

# Luke 01 - Birth of John the Baptist; Annunciation of the Messiah; Mary's "Magnificat"; Birth of John the Baptist; Zacharias "Benedictus"

## I. Introduction to the Son of Man (Luke 1:1—2:52)

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## Luke 1

### I. Introduction to the Son of Man (Luke 1:1—2:52)

- (1) Prologue (1:1-4)

**1 Since** many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

**1** Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us,

**1** Since many people have attempted to write an orderly account of the events that have transpired among us,

**1** Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

— “Since” - *επειδέπερ*, literally “because”; only here in the NT

— Luke tells us that when he wrote his gospel, there were already several written accounts of Jesus' ministry, perhaps including the gospel of Matthew. There were probably some un-inspired accounts of Jesus' life and ministry as well.

— Luke's statement doesn't imply that existing accounts were deficient, he simply wanted to write an account that was orderly and based on reliable research (v3).

2 just as **they** were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were **eyewitnesses** and **servants** of the word,

2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word,

2 just as they were passed down to us by those who had been eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

- "...they" - they were eyewitnesses, in contrast to Luke
- "...eyewitnesses" - *autoptes*, "to see for yourself"; a medical term, "to make an autopsy"
- Luke wanted to assure Theophilus, and all future readers, that his account came directly from eyewitness testimony of people who accompanied Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry
- "...servants" - *hyperates*, "under-rower"; also a term for clerical assistant who knew shorthand
- "eyewitnesses" and "servants (of the word)" are parallel descriptions of the same group of people

3 it seemed fitting to me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it out* for you **in an orderly sequence, most excellent Theophilus**;

3 it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it out* for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;

3 I, too, have carefully investigated everything from the beginning and have decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

- In v1-2, Luke described the work of previous writers; here, he refers to his own gospel, filled with his personal research, laid out in an "orderly" account.
- "...in an orderly sequence" - *kathexes*, one after another; consecutively; in chronological order
- This adjective used by Luke distinguishes his Gospel from Mark's, which he was very familiar with (he quoted Mark more than any other source)
- "...most excellent" - an official of some kind (Cf. Acts 23:26; 24:3; 26:25, which use the same term *kratistos*)
- "...Theophilus" - literally, "lover of God," was a common name during the first century. He was probably the direct recipient of Luke's gospel who then gave it wide circulation in the early church.

— He is a believer, apparently a recent convert from Greek paganism. Other gospels are in circulation. Luke's gospel is early. Luke identifies himself as a believer. He apparently joined Paul in Acts ("we" passages).

- Luke is writing as an investigator, not an eyewitness. He demonstrates diligence and thoroughness throughout his writings. He is a skilled historian.

4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

4 so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

- The stated purpose of Luke's gospel: Luke wrote to inform Theophilus about the truthfulness of the gospel that Theophilus had heard.

— In Acts, Luke said he had written previously about the things that Jesus began to do and teach before His ascension (Acts 1:1-2). He then proceeded to record the things Jesus continued to do and teach after His ascension—through His apostles—in Acts.

Christianity does not require believing things that are contrary to facts, but believing things that are true. Luke wrote his introduction to assure his readers that there was a factual basis for their faith.

### **Birth of John the Baptist**

Luke compares John's birth and maturation with Jesus' birth and maturation. In both cases:

- Parents were introduced (v5-7,26-27)
- An angel appeared (v8-23,28-30)
- A sign was given (v18-20,34-38)
- A woman who had no children became pregnant (v24-25,42)

(2) Announcement of John's birth (1:5-25)

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**.

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

5 During the reign of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was

Elisabeth.

- John by lineage, was one who was to become a priest. His parents lived when Herod the Great ruled as king of Judea from 37 to 4 BC. Both of his parents had a priestly heritage.
- "...Zechariah" = "God Remembers"
- "...division of Abijah" - Zechariah was of the 8th of 24 "courses" (divisions) of priests, drawn up in David's time (1 Chr 24:7-18)
- "...Elizabeth" - "His oath"
- The two are one flesh: "God remembers His oath"

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, **walking blamelessly** in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

6 Both of them were righteous before God, having lived blamelessly according to all of the commandments and regulations of the Lord.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

- Shows that Elisabeth's childless condition was not the result of her sin.
- "...walking blamelessly" - *amempos*, meant that they dealt with sin in their lives quickly, and as God required, not that they were sinless (Cf. Phil 2:15; 3:6; 1 Thess 3:13; Heb 8:7).
- The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was typically superficial and hypocritical, but Zacharias and Elisabeth were truly godly.

Sometimes we are deprived of something because God has better things awaiting us down the road. When we wait patiently on the Lord, he often gives us more than we imagined possible. Zacharias and Elisabeth wanted a child; God gave them a prophet.

The nation of Israel had no prophetic word for 400 years; Malachi closes with the promise of the coming of Elijah (Mal 4:5-6). John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). The OT period closed with John (Matt 11:13; Luke 16:16).

7 And yet they had no child, because Elizabeth was infertile, and they were both advanced in years.

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

7 They had no children because Elizabeth was barren and because both of them were getting old.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

- Elisabeth's condition was identical to Sarah's (Gen 17:16-17; Cf. Gen 16:4,11; 29:32; 30:1,23; 1 Sam 1:5-11; 2:5-8)
- Barrenness was a shame in that culture; it was an embarrassment to her (v25)
- God allowed several OT women to experience barrenness: the mothers of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel.
- Whenever the OT said a woman had no child, it also recorded that God gave her one later. Therefore, this statement prepares the reader for a miracle.

### **The Angel's Announcement to Zacharias**

- 8** Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,
- 8** Now it happened *that* while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,
- 8** When Zechariah was serving with his division of priests in God's presence,
- 8** And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,
- 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
- 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
- 9 he was chosen by lot to go into the sanctuary of the Lord and burn incense, according to the custom of the priests.
- 9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.
- There were so many priests at that time that the great privilege of offering incense on the golden incense altar in the temple fell to a priest only once in his lifetime.
- It was a privilege to stand before the incense altar in the holy place because this was as close to the holy of holies as any non-high priest could get. This would be the highlight of Zacharias' life.
- Zacharias was chosen by lot (*elache*) to be the priest who offered incense. God is sovereign over the lot (Esther 3:7; Prov 16:33).
- Interestingly, neither the Ark nor the Shekinah was present in Herod's Temple
- 10 And the whole multitude **of the people** were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.
- 10 And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.

10 And the entire congregation of people was praying outside at the time when the incense was burned.

10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

- "...of the people" - *laos*, crowd or multitude; an important word in this gospel [36x]

- Zacharias was tending the Golden Altar (the Altar of Incense), which is associated with the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies.

— The Altar of Incense represents the prayers of the nation: Outside, the people were praying while inside Zacharias offered incense at the altar. This was probably the evening "incense offering" at 3pm (Cf. Dan 9:21; Acts 3:1)

— Incense symbolized the ascending prayers of God's people that rise like a sweet fragrance to Him (Cf. Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3-4).

— The Ark was not in the Temple in those days, but the altar Zacharias tended is believed to be the original Golden Altar.

— At that particular moment Zacharias was the focal point of the entire Jewish nation.

Luke stressed prayer more than any of the other gospel writers. Here, as elsewhere in Luke & Acts, prayer is a prelude to divine revelation (Cf. Luke 3:21-22; 9:28-36; 22:39-46; Acts 4:23-31; 10:3-5,9-16,30-32; 13:2; 22:17-21).

11 Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

11 And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

11 An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the incense altar.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

- An angel evidently materialized beside the altar as Zacharias performed his duties

— Obviously, God took the initiative, at the time He chose, to reveal what He was about to do.

— Angelic appearances always indicated important events in the OT (Cf. Gen 16:10-11; Judges 13:3-21). As far as Scripture records, this was the only time an angel appeared in the temple.

12 Zechariah was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him.

12 Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him.

12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled, and fear overwhelmed him.

12 And when Zacharias saw *him*, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

- Zacharias was gripped with fear. This is a normal response—fear or awe (*phobos*) when confronted with mighty acts of God (Cf. Luke 1:30,65; 2:9-10; 5:10,26; 7:16; 8:25,37,50; 9:34,45; 12:4-5,32; 21:26; 23:40).

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 name him John**.

13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

13 But the angel told him, "Stop being afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name him John.

**13** But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

- "...Do not be afraid" - occurs 7x in this Gospel. The angel implies that Zacharias asked for a son along with his prayers for the nation: the angel told Zacharias what to name his son.

This will also be the case with Mary (Luke 1:31)

- "...your prayer" - Zacharias' prayer may have been a petition for a son

- "...you shall name him John" = "YHWH is [or has been] gracious"

— The angel not only gave the name of the son, but also detailed seven aspects of John's character.

### **Seven Aspects of John's Character**

(1) He will be a joy and a delight.

- In Luke, "joy" is often closely linked with salvation (3x in Luke 15). His ministry brought joy to Israelites who believed his message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3).

(2) He will be great in the sight of the Lord.

- How great? Jesus will say that no man born of woman is greater than John (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28). He is above all OT heroes.
- The expression "in the sight of" appears 35x in Luke and Acts. Used just one other time (John 20:30)

(3) He is never to take wine or other fermented drink.

- Appears to take a lifetime Nazarite vow (Num 6:1-21)

(4) He will be filled with the Spirit from the womb (v41)

(5) Many of the people of Israel would he bring back to God

- Crowds of Israelites did turn to the Lord through John's ministry (Matt 3:5-6; Mark 1:4-5)

(6) He would adopt the manner and dress of Elijah

- Another way he emphasized the urgency of his message was to dress, act, and eat like Elijah the prophet (Matt 3:4; 2 Kings 1:8)

(7) He would be the Messiah's Forerunner (Is 40:3; Matt 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)

- How was Jesus different than any other religious leader? For one, he had an advance man to prepare the way for him.

14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth.  
 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.  
 14 You will have great joy, and many people will rejoice at his birth,  
 14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he will be great **in the sight of** the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be **filled with the Holy Spirit** while still in his mother's womb.

15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.

15 because he will be great in the Lord's presence. He will never drink wine or any strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.

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 Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

- The cause of joy would be John's spiritual greatness; the same angel announced that Jesus would be "great"—without qualification (v32)
- "...in the sight of" - *enopion*, indicates God's choice and approval
- "...filled with the Holy Spirit" - a general term used by Luke to describe the presence and enablement of the Holy Spirit

John's greatness is not found in his choice of lifestyle, but in the fact that in understanding his calling, he pursues it fully carries out God's will faithfully. John's style will be different from that of Jesus. God does not make all people to minister in the same way. That diversity allows different types of ministry to impact different kinds of people.

16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.  
 16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.  
 16 He will bring many of Israel's descendants back to the Lord their God.  
 16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.  
 - John would turn the hearts of many Israelites back to God, as the prophets had done in the OT.

17 And *it is he who will go as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF FATHERS BACK TO *THEIR* CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

17 It is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

17 He is the one who will go before the Lord with the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, and to prepare the people to be ready for the Lord."

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

- No OT prophet was more successful than Elijah at turning the Israelites back to God
- After Ahab and Jezebel had pushed Israel's apostasy further than it had ever gone by instituting Baal worship as Israel's official religion, Elijah stepped in
- John would possess the same "spirit and power" of that Elijah had
- John would also be the predicted predecessor of Messiah (Mal 4:5-6; Cf. Mal 3:1)
- Jesus later explained that John fulfilled the prophecy of Messiah's forerunner (Mal 3:1). He would have completely fulfilled the prophecy of Elijah's return if the Jews had accepted Jesus (Mal 4:5-6; Matt 11:13-14).

### **Zacharias is Muted**

18 Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in her years."

18 Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years."

18 Then Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this, since I am an old man, and my wife is getting older?"

18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

- Zacharias was not an atheist, but a priest and a righteous man; he was offering prayer in the Temple and fully aware the messenger was supernatural. His doubt results in a confirming sign...
- When Abraham received the angelic announcement that God would give him the Promised Land, he, too, requested a confirming sign (Gen 15:8), which God provided.
- He should have simply believed the angel's announcement and given God thanks for it, as Abraham later did (Gen 17:17-18); so too did Manoah and his wife (Judges 13:2-21).
- Instead, he asked for verification of the promise, probably a sign (Cf. 11:29), and the angel gave him one. Problem is that it cost Zacharias inconvenience and embarrassment for nine months (Cf. 34-35)

— Perhaps Zacharias' request for a sign received a rebuke, whereas Abraham's did not, because Zacharias had the advantage of the OT record, whereas Abraham did not.

19 The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

19 The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

19 The angel answered him, "I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and to announce this good news to you.

**19** And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

- The angel helped Zacharias understand the seriousness of his mistake by explaining who he was

- Two named angels: Gabriel and Michael

— Gabriel is always on a Messianic announcement mission: Gabriel appeared 2x to Daniel (Dan 8:16; 9:21)

— Both times he also gave Daniel instruction and understanding. We infer he did the same here with Zacharias (Cf. v67-79).

— Gabriel could've been harder on Zacharias, but he was not—probably because Zacharias believed for the most part, and only wanted confirmation. He was not asking for a sign to help him believe.

20 And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time."

20 And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

20 But because you did not believe my announcement, which will be fulfilled at its proper time, you will become silent and unable to speak until the day this happens."

20 And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

- The sign: Zacharias struck dumb. Zacharias' inability to speak (and hear, Cf. v62) was partially a punishment for his unbelief, but it was also a sign.

— The sign served to heighten the wonder of what God would reveal, and to conceal Gabriel's revelation from the people until the proper time.

— In Luke, God may of His own initiative give a sign (1:36; 2:12), but requests for signs are consistently interpreted negatively (11:16,29-30; 23:8).

**21** And meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

**21** The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

**21** Meanwhile, the people kept waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed in the sanctuary so long.

**21** And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

- Zacharias' delay, then his inability to speak, impressed the worshippers that something supernatural had occurred (Cf. Dan 10:15-17)

**22** But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple, and he *repeatedly* made signs to them, and remained speechless.

**22** But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.

**22** But when he did come out, he was unable to speak to them. Then they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them but remained unable to speak.

**22** And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

- Normally, he would have pronounced the Aaronic blessing over them (Num 6:24-26)

- The people incorrectly assumed he had seen a vision, and Zacharias was unable to communicate to them what had really happened.

**23** When the days of his priestly service were concluded, he went back home.

**23** When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

**23** When the days of his service were over, he went home.

**23** And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

- He and Elisabeth lived in the hill country of Judah, where he probably pursued another occupation when not involved in "priestly" duties (v39).

### **Elisabeth's Pregnancy**

**24** Now after these days his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

**24** After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

24 After this, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and remained in seclusion for five months. She said,

24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,  
- The angel's announcement of John's birth to Zecharias occurred before Elisabeth conceived him (Cf. Matt 1:18-25). This is further evidence of his being a special provision from the Lord.

- Elisabeth's self-imposed seclusion may have been to safeguard the arrival of her child and her own health as an older woman.

25 "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon me, to take away my disgrace among people."

25 "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."

25 "This is what the Lord did for me when he looked favorably on me and took away my public disgrace."

25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

- She gratefully acknowledged God's grace in removing the "reproach" of his childless condition (Cf. Gen 21:6; 30:23; 1 Sam 1:19-20; 2:1-10; Ps 113:9).

- Mary, her cousin, may have been the first person to know the news (v36)

— Luke doesn't say, but Zacharias may have told her in writing about their son's destiny; she knew before Zacharias could speak that his name was to be John.

Zecharias and Elisabeth represent two different kinds of righteous people. Zecharias raises doubts about the angel's message, for the prospective parents are now beyond normal childbearing age (v18). Sometimes even good people have doubts about God's promise. Elisabeth pictures the righteous saint who takes her burden to God and rejoices when that burden is lifted.

### **The Announcement of Jesus' Birth**

This section parallels the previous section (v5-25). Their forms are so similar that Luke must have intentionally arranged them to bring out the similarities between them.

	<b>JOHN</b>	<b>JESUS</b>
<b>The introduction of the parents</b>	1:5-7	1:26-27
<b>The annunciation by an angel</b>	1:8-23	1:28-30
<b>The giving of a sign</b>	1:18-20	1:34-38
<b>The mother's reponse</b>	1:24-25	1:39-56
<b>The pregnancy of a childless woman</b>	1:24	1:42
<b>The birth</b>	1:57-58	2:1-20
<b>The circumcision and naming</b>	1:59-66	2:21-24
<b>The prophetic response</b>	1:67-79	2:25-39
<b>The growth of the child</b>	1:80	2:40-52

(3) Announcement of Jesus' birth (1:26-38)

**26** Now in the **sixthmonth** the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a **cityinGalilee** named **Nazareth**,

**26** Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

**26** Now in the sixth month of her pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

**26** And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

– "...sixth month" - the 6th month of Elisabeth's pregnancy

– "...city in Galilee" - Galilee was a Gentile area

– "...Nazareth" - Nazareth was a town with an undesirable reputation (John 1:46)

— Nazareth was not considered "kosher." Matthew makes the note that Jesus' subsequent association with Nazareth was also prophetic: "He shall be called a Nazarene" (Matt 2:23; Is 11:1)

— Gabriel now visited a small town in Galilee to meet Mary, contrasted with the big city of Jerusalem, where he met Zecharias.

**27** to a **virginbetrothed** to a man whose name was Joseph, of the **descendants of David**; and the virgin's name was Mary.

**27** to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

**27** to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

- Mary is a nobody in a nothing town in the middle of nowhere...but, both Mary and Joseph were of the House of David; the Book of Ruth links them with Bethlehem...

- "...virgin" - *parthenos*, refers to a young, unmarried girl and implies virginity; the word clearly means "virgin" here (Cf. v34)

- "...betrothed" - betrothal often took place shortly after puberty. Consequently Mary may have been a young teenager at this time, even as young as 12.

— In Jewish tradition, a girl was normally betrothed in the 13th year and for legal but not domestic purposes was from that point on considered to be married.

— Around a year later the girl was taken to the bridegroom's home for normal married life to begin

- "...descendants of David" - Luke identified Joseph as a descendant of David; this made Jesus a legitimate heir to David's throne, since Joseph was Jesus' legal father (Cf. 3:23). See [Daughters of Zelophehad](#) for details on Joseph's relationship to Jesus from the OT.

## **The Virgin Birth**

Dr. Luke gives us the most extensive account of the Virgin Birth: Luke calls her a virgin *parthenon*; she had not yet had sexual contact with a man (Luke 1:34). He notes she was pledged to Joseph (Luke 2:5). In the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, the Greek translation three centuries earlier also uses *parthenon*, an unambiguous term. She was a virgin. See [\*\*\(3\) Mistranslated Verses "Referring" to Jesus\*\*](#) in [Why Do Jews Reject Jesus as the Messiah?](#) for details on the virgin birth.

## **Jewish Betrothal**

A pledge: A man and woman pledged to each other for a period of time before actual consummation of marriage.

Binding: Much stronger than an engagement today. The two were considered married, but did not live together or have sex until after the wedding. If the wife proved unfaithful to her husband during this time, she could be stoned (Deut 23:24-25). Only divorce or death could terminate the betrothal, and from then on society considered them widow and/or widower. We must understand this ancient Jewish ritual to fully appreciate the relationship between the Bridegroom and His Bride, the Marriage Supper, et al.

Joseph the Carpenter: Nazareth was near Sephoris, a new capital being built. Joseph may have been a "builder" or architect (Mark 6:3).

*Tekton*: a worker in wood, a carpenter, joiner, builder; any craftsman, or workman; a planner. The term can also include a developer or builder in our modern sense. Even so, in a Greek-dominated culture, non-Greeks would obtain only modest roles.

### **The Angel's Announcement to Mary**

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, **favored one!** The Lord *is* with you."

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you."

28 The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord *is* with you!"

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art thou* among women.

- The fact that Gabriel greeted Mary as he did, and did not greet Zecharias the same way, shows Mary's favored position.
- "...favored one" - *kecharitomene*, a participle related to the noun *charis*, "grace"; she was "highly favored" because God chose to bestow special grace on her
- God did this without any special merit of her own (Cf. v47). Roman Catholic commentators dispute this, but competent scholars have shredded their arguments.
- Note: "among women" not "above women"

29 But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and was pondering what kind of greeting this was.

29 But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

29 Startled by his statement, she tried to figure out what his greeting meant.

**29** And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

- Gabriel's unexpected appearance in the temple unnerved Zacharias (v12), but it was his unusual greeting that puzzled Mary.

30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."

30 Then the angel told her, "Stop being afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God."

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

- Gabriel calmed her fears by announcing that he was present to offer a divine blessing

- Gabriel's admonition was the same as to Zacharias: "Do not be afraid, for you will have a Son" (v13). And again, the angel gives the name for the baby.

### **The Annunciation**

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you shall name Him **Jesus**.

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

31 Listen! You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

- This announcement would have come as good news to Mary...she would bear a Son, and He would be someone special.

- The words Gabriel used are very similar to the wording of Is 7:14 in the LXX (Cf. Gen 16:11-12)

- "...Jesus" - the Hellenized form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, which means "YHWH is salvation"

### **Named Before Birth**

- (1) Isaac
- (2) Ishmael
- (3) Moses
- (4) Solomon
- (5) Josiah
- (6) John the Baptist (v13)
- (7) Jesus (v31)

32 He will **begreat** and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the **throne of His father David**;

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

- "...be great" - like John (v15), Jesus would "be great"; even more, he would be "the Son of the Highest," a clear statement of His deity (Ps 2:7-9; 89:26-29; Cf. v35).

- Jesus would also be the long-expected Messiah, since God wold "give Him the throne of His father David" (2 Sam 7:12-14; Ps 89:3-4,28-29). His divine Sonship qualified Him for His messianic role.

- "...throne of His father David" [NASB] - not a reference to God's throne in heaven

— Gabriel does not change the literal interpretation of the Davidic Covenant of 2 Sam 7:12-16

— See [Dispensational Gaps](#) for a complete list of intervals in Scripture.

All four key aspects of the Davidic Throne are mentioned here. The Son of Mary is to sit upon the eternal Throne over the eternal Kingdom, for He was born into the eternal Dynasty. The eternality of the Dynasty, Throne, and Kingdom is assured because they all culminate in the Person who is Himself eternal, the Son of God.

The promises that God made to Israel have not been rendered null and void. Israel is yet to enjoy all the promises of the four unfulfilled, unconditional covenants, each of which points respectively to the four facets of Israel's final restoration.

33 and He will reign over the **house of Jacob** forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

33 He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

- "...house of Jacob" - not a reference to the Christian church; Mary could not have understood this expression in any other way

- Jesus will reign on the throne of David forever. No end.

## Five Key Predictions

(1) He will be great.

(2) He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Septuagint often used the term "Most High" (*hupsistos*) to translate the Hebrew 'elyown (Gen 14:18-22, et al). Mary could not have missed the significance of that terminology. The fact that her Baby was to be called the "Son of the Most High" pointed to His equality with YHWH.

- In Semitic thought, a son was a "carbon copy" of his father, and the phrase "son of" was often used to refer to one who possessed his "father's" qualities (e.g. the "son of wickedness" in Ps 89:22 means a wicked person).

(3) He will be given the throne of His father David. Jesus, as David's descendant, will sit on David's throne when He reigns in the Millennium (2 Sam 7:16; Ps 89:3-4,28-29; Is 9:1-7; 11-12; 61; 66; Jer 33). This is profoundly significant: the Throne of David did not exist during His earthly ministry and has yet to be fulfilled literally. Today He is on His Father's throne in heaven (Acts 2:29-36), not on David's throne.

- Many churches attempt to dodge the implications of this—and the myriad of OT prophecies regarding a literal earthly rule—a view known as "amillennialism."

(4) He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. Jesus' reign over the nation Israel as her King will begin in the Millennium and continue on into the eternal state.

(5) His kingdom will never end. These promises must have immediately reminded Mary of the promise of YHWH to David (2 Sam 7:13-16). David understood the prophecy as referring not only to his immediate son (Solomon) who would build the temple, but also to the future Son who would rule forever. David stated that YHWH had spoken of the distant future (2 Sam 7:19).

### **The Virgin Birth**

The Virgin birth was literal; David's throne will be literal. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves the Virgin Birth. Once you can prove the resurrection of Christ, then everything else comes together. His taking David's Throne will usher in a new reality. Mary would have understood that the angel was speaking to her of the Messiah. All five predictions deal with the greatness of the son, not the greatness of the mother...

34 But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

34 Mary asked the angel, "How can this happen, since I have not had relations with a man?"

**34** Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

- Mary, unlike Zacharias, did not ask for a sign that what the angel had predicted would happen

— Her question was not an indication of doubt, but an inquiry into *how* such a thing would be accomplished (Cf. Luke 1:18)

— The idea that the Messiah would appear soon did not surprise her. Instead, she asked how it would happen.

- Evidently Mary assumed that Gabriel meant she would conceive before she and Joseph consummated their marriage

35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will **overshadow** you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God.

35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

35 The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come over you, and the power of the Most High will surround you. Therefore, the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God.

**35** And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

- Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would be God's enabling agent who would make Jesus' supernatural birth possible (Cf. v41,67,80; 2:25-27).
- "...overshadow" - *episkiazo*, the same word for "overshadowed" in the Holy of Holies (Ex 40:35)
  - This word is also used in all three accounts of the Transfiguration where the cloud overshadowed those present (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:34).
  - Mary's womb would become a holy of holies for the Son of God. The Holy Spirit would bring out the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Christ.
  - This delicate expression rules out any crude ideas of a "mating" of the Holy Spirit with Mary.

The Virgin Birth was necessary:

- Because of Christ's deity and preexistence (Is 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2; John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17)
- It avoids the blood curse pronounced on Jehoiachin's line (more in Luke 3).
- Jesus would be legally identified as the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23; 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42)
- Required for Him to assume a human nature, without giving up His divine nature

36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth herself has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called infertile is now in her sixth month.

36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

36 And listen! Elizabeth, your relative, has herself conceived a son in her old age, this woman who was rumored to be barren is in her sixth month.

36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

- Even though she had not requested a sign, God gave her one: her cousin's barrenness being relieved

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

37 For nothing will be impossible with God."

37 Nothing is impossible with respect to any of God's promises."

37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

- Gabriel also reassured Mary with one of the greatest statements of God's power that God recorded in the Bible.

— He was alluding to the angel's words to Sarah, when he announced that she would bear a son in spite of apparently impossible obstacles (Cf. Gen 18:14).

- This statement undoubtedly comforted Mary in the following months, as it has comforted countless believers faced with difficult ministries or circumstances ever since.
- God can do the impossible. This should persuade those who doubt the possibility of a virgin birth to believe that God can do even this.

38 And Mary said, "Behold, the Lord's **bond-servant**; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

38 And Mary said, "Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

38 Then Mary said, "Truly I am the Lord's servant. Let everything you have said happen to me." Then the angel left her.

**38** And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

- "...bond-servant" - *doule*, a female bondslave; Mary affirmed her part in her Son's subsequent birth by assenting to the plan of God (Cf. v48)

- Gabriel's announcement bore bad news for Mary as well...her premarital pregnancy would bring misunderstanding and undeserved shame on her for the rest of her life (Cf. Deut 22:23-24).

— Therefore, her humble attitude is especially admirable (Cf. Gen 21:1,7,12; 30:34).

*There were three miracles of the Nativity: that God became a man, that a virgin conceived, and that Mary believed. And the greatest of these was the last. [Martin Luther]*

#### (4) Mary visits Elizabeth (1:39-56)

The conception of Jesus took place between v38 and v39. This section brings the parallel stories of John's birth and Jesus' birth together. The two sons had their own identities and individual greatness, but Jesus was clearly superior. John began his ministry by exalting Jesus in his mother's womb.

##### (A) Elizabeth praises the fruit of Mary's womb (1:39-45)

**39** Now at this time Mary set out and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,

**39** Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah,

**39** Later on, Mary set out for a Judean city in the hill country.

**39** And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judea;

- After the announcement and learning of the sign, Mary left Nazareth and hurried to see Elisabeth.

— The hill country in Judea may have been near Jerusalem, 50-70 miles from Nazareth; the journey would've taken 3-4 days.

40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

40 She went into Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.

40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, **the baby leaped in her womb**, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby jumped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

41 And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

- "...the baby leaped in her womb" - the baby received the Holy Spirit first

- The Holy Spirit also came upon Elisabeth, prompting her to greet Mary as the mother of the Messiah

— The Spirit evidently gave her intuitive or revelatory understanding of Mary's role

42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb!

42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb!

42 and she loudly exclaimed, "How blessed are you among women, and how blessed is the infant in your womb!

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb.

- Mary is the most honored of all women. A balanced view of Mary: She is highly honored, yet angel says "among" not "above" women.

- Elisabeth regarded the fact that John "leaped" in her womb as an indication of his "joy" that Mary, who would bear the Messiah, had come for a visit (v44)

43 And how has it happened to me that the mother of my **Lord** would come to me?

43 And how has it *happened* to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?

43 Why should this happen to me, to have the mother of my Lord visit me?

43 And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

- Elisabeth considered herself unworthy that the mother of the Messiah should visit her (2 Sam 24:21; Cf. 2 Sam 6:2-11)
- "...Lord" - *kyrios*, in Luke, the term often describes Jesus
- "Lord" would be more important for a Greek reader than would the term "Christ" (meaning "Messiah"), for the Gentiles had not been anxiously awaiting the Messiah
- On the other hand, the Septuagint often used the word "Lord" (*kyrios*) to translate YHWH (Cf. v45)
- Elisabeth called her "the mother of my Lord," He who was only a few days old as a zygote in Mary's womb.

44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb jumped for joy.

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

- Elisabeth related to Mary what Luke had already told the reader about John leaping in her womb (v41)

45 And blessed *is* she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

45 And blessed *is* she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

45 How blessed is this woman for believing that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled!"

45 And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

- Elisabeth said Mary was blessed, *makaria*, "happy" because she believed what God had told her. Mary visited joyously to confirm the Lord's word.

(B) Mary praises God (1:46-56)

### **The Magnificat**

46 And Mary said: "My soul **exalts** the Lord,

46 And Mary said: "My soul exalts the Lord,

46 Then Mary said, "My soul praises the greatness of the Lord!

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord...

- From the Latin Vulgate for Luke 1:34: *Et ait Maria magnificat anima mea Dominum.*
- "...exalts" - *megaluno*, to make great, magnify; to deem or declare great; to esteem highly; to extol, laud, celebrate; to declare glory and praise
- The term Magnificat comes from the first word of the Latin translation of this song ("magnify"); in English, it means "exalts"
- "The Magnificat" consists of at least 12 OT allusions and quotations. The same is true of the songs of Zacharias and Simeon (1:68-79; 2:29-32).
- Mary's familiarity with the OT shows her love for God and His Word
- Mary's recital has similarities to Hannah's song (1 Sam 2:1-10)
- First, Mary praised God for His special favor on her (Luke 1:46-50). Mary saw herself as part of the godly remnant that had served Yahweh.

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

47 My spirit exults in God, my Savior,

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

- She called God "my Savior," showing an intimate acquaintance with Him.

- As an OT believer, Mary's hope of salvation rested in God alone and His promises. Her hope was not in her own ability to make herself acceptable to God.

48 "For **He has** had regard for the **humblestate** of His bond-servant; For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed.

48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

48 because he has looked favorably on his humble servant. From now on, all generations will call me blessed,

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

- "...He has" - the Magnificat contains eight *He haths* which describe God's faithfulness (v48); power (v49); holiness (v49); mercy (v50)

- "...humble state" - Mary probably referred to her lowly social and personal position

- All generations of people would regard her as specially favored by God because he chose her to give birth to His Son.

49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.

49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.

49 because the Almighty has done great things for me. His name is holy.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

- Another reason why all generations would call Mary blessed: "He that is mighty" hath "done to me great things"

50 "And His **mercy** is to generation after generation Toward those who fear Him.

50 "And His mercy is upon generation after generation Toward those who fear Him.

50 His mercy lasts from generation to generation for those who fear him.

50 And his mercy *is* on them that fear him from generation to generation.

- "...mercy" - *e/eos*, God's mercy balances His power and holiness (Ps 103:17; Cf. Matt 23:23)

— *e/eos* translates the Hebrew word *hesed*, meaning "loyal love" in the LXX

— His mercy refers to His compassion, specifically to those with whom He has entered into covenant relationship. Those who fear God reverence and trust Him.

51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart.

51 He displayed his mighty power with his arm. He scattered people who were proud in mind and heart.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

- v51-53 reflects on God's power in reversing certain social conditions. His favor to Israel is especially in view.

— Through the Child that she was to bear, God was being merciful to Abraham and his descendants.

(All of our blessings and opportunities as Gentiles derive from the Abrahamic Covenant—through our relationship with the Son of David.)

### **Links to Abraham**

The Title (Gen 14) used by Gabriel (v32) was from an episode before Abraham was promised the land of Israel (Gen 15) and was circumcised (Gen 17).

52 "He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

52 "He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

52 He pulled powerful rulers from their thrones and lifted up humble people.

52 He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

- A striking feature of this poem is the fact that Mary viewed God as overthrowing established authorities. He had reversed Israel's political conditions.

53 "He has filled the hungry with good things, And sent the rich away empty-handed.

53 "He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed.

53 He filled hungry people with good things and sent rich people away with nothing.

53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

- He also reversed their social conditions

— Jesus' appearance and messianic reign would continue these divine works on a universal scale

In the ancient world it was accepted that the rich would be well cared for. Poor people must expect to be hungry. But Mary sings of a God who is not bound by what men do. He turns human attitudes and orders of society upside down.

54 "He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy,

54 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy,

54 He helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful,

54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;

- v54-55 recall God's mercy to Israel and to Mary (Cf. Is 41:8-89; 42:1; 44:21). He had been consistently faithful to His covenant promises with His people, having tempered judgment with mercy (Cf. Micah 7:20).

— God's past faithfulness gives hope for the future

55 Just as He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."

55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."

55 according to the promise he made to our ancestors— to Abraham and his descendants forever."

55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

- It was because of the Abrahamic Covenant that the Messiah came to bring redemption to Israel. It was also on this basis that Jesus taught the fact of the resurrection when confronted by the Sadducees who did not believe in it (Matt 22:23-33). Paul made the same point in Acts 26:6-8.

56 Mary stayed with her about three months, and *then* returned to **her home**.

56 And Mary stayed with her about three months, and *then* returned to her home.

56 Now Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

- This verse resumes the narrative interrupted in v46.
- Mary stayed with Elisabeth until John was born (v36)
- "...her home" - the Greek words indicate that she was still a virgin and was not yet married to Joseph.
- But by now, the tongues would have begun to wag... but by this time, God had given the good news to Joseph and instructed him what to do (Matt 1:18-25)

(5) Birth of John (1:57-80)

(A) Circumstances of the birth (1:57-66)

- 57** Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.
- 57** Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.
- 57** When the time came for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son.
- 57** Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

- The record of John's birth is given in a single verse, with friends sharing in the joy. The birth of Jesus will occupy an entire chapter (Luke 2).

- 58** Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.
- 58** Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.
- 58** Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.
- 58** And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.
- Elisabeth's neighbors and relatives shared in the joy of John's birth, as the shepherds did later when they announced Jesus' birth.

- 59** And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zechariah, after his father.
- 59** And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.
- 59** On the eighth day they went to circumcise the child. They were going to name him Zechariah after his father,
- 59** And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.
- Several verses focus on and emphasize *the obedience of Zacharias and Elisabeth*. The old couple was careful to follow the Law in circumcision of the boy (Gen 17:9-14; Cf. Luke

2:21).

— Normally the head of the household performed this operation

60 And yet his mother responded and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."

60 But his mother answered and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John."

60 but his mother said, "Absolutely not! He must be named John."

60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

61 And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name."

61 And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name."

61 Their friends told her, "None of your relatives has that name."

**61** And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

62 So they motioned to the baby's father to see what he wanted to name him.

62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

- Zacharias was, apparently, deaf as well as dumb

63 And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all amazed.

63 And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all astonished.

63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And everyone was amazed.

**63** And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

- God had named John prior to his conception

64 And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *freed*, and he *began* speaking in praise of God.

64 And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue *loosed*, and he *began* to speak in praise of God.

64 Suddenly, Zechariah could open his mouth, his tongue was set free, and he began to speak and to praise God.

64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue *loosed*, and he spake, and praised God.

- The fact that Zacharias immediately was able to speak amazed the crowd. Zacharias—and everybody else—praised God.

65 And fear came on all those who lived around them; and all these matters were being talked about in the entire hill country of Judea.

65 Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and throughout the hill country of Judea all these things were being discussed.

65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.

66 All who heard *them* kept *them* in mind, saying, "What then will this child *turn out to be?*" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

66 All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child *turn out to be?*" For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

66 Everyone who heard about it kept thinking what had happened and asked, "What will this child become?" because it was obvious that the hand of the Lord was with him.

66 And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

- Word then spread through the whole hill country (probably including the Jerusalem area) that this was an unusual child.

— The people continued to note that the Lord's hand was with him.

— Thirty years later, when John began his preaching ministry, many went out from this district who no doubt remembered the amazing events surrounding his birth (Matt 3:5)

— Priests served from ages 30-50. John and Jesus both began their ministries at 30.

(B) Zacharias praises God (1:67-80)

### **The Benedictus: Zacharias' Prophecies of John the Baptist's Ministry**

This psalm by Zacharias is filled with OT quotations and allusions.

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying:

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

67 Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

- The Holy Spirit "filled" Zacharias as He had Elisabeth (v41) and John (v15). He enabled the priest to prophesy.

— Zacharias uttered a psalm of praise in which he gave God's explanation of the significance of the events that had begun to happen in fulfillment of OT prophecy.

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited *us* and accomplished redemption for His people,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel! He has taken care of his people and has set them free.

68 Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

- "Blessed" - *eulogetos*, as in the Magnificat, the title of Benedictus comes from the first word ("Blessed") in the Latin

— There are at least 16 OT allusions or quotations in this song

- Zacharias first praised God for visiting his people Israel (Gen 21:1; Ex 4:31; Zech 10:3; Cf. Acts 15:14). He had done this most recently by sending Messiah's forerunner.

— Second, Zacharias praised God for redeeming His people. The best historical demonstration had been the Exodus, but now God was moving again to provide ultimate redemption, through the Messiah.

69 And has raised up a **horn of salvation** for us In the house of His servant David—

69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—

69 He has raised up a mighty Savior for us from the family of his servant David,

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

- "...horn of salvation" - Zacharias alluded to God's promise to raise this up from David's descendants ("a mighty Savior": Ps 132:17; Cf. Ps 18:2)

— He was speaking of Jesus, not John. He knew of Jesus' coming birth because of Mary's three-month visit (v56).

### Old Testament Allusions

- He would be a Jew (Gen 12:1-30)
- From the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10)
- From the family of David (2 Sam 7:12-16)
- Born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Cf. Ruth)

70 Just as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times—

70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

70 just as he promised long ago through the mouth of his holy prophets

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

71 Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us;  
71 Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us;  
71 that he would save us from our enemies and from the grip of all who hate us.  
71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

72 To show mercy to our fathers, And to remember His **holycovenant**,  
72 To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant,  
72 He has shown mercy to our ancestors and remembered his holy covenant,  
72 To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;  
- God would be merciful to the father by fulfilling His promises to them  
- "...holy covenant" - refers to God's promise in Gen 22:16-18; it includes promises of victory over enemies and universal blessing (Cf. Gen 26:3; Ps 106:45).

73 *The oath which He swore to our father Abraham,*  
73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,  
73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham. He granted us  
73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,  
- In v71-73, Zacharias alluded to "salvation," "mercy," and "covenant" fulfillment. The Messiah's salvation would be both political and spiritual (Cf. Ps 106:10).

74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of *our* enemies, Would serve Him without fear,  
74 To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,  
74 deliverance from our enemies' grip so that we could serve him without fear  
74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.  
75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.  
75 and be holy and righteous before him all of our days.  
75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

76 "And you, child, also will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;  
76 "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;

76 And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High, because you will go ahead of the Lord to prepare his way

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

- v76-77 focus on John and his ministry.

— This description of John clearly links him with Elijah (Cf. Is 40:3; Mal 3:1; 4:5)

77 To give His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

77 To give to His people *the* knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,

77 and to give his people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins.

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

- John would "prepare" (v76) the way for the Lord by giving "His people" the "knowledge of salvation" (Cf. 3:3; Acts 4:10-12; 5:31-32; 13:38).

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,

78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, his light from on high has visited us,

78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

- God's "tender mercy" (v78) motivated Him "to give salvation" (v77)

79 To shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

79 To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."

79 to shine on those who sit in darkness and in death's shadow, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and *in* the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Zacharias' "Benedictus" expounded four ideas:

(1) An exhortation to praise God (v68a)

(2) The reason God should be praised—He has come and redeemed His people (v68b)

(3) Deliverance for Israel through the Messiah (v69-75). The Messiah was to be Israel's horn of salvation (v69)

- The horn of an animal is an idiom for power and is a common symbol in ancient literature. Thus the Messiah would be strong and would deliver the nations from her enemies (v74)
- Again, the mention of God's holy covenant, *the oath God swore to Abraham* (v72-73); Cf. Gen 22:16-18 *on the very site of the crucifixion*.
- The title "Son of the Most High" is not uniquely Jewish. Melchizedek used the title, prior to the institution of circumcision. Not Levitical. Nebuchadnezzar calls Daniel's God the "Most High."

(4) Describes John's ministry. John would prepare the way for the Messiah (Is 40:3; Mal 3:1)

- Verse 77 may refer to the Lord rather than to John. However, John did preach the same message of forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3)

### **The Preparation of John the Baptist**

**80** Now the child grew and was becoming strong in **spirit**, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

**80** And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

**80** Now the child continued to grow and to become spiritually strong. He lived in the wilderness until the day he appeared in Israel.

**80** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

- "...spirit" - his character and personality

- Because of the special mission which John knew from an early age he would perform, he chose to follow the role of Elijah by living in a desolate area. As the son of a priest he would begin his ministry at age 30 (Num 4)

### **Legend of Elijah's Mantle**

There is a *legend* that when Elisha died, his mantle was placed inside the Golden Altar (the Altar of Incense). And when Zacharias received the visit of the angel, he was told to take the mantle with him (Cf. Luke 1:17) and that this may have been the very mantle that John the Baptist was wearing 30 years later (Cf. Mark 9:13). There seems to be evidence that this original Golden Altar was in the second Temple.

John was preaching at Beth Bara. People would travel 20 miles of windy desert road from Jerusalem to hear John preach. The Scripture tells us he was preaching in the spirit and power of Elijah. The *conjecture* is that he was actually wearing the mantle of Elijah.

### **Jesus' Birthday**

The records of the announcements and births of John and Jesus were arranged by Luke in parallel fashion. However, the emphasis is on the birth of Jesus, which will be described in greater detail than the birth of John (Col 1:18). A strong case can be made that Jesus was born on September 29, 2 BC (Feast of Trumpets): Flocks were in the fields. The Roman registration would not have occurred in winter. More likely summer or fall. John the Baptist was possibly born April 19-20 that same year (Passover).