

Luke Lesson 01

Luke Chapter 1

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Memory verses for this week: *2 Pet 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Introduction: We begin a new study on the book of Luke this week. Four different men, led by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, penned four different accounts of the gospel, each from a different view and perspective. God used these four men to give us a more full account of the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord. In Matthew 18:6, the bible says Mat 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. God has given us not only 3 witnesses, but four, each written by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One of the important things Luke does in his account is to show Christ as a guest in the home of various people, and dwelling a great deal on the prayer life of the Lord.

I. The Theme and Author of the Book of Luke

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

Luke 1:2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

Luke was a beloved physician and yet a very humble man. He never mentions himself here or in the book of Acts. He and Paul met at Troas on the second apostolic journey. (See Acts 16:6-11) In verse 10 of Acts 16, we see that Luke joined Paul's company when it says 'we'.

Acts 16:10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

Acts 16:11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

Luke was one of those faithful men that stood by Paul. In his last letter from Rome, Paul writes "*Only Luke is with me.*" II Timothy 4:11

The theme of the book is clear "The Things which most surely believed among the early Christians." These of course relate to the birth, life, death, and ultimate resurrection of Christ. Luke says many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things. Perhaps many who wrote were not inspired apostles, but wrote what they remembered about the accounts. But Luke says in verse 2 that these things were known

to him by those who were personally acquainted with the Lord, who had known him from the beginning.

In the book of Luke, he present Jesus as Man in all perfection, and backs it up with many evidences of this. In comparison, Matthew chose to present Christ as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel. John presents Him as the manifestation of Deity, the Eternal Son of the Father, the one who brings us salvation. Luke brings out some of these same things, but spends much time on the prayer life of the Lord.

Luke 1:3 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,

Luke 1:4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Luke insists that he had perfect understanding of all things from the beginning. He sought out those who had known the Lord Jesus personally and learned the facts from their own lips. He was of course, led by God to pen the inspired Word, but the Spirit of God led him to make use of all reliable sours of information.

2 Pet 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

In verse 4, Luke points out ‘the certainty of those things.’ The gospel rests upon these divinely accredited certainties.

II. The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

Luke 1:5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

Luke 1:6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

There was a period of time of about 400 years between the book of Malachi and the accounts of the Gospel in the New Testament. These years are referred to as the ‘silent years’ because there was not record of God speaking audibly to man. Neither by God or by angels and no prophecy was given during this time. God spoke by His prophet Daniel to reveal that there would be 483 years (69 periods of 7 years each) before the Messiah would come.

Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Some of the Jews like Zacharias, Simeon, and Anna knew that the time had almost expired. Many would go up to Jerusalem to observe the feasts of the Lord and hope that promise would soon be fulfilled. Then one day the angel of the Lord appears to Zacharias as he ministered in the temple.

Luke 1:7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

Luke 1:8 And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,

Luke 1:9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

Luke 1:10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

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

Zacharias was from the tribe of Levi and priest in Israel. The course of Abia (of whom Zacharias belonged) was the eighth of 24 courses that the priest served in the temple in two week intervals. On this day, he was burning incense at the sacred altar, the golden altar in the holy place. His wife was from the lineage of Aaron, the first high priest of Israel. All of the High Priests came from the family of Aaron. Other sons of Levi served as Priests, but only Aaron's descendants were High Priests. This couple were righteous people who walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. They had no children and they were now old and all hope for a child was gone. But Zacharias performed his duty faithfully while the people waited outside. This is a picture of Jesus as our great High Priest who has gone into heaven while we, His people, wait here upon the earth until he returns.

J. Vernon McGee said this about Zacharias and Elisabeth.

God breaks through after 400 years of silence. Chronologically Dr. Luke begins the New Testament. He goes back to the birth of John the Baptist, to where the angel Gabriel appeared to John's father as he served in the temple. John's parents were Zacharias and Elisabeth. *Zacharias* means "God remembers," and *Elisabeth* means "His oath." Together their names mean, "God remembers His oath." When did God take an oath? Psalm 89:34-37 records God's oath: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah." God swore an oath to David that one of his descendants would have an eternal reign. Christ is that descendant. "God remembers His oath!" God is ready to break through into human history after 400 years of silence.

Notice that the Scripture tells us both Zacharias and Elisabeth were righteous. That is, they were right. How were they right? They recognized they were sinners and brought the necessary sacrifice. i

i.J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

Luke 1:12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

Luke 1:13 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.

The appearance of the angel caused Zacharias to be troubled and fear fell upon him. No living Israelite during this time period had seen an angel. It was believed among the Jews that it meant death to look upon God or any heavenly representative.

Judg 13:21 But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD.

Judg 13:22 And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.

Luke 1:14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

The angel tells of the gift of a son whom Zacharias was to name “John”. The angel tells him to fear not, no doubt aware of the fear the man was feeling. The angel was also aware of the prayer he had made asking God for a son to be born. Perhaps he had just about given up on ever having a son, but God was faithful to answer his prayer. This boy was John the Baptist, and it says in verse 14 that many would rejoice and be filled with joy and gladness at this birth. He was to be great in the sight of the Lord. He was to drink neither wine nor strong drink. He was to take the vow of a Nazarite, which abstained from wine and strong drink as part of the vow. (Read about the vow of the Nazarite in Numbers Chapter 6.) John was to be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb. This was a very unusual thing as no other person has ever received the Holy Ghost at physical birth. All of us who are born again are filled with the Holy Ghost on the day we experience salvation. John was a great man. Jesus said there was none born of women greater than John.

Luke 7:28 For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

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 Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Luke 1:16 And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

Luke 1:17 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.

John was to turn many of the Israelites to the Lord. He was to go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah. As John went forth, he preached the gospel. We should also tell others about Jesus Christ in our lives.

Matthew Henry said this of John the Baptist:

He shall go in the spirit and power of Elias. That is, First, He shall be such a man as Elias was, and do such work as Elias did,—shall, like him, preach the necessity of repentance and reformation to a very corrupt and degenerate age,—shall, like him, be bold and zealous in reproving sin and witnessing against it even in the greatest, and be hated and persecuted for it by a Herod and his Herodias, as Elijah was by an Ahab and his Jezebel. He shall be carried on in his work, as Elijah was, by a divine spirit and power, which shall crown his ministry with wonderful success. As Elias went before the writing prophets of the Old Testament, and did as it were usher in that signal period of the Old-Testament dispensation by a little writing of his own (2 Chr. 21:12), so John Baptist went before Christ and his apostles, and introduced the gospel dispensation by preaching the substance of the gospel doctrine and duty, Repent, with an eye to the kingdom of heaven. Secondly, He shall be that very person who was prophesied of by Malachi under the name of Elijah (Mal. 4:5), who should be sent before the coming of the day of the Lord. Behold, I send you a prophet, even Elias, not Elias the Tishbite (as the Septuagint has corruptly read it, to favour the Jews' traditions), but a prophet in the spirit and power of Elias, as the angel here expounds it. ii

Luke 1:18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

Luke 1:19 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 show thee these glad tidings.

Luke 1:20 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.

Zacharias realized the limitations of his age and his wife's age. He asks how can this be. The angel identifies himself and says that he stands in the presence of God. And as we know, with God, nothing is impossible. Just as Abraham had his son Isaac past his prime years, Zacharias would likewise have a son in his old age. God had sent Gabriel with a message and to bring him these glad tidings. Zacharias was to be dumb and unable to speak again until the promise be fulfilled. Unbelief closed the mouth of Zacharias because he did not believe God. You and I can let unbelief and sin make us quiet from speaking in defense of God's Word if we are not careful.

Luke 1:21 And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

Luke 1:22 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.

The people continued to wait on Zacharias, and no doubt wondered why he was taking so long in the temple. It was time for him to come out and bless the people, however today

iiHenry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

he comes and out and can not speak. He beckons unto them but is speechless. They perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple due to his strange actions.

Luke 1:23 And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.

Luke 1:24 And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,

Luke 1:25 Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

Even though Zacharias could not speak, he still fulfilled his full two weeks of service in the temple, and then departs unto his own house. In verse 24, we have a record of Elisabeth conceiving and how she hid herself for 4 months. She was so full of joy to know that after all these years, God was answering her prayers and she was to have a son. Back at this time, a woman who did not have a child was looked down upon with reproach. Not only was Elisabeth to have a son, but he was to be the great one that was to prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ. He was to bring the gospel to the nation of Israel and prepare a people ready for the messiah to appear.

III. The Announcement to Mary of the Birth of Christ

Luke 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

Luke 1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Luke 1:28 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 birth of a Saviour had been promised many years before the angel visited Mary. In the beginning creation, God promised that there would be one that would come that would be our Savior.

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

The term “Her seed” referred to the seed of a woman. And her seed was none other than Jesus Christ.

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

In this verse in Isaiah, it is clearly told that a virgin would conceive a son. Immanuel means “God with us.” Mary was a virgin and had never knew a man.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

What great names are associated with our Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

In verse 26, it says the angel appeared to Mary six months after Elisabeth had conceived. Gabriel seemed to be the angel that the Lord always used to bring announcements. We have only three angels mentioned by name in the bible, Gabriel, Michael, and Lucifer which fell as recorded in Isaiah Chapter 14. Whether all three of these were arch-angels is not clear, but Michael is clearly noted as an archangel in Jude 9. I’ve always thought these three were the three archangels of God and given special tasks to accomplish. We know a large number of the angels were cast out with Lucifer when he was cast out of Heaven.

2 Pet 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Gabriel was sent to a certain city and to a certain person which was Mary. Mary was a virgin espoused to Joseph. Note she is not just a young girl as some versions of the bible make it out, but she is identified twice in verse 27 as a “virgin.” In verse 28, it says that Mary was:

“Thou art highly favored.”

“The Lord is With thee.”

“Blessed art thou among women.”

These things were not said about her because she was a popular person or because she lived a worldly life. It was because she was a woman who lived a separated life and was willing to serve God even if it cost her. Mary was a virgin of the house of David which made her born of David’s greater son. She was not chosen because she was a virgin, but she had to be to be chosen as Jesus’ earthly mother. But it was due to her being a spiritual person and subject to the will of God. Mary was from the tribe of Judah and qualified to bring the Savior into the world. We see the promise made to David concerning His son and the reference to Christ.

2 Sam 7:12 And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.

2 Sam 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

2 Sam 7:14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

Luke 1:29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

Luke 1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

Luke 1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

The announcement by the angel troubled Mary. She did not understand what he was telling her at this time. The angel told her to not fear but to realize that she had found favour with God. She would conceive and bring forth a son who would be called Jesus. Jesus of course means “Saviour”.

Luke 1:32 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:

Luke 1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The angel tells Mary that her son would be great and would be called the son of the Highest. Many who did not respect Jesus for who He was simply called him Joseph’s son, but Joseph was not Christ’s true Father. The Holy Ghost came upon Mary when she conceived. Joseph was Christ’s ‘step father’ as he might be called. He raised him on earth, but he was not Christ’s father. God promised that Jesus would be given the throne of David. It was a literal throne there in Jerusalem, and one day, after the seven years of Tribulation, Jesus will come and take up that throne. In Acts, the apostles asked Jesus if God would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Acts 15:13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

Acts 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Acts 15:15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

Acts 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

Acts 15:17 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

After the times of the Gentiles, God will return again and setup that throne of David. Christ in that day will reign 1,000 years on the throne. (Rev 20:4-6)

J. Vernon McGee said this about Christ.

This is plain language. There is no way of misinterpreting it. This passage is quite literal. Those folks who deny the virgin birth also do not believe that the Lord is going to sit on the throne of His father David. Apparently it was understood that what Luke is writing about is literal. The virgin's womb is literal, and the throne of David is literal. He shall literally reign over the house of Jacob, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. That kingdom is also a reality. iii

God stated that He would reign over the house of "Israel" forever. Israel was the name God gave to Jacob, and this has reference to the natural descendants of Jacob, the natural Jews. After the Millennial Kingdom, this kingdom will be moved to the new heaven and new earth and there will be no end of the kingdom.

Luke 1:34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

Luke 1:35 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.

Mary had to be both shocked and perplexed by this news. She asks a simple and pointed question... "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" This also points to the fact that she was a virgin. It was not a lack of faith, as it was when Zacharias could not understand how he (and his wife) could have a son since they were well stricken in years. Mary was asking for enlightenment as to how it was to happen. The angel tells her that the Holy Ghost would come upon her.

Luke 1:36 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.

Luke 1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

iiiJ. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

To confirm Mary's faith, Gabriel tells her that her cousin Elisabeth, known as barren, had also conceived and was now six months along with child. This points out how we know John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus. While all of this might be hard to believe, verse 37 makes it clear. "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

I thought J. Vernon McGee's comments on verse 37 were especially good.

J. Vernon McGee:

The birth of John the Baptist is also miraculous, but it is not a virgin birth. The statement of the angel, "For with God nothing shall be impossible," is a good one and something we need to hold onto during these days. I want to emphasize, however, that there are folk who have taken this statement and twisted and distorted its meaning. There is nothing impossible with God when He has determined to do it, but He will not necessarily do the impossible we ask of Him. Many people use this verse as a cliché to cover up the fact that they want their own selfish desires. Nothing is impossible with God, but there is a great deal that is impossible with you and me. When a man says, "Nothing is impossible with God" and fails at some task he claims the Lord gave him to do, it causes unbelievers to ridicule God.

Anything God determines to do He can accomplish, because there is nothing impossible with God. But that does not mean He will do everything believers want Him to do, because some things are not included in His plan. Let us put everything in proper perspective before we do a lot of talking that will hurt and harm the cause of Jesus Christ rather than help it. iv

Luke 1:38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

Mary was a woman of faith, and says for it be unto her according to thy word. I wonder if we were faced with such a difficult thing, would be so quick to agree. No doubt she realized that she would be facing shame from a world who would never believe the truth about her situation. These peculiar circumstances were not normal, and the world would never believe that she was chosen of God for this great miracle. But Mary was a humble servant, and accepted all of this as God's Will and bowed in submission to His Will. She was engaged to be married, and I'm sure she wondered what Joseph would think. We have a record of some of the things Joseph went through when he was told of what was to transpire with Mary.

Mat 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

ivJ. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

Mat 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

Mat 1:20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

Mat 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Joseph's great love for Mary is shown by his willingness to hide her away privately rather than making her be shamed before the public. She truly might have been stoned to death had he exposed her since the since of adultery was punishable by death. She was not guilty of any sin, but men and women would have thought she was. Because God sent the angel to tell Joseph the truth, he accepted things and did things the right way.

IV. Mary Visits Elisabeth

Luke 1:39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

Luke 1:40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

The bible doesn't tell us the thoughts Mary must have had after the angel departed. No doubt she would have wondered what her acquaintances and relatives would think of her. Would they believe her account of the angel, or think she had created the story to hid something she had done. Mary goes in haste to see her cousin, Elisabeth. While their situations were different, God was involved in both of their lives. Elisabeth was too old to have a child, but yet she was expecting one in a few months. Most likely she would have words of comfort to Mary who was young at this time.

Luke 1:41 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:

As Mary saluted Elisabeth, John leaped in her womb and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. This was another indication of how God was pleased and blessed both of these women.

Luke 1:42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Luke 1:43 And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

Luke 1:44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Luke 1:45 And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Elisabeth greets Mary with great words that had to encourage and uplift her. “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” These are not only words of faith, but point to the purity of Mary. And further proof of the words of Gabriel about how this mysterious child would be none other but God manifested in the flesh. This had to be a great blessing to Mary. Elisabeth tells her that there will be a performance of those things told her from the Lord.

Mary was truly a chosen vessel of God. She perhaps was the greatest woman that lived during this time. But irregardless of her greatness and purity, we do need to remember that is all she was. A great woman chosen of God to be the mother of Jesus Christ. She has no more power with God than any other saved person. Some teach that she can intercede for you with God. That is not true teaching. We are to come in the name of Jesus, the name above every other name.

Matthew Henry said this about the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth.

Blessed is she that believed. Believing souls are blessed souls, and will be found so at last; this blessedness cometh *through faith*, even the blessedness of being related to Christ, and having him *formed in the soul*. They are *blessed* who *believe* the word of God, for that Word will not fail them; *there shall*, without doubt, *be a performance of those things which are told her from the Lord*. Note, The inviolable certainty of the promise is the undoubted felicity of those that build upon it and expect their all from it. The faithfulness of God is the blessedness of the faith of the saints. Those that have experienced the performance of God’s promises themselves should encourage others to hope that he will be as good as his word to them also: *I will tell you what God has done for my soul*.

Mary’s song of praise, upon this occasion. Elisabeth’s prophecy was an echo to the virgin Mary’s salutation, and this song is yet a stronger echo to that prophecy. We may suppose the blessed virgin to come in, very much fatigued with her journey; yet she forgets that, and is inspired with new life, and vigour, and joy, upon the confirmation she here meets with of her faith; and since, by the sudden inspiration and transport, she finds that this was designed to be her errand hither, weary as she is, like Abraham’s servant, she would neither eat nor drink till she had told her errand. v

V. Mary Magnifies the Lord

Luke 1:46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

Luke 1:47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Luke 1:48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

vHenry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

After Elisabeth finished speaking, Mary opened her mouth to praise the Lord in a beautiful psalm which compares favorably with those written by divine inspiration by David, the Psalmist and King of Israel. Since all words recorded in the word of God are inspired of God, that means the things she spoke were inspired. These words are of great value to us not only due to their poetic beauty, but they prove that Mary's hope of salvation rested upon God himself. Some groups from Rome had said that she was born without the inbred sin nature and had no need of a redeemer, but Mary herself says "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." Mary was a good woman, but as we mentioned last week, that is all that she was. A good woman chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus Christ.

She has no special power with God as some teach, and we are never commanded to pray to Mary for any purpose. Jesus, to the best of my knowledge, never in the scriptures addressed Mary as 'mother', but treated her with love and respect. As he was dying, he did tell John to behold her, and to take her in as a mother.

John 19:26 When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

John 19:27 Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Mary, as good a person as she was, one with a great moral character, still realized that she had need of a Savior. All of us must come to God as a sinner and turn to Christ by faith to be saved. Mary was wise in not giving herself credit for any extra ordinary righteousness that lifted her above other people. In verse 48, Mary recognizes that she will be remembered by all generations as blessed. She saw herself as a humble handmaiden of the Lord. She truly was blessed above all other women due to being selected of God to be the physical mother of His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Luke 1:49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

Mary was wise to seeing all that had come upon her as the goodness of the Lord. She didn't perceive herself too highly, but rather recognized the Mighty God of Israel and recognized his great holiness.

Prov 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Prov 16:19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

Luke 1:50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

Luke 1:51 He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Luke 1:52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

Luke 1:53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

We can tell by these verses that Mary had been taught the word of God. These words show how she must have meditated of the condition of her people and the oppression that they endured. And she knew in her unborn child the promised Messiah was about to deliver Israel from their affliction.

He would bring judgment to their Gentile oppressors. God's mercy truly is on those that fear him from generation to generation. We all need the mercy of God. God honors those who pray and seek him with a humble heart.

Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

God has done great things for us. In verse 51 he has showed us strength with his arm and scattered the proud. In Verse 52 he hath put down the mighty and exalted those of low degree. He has also filled the hungry with good thing, but has sent the rich away empty.

Mary sings, "He hath shewed strength with his arm." In Isaiah 53:1 the prophet Isaiah said, "... to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" Then Isaiah begins immediately to reveal the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. God has shown the strength of His arm and revealed His power and love in the salvation He has given to mankind. vi

Luke 1:54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;

Luke 1:55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

God has truly been with the nation of Israel and loved and protected it through the generations. Today they are still seeking the Messiah, but one day they will see Jesus as the true Son of God that He is. And the bible says that the nation will be reborn as in a day. God spake many promises to the forefathers like Abraham, and these promises will be kept. God never goes back on His Word.

As we studied last week, one day, and I don't think it will be many weeks from now, Jesus will return and take us out of this world. Things will be in place then for the beginning of the seven years of tribulation. After that, Christ will then sit on that

viJ. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

physical throne of David there in Jerusalem and will rule this world during the Millennial Reign of Christ.

Luke 1:56 And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

From verse 56, we can see that Mary stayed with Elisabeth for about 3 months and then returned home. We know from last week's lesson that Elisabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy when she came to visit. It was now time for Elisabeth to bring forth her son, and as promised of the Lord, the boy is born.

VI. The Birth of John the Baptist

Luke 1:57 Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son

Luke 1:58 And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

As always, things come to pass as God promises. John the Baptist is born just as the angel had told Zacharias and Elisabeth nine months earlier. The neighbors and relatives rejoice at the boy's birth. Even they had heard about how God had showed great mercy upon Elisabeth and they rejoice with her. She was well past the age of bearing a child, but God can do what seems impossible to man.

Luke 1:59 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.

Luke 1:60 And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.

Luke 1:61 And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.

As commanded in the law, the parents bring John to be circumcised on the eighth day at the temple. This commandment was given to Abraham many years prior to John the Baptist's birth.

Genesis 17:12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.
vii

The family was already calling the new son Zacharias after his father. They did not know that God had already given this child a name when the angel appeared to Zacharias in the

vii *The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

temple. Elisabeth told them “NOT SO; but he shall be called John.” They argued that no one in the family had ever been so named.

Luke 1:62 And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.

Luke 1:63 And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

Luke 1:64 And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.

Zacharias did not hesitate about letting them know what the child’s name would be. He tells them to bring a writing table, and he wrote down the name John. There was no question about what his name was to be, since he had received instructions from God. Apparently, years before this it had been in God’s plan that a man named John the Baptist would come in the spirit of Elijah and prepare a people for the Lord. Unbelief had closed Zacharias’ mouth, and now, by faith, his tongue is loosed. Unbelief had made him dumb, and now faith enabled him to speak and to praise God.

J. Vernon McGee said this about the naming of John.

Since he could not speak, he wrote for them, “His name is John.” He had already been named by God. Those present marveled at the name.

After this, Zacharias was able to speak again, and he immediately began to sing praises to God. Although he did not have much faith, when the baby was born he could rejoice in God. Again, the lack of faith displayed by Zacharias is a quality many of us have. When God hears and answers prayer, we really get up and rejoice. I sometimes think that the reason God answers prayer for some of us weaker saints is so that we will have something to rejoice about. As a rule, weaker saints do not do much rejoicing. The stronger saints, with more faith, rejoice in all circumstances. viii

Luke 1:65 And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.

Luke 1:66 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.

Due to Zacharias being able to speak again and rejoice to the Lord, it says the people were afraid and fear come on all that dwelt round about them. People knew that something very strange and mysterious was involved with the birth of John the Baptist. They wondered what manner of child this would be since they could clearly see the hand of the Lord in his birth and his name.

viiiJ. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

VII. The Prophecy of Zacharias

Luke 1:67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

Luke 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;

The Holy Ghost comes upon Zacharias and filled him and he began to prophesy. Because of Zacharias' faith, both enables him to speak of the things which are not, as though they are. "God has visited and redeemed his people." At this time, Israel had not yet been redeemed, but Zacharias is certain that since his promise had been fulfilled in regard to the birth of this child, that God would certainly provide redemption through the coming Savior. Zacharias points out that the horn of salvation will come from the house of David.

Luke 1:70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:

Luke 1:71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

Luke 1:72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

Luke 1:73 The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,

Luke 1:74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

Luke 1:75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

Zacharias realized that these great promises had been declared by the prophets down through the years. From the garden of Eden, God has promised that a Savior would come. And now he was about to appear. God told Abraham that "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." He was now confident that in his day, Zacharias and the nation of Israel would see this fulfillment. Over 1900 years have passed, and the people of Israel today suffer perhaps more from their enemies than ever before in earlier ages.

If you just take a quick look, you might think God's promise has failed. But just as all other promises, this one will come to pass. Jesus will soon come back the second time, and then the remainder of things will be fulfilled. Nothing is wrong with the Word of God, and no one has to 'interpret it' to their private interpretation for us. It is clear what God said and he meant what he said.

2 Pet 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

2 Pet 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2 Pet 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Luke 1:76 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,

Luke 1:77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Luke 1:78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

Luke 1:79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1:80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

Zacharias now prophesies of what John the Baptist will do when he comes on the scene. He will be called a prophet of the Highest. He will give them the knowledge of salvation and remission of their sins. Over in Malachi, we are told about the ministry of John.

Mal 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

John was a chosen vessel of the Lord, and he grew and waxed strong in spirit. And the day would soon come to proclaim the Gospel there in the desert and wilderness.

*Mat 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of **Judaea**,*

Mat 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mat 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Mat 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Mat 3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

Mat 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matthew Henry said this about John the Baptist:

1. Of his eminence as to the inward man: The child grew in the capacities of his mind, much more than other children; so that he waxed strong in the spirit; had a strong judgment and strong resolution. Reason and conscience (both which are the candle of the Lord) were so strong in him that he had the inferior faculties of appetite and passion in complete subjection betimes. By this it appeared that he was betimes filled with the Holy Ghost; for those that are strong in the Lord are strong in spirit.

2. Of his obscurity as to the outward man: He was in the deserts; not that he lived a hermit; cut off from the society of men. No, we have reason to think that he went up to Jerusalem at the feasts, and frequented the synagogues on the sabbath day, but his constant residence was in some of those scattered houses that were in the wilderness of Zuph or Maon, which we read of in the story of David. There he spent most of his time, in contemplation and devotion, and had not his education in the schools, or at the feet of the rabbin. Note, Many a one is qualified for great usefulness, who yet is buried alive; and many are so long buried who are designed, and are thereby in the fitting, for so much greater usefulness at last; as John Baptist, who was in the desert only till the day of his showing to Israel, when he was in the thirtieth year of his age. Note, There is a time fixed for the showing of those favours to Israel which are reserved; the vision of them is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie. ix

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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