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Mary Visits Elizabeth



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this text, Steve Gregg examines the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus, discussing Mary's visit to Elizabeth and the fulfillment of ancient prophecies. Mary is acknowledged as blessed among women due to her role as the mother of Jesus, and her response to her mission of bringing Jesus into the world shows her deep faith and acceptance of God's will. The passage also explores the prophecies of Zechariah and Malachi, which foretold the coming of John the Baptist and his role in preparing the way for Jesus as the means for people to have knowledge of salvation and remission of sins.

Transcript

Today we are looking at Luke chapter 1, verse 39. We're continuing the narrative from where we left off last time. We took the first 38 verses of Luke in our previous session, and we are still talking about stuff that has happened before the birth of Jesus, and the focus is really, at this point upon the birth of John the Baptist, though there has now been the announcement of the angel to Mary that Jesus would be born, this was given following an announcement to Zacharias that John the Baptist would be born.

Now, of course, it remains for us to read about the birth of John and the birth of Jesus, and we shall read of both in our classes today. In this session, I want to take the remainder of Luke chapter 1. It's just a continuing narrative from where we left off. We saw in verse 38 that the angel had given her, Mary, a bit of news that at one time would thrill her, no doubt, and at the same time would fill her with some degree of consternation, because it would be costly for her to take the position God was calling her to, to be the virgin mother of a baby.

Now, if this had happened after she was married, it wouldn't have been anywhere near as problematic, of course, but then she wouldn't be a virgin, and it was necessary that the prophecy should be fulfilled that Jesus be born of a virgin, and therefore it meant that some virgin had to bear the stigma of being pregnant, and to really live with probably the skepticism of the majority of the people who knew her all the days of her life. No doubt, all those who knew Mary at this time, well, let me put it this way, the majority of those who knew Mary at this time probably assumed till their dying day that

she had been naughty, and that she had jumped the gun, or that she had cheated on her fiancé, and she had to live with that stigma throughout the rest of her life. However, I do think that her family probably came to support her in this, though we read nothing about her parents.

We know nothing about her relationship with her parents, and how their reaction to this went. We find that as soon as Mary learns that she's going to be pregnant, she makes a trip to see Elizabeth, her cousin or her relative. We don't know exactly what the relationship was, obviously there's a tremendous generation gap, probably two generations removed between Mary and Elizabeth, though we don't know exactly what the nature of that relationship was.

She could have been a great-great-aunt or something like that. In any case, though, Mary finds it opportune to go to Elizabeth, and for obvious reasons. She is not yet showing, of course, she's just been told that she's going to become a mother, and so she doesn't really have to explain her situation to her family yet, but she has been told by the angel that Elizabeth is six months pregnant at this time.

Now that might have been news to Mary, but probably not. If Elizabeth was in fact a relative of hers, with whom she was on speaking terms, then it probably was well known in the family that this old woman in the family had gotten pregnant. It was a miracle, there's no question about it, and the explanation was made that an angel had announced it, and no doubt what the angel had said about John the Baptist usually was probably relayed along with the story.

I mean, just put yourself in that position. All the relatives would be amazed to learn of Elizabeth being pregnant, and would expect an explanation, and no doubt they'd get the true explanation. So they'd hear about the angel, they'd hear about the predictions about John.

Now, of course, Elizabeth did hide herself for five months when she became pregnant, which may suggest that her relatives didn't learn of her pregnancy quite as early as they might otherwise have. She may have kept this a secret for the first five months, but by the time the angel came to Mary it had been six months, which means that Elizabeth had come out, probably, out of hiding now, and probably her pregnancy was the talk of the family. In any case, if anybody could sympathize with Mary's situation, it would be her relative Elizabeth, who was experiencing something very similar, a miraculous pregnancy and a significant child, with a great destiny that had been announced by an angel.

These things both Elizabeth and Mary had in common, and since Elizabeth was fortunately a member of the family, she could pretty much be in Mary's corner in terms of defending Mary against the skepticism of the family, the natural skepticism that there would certainly be when this teenage girl tells her dad that she's pregnant, and Joseph,

of course, would be the one who knew best of all that he wasn't the father. How could she convince her fiancé? How could she convince her parents? Well, we don't know how she convinced her parents. I do think it's likely that it was Elizabeth's intercession for Mary with the family that probably kept Mary out of hot water with the family when they found her to be pregnant, since Elizabeth clearly had an undeniable miracle in her own life, that her own pregnancy had been accompanied by angelic visits and announcements and predictions about the child, and also that her child was simply a forerunner for another, and that was told Zechariah 2 about John the Baptist by the angel.

Therefore, for Mary to say, well, the other that Elizabeth's child is a forerunner for is my baby, and the same angel came to me, and the same angel announced that my son was going to be significant, even more significant than Elizabeth's son. Now, even though Elizabeth had this miracle, it would not automatically pave the way for people to believe Mary's story. After all, a young girl who'd been naughty and got herself pregnant might take advantage of the situation and say, well, hey, my Aunt Elizabeth, she got away with, I mean, she did have a miracle.

Maybe I could claim I had a similar miracle, you know? It would not go without saying that Mary had a true story just because Elizabeth's story was remarkable. But if Elizabeth was convinced of Mary's story, that would certainly go a long way towards smoothing the road with her own other family members and convincing them that she had a genuine miracle in her life, and no doubt Mary needed that. She no doubt needed an intercessor in the family, and I'm sure that that is one thing that motivated her to go to see Elizabeth, if not the principal thing.

Now, when it comes to convincing Joseph, Joseph needed something else. It's very probable that Joseph never met Elizabeth, and he was of another family and may never have had the advantage of Elizabeth sharing her conviction with him about Mary. In fact, it's possible that he heard of Mary's pregnancy before Mary even returned from Elizabeth's place.

We don't know when the news came to Joseph, but when he found out Mary was pregnant, of course, Matthew tells us that he made plans to put her away secretly, but an angel stopped his plans. We'll talk about that in another session sometime. At any rate, Mary now goes down to visit her relative, Elizabeth.

In verse 39 of Luke 1, Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah. We're not told what city of Judah it was, but it was no doubt a Levitical city. The Levites, in the days of Joshua, when the land was dispersed among the various tribes of Israel, the Levites did not receive an inheritance of land like the other tribes did.

God explained it in these terms. He said, Levi has me for their inheritance. They won't

get a land inheritance.

I am their inheritance. And the Levites had the special privilege of being the tribe that was chosen to officiate at and to maintain the tabernacle service. But they had to live somewhere.

All the other tribes were given some area of the land of Israel to be their area, but the Levites were not given such an area. Therefore, 48 cities were selected throughout the country in all the other tribes' territories, which were designated for habitations for the Levites. And the Levites had what we call Levitical cities.

They didn't have farmland like the other tribes did, and they didn't need it. The other tribes would produce the food, and they paid their tithes to the Levites, and they lived off the tithes. So the Levites only had, you know, they were city dwellers.

They weren't farmers. And there were Levitical cities. Now, there were a number of these cities in Judah.

It is thought by many that Elizabeth and Zechariah may have lived in Hebron. That is a Levitical city in the tribe of Judah that was in the hill country, and yet it may not be the only possibility. We're not told what city it was, but we will have to say this.

Mary was said to be a resident of Nazareth in the earlier portion of this chapter. And if she was from Nazareth, and she went to the hill country of Judea, she had to make a trip that was, oh, the better part of a week, or maybe even more than a week, depending on how she traveled. And the question arises whether she made this trip alone.

I mean, would a young girl make a week-long trip on foot through, you know, rough country and possibly where there'd be dangers of robbery or worse things, wild animals, for instance. The Jordan River was jungle around it, and there were lions there, as the Psalms attest and many other parts of the Bible. The Book of Judges tells us there were lions in there.

Did this girl travel alone or what? I mean, it's not like today she couldn't just jump on a greyhound bus and leave the driving to them. She had to actually make a major, you know, journey that would take the better part of a week where she'd have to lodge someplace, she'd have to travel in some safe conditions. It's possible, I mean, it's not likely Joseph went with her.

Maybe he did, I don't know. But if her order of business had been different, perhaps she would have asked Joseph to conduct her there. But I think she was going there largely before disclosing her plight to any of her relatives or even to Joseph in order that Elizabeth might be the first to know.

It's very possible that Mary scheduled her trip during one of the festival times because

during Passover or Pentecost or the Feast of Tabernacles, which fell at three different times during the year, all the Jews of Galilee, or most of them, certainly all the adult males, would make trips down to Jerusalem. And she would then be at least capable of traveling in a company from her neighborhood or from her village down into the general region from which she could make her own trip to Hebron, if that's where she went, or whatever little city. But, you know, when we talk about how she just made a trip to Judea, we might pass over that without thinking because we make trips like that all the time.

We're only talking about, you know, 70, 80 miles or something like that. We'd make the trip in an hour and a half or less on modern highways. But we're talking about a major and what could be a fairly dangerous journey for a young girl to make alone.

But she made it in one way or another, whether she traveled in company at one of the festival times or had some friend accompany her to keep her safe or whether she just risked it and went on her own. We don't know. But she went with haste, which means that she wanted to waste no time whatsoever.

And, of course, this even due to the fact that though if she became pregnant the day the angel talked to her, we don't know that to be the case, but even if she did, it would still be some months before anyone would have to know about it before she'd begin to show. But she wanted to immediately get down to Elizabeth, possibly for reassurance herself, possibly just for fellowship with the only person on the planet who would really understand her situation. When you have special experiences with the Lord, there's something reassuring and strengthening and encouraging about running into somebody who's had a parallel experience, especially if it's a very rare kind of a thing and most Christians have the faintest idea what you're talking about.

When you've had some kind of an encounter with the Lord, an angel visits you or something, it must be, I've never had that happen to me, but I would think if I had, it'd be reassuring to meet someone else who'd had an angel talk to them too, and a genuine experience and someone who could understand and relate. And so she ran off to Elizabeth's place. Presumably she informed her parents of it and got their permission, under what pretext we don't know.

Verse 40, And she entered into the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Now it was predicted earlier in the chapter that the baby would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb.

That was stated to Zacharias by the angel. One of the special things said about this baby in verse 15 was that he would be filled with the Spirit from the womb. Although it doesn't here say that it was the baby who was filled with the Spirit in verse 41.

It was the mother who was filled with the Spirit. The baby is simply said to have leaped. Although it may well be that we're to understand this as the fulfillment of the angel's prediction that the baby himself was filled with the Spirit at that time as well.

A few moments later in verse 44, Elizabeth mentions that the baby in the womb leapt for joy. It just wasn't one of those normal kinds of kicks that a baby at six months in the womb may do several times a day. It was more of a joyful leap, which was associated with the mother being filled with the Spirit.

And no doubt that's when John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit too, though we're not told so in explicit terms here. Verse 42, Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. But why is it that this is granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord. Now, if Mary went down to Elizabeth's house for encouragement, I think that she probably got just that from this experience. Mary didn't come and say, Elizabeth, I've got this amazing thing to tell you, but you better sit down, you're not going to believe this.

Before Mary could say a word except hi, Elizabeth was prophesying about the baby in her womb being the Lord and that the things that were promised to Mary were going to be fulfilled. Now, Mary wasn't even showing yet. So it was clear that Elizabeth received this prophetically.

And that must have been very encouraging to Mary, that she knew that she hadn't just had a bad dream or something, or a strange dream, that now there was a confirmation, supernatural confirmation from God, that what she had heard from the angel was in fact true, and that she didn't need to convince Elizabeth of it, Elizabeth knew about it in advance. Now, she begins by saying to Mary, blessed are you among women. Now, this statement, of course, sounds maybe to some of our ears a little bit Roman Catholic.

You know, to say that Mary is blessed above all women. We shouldn't be afraid of that. I mean, the Catholics believe in the virgin birth, so do we.

They believe in the Trinity, so do we. They believe Jesus is God in the flesh, so do we. We don't believe everything the Roman Catholics believe, but there's no reason why we should be shy about acknowledging something the Bible says, just because it may have become a distinctive of some group that we have great disagreements with.

Obviously, we do not believe in the veneration of Mary. We don't believe in praying to Mary. We don't believe that Mary is an intercessor for believers, and we don't believe she's a co-redemptrix with Christ.

All these things are taught by the Roman Catholics about her. But to say that she is blessed above women, it seems to be a statement that requires no defense. I mean, can you imagine any woman in history who is more blessed than to be the mother of Jesus? She is the most famous mother in history.

There's no other woman in history, except possibly Eve, that is more famous than Mary. I say Eve might be, because, of course, not only Christians, but Jews would be aware of Eve, and maybe even non-Jews who have some traditions of the creation. I guess Sarah would have to be pretty famous among the Jews, too, but nowhere near as famous worldwide as Mary is.

But Mary certainly was blessed above women, and you have to consider that virtually every woman, no doubt, in that society, they probably wished that she might be the mother of the Messiah. In that particular generation, there was a heightened expectation that somebody was going to be the mother of the Messiah. There was this old guy, we run into him later, an old prophet in the temple named Simeon.

And he was an old man without many more years to live, and God had told him that he wasn't going to die until the Messiah came, and he would see him. The old woman, Anna, who lived in the temple also, or frequented the temple, she was part of a group of believers who were looking eagerly for the redemption of Israel. There were prophecies, like the prophecy of Daniel's 70 weeks, and other indicators that pointed to the probability that the Messiah would be coming soon.

Therefore, Mary and her generation must have been somewhat aware of this expectation. And the more pious among them, and Mary must have been among the most pious girls of her generation, must have certainly hoped, against all hope, that she might be the one who would bring forth this baby if someone was going to. And Mary, of course, what happened to her was no doubt beyond her wildest dreams, that she got to be the one woman in all of Israel, out of over three million Jews in the world, that she was the one selected to be the mother of the Messiah.

To say that she was blessed above all other women is an understatement. And there's no reason why we need to shy away from acknowledging that Mary was a godly woman, probably more godly than most, maybe more godly than any other. We know that she was saved by grace, like the rest of us, and that she was not a perfect human being.

She was not sinless. But, be that as it may, we must say that Jesus would have been put into a family by sovereign choice of God that would be the godliest influence on his upbringing. And I think that Mary and Joseph, in every place where we get any evidence of them, especially in their young years when Jesus was being born, they certainly give evidence of being pious and godly people.

And we ought to honor Mary. We shouldn't honor her quite like the Roman Catholics do,

because they give her almost the honor of being a goddess. But, as a godly woman, she's a good role model for women today.

When she was faced with what was probably costly to her reputation, mission, that is, the mission of bringing Jesus into the world while she was still unmarried, she just accepted it. She said, Behold the maid servant of the Lord, be it to me according to your word, in verse 38. That's a great attitude for anyone to take, male or female.

But when you consider how much her reputation was on the line and probably remained tainted in the eyes of the community for the rest of her life, in order to be used of the Lord as a handmaid in this way, you realize that it cost her something. But her resignation to the will of God in the matter shows that she valued the will of God more than she valued some other things, like how people are going to think about her for the rest of her life. Of course, godly people who believe this story, like we do, think very well of her, and that's what is suggested here.

And she mentions that, too, in her own response here. But John the Baptist apparently recognized Jesus. They were sort of soul mates, as it were.

Both of them were still in the womb, but somehow there was some recognition. John the Baptist leaped for joy when his cousin's mother came to visit, and neither of them were born yet. But it was Elizabeth's words, no doubt, which were clearly prophetic.

I mean, she couldn't have known those things without having them revealed to her. Mary had no doubt told no one about it. That must have encouraged Mary that there was a confirmation that everything, well, as the last words are, blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment, verse 45, of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Now, Mary said, in verse 46, My soul magnifies the Lord. Because of this statement, my soul magnifies the Lord, this speech of Mary's that is given here, this song of praise, as it were, has been given the Latin name, the Magnificat, which must mean, and I don't know Latin, but I assume it means the magnification of the Lord, or, you know, the Magnificat. You know any Latin? You must have studied Latin when you studied law, didn't you? I think Magnificat probably means the magnifying of the Lord, or something like that.

Because she says that here. This speech of hers actually is very much like that of another woman, upon the awareness that she was going to have a special child from the Lord, and that was Hannah. In 1 Samuel, chapter 2, we read of her sort of praising God in similar terms.

We'll read Mary's words first, then we'll look at Hannah's words and see how similar they are. She said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. This makes it clear Mary was not sinless, as some traditions say she was.

She had a Savior. She needed a Savior like anybody else. She was a sinner, saved by

grace like anyone else.

God was her Savior. For he has regarded the lowly state of his maidservant. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

For he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is on those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm.

He has scattered the proud into the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel. In remembrance of his mercy, he has spoken to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. Now we're going to look at this a little bit more verse by verse.

But let's look for a moment back at 1 Samuel to see the original from which this is often believed to be influenced. That is to say that Mary may have been aware of Hannah's song, or else the same spirit just inspired both of them. Of course, the Bible doesn't say that Mary was inspired when she said these words, but one gets the impression that she was speaking somewhat prophetically.

When Hannah learned that she was going to have a child after she had been barren for many years, in 1 Samuel chapter 2, it said, Hannah prayed and said, My heart rejoices in the Lord. Very similar to Mary's, my soul magnifies the Lord. My horn is exalted in the Lord.

I smile at my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation. Mary refers to God as the God of her salvation also. No one is holy like the Lord, for there is none besides you, nor is there any rock like our God.

Talk no more so very proudly. Let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is the God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and those who stumble are girded with strength.

Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, and the hungry have ceased to hunger. Almost that exact statement is found in Mary's Magnificat. Even the barren has borne seven, and she who has many children has become feeble.

The Lord kills and makes alive. He brings down to the grave, and He brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich.

He brings low and lifts up. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the beggar from the ash heap to set them among the princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. For

the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and He has set the world upon them.

He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces.

From heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His King and exalt the horn of His anointed.

Now, something that Mary's speech and Hannah's have in common is they both begin by exalting in the Lord and talking about Him as their Savior, and then they go on to talk about how God brings down the low and lifts up the humble. He feeds the hungry, and He makes hungry those who have been full. He takes those that were lowly and exalts them to lofty places and brings down those who were already in lofty places.

And both of them see prophetically something more that God's doing. Hannah has tremendous insight. In this last verse of hers, in verse 10, because she says, He will give strength to His King.

That's an interesting insight. When Hannah lived, there were no kings in Israel, nor any indication that there would be any. Now, Deuteronomy had mentioned briefly in chapter 17 of Deuteronomy that there would be a time when Israel would desire a king.

But there had been 300 years now since Moses had uttered those words, and there had been no move in that direction. Interestingly, though, this very child that was born from Hannah, Samuel, was the guy who inaugurated the first king and the second king of Israel. He anointed Saul, then he anointed David.

And so, the woman was speaking prophetically. Her child was not even born yet. And yet, she saw that somehow there was going to be a king in Israel.

Now, it's possible, of course, that by king she's referring to the Messiah. The hope of a coming Messiah who would be a king of Israel, no doubt already had some circulation among the Jewish community. And when it says that He will... The last line in Hannah's statement is He will exalt the horn of His anointed.

The word anointed is the word Mashiach. It's the word for Christ, Messiah. In Hebrew, it's Messiah.

In the Greek, it's Christ. Both words mean the anointed one. So, she may be predicting the coming of the Messiah.

Although the fact that her child did anoint two kings, Saul and David, makes it seem like perhaps that's what she's talking about. The point is, though, that she saw in her own circumstance sort of a type of what God does, generally speaking. He eventually settles the scores.

Those who had been the underdogs eventually get vindicated. In her own case, she had been one of two wives of the same man. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Penanah.

Penanah had children, which ordinarily would give her status in society and usually favor in the sight of her husband. Hannah had been barren, and Penanah used to mock Hannah, very much like Hagar mocked Sarah when Hagar became pregnant by Abram, and Sarah was unable to. It apparently was fairly common that there was rivalry.

When a man had more than one wife, there was rivalry, and the rivalry was over who could bear the most children. We see that certainly as a dynamic in Jacob's family. Jacob's two wives, Rachel and Leah, were always in competition to see who could give him more children, even to the point where they brought their maids into the act and were cranking out kids.

Penanah was cranked out 11 kids in 7 years. That was going on in the house of Elkanah between Penanah and Hannah. And Hannah was humiliated.

Now, her husband was not contributing to that humiliation. He actually said to her, you know, don't grieve. In chapter 1, verse 8, Elkanah, her husband, said to her, Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons? In other words, it didn't bother him that she hadn't given him any sons, but it bothered her.

But when she says in her statement in chapter 2, verse 3, talk no more so very proudly. Let no arrogance come from your mouth. No doubt she's thinking of her rival, Penanah, who is arrogantly mocking her for being childless.

Yet, she goes from there to talk about general dealings of God with poor and underprivileged and the downtrodden and so forth, so that she talks about how in verse 4, the bows of the mighty men have been broken and those who stumbled previously are now girded with strength. Those who were full are now hungry and have hired themselves up for bread, but the hungry have ceased to hunger. Even the barren is born seven.

She's clearly not talking about herself because she hasn't born seven. But the point is, she's saying that God turns around the situation of the humble in favor of them and brings those proud ones low. This concept, of course, is taught by Jesus and it's taught in the Old Testament.

God resists the proud. He gives grace to the humble. Jesus said this.

He said that he that exalts himself shall be humbled. He that humbles himself shall be exalted. James and 1 Peter both make the same observation.

It's a leading theme. That's where Mary is coming from in her speech too and it has

much in common with Hannah's. The difference is that Mary had not spent a long time humiliated by her barrenness.

She hadn't even been married yet. If anything, she faced the possibility of humiliation for being pregnant because she wasn't married. In any case, however, she viewed herself as one who was downtrodden.

Now, perhaps her sense of being one who had been poor and so forth is not with reference to any particular relationship she was in. It's conceivable that she just identified with her own people, the Jews, who were downtrodden under the Roman oppression. She had known it all her life.

All her generation knew it. The Romans picked on the Jews and now she saw the Messiah coming and she, probably like the rest of them, thought the Messiah was going to deliver them from the Romans. Therefore, she may have seen this in that light, although I think it's more likely she was just revealing her own true sense of humility about herself.

Notice how she describes herself. In verse 48, she describes herself as the lowly state of her maid servant. Her own state was a lowly state.

She was a maid servant, a female slave. Now, that doesn't mean that that's the status she really held in society. She wasn't a slave in her parents' household.

She was a slave of God. She saw herself as a humble slave. That is certainly the right way to think of oneself.

Luke recorded the words of Jesus later on, encouraging us to think exactly that way about ourselves. In Luke 17, verses 7-10, Luke 17, verses 7-10, Jesus said, "...in which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep," that is, a slave, "...will say to him, when he comes in from the field, Come at once and sit down to eat. But will he not rather say to him, Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk, and then afterwards you will eat and drink?" That was the normal procedure for slaves.

They didn't work an eight-hour day and then take the rest of the day off. They worked until there was no more service to be done to their master. So, even if they work out in the field all day, when they come in, they have more work to do indoors until their master has been satisfied, and then they can scavenge around and find something for themselves.

That's what Jesus is pointing out. Now, by the way, Jesus isn't saying that slaves should have been treated that way. He's not talking about what should be.

He's just talking about the way it was. That was the mentality about slavery. A slave, he wasn't a member of a union.

They couldn't say, We'll only work 40-hour weeks and only for this amount of pay, minimum, or whatever, and only this kind of job. Slaves didn't have any rights. It was understood.

He says, Obviously, that doesn't happen. It doesn't happen that the master says, Let me feed you, when he comes in from the field. That's not how things go with slaves.

Verse 9, Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded of him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done only what was our duty to do.

Now, this is the mentality of the Christian who has been 100% obedient. Now, if you haven't been 100% obedient, then you've got more grounds for humility even than that. But he says, When you've done all the things you've been commanded to do, instead of boasting about it, your attitude should be, Well, I've just done what's required.

It would be a criminal for me to do less. It's not that you get some kind of special commendation when you're obedient to God. That's what's expected.

If you're not obedient to God, you've got something to answer for. But if you're 100% obedient, and no one is, but even if you were, your status would be that of an unprofitable servant having done nothing more than what was required. Now, that is Jesus' teaching about self-esteem.

Actually, I think some translations render it, I am a worthless servant or an unworthy servant or something like that. Does someone have a translation that renders it that way in verse 10? What's it say? Unworthy. Yeah.

Unworthy. That is, I don't have worth. I'm unprofitable is the traditional rendering of that word.

But that certainly doesn't go along with the self-esteem teaching of our own age, but it goes along with what Jesus said. View yourself as an unprofitable servant even after you've been fully obedient. Now, it's a little easier to be humble when you haven't been fully obedient and you feel convicted of your own failure.

But when you find yourself doing better than others and seeing other people failing more miserably than you and find that you are, in fact, more spiritual than other people, more consistent in your walk than other people are, more committed, and where this isn't a self-deception of pride on your part, but it's genuinely the case. You see people who are more compromised than you're willing to be yourself. The tendency, of course, is to succumb to spiritual pride, but Jesus says no, even if you're 100% obedient and even you aren't that.

If you've reached that goal, say, I'm an unprofitable servant, I've only done what's my duty to do. There's no special congratulations, no special award of merit due to me. I haven't earned some kind of a crown, although God may give me a crown.

You know, it's an interesting thing. Jesus points out that the servant does not expect his master to serve him. But Jesus elsewhere said that's exactly what the master will do to those whom he finds occupied and well-doing.

I didn't intend to give this scripture, so I don't have the reference. Maybe you do in a cross-reference, or maybe I do in a cross-reference if I took the time to look it up. Maybe I'll just look real quickly and see if I do.

No, apparently not. There's a cross-reference. I thought it was in Luke 21.

I'm kind of glancing through there to see if I'm in the right place for it. But Jesus said that when he comes, blessed is the servant that he finds diligently doing what he's supposed to do. He says, I say to you that the Son of Man will, I forget, serve him.

Something very close to that. The very thing that Jesus said servants have no right to expect from their masters. Now I've got you on the search.

That's good. We'll find it together somewhere. I thought it was also in Luke, but it might be in one of the parallel passages.

It might be in Mark 13. Did someone find it? I heard someone say something, but I couldn't hear what you said. Let's see here.

I think it may be in Mark 13. I'm checking all these different places. I'm afraid it's not there.

I'm afraid I don't have the reference. I thought it was in the Olivet Discourse in one of the versions. I don't think it's in Matthews, where Jesus said that the servant who is found doing what he should be doing when the Master comes, he says, I tell you the Master will serve him, will gird himself and serve him.

I'm surprised no one's found it yet, because usually people find things in a faster fashion than I do. Let me see. I'm still looking just for a few seconds more.

Well, yeah, I don't... I shouldn't be detained like this, but now my curiosity has got me, because I thought I knew right where it was. Could be. Let's see, Luke 22 and verse 27.

That's not the verse I was thinking of, although that's a good one on the same point. But that's not the particular case I'm thinking of, but that's a good verse also. Jesus said, who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves, is not he who sits at the table, yet I am among you as one who serves.

Which one? Thank you. Thank you very much. I knew we'd hunt it down if we took the time here.

It's good to have as a cross-reference to Luke 17, even though Luke 17's not our text today. Luke 12 what? 37, thank you. There it is.

Blessed are those servants whom the Master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you, that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. That Jesus would do that for his servants is... I mean, it's magnanimous enough, even though we don't have a clear conception of what slavery was, and we don't realize how flip-flop of the way society would understand things that is.

But in view of the fact that Jesus particularly went out of his way to say in Luke 17, do you think that the Master will serve his servants after they've worked? And he says, I think not. Yet, he says, yet I will. And that shows that Jesus calls us to view ourselves as unprofitable servants, and then he leads the way and shows himself to be... he takes that role himself as a server of his servants, the servant of all.

And so, Mary was obviously on the same track in terms of self-esteem as what Jesus later was, and which Jesus encouraged us to be, to see ourselves as lowly, unprofitable servants without an awful lot of rights. And that's exactly how Mary describes herself. In Luke chapter 1, she says in verse 48, God has regarded the lowly state of his female slave.

That's what maid-servant means. But she says, for behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. That's true.

That's true. For he who is mighty has done great things for me. Notice she takes no credit.

They're going to call me blessed because I really have measured up. But they're going to call me blessed because I'm really blessed by God. God has done great things for me.

Now, by the way, I keep thinking of verses I wish I had looked up before because I decided that they'd make good cross-references. I didn't think of them earlier. But there was a place.

It might be Luke 11, 27, which I'm thinking of as a cross-reference here. I'll bet it is. Let me see.

Yep, there it is. I'm so glad we found this. Okay.

It's embarrassing to say, well, there's a scripture somewhere that I forgot to look up or didn't think about before, but now I think about it now and don't know where it is. Luke

11 and verse 27. It says, It happened as Jesus spoke these things that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts which nursed you.

Now, the womb that bore him was Mary's, and the breasts that nursed him were Mary's. Therefore, this is another way of saying, Blessed is your mother. Blessed is Mary.

An old woman who wished that she had had the privilege of bringing the Messiah into the world, she pronounced blessing and beatitude on the one who did have that privilege, though this woman may not have known Mary personally. But Jesus responds interestingly in verse 28. He said, More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

Now, when he said more than that, I don't know if he means that those who hear the word of God and keep it are more blessed than Mary, in which case he'd be suggesting that she at that point in her time was not exactly hearing the word of God and keeping it. Can we think such a thing about Mary? Well, we do know that on one occasion, she and the brethren of Jesus came to take him away because they'd heard that he was kind of crazy, and they were going to take him into their custody. This is in Mark chapter 3, I believe.

And when they came to see him, he wouldn't even grant them an audience. That includes his mother and his brothers. And on that occasion, who is my mother and who is my brother? Those who do the will of my Father, those are my real mother and brothers.

As if to say that Mary and his brothers were not on that moment acting in obedience to his Father. And that might have been his implication here too. More blessed than the womb that brought me into the world is the heart that embraces my words and keeps them.

Now, it's also possible that when he said more than that, he might be saying more than just her. There's others too who are equally blessed. He might not be trying to make a disparaging remark about his mother here in Luke 11, 28, but he might be saying, well, you say there's a blessing on the woman that brought me into the world, but there's an equal blessing beyond that.

She's not the only one. There's more than just her. Anyone who hears my words and does them is blessed.

It could be taken either way. But we see certainly that Mary was right, that people would call her blessed. This was a spontaneous outburst on the part of this woman when she heard the gracious words coming out of Jesus' mouth saying, boy, would I like to be that guy's mother.

You know how Jewish mothers are. Have you ever met a Jewish mother? They like to

boast about their sons. They like to be proud of their son, the doctor or the lawyer or the accountant or whatever.

They're successful sons. Now, in the movie Executive or whatever, I mean, just think how Albert Einstein's mother must have felt. You know, he was Jewish and had a Jewish mom.

Well, just think how Adolf Hitler's grandmother must have felt. She was Jewish. Or Sigmund Freud's mother, Karl Marx's mother, some of the others.

Well, I don't know whether their mothers approved of their philosophies they got into or not, but Jewish mothers have sort of a stereotype of the proud Jewish mother and the protective and so forth. And this old lady no doubt thought, boy, I wish my son had turned out like you. Wish I was your mom instead of my children's mom.

Blessed is the woman for you. I like what you have to say better than mine. My kids aren't amounting to much.

But the interesting thing is, Mary had occasion to boast a great deal. And she was a Jewish mom. She must have had to overcome the natural, the cultural tendencies of her race and gender.

Because she was the one woman selected out of the whole nation to be the mother of the Messiah. And yet she doesn't flatter herself. She just says, well, God has done great things for me.

I'm just a lowly slave. Later on even, when angels announced great things about Jesus to the shepherds, and the shepherds came and told Mary about it, you'd expect Mary to spread that all over the neighborhood. Want to hear what the angels said about my son? The sky was full of angels singing praises to my son.

She pondered these things in her heart. She was obviously an exceptional girl. And even when granted this privilege, and having received a very affirming prophecy from Elizabeth, one that could make a person proud, it only gives her occasion to feel more humbled.

You know, a truly humble person is humbled by praise. It's really true. There's not much danger of a humble person being ruined by praise.

Because if a person is only pretending to be humble and is really proud, they will really live for praise. They'll want praise. They'll desire affirmation.

They might act humbly, but they really want praise because they are really quite self-infatuated. They're possessed of a strong sense of self-importance, and they like affirmation of that from people. But someone who's truly broken and truly humble knows they don't deserve any praise.

And to hear people praise them or say great things about them, it only impresses upon them how little they deserve the praises they're hearing and how great God is in putting them in such a position that people would envy them. And Mary obviously was that way. She received a very affirming and very ego-flattering kind of a prophecy, not only from the angel, but from Elizabeth.

But Mary turns the attention to the Lord. She's just a lowly slave. She's not just faking humility here.

You can see how she viewed herself in some other ways. When she says in verse 53, with words that sound very much like Hannah's words, He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy.

Also, I guess we could say in verse 52, it says, He has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. No doubt she's identifying herself as one with the lowly in verse 52 and the hungry in verse 53. And since she's already identified herself as a servant, she sees herself and the mercy that God has shown to her as the way God deals with humble, with lowly, with servants, with hungry, godly people.

In fact, she sees it as the way God has shown mercy on her is sort of just a picture of His mercy on the whole nation of Israel, which is His servant. As she is His servant, so is the nation of Israel. And she says in verse 54, He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Now, she saw what was happening in her womb as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises, the Abrahamic covenant. She said what God is doing here is in fulfillment or as honoring and remembering His mercy that He promised to Abraham. By the way, Zacharias, who also prophesied before this chapter is over, makes the same point.

What was going on in that little corner of the world at that particular little period of time was the fulfillment of the ancient prophecy made 2,000 years earlier to Abraham that through him and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, which, of course, both Zacharias and Mary recognized themselves as descended from Abraham. Therefore, the children that they were going to be bringing forth into the world were Abraham's seed and particularly, of course, Mary's child was Abraham's seed through whom all the nations were going to be blessed. She somehow got a glimpse of that, though I seriously doubt that she understood fully how these prophecies were going to be fulfilled.

There's a sense in which her prophecy has the ring of the ordinary Jewish hopes that the Messiah might deliver Israel from their oppressors, from the mighty in verse 52, which were the Romans. And at a later time, certainly that's how most of the disciples of Jesus

thought he was supposed to be operating. That's what they thought about the Messiah.

I don't know that Mary was any more informed than they. John the Baptist scarcely knew better. When he was in prison, he was stumbled by the fact that Jesus wasn't gathering the armies to lead against the Romans.

Even people who receive prophetic words often do not have the faintest clue as to how those words will be fulfilled. It says in 1 Peter 1 that the Old Testament prophets in 1 Peter 1, 10-12, that the Old Testament prophets prophesied of the grace that would come to us Christians, but it says they didn't understand what they were prophesying about. It says they searched diligently and inquired of the Lord what they were talking about.

And the Lord just said, none of your business. It's not for you to know. It's for a later generation to appreciate.

I'm talking about 1 Peter 1, 10-12, which says, of this salvation, the prophets, meaning the Old Testament ones, have inquired and searched carefully who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. That is, the prophets asked and inquired and searched to know more about what the meaning of their prophecies was. And verse 12 says, to them it was revealed that not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, which things even the angels don't fully understand.

Even the angels desire to look into these things. So, the Old Testament prophets didn't fully understand. They inquired of God for more information, but didn't get it.

He said, that's not for your generation to worry about. That's for a later generation. You just speak your word faithfully.

I'll worry about how it's fulfilled and when. Well, Mary was speaking prophetically. So was Zacharias later in this chapter.

So did John the Baptist speak prophetically. All of them knew that Jesus was the Messiah, and that was implied in their prophecies. But they probably did not fully understand what the Messiah was really going to do.

They knew that this was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. They knew that this was the hinge of history. That this was the turning point that God had always spoken of through all the prophets, but they didn't quite understand the nature of the prophecies, I think.

And the reason I think that about Mary is because she was often perplexed by the things Jesus did when He was an adult, or even when He was a boy. When He was 12 years old, she just couldn't quite understand the track He was on. Remember He said, Didn't you know I must be about my father's business? When He was at the temple, the Bible says Joseph and Mary didn't understand what He was talking about.

They just didn't quite grasp what His mission was. They knew He was the Messiah, but their concept of the Messianic mission was not at all formed in terms of the way Jesus actually fulfilled it. And so we see insight mixed with vagueness in Mary's prophecy, and no doubt in Zacharias' also.

She was certainly right in what she said, but she may not have been right in what she thought it meant. We don't know what she thought it meant, but we have some indication that she didn't fully understand the import of the mission of Jesus either, which is why later she and the brothers of Jesus came looking for Him to take Him into custody because they thought He was mad. I didn't give you the exact reference for that statement.

Maybe that's a new one to you. If you've read the Gospels, you're familiar with what I'm talking about. It's in Mark chapter 3. I mean, you may not be real familiar with it, but somewhere in Mark chapter 3. Or it might be at the end of chapter 2. But it tells how, just in passing, 31? 331? Well, it talks about His mother and brothers coming, right, to see Him.

But there's a previous mention. It might be actually in the end of chapter 2 where it talks about His relatives heard what He was doing and they thought He was beside Himself. They thought He was crazy.

Their arrival is mentioned in verse 31, but as far as their motives for coming, that's stated somewhere a bit earlier in Mark. I thought it was earlier in chapter 3, but it might be in chapter 2. In any case, I know the general place it is, but we don't want to take time right now. But there is some indication that Mary even had her own moments, just like John the Baptist did, of being a bit stumbled by the way that Jesus was doing things.

Yeah, I'm still looking. I'm still looking, but I may not run into it real quickly here. Oh, well.

Not a major thing right now. Back on track. Luke 1, verse 56, "...and Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months..." Yes? Thank you very much.

Mark 3.21. You students are great. Walking concordances. Luke 3.21, "...but when his own people heard about this, they went out to lay hold of him, for they said, He is out of his mind." Now, it doesn't say Mary and his brothers there, but we find Mary and his brothers arriving.

So, they must be his own people that's referred to there in verse 31. But Jesus wouldn't even grant them an audience, which suggests that he didn't consider that they were there for good reason, and so he just kind of ignored the fact that they'd come for him. I guess he was too big to be dragged off.

After all, bigger crowds had tried to drag him over a cliff, and he had walked away. So, I doubt that Mary and the brothers could haul him off against his will either. Okay.

For one thing, they couldn't get close to him. The crowds were too great. "...So Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months and returned to her house." Now, that's interesting.

She stayed with Elizabeth probably until the birth of John. Since Elizabeth was six months pregnant when Mary went to visit her, and she stayed three months, she either left Elizabeth just prior to the birth of John or just after it. I would imagine that she would have stayed at least for the birth of John since it was so close at the time that she left.

It would be strange for her to leave without helping the midwife there and helping to deliver the baby. Now, Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. "...And when her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her.

So it was on the eighth day that they came to circumcise the child, and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zechariah." So, apparently the naming of the child was done on the occasion of his circumcision. Probably the modern practice of christening a child in some denominational practices is probably of similar origin, maybe even of this very origin following the Jewish custom. Much that came into the liturgical church practice is borrowed from the Jewish practices.

I don't even understand what christening is today. I'm not sure that I even understand that correctly because I never came from a church that practiced that. But we can see that when the child was eight days old, that's when his name was officially given on the occasion of his circumcision.

Of course, he had to be circumcised on the eighth day according to the law. That was the day it had to be done. And so they thought that he should be called after the name of his father, Zechariah.

But his mother answered and said, no, he should be called John. Now, the neighbors thought that she was acting on her own authority and kind of speaking out of place. Unfortunately, the dad couldn't speak because he'd been mute for the past nine months.

But they said to her, there's no one among your relatives who is called by this name. So they made signs to his father what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote saying his name is John.

So they all marveled. Now, this is so funny. It shows you so much about human nature.

They made signs to his father what he should be called. As if he was deaf. I mean, like they're using sign language with him as if he can't hear.

The Bible doesn't suggest anywhere that he couldn't hear. He was just struck dumb for nine months. But people are so awkward around disabled people that this happens.

We had an elder in one of our churches who was paralyzed from the chest down from an accident. And of course, he was in a wheelchair and his wife used to push him around in the church. He's a highly intelligent man.

He was a teacher and well-read and very articulate. But after church, people would come up to Charlie and Amy and they'd say to Amy, do you think Charlie would like a cup of coffee? And she says, why do you ask him? He can think. He can speak.

I mean, he's a normal guy, just disabled. And people sometimes don't know quite... They act like disabled people are more disabled than they really are. Almost like they're mentally disabled or something.

And sometimes it's surprising when you find people who are physically disabled in some way to find out how normal they are in all other respects. But anyway, we just see the same kind of tendency here. There's no reason to believe that Zacharias was deaf.

And yet, it's very clear that they were communicating with him as if he were deaf, making signs to him, and trying to get some information out of him. And so, of course, he was dumb and he couldn't speak, so he had to write out the answer. He said, his name is John.

Which caused everyone to marvel. For one thing, Zacharias was a great name. It was a great biblical name.

36 men in the Bible are named Zacharias. Or Zechariah, the Hebrew form of it. That's a name with great roots in their Jewish heritage.

Furthermore, it was the father's name. And it was an only child. The father's going to die childless apart from this child.

And therefore, if the father's real name was going to be carried on, one would think that you'd give him the father's name. So, this was his last chance, you know, to name someone after himself. But John is not even an Old Testament name.

It's not even a biblical name of the Old Testament. Though it was apparently relatively common in the New Testament times. I believe John, if I'm not mistaken, is a Greek name.

Is it John? We've got a lot of Johns here, too. Don't we? Anyone know if John is a Greek name? I believe it is. But, of course, the Greek culture had influenced a great deal in New Testament times.

There's a lot of Johns in the New Testament, but none in the Old Testament. In fact, there was a high priest's relative named John. There was John the Baptist.

There was John the son of Zebedee. There was John Mark. It's not even from an earthly language.

It's a defensive answer. Okay. Yahweh has been gracious.

God has been gracious. Now, it's possible that it does have a Hebrew root, but it's not found in the Old Testament. And I just don't know much about the etymology of it.

I think it's derived from the word Shondala. It's from a heavenly language, right? Okay. Went over the heads of our non-Pentecostal friends here.

That's okay. I had to wait a while for that laugh. I can see.

Okay. So, they named him John, which surprised everyone. And as soon as Zechariah had committed himself in writing to name him John, which is, of course, what the angel said his name would be, it says that that ended his period of muteness.

And it says in verse 64, Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them, and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, What kind of child will this be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

Now his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David. Now, that God has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David cannot be a reference to the birth of John the Baptist, because John the Baptist, we were told earlier, was of the house of Levi. David was not a Levite.

Zechariah himself was a Levite, a priest, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron. That would make her a Levite also, because Aaron was of the tribe of Levi. Therefore, here is a Levitical child born.

John the Baptist was born to a priestly family, and had he not been called away into the wilderness as a prophet, he would have been a priest. And according to Jewish custom, at age 30, he would have become a priest, because of his pedigree here. However, he was called away to be a prophet at age 30 instead of a priest.

By the way, so was Jeremiah, I believe. Well, Jeremiah, we don't know at what age he was called away, but he was a priestly stock, and he was called to be a prophet instead. Also, interestingly, Ezekiel was a priest of a priestly family, and at age 30, his ministry began, prophesying.

Now, he was in exile in Babylon, so he couldn't have served as a priest in Jerusalem, but as an exile, he began a ministry of prophecy, according to Ezekiel chapter 1, though it was the very year he would have begun his priestly duties had he been a priest in Jerusalem. Also, Zechariah in the Old Testament, who wrote the book of Zechariah, was also a priest, though we don't know that he was called to be a prophet in his 30th year. We see that Ezekiel was, and so was John the Baptist, the very year that, due to their pedigree, they would have become priests, they instead became prophets.

And John's ministry began when he was 30 years old, or at least that's the figure that's given as thereabouts. Now, how then is this interpreted as God raising up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David? It wasn't David's house, it wasn't David's family. Obviously, he's referring to Mary's baby, which confirms that Mary was descended from David.

Now, we don't know that to be the case, unless Luke 3 is Mary's genealogy. Apart from that, we would have no confirmation of Mary's background, but we have concluded that Luke 3, verse 23 and following, does give Mary's genealogy, not Joseph's, and therefore, Mary was descended from David, and he's referring to Jesus who had not yet been born, but upon the birth of John the Baptist, Zacharias begins to announce the coming of Jesus. Remember I said that the dumbness, the nine months dumbness and silence of Zacharias probably stands as a symbol of the 400 years of prophetic dumbness or silence of God from Malachi till the coming of John the Baptist.

From Malachi, 400 years before Christ, to the coming of John the Baptist, there were no prophets. God was silent. But that silence ended with the coming of John the Baptist, and that silence was broken with the message that the Messiah was coming.

And likewise, Zacharias' own personal silence ended with the coming of John the Baptist and began with the proclamation of the coming of Jesus. I think that his own personal silence and muteness is symbolic. I mean, I think it really happened, but I think it served as a symbol of the breaking of the silence of God in now sending another prophet after all these years to announce the coming of the one of the house of David, raising up a horn of salvation.

Now, in verse 69, where it says a horn of salvation, we encounter that word horn also in Hannah's prayer. In 1 Samuel, she mentions something about God exalting her horn. The word horn is used frequently in the Psalms as well, and sometimes in the prophets.

It was symbolic for power. In certain prophetic visions where nations were signified by

animals, like the vision of the ram and the he-goat, the ram with two horns represented media in Persia, and the he-goat with a notable horn represented Alexander the Great and his power. And then when that horn was broken, four horns came up in its place, which were the four kingdoms into which Alexander's was divided.

A horn represented political power usually, usually political power or military power. David in the Psalms frequently talks about how God has exalted his horn, meaning his prominence as a political leader and as a military victor over his enemies. Hannah, of course, saw her victory as being not a military one, but as over her rival, the other wife of her husband.

Zechariah may have been interpreting the coming of Jesus here as a political thing, as God exalting the horn or raising up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David. Now here, it's not so much the horn of Israel that's exalted, but this Messiah is the horn of salvation, the power of salvation. The word horn can often simply be substituted with the word power to understand what is meant here.

So it's saying that God has raised up the power of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, although this had not yet happened. Many times prophets speak in what is called the prophetic perfect tense. You'll find it in the Old Testament all the time.

Something we'll talk about when we have an introduction to the prophets. One of the more common phenomena in the Old Testament prophets is they speak in the past tense, which is called the prophetic perfect tense. They see it so clearly, and it's so certain because it's determined by God, that they can speak of it as if it's already been accomplished.

They speak of it as if it's already happened. Now here, only John the Baptist has been born, not Jesus. Yet, Zechariah is prophesying about Jesus as if it's already happened.

God has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since the world began. Now this statement, since the world began, prophets since the world began, were there prophets at the beginning of the world? Well, it's possible we have a hyperbole here, meaning just all the prophets of all time have spoken of this. And that would appear to be true.

We don't know whether Elijah and Elisha and some of those prophets who never wrote anything spoke about the Messiah or not. But we do know that all the writing prophets whose records have been preserved in the Old Testament have spoken of the Messiah. There's not one of them that lacks a reference to the Messianic kingdom.

And so he sees this as a fulfillment of that which is written by all the prophets. In Acts chapter 3, Peter confirms the same thing, namely that what Jesus has accomplished was predicted by all the prophets. All the prophets.

From Samuel on, he says, in Acts chapter 3, verse 24, Peter said, Yes, and all the prophets from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. So Peter believed that all the prophets had spoken of his own days. It'd be an exciting thing to be able to know that you were living in the days that were such important days that not one prophet had ever spoken without making reference to your generation and to your times.

Because that was such a pivotal time. Of course, we do think, a lot of people think that is the case of our own generation. A lot of people think that the prophets have spoken of our own days as the last days and so forth.

But finding the actual predictions in the actual books of the prophets is quite a task. I don't know of anything in the books of the prophets that predicted our days. And that comes from a fairly good familiarity with the prophets.

Anyway, there may be something in there, but I'm not aware of it. But those guys, the people we're reading about here, they lived in times where they knew this was the turning point of history. It was such a significant transition time that every prophet God had ever sent had predicted it.

He spoke about this by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been since the world began. Verse 71, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, there it is again interpreting this as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. Now, twice, verse 71 in the first instance and verses 74 and 75 in the second, he talks about being delivered from the hand of all our enemies.

Now, he may have, in fact, in his own mind, interpreted this prophecy as being a reference to the Jews being delivered from their oppressors, the Romans. We don't know whether he saw it that way or not. In all likelihood, he did.

But even if he was mistaken in his interpretation, his words were inspired. That's what we're told when it says that he was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied. In verse 67, certainly we would not be told that he was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied if we were not to take his words as inspired.

Therefore, even though he may have misapplied the meaning of his own words, whether he did or not, we don't know. Yet, they were true words. That Jesus came.

One of the things Jesus came for is, verse 71, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us and restated in verses 74 and 75, to grant us that

we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. This prediction must be true. And although it is not political enemies that we are delivered from, it must be true of our spiritual enemies.

You know, when the angel appeared to Joseph to tell him about Mary's situation and explain it to him, he said that his name will be called Jesus. I think it's Matthew 1.21. He says, his name shall be called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Just as God in the Old Testament was looked to by the Jews to save them from their political enemies, as he had saved them, for instance, out of Egypt from Pharaoh in the Exodus, it was now necessary for him to save his people from a more heinous enemy, a more diabolical enemy, a more damaging enemy that ruins them for eternity, not only for their lifetime.

And that is sin. And that's what was predicted. Look at Micah 7. The book of Micah, right after Jonah.

In the last chapter of Micah, he says in verse 14 of Micah 7, Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your heritage, who dwell in a solitary woodland in the midst of Carmel. Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days of old, as in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt. I will show them wonders.

Now, there is a comparison here of something God's going to do for His people that is comparable to when He took them out of Egypt. That is something that is analogous to the Exodus. He goes on a little further on down.

Verse 19, Micah 7, 19. It says, He will again have compassion on us, just like He did when He brought them out of Egypt. He's going to do something similar.

And He will subdue our iniquities, that is our sins. Now, when He brought them out of Egypt, He subdued their enemies, the Egyptians, their oppressors, their physical oppressors. But now it is predicted there is going to be something like that in principle, but it's going to be spiritual oppressors that He will subdue.

He will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea, just like He did the Egyptians, drowned them in the sea when He delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. Our sins now and our iniquities are now in the place, in this analogy, that the Egyptians were in as the oppressors of God's people, which God delivered them from.

Now, this second exodus, this deliverance of God's people from sins that resembles His deliverance of them from their Egyptian captors, is in view again, I think, in Luke chapter 9. In Luke chapter 9, we have the story of the transfiguration there. And we know that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus on the mountain and Peter and James and John

saw it. And it says in Luke chapter 9, in verse 30 and 31, Behold, two men talked with Jesus, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease, which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem.

Obviously, His death. But the word decease there, I don't know what it reads in any other versions out there. The word in the Greek is exodus.

Exodus is a Greek word. It means a going out. And here's Moses and Elijah.

Moses was the guy that God used to accomplish the first exodus. And now he and Elijah are talking to Jesus about the exodus that Jesus is going to accomplish through His death in Jerusalem. Through His death and the resurrection.

In other words, the second exodus. That which the prophets foretold. That there would be another thing that God would do.

Analogous to when He brought them out of Egypt. In fact, such a great thing that it would eclipse the time when God brought them out of Egypt. Once again, not having intended to go quite in this direction, I didn't look up some of the verses I'd like to show you, but I might be able to find them quickly.

In the book of Isaiah, I think it's in Isaiah 54. I may be wrong. Is it there? That He says that they will forget... Let's see here.

I think it's in Isaiah 54 that He talks about He's going to do something that will be so remarkable that they will no longer say blessed is Jehovah who delivered us from Egypt. But blessed be Jehovah who delivered us in the secondary sense. Which means that this new salvation would be so great it would eclipse the exodus.

God was remembered by the Jews as the one who delivered them from exodus. In fact, the Passover was a yearly celebration of that deliverance. But when Jesus ate the Passover the last time with His disciples... I think I've named the wrong chapters.

I'm not going to take time looking for it. When Jesus sat at His final Passover with His disciples, He said, I have with great longing desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And they said, This bread is my body.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for the remission of sins. Clearly, this was a spin-off of the Passover which celebrated every year the exodus. But He was now giving it new meaning.

From now on, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you show forth my death until I come. And the idea then is that His death eclipses the exodus. Instead of remembering the exodus of the Old Testament when they took Passover, they are now to remember something else instead.

Something that would take the place of their remembrance of the exodus. And that was the greater exodus which He accomplished through His death and resurrection. And the Passover meal from then on would be a commemoration of that instead of the exodus.

So we can see that what Jesus accomplished at the cross in delivering His people from their sins is likened in many places to His deliverance of them from the bondage of their Egyptian captors and oppressors or their enemies in general. Micah said that He is going to cast our sins into the depths of the sea. He is going to deliver us from our iniquities.

That's of course what Jesus came to do. Now, Zacharias was not wrong when he said that the coming of Jesus would result in that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Or in verse 74, that He'd grant that we being delivered from the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Sounds like He's talking about political deliverance. Possibly from the Romans. But the statement is true in a different sense.

It's true in the sense of delivering us from the hand of the demonic powers that are our enemies and the sins, the bondage of our sins, so that we can live and serve God in holiness and true righteousness all the days of our lives. Now, a lot of Christians don't believe that promise. But it's a prophecy here that accompanies the coming of Jesus into the world.

That His coming would result in this, that we could live in holiness and true righteousness and be delivered from our sins. Many Christians don't expect that, don't believe that. I believe that.

I believe that we can overcome the sins in our lives and we can live in holiness and true righteousness and that we are expected to strive toward that goal. And nothing short of that is really worth settling for. Now, I already pointed out that verses 72 and 73 affirm that Zacharias, like Mary, saw this as a fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant and that the thing that God had promised way back there to all the fathers, including Abraham, was now in the process of fulfillment.

Then, at verse 76, he turns and prophesies to his own son, his infant son, who, of course, could not understand him at that point, but it was symbolic of his declaring what his son's role would be. By the way, Isaiah did this also. Isaiah had a son in Isaiah chapter 8 named Mehershal Elhashbaz.

And at a certain point, he started prophesying to his son, saying, My son, this is what's going to happen in your lifetime. This is what's going to happen to your nation, and so forth. So, I guess this is not unprecedented that a prophet, on the birth of his own son, would see a special significance in his son's role and would even utter prophecies to his

infant son, who, of course, could not possibly understand him, but, nonetheless, a method of conveying the importance of this child.

He says in verse 76, A new child will be called the prophet of the highest. For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins. Now, he does grasp here that salvation is a matter of getting them remission of their sins, not a matter of political deliverance.

So, he may have had a better grasp of this than some of the people, even later, of the disciples did. Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring from on high has visited us to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace. Now, in the Psalms, it says of the wicked that the way of peace they have not known.

Where does it say that? I can find that one. I can't tell you until I look it up, but I can definitely find that one. It's actually not in the Psalms.

I was wrong. It's Isaiah 59, 7 and 8. In Isaiah 59, 7 and 8, it says, Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways.

And the way of peace they have not known. There is a way of peace. It's a way of peace with God, and it's a way of being a peacemaker with men.

Wicked people don't know those ways. Those are learned ways. We're not born innately unselfish and peacemakers and willing to defer and so forth for the sake of peace, but it has to be a learned behavior.

The wicked do not know the way of peace. But, Zechariah said that this child, John the Baptist, would guide our feet into the way of peace. That is, he'd give us some insight in how to live at peace, almost certainly with God, but also possibly meaning the kind of shalom peace that the Jews considered to be, you know, basically general well-being and freedom and so forth.

But he saw John the Baptist as coming to remedy a situation that they didn't know by nature. They didn't know the way of peace without being shown, but he would come and guide them. Now, this guidance is figuratively described as giving light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Now, actually, it's not John the Baptist who would guide their feet. It's the day spring from on high that would, in verse 78. He speaks this to John the Baptist, but he's really talking about Jesus.

The word day spring means daybreak or the dawning, the sunrise. Where does he get this imagery? From a number of places. One of those places is in Malachi, interestingly enough, because Malachi is the book that predicted the birth of John the Baptist.

And when John was born, or the coming of John the Baptist, I should say, and when John was born, his father made an allusion to this prophecy, but to a different part of it. In Malachi chapter 4, the last chapter of the Old Testament, you see that verses 5 and 6 are the prophecies about Elijah coming, and those are the prophecies that were quoted by the angel about John the Baptist. So, John is in view here.

Likewise, Malachi 3.1 is about John the Baptist. Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. That's a reference to John the Baptist.

And Zechariah is actually alluding to that very prophecy, who prepare the way before me. In Luke 1.76, where he said, for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways. In Luke 1.76, Zechariah says to John the Baptist, you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways.

Well, that's obviously an allusion to Malachi 3.1. But there's another allusion to Malachi that may not be as obvious, and that's Malachi 4.1 and following. For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all that do wickedly, shall be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up.

You know what I think this is talking about. Says the Lord of hosts, that will leave them neither root nor branch. But look at verse 2 in contrast.

But to you who fear my name, to the believing remnant of Israel, the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. That is no doubt what Zechariah is referring to when he said the sun rising from on high is business. The word day spring means sunrise.

So he said, with the coming of John the Baptist, this Malachi prophecy is in the process of fulfillment. The sunrise has come. The sun of righteousness is arising with healing in His wings.

And Jesus' ministry was characterized by healing. And it was the sunrise. A lot of people apply Malachi 4 to the second coming of Christ.

But this can hardly be appropriate. In view of the fact that both chapter 3 and chapter 4 of Malachi are quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled in John the Baptist, the fact that Zechariah is full of the Holy Spirit makes application of these verses to John the Baptist, obviously these prophecies in Malachi are about the first coming, not the second coming of Christ. The sunrise was the coming of Jesus the first time.

Look over at Isaiah very quickly. We only have about 4 minutes of tape left. So let's quickly look at Isaiah 9. Isaiah 9. Verses 1 and 2. Isaiah 9 verses 1 and 2. By the way, I might just tell you that these verses are quoted in Matthew 4 verses 13 through 16 as being fulfilled in Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

So we're reading in Isaiah 9, 1 and 2 a prophecy about Jesus' Galilean ministry. These verses are quoted in Matthew 4 as being fulfilled in Jesus' Galilean ministry. Here it says, Nevertheless, the gloom will not be upon her who was distressed, as when at first he lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

That's where Jesus' ministry began, in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. And afterwards he more heavily oppressed her by the way of the sea beyond Jordan. In Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

And those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. So, here's a sunrise also. These people dwelt in darkness.

They walked in darkness. They dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. These people, these Jews of Galilee.

But it predicts a time when they will see a great light. That a great light is going to shine upon them. And we know this was fulfilled in Jesus' ministry because these verses in Isaiah are quoted as being fulfilled in that way.

Also sounds very much like Zechariah's words when he says to give light to those who sit in darkness. And the shadow of death. The shadow of death obviously is a reference taken from this passage here.

The shadow of death and in darkness in Isaiah 9-2. So, Zechariah is alluding to this passage in Isaiah 9 about a light shining on those who are in darkness. Thus we have two times in the New Testament that Isaiah 9-1 and 2 are alluded to as fulfilled in Christ.

If you'll turn to one other passage, Isaiah 60. Isaiah 60 in verse 1 says... Yeah, that's right. Verse 1 says, Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the people. But the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. And Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

This is too, I think, the same thing. The rising of the glory, the rising of the Son of Righteousness. Those who sat in darkness, those who are in gross darkness, are enlightened by the sunrise.

That was the coming of Christ. Zechariah has understood it so. He says, The sunrise from on high has visited us.

In Luke 1.78. And he quotes or alludes to a number of these Old Testament passages as being fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and John the Baptist. The last verse in Luke 1 says, So the child grew and became strong in spirit. This is John the Baptist, not Jesus.

He's not born yet. And was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel. We don't know how young John went into the desert.

It's fair probably to guess that maybe after his bar mitzvah, when he became a man, after age 12 or 13, he may have taken up residence in the wilderness. We don't know. We know he was there as an adult, and apparently lived there a long time before that, because it says he dwelt in the wilderness until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

Apparently he did even then stay in the wilderness. But we'll have more to say about John later when we get to the adult life of Jesus and John. From this point, the narrative has turned to the birth of Jesus, which we'll have to take next time.