the same man called Antipater II, Herod the Great's eldest son who tried to poison his father.

It is fascinating to me when various prophets reproach political leaders; that sort of thing always interested me. Various prophets have gone to leaders and corrected them for their bad behavior, and I have often thought, *but what about the privacy of the priesthood?*

Political leaders, in that era, were the celebrities of their day. There were some actors and some musicians, but the true human celebrityship of that era were those with political power. Because of this, people knew about what they did and how they behaved. Today, we see all of these various magazines and they are all about this and that celebrity; and the magazines sell because someone's face is on the cover, or their name is on the cover; or there is a fascinating headline about so-and-so, and you just have to buy it and read what really happened.



This is how the people of that era thought about their leaders, except that there were no magazines. But they knew what their leaders did and they talked about it and, sometimes, they even emulated their rulers. That is, the norms and standards of the rulers influenced the thinking of the local populace.

Herod had taken his brother's wife, and this was a great scandal. If you have a short historical perspective, in the United States, Ronald Regan was the first elected president of the United States who had had a divorce. Prior to that, this sort of thing would have been unheard of. You may have wondered, if you know a little about U.S. political history how the Kennedy wives stayed married to John, Robert and Edward Kennedy. This was because a divorce would have destroyed their political future. Therefore, the wives were kept in the picture, despite all of the things that the Kennedy boys did. The same thing was true of the Bill and Hillary Clinton marriage, with the added factor that Hillary also wanted to become president.

So, what Herod did was very apparent to all under his rule; and he influenced the people with his actions. This was not a discreet affair that he did, but he had taken his brother's wife into his own palace. This puts adultery right out there front and center; and it influences the norms and standards of the general population.

We like to think our political leaders are the most important people ever, but they are not. The individual family unit in the United States is far more important. When that family unit goes awry, then so does the nation (as per the laws of divine establishment).

Now, how did this topic seep into John's teaching? Did John just start ragging on Herod and word got back to him? We don't know. I suspect that Herod himself came to see John, to see what all the fuss was about, and John knew who he was and confronted him over his behavior. Based upon the 3 questions, *what should we do*, I would not be surprised if Herod proposed the very same question to John. However, John's answer angered both Herod and Herodias, who believed that they ought to be able to do any damn thing that they wanted (people with power and/or money often believe that they are a law unto themselves). John tells them that they are not.

Luke 3:19b ...and for all the evil things that Herod had done,...

The sons of Herod the Great were apparently not very angelic (several of them tried to kill their own father). The Bible only offers a handful of passages about Herod the Tetrarch. Apparently, he apparently did a lot of evil things.

Interestingly enough, John the baptizer reproved Herod Antipas for his actions, although we do not know exactly what caused John to speak of this.

Luke 3:19 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done,...

Herod the tetrarch was one of Herod the Great's sons. He was tetrarch over Galilee and Perea between 4 B.C. and A.D. 39. John the baptizer apparently reproved him for his actions as ruler. I must admit that, for many years, I did not get this. Herod is a ruler, he is going to do bad things like have Herodias, his brother's wife. It is reasonable to ask, so, *what of it?*

Royalty, in that era, was celebrity. People looked up to royalty and noted their actions and sometimes took moral cues from them. The problem being, if his immoral lifestyle is imitated, this makes for a very immoral Galilee. There is nothing worse for children than the dissolution of their family unit. In addition, I think that, the further a people get away from common morality, the further that they get away from God. That is, these two things go hand-in-hand.

Satan's attack upon a client nation is to change as many norms and standards of that client nation as is possible. The whole idea is, if an unbeliever has this set of standards which are wildly different from divine establishment and the Bible, it is easier for that person to simply reject the Bible outright. I believe that this is happening in the United States today; about a fifth of more of the population have views which are in complete opposition to Scripture. On some particular issues, this is much higher. With respect to homosexuality, there has been a cultural acceptance that it is inbred and natural—possibly as high as 50% of Americans believe this. The Bible takes a completely different view of homosexuality,

condemning homosexual acts as sinful and relating them to the downfall of the city of Sodom. So, you see the problem? If a person is raised to accept homosexuality is normal and okay; then the Bible view of it is going to put that person off. Furthermore, there are many believers who also believe that homosexuality is a non-issue. This puts them at odds with Scripture. A believer who does not accept that authority of the Scriptures is automatically going to have a sorry, unproductive Christian life.

The more places that Satan can set a nation at odds with divine establishment, the more likely he will take even more people with him into hell. So, this is why the morality of influential people is an important consideration.

How often does a generation rise up and reject the morality of their parents? In the United States, people often see popular culture or the actions of celebrities, and choose the morality that they live by, over the morality of their staid and bland parents.

One of the things which I have observed in my life is, 40–50 years ago, when Jesus was spoken of, He was given some respect. Even unbelievers and skeptics tended to accept that He lived and had to have been very wise, despite their own skepticism about Jesus being anything more than an influential human religious figure.

Today, I have observed many skeptics who doubt that Jesus even lived (despite Him having 4 biographers from His era); and most of them do not show Him or His words the slightest amount of respect. As a result, they give Him and His teaching little or no credence.

It is clear to me, during that same period of time, that the morality of the people of the United States has gone downhill. Not only do we have people who think that they can choose their gender, but that this gender might be one of 57+ gender options. Whereas, in the 1950's, the Bible may be considered sacrosanct by a majority of Americans, today, a person's sexual choices and deviations appear to have eclipsed Scriptural authority in importance.

Herod the tetrarch knew that what he was doing was immoral; and it seems reasonable that he understood that he, as a leading political figure, very much set the tone of morality for his people.

What Herod did quietly and behind closed doors is not a concern to anyone; but what he flagrantly did, marrying his brother's wife, also gave hundreds, if not thousands, of husbands, the go-ahead to set their wives aside and to choose someone else—after all, Herod did that. The rejection of the nuclear family plays havoc with a society. Herod's influence, even though he was not generally liked, could affect an entire generation of people.

I write this during a time when there are thousands of young protestors on the street, people who know next to nothing, but they believe what they believe with great passion, and are willing to harm other people and their property in order to impose their vision on

society, as murky as that vision might be. Let me suggest that, apart from few exceptions, these *protestors* are not the children of an intact Christian marriage. Most of them have a great deal of self-esteem (something pushed by our education system), but they lack any knowledge and wisdom. They only have their unchecked emotions (one of the reasons we spank children is because of their unchecked emotions).

Back to Herod. His immorality infected his entire household; and John the baptizer would come to his death as a result of the great immorality of the Herod family.

Luke 3:20 ...added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

In addition to all of the evil that he did, Herod put John the baptizer into prison. As we will find out, Herod had a rather nuanced relationship with John.

Rulers often hate to recognize that there are authorities over them. John the Herald is a spiritual authority over Herod; something that Herod was unwilling to accept. King David, on the other hand, accepted that he was not the ultimate authority. When Nathan the prophet came to him and reprimanded him for his immoral actions, David accepted Nathan's spiritual authority and willingly submitted to God's discipline as a result. He did not hold Nathan responsible in any way for reproving him. In fact, as we will find out in this chapter of Luke that King David named one of his sons by Bathsheba *Nathan*.¹¹⁰

Lesson 099: Luke 3:19–22 John the Herald, Herod Antipas and Jesus the Christ

For a brief time (for two verses), we leave the situation of John the Herald baptizing Jesus in the Jordan, and we look ahead in time, future from this date:

Luke 3:19–20 But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprov'd by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this [evil thing] to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

In the past, we have talked about whether the book of Luke was strictly chronological. At this point, Luke mentions something that would take place in the future, regarding the narrative that he had written up to v. 18. Luke will return to John and his ministry in v. 21.

So there is no confusion, Herod did not put John in jail, let him out, then John goes back to his ministry, and then Herod locks him up again. So, Luke tells us at the end of v. 20 what would take place in the near future (future to the events of this narrative); but he does not use the future tense.

There is a purpose to this: this is a literary device to separate and isolate the ministry of John the Herald from Jesus the Messiah. The ministry of Jesus and the overlap follows in the next passage. However, prior to this, we take John's ministry to its logical end.

¹¹⁰ He named one of his sons Nathan; and I assume this was to honor Nathan the prophet.

Being placed into prison is not the end of John's story; but it is, for all intents and purposes, the end of his public ministry. This is the case, despite there being quite a number of his disciples who continue for many years after. The communications of what was happening all over Galilee and Judæa was not broadcast to every person, 24/7. So, it is possible for people to have been baptized by John and consider themselves disciples of John, and remain that way long after John is no longer on the scene. During the next several years, they may not have any contact with John or with Jesus, for that matter. They may not be fully aware of all that is happening; or they may simply distance themselves from what takes place during the public ministry of Jesus. My point is, there are disciples of John who continue as his disciples for many years after this, even though John's actual ministry will end in a few months (I think no longer than 6 months from this point in time).

John has said, "**He [the Messiah] must increase and I must decrease.**" (John 3:30) That is what is happening right here. Slipping in vv. 19–20 is actually a very clever literary device.¹¹¹ This takes John's ministry to its logical end (he will still have disciples, but he will not be baptizing anyone at the Jordan River any more); and Jesus' ministry will begin at this point and move forward (beginning with some introductory verses in this chapter).

At v. 21, we go back to John baptizing people in the Jordan River. The previous two verses actually look forward in time when Herod will lock John up in prison. But, in v. 21, we return to John's public ministry of baptizing and exhorting.

At this moment in the narrative, Jesus is revealed to the people in an extraordinary way.

Luke 3:21a **Now when all the people were baptized,...**

We have no idea how long John's ministry continued; but there was a day when he was baptizing a large group of people that Jesus came forward. John's ministry appears to have continued for a few weeks or perhaps several months before Jesus arrived on the scene. There is no indication how many people John baptized, how many times he spoke publicly, whether he moved about on the Jordan or settled into one place—none of those things can be determined on the basis of Luke's account. However, if Jesus' ministry is 3–4 years, then I suspect John's ministry was perhaps 1–3 months; and possibly, up to 6 months. What is fascinating to me is, their very short ministries were preceded by 30 years of preparation.

Luke 3:21b **...and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,...**

When we put all of v. 21 together, it is going to make more sense.

Jesus is there with John, standing in the Jordan River with John, and He is baptized and He is praying. The aorist passive indicates that He received baptism at a point in time (which is covered in greater detail in Matthew 3:13-17).

¹¹¹ I did not recognize this on my own; but a footnote in the New American Bible pointed this out.

The present participle of *praying* suggests that Jesus was continuing in a state of prayer over an extended period of time. He is preparing for His public ministry, which is anticipated by being baptized and by praying in advance. What happens here will be the beginning of Jesus' entrance into God's plan for His public ministry.

Interestingly enough, where John is, at the Jordan River, is not where Jesus primarily ministered. Most of Jesus' public ministry will take place in Galilee (the region, not the sea); but He did go to Jerusalem for some of the holy days. John's ministry was taking place due south of the Sea of Galilee, in the Judæan desert (and, by desert, I mean uninhabited area).

Luke 3:21a-b **Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,...**

As we have studied, John spoke publically on a number of topics; and also, he baptized the people who came to him. This baptism would not be the same as the Christian baptism, as John was speaking to Israelites during the Age of Israel. So, when John baptized these people, the water represented the Kingdom of God; and John was associating his disciples with the Kingdom of God. He could present the Kingdom of God to his followers because the King was going to reveal Himself (actually, God would reveal Jesus as the King).

Jesus' baptism is unique and it marks His being baptized (which means, being identified fully with something) with the plan of God. John, as the herald of the Lord, baptized Jesus. This would mark the beginning of the Lord's public ministry, and the point at which John's ministry began to be eclipsed by the Lord's. Both men would, for some short period of time, have coterminous ministries, but the Lord's ministry would continue to grow and John's would level off or become smaller. And then, Herod would put John in prison.

Luke 3:21c **...the heavens were opened,...**

While Jesus is praying, and after He is baptized, the heavens open up. Now, we do not know if there was some sort of physical representation of this; or whether this opening is strictly defined by the next phrase. I believe that v. 22 will describe what is meant by the heavens being opened.

Let's look at all of v. 21 first:

Luke 3:21 **Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened,...**

Luke gives us a unique perspective. We know in the other gospels that Jesus came and John recognized Him. They were cousins, so John apparently knew what Jesus looked

like (this is an assumption on my part, as we do not know if there had been any contact between the two men previously¹¹²).

The other gospels tell us that, on previous occasions, John also spoke of Jesus to the crowds. This would make sense, since John's baptism for these people identified them with the Kingdom of God; so John would naturally speak of the King.

John baptized all of the people there, and Jesus was baptized after and then Jesus prayed, and the heavens opened up. What it means for the heavens to open up appears to be defined by the next verse:

Luke 3:22a *...and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove;...*

Something which appeared to be a dove (or dove-like) descended upon Jesus. Luke understands that this is the Holy Spirit taking on some sort of physical manifestation. I am assuming that this is what is actually taking place, rather than these words being metaphorical. My assumption is, those who were there tried to describe what they saw, and that the best description that they could come up with is, *the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove*. This is what they saw with their own eyes.

This manifestation of the Holy Spirit—appearing to be a dove coming out of the heavens—is probably how we are to understand the opening of the heavens. Maybe there was some sort of break in the heavens, but nothing like that is described here or elsewhere.

There is actually a bit of controversy here. Some say that the Holy Spirit could not have looked like a dove; but, that He just descended as a dove might. However, the text is clear that the Holy Spirit appears like a dove in bodily form. This simply means that God the Holy Spirit allowed Himself to be perceived as a physical shape, so that those who were there could actually see what was taking place.

We should bear in mind that, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit do not have a physical form that we are able to perceive with any of our 5 senses. We cannot touch God; and we cannot see Him. God created the universe, but God is not confined to the universe or to the physical laws of the universe. The form that God is actually in cannot be perceived by our 5 senses, no more than you can see the soul of any person that you speak to. However, God is able to reveal Himself in His Word and through some of the things which He does where He makes Himself visible and/or audible.

In my study of Exodus, I have many times made reference to the fact that God can be very theatric. He allows things to be seen and heard which are remarkable and remain in the memories of the viewers for a very long time. To us, these are words, and we try to develop a picture in our minds of what is taking place. Apparently Luke the author

¹¹² I would think that there was contact simply because both families seemed to be devout, meaning that they would go to Jerusalem for the various holy days.

interviewed people who were there, and they described these things to Luke, as best they could.

Luke 3:22a ...and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove;...

The Holy Spirit is not a dove; the Holy Spirit does not regularly appear as a dove. And, on top of that, Jesus certainly must have been powered by God the Holy Spirit prior to this. Therefore, I believe that all of this took place for the benefit of the folks who were there. Since God is very theatrical; things like this (a dove coming from out of the heavens appearing to light upon the Lord) help to point out to humankind what we should focus upon.

“Look upon This Man! Study Him!” is what God is telling the people there.

What people understood from this is, the heavens opened up and the Holy Spirit came down and dwelt upon the Lord.

The people who were there and witnessed this—these were John’s disciples. They listened to John’s words and, presumably, they tried to live as John said that they should. However, something needs to happen which tells John’s loyal disciples that Someone greater than John has arrived (as John himself was teaching).

I believe that the opening of the heavens and the descending of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus were things which people were able to see. This was quite supernatural and certainly dramatic. It would be my assumption that God made these various aspects perceptible to the human eye; and I do not believe that this was a mass hallucination.

There is certainly a reasonable question to be posed at this point: is this the first time that Jesus received the Holy Spirit? If it is, what has He been doing up until this point in time?

From the beginning, and we do not know precisely how this worked, Jesus was sinless, fully human, possessing both the Holy Spirit and Deity. However, it appears that, in some form or fashion, His function as God was set aside (doctrine of Kenosis). It would logically make sense that He actually received the Holy Spirit at the moment of birth. It would also make sense that Jesus did not access His Deity even from the point of birth.

It is not clear when Jesus, in His humanity, would have realized that He is divine; nor is it clear why He knew to not to access His Deity. Whatever interplay or interaction or understanding which existed between Jesus the Infant and Jesus the God, we have no idea.

Because this relationship between Jesus the Man and His Person as God is unique, it is difficult to explain every aspect of that. There are many analogies which can be drawn, but they will fall flat. For instance, there are a number of very recognizable celebrities who use wigs and makeup in order to go out and do things unnoticed in public. They are setting aside their considerable fame in order to enjoy some privacy. For these minutes or hours

where they exist apart from their recognizable faces and fame, could be seen as analogous to our Lord setting aside His Deity. Poor analogy, I realize.

There was a second way in which the heavens opened up:

Luke 3:22b ...and a voice came from heaven,...

The second sign of the heavens being opened is the voice which seems to come down from the heavens.

I believe that this voice of God could be audibly heard by John and those who were there to be baptized. All of this was very memorable for those who were there. These people would later share the story of what they saw and heard with Luke and other gospel writers (all 4 biographers record this incident).

Luke 3:22c ..."You are My beloved Son;..."

It appears that Matthew and Luke present the actual words from heaven differently. To the people who are there, they hear, "This is My Son..." (Matt. 3:17b) but Jesus heard the words, "You are My Son..." (Luke 3:22c). Whether these are separate phrases spoken by God, or if this is the same voice, but perceived differently, we do not know. Is it possible for one set of people to hear one thing, and another to hear something else? I would assume so. No doubt, God is able to do something like this. God is not confined to our universe or nor is He constrained by natural laws.

Literally, Jesus is called *the Beloved of mine*. Often, in the Greek, the application of the personal pronoun is understood. However, here, *of Mine* = *My* is a part of the text.

Luke 3:22d ...with You I am well pleased."

Again, Matthew and Luke present this differently. In Luke, God speaks directly to Jesus; in Matthew, God speaks of Jesus in the 3rd person. Whether these are two separate statements made one after the other; or one statement heard differently, we are not told. I believe that we may rest assured that both things were heard.

Luke 3:22 ...and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."

John baptizes Jesus, followed by two things which were perceived by the people there—something like a dove came out of heaven and descended upon the Lord; and a voice came out of heaven as well. The voice of God. These two things together represent the opening of heaven.

Luke 3:21–22 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."

John the Apostle also noted that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove (John 1:32–34)—but it is clearer in Luke that the Holy Spirit appears to be in the form of a dove.

Throughout Scripture, all members of the Godhead have appeared in some form or another. We are unable to see God. He does not have a form or visage that we are able to see, as God does not belong to the time/matter/space universe which He created; He is not confined to the laws of this universe either.

God is able to enter into human history—into our time/matter/space universe—and Jesus did; and His humanity was perfectly real, visible and understandable.

The way that all of this is presented makes me think that Luke spoke to someone who was there when John baptized Jesus and the Holy Spirit was observed to descend upon the Lord.

Luke 3:21–22 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased."

I believe that the *heavens opening* (v. 21) are defined by the text of v. 22. Two things happened: the Holy Spirit appeared visually to descend upon Jesus, like a dove. Then, the people who are there heard the voice of God speak (on very rare occasions, God's voice is heard by a group of people—the only two examples I can think of are here and when the Ten Commandments were given audibly to the people of Israel).

Having come to the end of Luke 3A, there are two topics for us to examine: (1) the doctrine of baptism (which will be presented as two separate doctrines); and (2) John's baptism of Jesus in the other gospels. How do these narratives compare?

There is a package of R. B. Thieme, Jr. notes floating about the internet, where they are indexed and can be viewed in a browser, so that one might easily locate specific topics and passages. I have done considerable editing of this doctrine, but the fundamental credit for the development of this doctrine belongs to R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Many other doctrinal pastors are around who provide these same doctrines; and some of these doctrines vary little from Bob's original work.

The Meaning of the Word Baptism (from Thieme notes)

1. The Greek verb is baptizō (βαπτίζω) [pronounced *bap-TID-zoh*]. Therefore, it

The Meaning of the Word Baptism (from Thieme notes)

should be obvious that our English word, *baptize*, is a transliteration from the Greek. The definitions given to this word are: *to baptize, to wash, to immerse; to do a ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism*. More importantly, there appears to be the concept of *identification*; that is, a baptism *identifies, associates or relates* one thing to another. Strong's #907.

2. The Greek noun is *baptisma* (βάπτισμα) [pronounced *BAP-tis-mah*]. Obviously, *baptism* is a transliteration as well. The given meanings for this word are: *baptism (real or figurative); immersion*. As above, there is the further concept of, *identification, association, relation*. Strong's #908.
3. We know the etymology of the verb because it is found in ancient Greek literature. These words have come down to us through three different Greek languages over a period of 1000 years. Before these words became a part of the New Testament they were already a thousand years old. So we know almost exactly what they mean. The Greek word for baptize means, *to identify one thing with another, to identify with "something else"; to place something into something else and thus identify them together*.
 - 1) Homer, in the IX book of The Odyssey, used the word *baptize* in his analogy of the spear entering the eye of the Cyclops and with the immersing of hot steel in water by the smith: the steel was identified with the water; the steel was placed into the water.
 - 2) Herodotus used the word *baptize* in baptizing a new spear in the blood of a pig which had been sacrificed to the god of war. The spear was placed into the blood; thus, the spear was identified or associated with (or related to) its purpose, which was to draw blood. When the Spartans went to war they always took an oath to kill the enemy and, as they took this oath, they plunged their spear into the pig's blood. That was called the baptism of the spear. It was now a warrior's spear, as it had touched blood. So the point of the spear, which is something, goes into something else (the pig's blood) which has been offered as a sacrifice to the god of war. We may add to this concept that, when placed into the pig's blood, the spear was associated with blood for the first time. However, this is not the case with the next historical example.
 - 3) Euripides used *baptize* in identifying a sunken ship with the sea. The "something else" was the bottom of the sea. He said the ship was baptized in the sea. The ship is fully immersed, but it is also fully identified with or associate with the sea—and, in this case, this association is complete and forever.
 - 4) Thus, the connotation of the word baptizo is always identification or association with "something else". This is achieved by putting something into something else, and that is all.
4. There are seven baptisms found in the Bible. Four of them are dry and three of them are wet, but in each of these baptisms, something or someone is identified with, associated with, or related to something else. That is what baptizo really means. We will study those 7 baptisms in the next doctrine.

The Meaning of the Word Baptism (from Thieme notes)

5. "Baptize" is not an English word but the transliteration of a Greek word. The only way to translate it is give it its proper meaning: *to identify, to identify something with something else, to closely associate two things together, to set the precedence of a relationship between two things.*
6. To summarize: Baptizô or baptise means *to identify, to associate, to relate*. This may have begun with immersion of one thing into another, but that is done with a more fundamental purpose in mind (to associate, identify or relate one thing with another). This was true in the days of Homer. Homer used these words in the sense of identification. Then in the days of the great Greek historians of the fifth century B.C., Herodotus and Thucydides used it. Euripides used it. And always with great consistency the verb and the nouns have meant *identification, association, relation*; and often achieved or represented by *immersion*. The deeper connotation is *identification, association, or establishing a relationship*. Something is identified with something else. Homer talks about the crafty Ulysses putting the sharpened beam into the eye of Cyclops. he says the plunging of the beam made a hissing noise like a man who smelt iron when he dips the iron into the water, and he used the word bapto, identifies it, so that the iron is tempered. So the word has been used extensively so there was never a reason to have a transliteration rather than a translation. The translation should be *identification, association, establishing a relationship; often represented by immersion*.

Although this doctrine was edited and appended, it is based upon the work of R. B. Thieme, Jr.

There are seven baptisms in the Scriptures (four real, three ritual). The WEB translation (capitalized) is used below, unless otherwise noted.

The information below came from a collect of R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s notes.

The Seven Baptisms of Scripture (from Thieme notes)

Baptize means *to identify, to associate, to relate one thing to another, to be made one with*. Sometimes this identification is established or initiated with an immersion; but with the examples below, it is clear that is not always the case. It means something so identified with something else that its nature or character is changed, or represents a real change that has already taken place.

1. The 4 Real Baptisms: (Actual Identifications, associations, and/or relations)
 - 1) Baptism of Moses — 1Corinthians 10:1,2. The children of Israel are identified with Moses and the cloud as they pass through the Red Sea. 1Cor. 10:1–2 **Now I would not have you ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;...** In that time, Israel was being led by a cloud and a pillar of fire. They followed the cloud into the midst of the sea, where the sea was pushed aside and the ground was

The Seven Baptisms of Scripture (from Thieme notes)

- dry. The children of Israel were fully identified or associated with Moses and with the cloud (the leading of God); and yet, they are completely dry. The Egyptian soldiers who pursued them were immersed in the water and they drown. The Egyptians, who were immersed, were *not* baptized.
- 2) Baptism of the cup and the cross — Matthew 20:22a (**But Jesus answered, "You don't know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"**). Jesus would drink from the cup of our sins; and Jesus would be fully associated with or fully identified with our sins, and He would take the punishment for those sins. 2Corinthians 5:21 **For Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.** Jesus Christ drank the cup filled with our sins — He thus identified with our sins and He bore them on the cross. His identification with sin is the baptism here. 1Peter 2:24 **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by Whose stripes you were healed.**
 - 3) Baptism of the Holy Spirit, which takes place in the believer. 1Corinthians 12:13 **Because by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.** (UTV) The believer at the point of salvation is placed into the body of Christ. He is fully identified as a believer, as a Christian; he is completely associated with or related to Jesus Christ. This baptism is the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5 Romans 6:3,4 Galatians 3 Colossians 2:12 Ephesians 4:5.
 - 4) For those who live during the Church Age, we are either baptized by the Holy Spirit in life or we face the baptism of fire at death. Unbelievers face the baptism of judgement. In the Tribulation, this will be represented by the Battle of Armageddon: Matthew 25:31, 33 3:11 Luke 3:16 (**John answered them all, "I indeed baptize you with water, but he comes who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to loosen. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, ..."**) Unbelievers are identified or associated with judgment; they are identified with and immersed in the fire. There is a great contrast set up in 2Thessalonians 1:6–10 **Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay affliction to those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, punishing those who don't know God, and to those who don't obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus, Who will pay the penalty: eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He comes in that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired among all those who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.**
2. The 3 Ritual Baptisms: (*representative Identification, close association with, a relationship initiated*) Water is used for these rituals. Water is symbolic of something else, but the individual is fully identified with the water and therefore,

The Seven Baptisms of Scripture (from Thieme notes)

related to or associated with what the water represents.

- 1) The baptism of John — Matthew 3:6, 11a Luke 3:16a. The water symbolized the Kingdom of God which John proclaimed. As herald to the King, John announced the coming of the King-Messiah. People, when baptized by John, were indicating, in effect: “I have believe in the imminent revelation of the Christ (Greek name for *Messiah*), and I am now symbolizing that identification/association/relation with His Kingdom by baptism.” Furthermore, the baptism represented a cleansing of the people, as one could not enter into the Kingdom of God without being cleansed.
- 2) The baptism of Jesus by John was a unique baptism. Water was used; John did the baptizing; but Jesus Christ was NOT a sinner. Therefore, Jesus’ sins were not washed away; He was not cleansed.
 - (1) The water is symbolic of the Father’s will or plan. Jesus Christ identified Himself with the Father’s will in the execution of God’s plan for salvation — Matthew 3:13–17.
 - (2) Clearly, we cannot “follow the Lord in baptism” as His purpose was to secure our redemption.
 - (3) We are able to follow the Lord and duplicate the mode of His baptism. However, our baptism this has a different but related association.
- 3) The baptism of the believer in the Church Age — Acts 2:38.
 - (1) Water represents the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers are identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It symbolizes retroactive and current positional truth. It is the ritual of the real baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is thus a picture of Spirit baptism.
 - (2) The person going into the water is identified with the water and with Jesus in His death. He is saying in effect, “I am identified with Jesus in His death.”
 - (3) The person coming out of the water is identified with the air which represents: Identification with Christ in His resurrection. The believer is giving testimony to current positional truth — allowing His resurrection life to live through us.
 - (4) In essence, we are also identifying with the plan of God, which begins for us at the cross. Water baptism is simply a recognition that we have believed in Jesus Christ and have begun our place in the plan of God at the cross.
- 4) One verse may seem to be confusing, regarding the baptism of John and the baptism of the believer in the Church Age: Acts 8:12 **But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**
 - (1) Jesus had come to the Jews and proclaimed the Kingdom of God, as He was their King.

The Seven Baptisms of Scripture (from Thieme notes)

- (2) The early believers in the Church Age believed that Jesus would return during their lifetimes, thus initiating the Kingdom of God.
- (3) Philip presented the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He had died for our sins, was buried and then resurrected.
- (4) Jesus' return is still taught today, which is preceded in time by the rapture of the church.

Ritual without reality is meaningless. The Church Age believer may participate in the ritual of water baptism. Water baptism should only take place *after* a person has exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is reasonable that the new believer learn enough doctrine to make the ritual meaningful.

The believer needs doctrine before ritual baptism. It is a good idea that they understand positional truth: retroactive positional truth, current positional truth, experiential positional truth, and human good versus divine good. He should understand the difference between relationship and fellowship. Once we have believed in Jesus Christ, we always have a relationship with God through Him. However, we only have fellowship with God when we are temporally cleansed by means of 1John 1:9 (by naming our sins to God).

The believer was baptized in the early church very soon after salvation. Reason: Because as soon as the individual was saved he was given a long lesson in Bible doctrine. Immediately upon understanding the basics the individual was baptized. An individual should never be baptized until he understands the doctrine behind the ritual.

All Church Age believers participate in the real baptism of the Holy Spirit.

As R. B. Thieme, Jr. said many times, *ritual without reality is meaningless*.