

# OpenTheo

## Luke 1:26 - 1:80



### Gospel of Luke - Steve Gregg

In this biblical passage, Steve Gregg discusses the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ as presented in Luke chapter 1. He highlights the importance of Mary and Joseph's lineage to David, underscoring the fulfillment of messianic prophecies. He also draws attention to the miraculous nature of these births and Mary's faithfulness despite the social and emotional risk involved. Gregg further explores the significance of John the Baptist as a precursor to Jesus and the expectations of salvation among the Jewish people.

### Transcript

Now we're returning to Luke chapter 1. We left off with verse 25. And in those first 25 verses, we read about the announcement to Zechariah that John the Baptist would be born and the story doesn't go all the way to his birth before it's interrupted. It only goes to the point of about five months or so after the pregnancy had commenced.

So we now turn our attention to another geographical area. We don't know exactly where Zechariah and Elizabeth lived, but they lived somewhere in the hills of Judah or Judea and they were Levites so they might have lived in one of the Levitical cities. Some scholars speculate they might have lived in Hebron, which would be a Levitical city in Judea, but there were others and so no one knows for sure.

But now we are going to turn our attention in the midst of Elizabeth's pregnancy to another geographical area, Nazareth, in the north of the country, up in Galilee. So we've been in the southern region of Israel, Judea, and now we look at the other end of the country where there's another couple who are going to figure prominently. Verse 26, Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, Rejoice, highly favored one. The Lord is with you.

Blessed are you among women. But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, Do not be

afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and you will bring forth a son and shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of God, excuse me, the Son of the Highest, which is the same as the Son of God. And the Lord shall give to him the throne of his father David.

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end. Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be since I do not know a man? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the highest will overshadow you. Therefore also that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

Now indeed, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God, nothing will be impossible.

Then Mary said, Behold the handmaiden or the handmaid servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. And then the angel departed from her.

Now we have the same angel, this time approaching the woman, not the man. The woman in this case doesn't have a man. Although she's betrothed, she will be married, but she is unmarried at this point.

And so the announcement is made to her rather than to Joseph. Though of course in Matthew's version, we also have an angel coming to Joseph at the proper time, later than this. The angel first came to Mary and later when Joseph found that she was pregnant, an angel came to him as well, the Now I point out at this stage that Luke's birth narratives are all told from the side of Mary, her family.

Elizabeth is her relative. The angel comes to Mary. This is a narrative that apparently originated from Mary.

Probably she was Luke's source of this. And Matthew, on the other hand, tells the story from Joseph's side. Joseph's genealogy is given.

Joseph is the one who receives a visit from the angel in Matthew chapter one. Chapter two, the angel appears to Joseph a number of other times. So only Matthew and Luke even have birth narratives of Jesus.

Mark and John skip over these things entirely. But Matthew tells them from the man's side, from Joseph's side. No doubt because Matthew was written for Jews and the Jews would be concerned about the man.

He's the head of the home. He's the one who's important. The genealogy comes through

the man.

And so to the Jew, Joseph's experiences would be more pertinent. Luke wants to tell us from Mary's side. So we've already read about her relatives and now we read about her.

Now it says in the sixth month. This is almost certainly a reference to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Though the last we read of it, it was only five months because she hid herself, it says, for five months in verse 24.

But of course, when the five months were completed, the very next day was the sixth month. And so we have the story taken five months before we have Mary in it. And then in the beginning of the sixth month, we have her in the picture.

And she's in a city of Galilee called Nazareth. And the fact that Luke says it's a city of Galilee may be an indication of what we already knew, that he's writing to a Gentile because he has to tell that Nazareth is a city in Galilee. A Gentile who maybe lived in Rome or somewhere like that wouldn't know the geography, wouldn't know where Nazareth was.

A Jew would. It's obviously not written to Palestinian Jews. He wouldn't have to tell us that it was in Galilee.

Now it is to a woman, a virgin, betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. Now who's of the house of David, Joseph or Mary? Well, I believe they both are. We know Joseph was because Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph and he clearly is to the house of David.

Mary, we don't have any unambiguous genealogy of Mary, but we do have a genealogy in Luke chapter three, which I believe is Mary's. When we get to chapter three, I'll talk about the ambiguity of that. But the genealogy in chapter three of Luke is also going back to David.

And I believe it's essential that Mary was descended from David. If Luke doesn't give us Mary's genealogy, no one does. And if we don't have Mary's genealogy, we don't have Jesus's bloodline.

Because the promise that was made to David was it would be a son that comes from his bowels, not just someone adopted as Jesus was adopted by Joseph into the family, but someone who came physically the seed of David. And if Mary was not descended from David as well as Joseph, then Jesus was not. And that's an essential part of qualifying to be the Messiah.

So I believe Mary is also of the house of David, though it's not clear that it's a reference to her. It could be a reference to Joseph, the way that it's worded here. She was betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David.

Well, he was of the house of David, but she probably was too. And we'll see that later on. Now, in contrast to the couple we read about earlier, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were both emphatically descended from Aaron.

Even Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron. They were Levites. Mary and Joseph were Judahites.

They were not of the tribe of Levi. They were descended from David and therefore of the tribe of Judah. Yet there was a relationship of some kind between the two.

They were different tribes, but somewhere obviously in their ancestry, someone of the tribe of Judah had intermarried with somebody of the tribe of Levi, which was not unthinkable at all. I'm sure it happened a great deal at the time. And therefore, though we don't know which generation it was earlier, it was probably not very much earlier that Elizabeth was still known to be related to Mary in some sense, probably a fairly distant sense.

But it's even possible that Mary had not yet heard of Elizabeth's pregnancy. They might not have been that close prior to this time. The angel comes and refers to Mary as the highly favored one in verse 28.

This could be translated full of grace. And it is because of this that the Roman Catholics have their saying, Hail Mary, full of grace. But it doesn't mean that she's an unusual woman in the sense of being perfect or full of grace, like God is full of grace, like Jesus is full of grace and truth, but she's full of God's favor.

That is, God favored her highly. The word grace, *keres*, in the Greek means favor. And so she's just really highly favored because almost every Jewish girl would be glad to have become the mother of the Messiah.

The Messiah was the desire of Hebrew women to be his mother because he'd be the savior. I mean, a woman would be glad to have a son who's the high priest or other important person, but the Messiah would be the chief privilege to be the mother of. So here she's told she's the one, highly favored, blessed among women.

Now, she wasn't sure what to think at first. She might not have even known it was an angel initially. I mean, angels, when they appear, look like people, like men.

And so she might think it's strange that some guy shows up. And where she was, we don't know. Was she gathering water out by the well? Was she in her room? I mean, was she somewhere she didn't expect a man to show up? We don't know.

All we know is she was troubled and wasn't sure what to make of the announcement. So she received further information as well as consolation. He said, don't be afraid, which is, as I say, what angels always say.

He says, you have found favor with God and behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and she'll call his name Jesus. Now we know the name Jesus is in Hebrew, the Yeshua, and it comes from two words that mean Yahweh is salvation. When in Matthew chapter one, when Joseph is told that the child's name will be Yeshua or Jesus, the angel says, because he will save his people from their sins, his name should be called Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

So that's the meaning of the name is Yeshua is salvation. It means savior essentially, because he'll save them. He doesn't make that statement about the name here.

He just says his name will be called Jesus. He will be great. He'll be called the son of the highest.

Now it's interesting because Luke very commonly takes Hebraisms and paraphrases them because he's writing to a Gentile, but the highest is definitely a Hebraism. It's a euphemism for God. The Jews used a number of euphemisms in place of the word God because of their carefulness about being irreverent with the name of God.

They didn't want to overuse it. They didn't want to cheapen it. So they had a number of words that they would use instead of the word God.

And the highest is one of the ones they'd use. And so when it says the son of the highest, it means the son of God, but it's clearly a Hebraism, which Luke does not change. There's many Hebrew elements of chapters one and two of Luke more than in the rest of the book.

And some feel that it's because he derived this material from, you know, obviously a strictly Jewish source, probably Mary herself. He probably preserved even the very words the angel said to her, even speaking to a Hebrew girl, he uses the Hebrew euphemism, the highest instead of God. And Luke keeps it.

He retains the Jewish flavor of these two chapters very much. Because when we find Zechariah's prophesying, when we find Mary prophesying in these chapters, it's very Jewish. It's all about how God has visited his people, Israel, and fulfilled the promises he made to Abraham and things like that.

A very Jewish flavor to these birth narratives, even in Luke. And this is a Hebraism itself, a Jewish idiom, the son of the highest would simply mean the son of God. And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.

Now that's what the Messiah was supposed to come be. He was supposed to be a descendant of David who would rule in David's place. The fulfillment of this is disputed between different Christians.

There are dispensationalists and there are non-dispensationalists. And the former

dispensationalists believe that the throne of David is not occupied at this time. But when Jesus returns, the throne of David will be established in the millennial reign and Jesus will sit on the throne of David.

In fact, they say that since Jesus never sat on the throne of David in his first coming, he has to come back and sit on the throne of David in the millennium because the prediction is that he would do so. However, the apostles understood and preached that Jesus now sits on the throne of David. And this throne is at the right hand of God.

Now, obviously, it's not the same chair that David sat on, but that's irrelevant. The throne of David doesn't mean the same chair he sat on. Even Solomon, who clearly sat on the throne of David, didn't sit on the same chair.

He made a new chair. Solomon made his own throne, more ornate than David's, and sat on it. But he was reigning on the throne of David, just as we might say that the current monarch of Great Britain sits on the throne of King Richard or somebody in the past.

It's the same government. They're sitting in the place where former kings sat in rulership. Sitting on his throne doesn't mean it's the same chair, literally.

And as David ruled over the kingdom of God in his day, which was the nation of Israel, so Christ rules over the kingdom of God now at the right hand of God. And as you look at Acts, which Luke also wrote, we can see exactly how Paul and Peter, and therefore Luke, understood these promises being fulfilled. If you look at Acts 2, it says in verse 30, Acts 2, in verse 30, Peter's preaching says, therefore being a prophet, he's referring to David as a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, he would raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne.

It says in verse 32, this Jesus God has raised up, of which were all witnesses. That is, David said that God would raise up his son to sit on the throne, and Jesus has been raised up for that very purpose. And then he says in verse 33, therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured this out, which you now see in here, for David did not ascend himself to the heavens.

And he goes on to quote some other verses, and then he says in verse 36, therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucify, both Lord and Christ. He has enthroned him according to David's expectation that his seed would rise up to sit on his throne. God raised him up, and he has made him the Lord.

He has made him the ruler. He has made him the Messiah, just as he promised to David. It's very clear that Peter and Acts, therefore Luke writing it, saw the ascension of Jesus and his enthronement at the right hand of God as the fulfillment of the Davidic promises.

And if it's not entirely clear there, which I think it is, if you look at Acts chapter 13, you'll find the first recorded sermon of Paul. Now Acts 2 had the first recorded sermon of Peter, and now in chapter 13 we have the first recorded sermon of Paul. And in that sermon, which was rather lengthy, it says in verse 30 about Christ, but God raised him from the dead, and he was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people.

And we declare to you glad tidings that the promise which was made to the fathers God has fulfilled. Okay, it's not yet to be fulfilled. The promise God made to the fathers has been fulfilled.

God has fulfilled this for us, their children, in that he has raised up Jesus as it is written in the second psalm. You are my son, today I begotten you. So he quotes Psalm 27 and says this is about the resurrection of Jesus.

God has established Jesus as his reigning son on his throne in raising him from the dead. And then, verse 34, and that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken thus, I will give you the sure mercies of David. This is a quotation from Isaiah 55.3. Now the sure mercies of David refers to those certain promises that God made to David, and most especially that he'd raise up the Messiah to sit on his throne.

That's what the Israelites recognized as the guaranteed merciful promises God made to David was that though David would die, his son would reign forever, his offspring the Messiah. That's the sure mercies of David. And Paul says in that God raised him from the dead, he has fulfilled this promise that God would give him the sure mercies of David.

So what Paul and Peter are saying very clearly is that the promises God made to David, that a son of his would sit on his throne, have been fulfilled in the resurrection, and of course the subsequent ascension of Christ and his enthronement at the right hand of God. So the angel says he will give him the throne of his father David. He's not talking about thousands of years out past Mary's time.

This is something that would happen as a result of Jesus being born and coming the first time. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Now these words in verses 32 and 33 are deliberately echoing almost verbatim some of the words of Isaiah the prophet about the Messiah.

In Isaiah chapter 9, which is or should be a very well-known prophecy about the Messiah, Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7, it says, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. The government will be on his shoulder. Then he'll rule over the house of Jacob, just like the angel said.

And his name should be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace. It says of the increase of his government, that is of his kingdom and peace, there will be no end. So also said the angel, his kingdom will, there will be no end, he says, of his kingdom.

It says, Upon the throne of David, that's also part of the angel's announcement. He'd sit on the throne of David over his kingdom to order and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward even forever. From what time forward? From his birth.

This is a prophecy about the birth of Jesus, not the second coming of Jesus. Unto us a child is born. That's his birth.

That's not the second coming. The giving of the throne of David to Jesus occurs not at his second coming. It's already been given to him as a result of his first coming, his birth.

And so the angel announces to Mary that this prophecy of Isaiah and of many other prophets, but especially the wording of Isaiah 9, 6, and 7 is echoed in the announcement of the angel. It says, Then Mary said to the angel, verse 34, How can this be, since I do not know a man? Now, this is an honest enough question. She is going to have a baby, but she's not married yet.

Now, more than that, the baby is going to be the son of God, which might give her reason to wonder, this guy I'm betrothed to isn't God, so maybe it's not going to be him who's the dad, you know? Who's going to be the dad if the baby's going to be God's son? If he's born Joseph's son, then they call him the son of Joseph, not the son of God. So she's wondering, what's this all mean? It's kind of curious, and she gets an answer. Now, this next verse, 35, is telling her how this is going to happen, how this can be.

And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest, again a reference to God, the power of God, will overshadow you. Therefore, also that holy one who is to be born of you will be called the son of God. So this is how it's going to happen.

You wonder how, without knowing a man, without having sex with a man, you can become the mother of a baby, and how that baby can be the son of God. Well, he says this is how he's the son of God, because the Spirit of God and the power of God come upon you and overshadow you. And this will result in the conception that I just described.

And it's for this reason, he says, that he'll be called the son of God. Now, that last line, in particular, seems to be saying that the reason Jesus is called the son of God is because he was conceived in his mother's womb, not of man, but of God. It was the work of God.

It was, God is his Father. And it doesn't say he was already called the son of God before this, like in eternity past. In eternity past, Jesus was the Word.

When the Bible speaks about Jesus in his pre-incarnate time, he is called God, and he's



called the Word. But when he's born on earth without a human father, and only God is his Father, he is thereafter referred to as the son of God. Now, what I've just said is considered not strictly orthodox, because orthodox theology teaches that Jesus is the eternal son, that he was the son of God from eternity past.

Well, this may be so, but the Bible doesn't tell us so. Once again, it's what the theologians tell us. It may be right.

I cannot argue that Jesus was not the son of God before he came to earth, but the wording of this angel's announcement sounds like the reason he's called the son of God is not because he's had that title for all eternity, but because he'd be born in this manner without a human father. How am I going to get pregnant? Well, God's going to make it happen. Therefore, your child will be called the son of God.

I don't have much to argue about that. All I can say is the wording there sounds that way to me. And there are no passages in the Bible that describe Jesus as being the son of God prior to his incarnation, with the exception of prophecies about the Messiah which pertain to after his incarnation.

For example, we just saw Isaiah 9-6, unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. Well, when the child is born, he's a son, right? I mean, he's given as the son of God to us. Likewise, Psalm 2-7, which was quoted by Paul, you are my son, this day I begotten you.

It's not a reference to eternity past, it's a reference to the resurrection. I mean, Paul said that. In that he raised him from the dead, he said in the Psalm, you are my son, this day I begotten you.

It's not eternity past, it's on a day, the day of the resurrection. Jesus was born from the dead. He's the first born from the dead, the Bible says, the first begotten from the dead.

Jesus calls himself that in Revelation 1-5, and Paul calls him that in Colossians 1-18, the first born from the dead. So Jesus was born from the dead at his resurrection. He was born from the womb during his conception and his incarnation.

But these are the senses in which the Old Testament refers to him as the son of God. The Old Testament does not refer to him as the son of God, as being the son of God prior to his incarnation. So I would never forbid anyone to believe that Jesus was eternally the son of God.

I would just say, Scripture doesn't have any support for you on it. It's a very orthodox position though. In fact, to say what I have said, that it looks like he's called the son of God because of the manner of his conception, just know that's gone down in history as a heresy.

I'm not sure why, but lots of things became after all, even Protestantism is called a

heresy by the Roman Catholics. And I'm called a heretic by some people of all things. Can you imagine? Someone as mainstream as me.

Anyway, the point here is the angel's words sound as if he's saying, you call him the son of God because he was born without a human father. God did it. Now the language of the spirit of God will come upon you and the power of the house will overshadow you.

It seems reminiscent of the tabernacle. The cloud overshadowed the tabernacle in Moses' day. By the way, I will say this just out of fairness against my point I'm about to make is the word overshadowed in the Greek here is not the same Greek word that's used in the Septuagint when it talks about the cloud of glory overshadowing the tabernacle.

Both words mean overshadowed, but a different Greek word is used. It'd be nice if it was the same one. I really make the point I'm trying to make here.

And that is that John tells us in the first chapter of John's gospel in verse 14 says, the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us. That's the word that John uses in the Greek. He pitched his tent, he tabernacled among us.

And of course the word was God, but he tabernacled in a human body. And for God or the angel to say, Mary, your body will be overshadowed. And the Messiah will come as a result of that.

It almost invites the likeness of the tabernacle with the glory cloud, the Shekinah glory coming and overshadowing the tabernacle and God meeting with man there. So God tabernacled in the child in Mary's womb, and this word overshadowing kind of reminds me of that tabernacle imagery. The idea being that Jesus on earth was the glory of God, the Shekinah glory of God tabernacled in a human body, just as God tabernacled among Israel in a tent.

And although God is everywhere, his manifest presence was only there. He is everywhere in the universe, but he manifested himself at the tabernacle in the Shekinah glory. When Jesus was on earth, of course the father is everywhere.

Jesus said the father is greater than I, but he was manifested right there in that one tabernacle, the body of Jesus. He made himself known and manifested. In fact, Paul even says that in 1 Timothy 3, I think it's verse 15, he says, great is the mystery of godliness.

God was manifested in the flesh. The manifest presence of God was in Christ's flesh as he was in the tabernacle of old. Anyway, verse 36 says, now indeed, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age and is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.

For with God, nothing will be impossible. So of course, he's saying this is kind of

incredible. I realize, I mean, this has never happened before.

No virgin has ever conceived and had a child before, and I'm telling you it's going to happen. And I realize this is unprecedented. Actually, unlike Zacharias and Elizabeth as old people having a child, that's not unprecedented because there were cases in the Old Testament like Abram and Sarah that are like that.

But a virgin having a child, there's no precedent for that. The closest thing I can say is that recently your aunt Elizabeth has gotten pregnant, and she was barren, and she's too old. It's a miracle.

God has shown here that nothing is impossible, and therefore, what I'm telling you is going to happen to you is not really any more impossible than what was impossible for Elizabeth. So this is to encourage her that there are strange things afoot in Israel right now. God is doing something new.

He's already done something quite miraculous in the case of Elizabeth. You're the next person he's going to do something miraculous with. Then Mary said, Behold, the maidservant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. Now, of course, she'd be privileged to have a child, be the Messiah, but the circumstances would be somewhat difficult for her. She knows that she hasn't been messing around, but other people wouldn't know that for sure.

In fact, very few people would believe it if she told them. Oh, this baby, it's from God. I haven't been with a man.

Well, who's going to believe that? Even her betrothed spouse, Joseph, was going to have trouble with that. But she realized, I'm sure, that by this prophecy being fulfilled in her, she was going to take the risk of being misunderstood, ostracized, perhaps divorced, maybe even stoned to death for adultery. But this was okay with her if that's necessary, whatever God wants.

The main thing here is not that she wanted all those troubles, but she disregarded those troubles and wanted the will of God. She was a servant of the Lord. The maidservant of the Lord is like a slave.

I'm God's slave. Whatever he wants, I guess is what's going to have to happen. That's cool.

Cool with me. And simply, that's the attitude of a Christian about anything, about any hardship that God may choose. Well, I object.

I'm the slave here. I've got a master. My master owns me.

So, here I am, the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word. I'll

take it.

And so, the angel departed from her. Now, verse 39, Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah. Now, this is, of course, where Elizabeth lived.

So, why she went to visit Elizabeth, we are not told. But we might guess. And we'll have something to say about that in a moment.

But she leaves Nazareth, goes to the hill country of Judah, and entered 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. 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 this 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 the things which were told her from the Lord. Now, notice Elizabeth professes to know what was told to Mary.

In fact, she knows instantly that Mary is carrying the Messiah. Now, we don't read of Elizabeth ever being told that. Mary hadn't even told her that.

Mary just walked in the house and said, Hey, how are you doing? She greeted her. And Elizabeth, apparently by divine revelation, knew, okay, she's pregnant. The Messiah is her baby.

The Lord has told her things about this. No information, presumably, had been given to Elizabeth about this, but she just knew it by divine inspiration. We're told she was filled with the Holy Spirit, which in the Bible, usually it was accompanied with prophecy or something else.

So, she apparently knew by divine inspiration, prophetically, these things that she said about Mary. Now, the babe, John, leapt in Elizabeth's womb. He was six months along.

We have reason to believe that he was filled with the Spirit at that time because of what the angel had said earlier to Zacharias. Also, we're told he leapt for joy. This tells us something about the status of a fetus, which is controversial in modern times.

It is the beginning of the third trimester. This child had joy. Now, again, Elizabeth must have known that by revelation, but she gives a lot of information she had to know by revelation.

She said that my baby just jumped for joy. If he's filled with the Spirit from the mother's

womb and he has joy and he jumps for joy, he obviously is a person. He's not a tissue blob.

He's actually a prophet already. He's already filled with the Spirit. It certainly tells us something about the status of an unborn baby, at least at this stage.

They might say, well, it wasn't in the first trimester. We do know it wasn't in the first trimester, but the Bible doesn't give us any cutoff point backward. Certainly, at six months, he's clearly a prophet of God, already filled with the Spirit.

Was he at five months, four months, three months? We're not told where a cutoff point would be. It would be very unsafe to assume that at any point during the pregnancy, he was not regarded as John the Baptist by God. He was a human being from the conception, obviously.

What other species would he be? If he's not living, why is he growing? If he's not human, why does he have human DNA? What species is he then? He's a living human being in the womb, and so is every baby that's been conceived. Elizabeth gives this very encouraging thing. Why did Mary even go to Elizabeth? You might think that Mary would go to avoid embarrassment, but she actually left before her pregnancy was visible.

She actually returned home when she was three months pregnant. She waited for John the Baptist to be born, which would make Mary three months pregnant. When John was born, she went back home.

She went when she began to show. She didn't leave in order to conceal her pregnancy. She returned when her pregnancy would become evident.

She could have concealed it for three months without a difficulty. She must have gone there because she felt like, you know, I don't understand everything that's going on, but I know someone who knows more than me. I know someone who can relate with me here.

I mean, I know somebody who is experiencing miraculous things too, and that's my aunt Elizabeth, her cousin or whatever she was. And so she wanted to go for some fellowship. I mean, here's two women who are both having angels send messages to them and God doing supernatural things to them.

You know, when you have an unusual experience with God that's different than the people in your church, and you find someone else who's had one like that, you really kind of crave some fellowship with someone who might be able to relate with what you're going through, and she would be that way. But more than that, because Elizabeth knew about the situation and Mary could communicate with her and so forth, Elizabeth would be an advocate in the family. After all, if Mary just stayed home in Nazareth and said to her folks when she started showing, uh, it's from God, not, you know, Joseph and I

have not been together.

I haven't been with the guy. This is a miracle. Why would they believe it? But if she had Elizabeth in her corner, a relative to her relatives, a woman who also had a supernatural thing, not very dissimilar going on in her case, unmistakably, because everyone knew, I mean, maybe people wouldn't know if Mary was a virgin, but they'd know Elizabeth was old.

Yeah, I mean, the miracle in Elizabeth was indisputable. And for Elizabeth to have had a similar thing and to stand up for Mary and with the family, say, hey, this is real. This is for sure.

I mean, same thing, same angel that came to my husband came to her. And I mean, this would be something Mary might well need once she started to show. So she goes and spends the first three months of her own pregnancy with Elizabeth, uh, making this connection and getting this kind of affirmation.

And I believe that afterward, if ever there was question about the truthfulness of Mary's story among her relatives, Elizabeth was quite willing to stand up for her and say, hey, you know, God showed me this is true. Just like he made me pregnant miraculously. So Mary responds with a song usually called the Magnificat, because that's the first word in the Latin version of this song of the, uh, both Catholics and Protestants sometimes refer to this song that she sings as the Magnificat.

And it goes like this. Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior, for he has regarded the lowly state of his handmaiden, his hand servant, his maidservant. I read the King James into there naturally because I've read the King James.

It's handmaiden, but it's maidservant in the New King James. For behold, henceforth, all generations will call me blessed. But the Roman Catholics have certainly made sure that was done.

For he who is, but Protestants too, 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 in 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 as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her house. Now this word that Mary sang is certainly a prophetic word. It doesn't say that she was filled with

the spirit herself, but I think it's implied that this was a prophetic utterance she gave because she talks about things that had not happened yet.

And actually her song resembles very closely Hannah's song, which anyone who has read Samuel will have noticed. In 1 Samuel chapter 2 verses 1 through 10, when Hannah got pregnant after being unable to conceive for a long time, she sang a song of praise to God. And it contains a lot of the same elements.

It's hard to miss the similarities between Mary's and Hannah's songs. And frankly, no commentary has ever missed them. And probably you haven't either if you've read them both in sort of recently.

A few things. In verse 47, Mary refers to God as her savior. And many times Protestants like me who don't believe that Mary was sinless have used this as a proof that she was not sinless.

She needed a savior like everybody else. However, it's not a real strong argument. I mean, she certainly was a sinner like everyone else.

She wasn't sinless. But this argument, which is so convenient for Protestants to use, is not really as cogent as we might wish. Because the word savior is used in Israel, in the Old Testament and so forth, a lot of different ways.

And very rarely does it mean what we're talking about when we talk about salvation. It usually means God delivering people from a circumstance that was treacherous, dangerous, undesirable, unpleasant. And certainly she could have been speaking as a representative of Israel, that God is Israel's savior, or herself as one who's participated in the salvation of Israel.

God is her savior in senses that all Israelites could say that God was their savior. She may appreciate it more at this point than some Israelites did, but she may not be thinking of salvation like we're thinking of justification by faith, all those things that are part of the salvation that's revealed in the New Testament. This is too early.

Even John wasn't born yet, much less Jesus, nor Paul. Paul hadn't preached salvation as we've largely come to understand it either. So her reference to salvation probably is an Old Testament kind of salvation she's thinking of, that God is the savior of all Israel, including her.

And that makes it difficult for us to insist that she's admitting that she's a sinner needing salvation from sin, you know, like we talk about salvation today. Primarily for us, salvation is from sin. For Israel, salvation was from Egypt, from Babylon, from their enemies, and things like that.

That's commonly how David, for example, spoke about salvation. That's certainly how

Old Testament people did. And Mary was an Old Testament person.

She didn't live under the New Testament until after Jesus died and rose again. And she's probably not thinking in Pauline terms or whatever, but rather in Israeli terms, which might not be, you know, anything about her own sinfulness here, though we would admit as Protestants that she was not a sinless person. Now, what most of her song is, is telling how God has reversed the fortunes of the mighty and the She's one of the lowly.

She and Joseph were poor. They were peasants. We know they were poor because we're going to see in the next chapter that they had to use the sacrifice of the dedication of Jesus in the temple.

They had to use the sacrifice of two birds rather than of a lamb because the law had made an accommodation for people who were too poor. They're supposed to offer a lamb, but the poor could offer two birds. And we read that in chapter two, that Mary and Joseph offered the two birds.

So they were a poor family. She was from a lowly family, a nice lineage, but the kings of Israel were long past, you know, in their history. Although she came from David, probably hundreds of people, if not thousands, came from David in her generation.

Even Joseph was just directly descended from the kings of Israel, but the last king had been 500 years earlier. And, you know, people of that line weren't particularly privileged people in Israel society at that time. They were poor people with good lineage, and she was lowly.

And she says, you know, she's the Lord's maidservant, but she'll be called blessed by all generations. The Lord has taken the lowly and lifted them up. He scattered the proud in their imagination of their hearts.

There's some sense in which she could be prophesying what was not yet true. When he says, he has put down, verse 52, he has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the richest in a way empty.

This may be just a generic way of saying that God has taken the privileged and passed over them and given these privileges to a lowly person like her. It's like when Boaz praised Ruth. He said, you didn't seek younger men or rich men or whatever.

You're a virtuous woman. You chose me even though I'm not young and attractive and so forth. You passed over better options, more probable options, and chose somebody who would not be as likely an option.

That's what she's saying. God has passed over the rich, the powerful, the kings, the people that you might expect them to be the ones bringing the Messiah into the world,



but not so. He passed over them and raised up the lowly, the hungry.

Hunger could speak of poverty or it could speak of her spiritual hunger, that she was spiritually hungry and God came to her and satisfied that hunger. It's really hard to say, but she does say in verse 54, he has helped his servant Israel. So it may be that all this talk about lowly and so forth is referring to the remnant of Israel, of which she was a representative member, but not speaking only of herself, but that in sending the Messiah through her, God was doing something great for all of Israel, sending the Messiah in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Notice again, Mary and all the New Testament witnesses testify that the birth of Jesus was the fulfillment of all the promises God made to Abraham and so forth. And I say that only because there is that other view out there that's popular in modern times that God didn't fulfill his promises to Israel in the first coming of Christ. They've been left unfulfilled and they'll be fulfilled when Jesus returns.

But historically, the church has always taught that the first coming of Christ was the fulfillment of all the Abrahamic promises, but it's somewhat more popular in certain circles to say otherwise and say, no, he hasn't done that. That's going to happen when Jesus comes back. She did not recognize any of the promises God made to the fathers or to as something not being fulfilled in these events.

And then we don't know how she and Elizabeth spent the next three months, but they spent them together and then she went home. It's very possible that when she returned, she carried a letter from Elizabeth to Mary's own parents, her own family saying, hey, I know this seems like a strange story, but your daughter is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. I don't know.

We don't have any record of it. It may not have happened, but I do believe that Mary probably benefited from having Elizabeth in her corner. And a letter from Elizabeth to Mary's parents could well have made it easier for Mary to re-enter her family as a pregnant and now beginning to be a visibly pregnant young woman.

Now what happened after this with Mary, we don't read immediately until the birth, but it's between this point and the birth that the angel appeared to Joseph and that's told in Matthew chapter one. We can't go into that in detail, but Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant probably after this point. And he had his struggles with it, but an angel came to him and made it okay with him too.

So that is left out of Luke's narrative, but included in Matthew chapter one, verse 57, now back to Elizabeth and John the Baptist. And so through the rest of this chapter, it's the focus is going to be on John the Baptist, not on Jesus directly. 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. Now, so it was on the eighth day that they came to circumcise the child. Of course, the law required that every male Jewish child be circumcised on the eighth day of his life.

Jesus likewise was circumcised and they would have called him by the name of his father Zacharias. Apparently they named their child at the time of the circumcision. And so when it came time to circumcise him, the assumption was, well, he'll carry on the family name.

His dad's Zacharias, it's a worthy name. Let's give this child that name. And his mother answered and said, no, he should be called John.

But they said to her, there is no one among your relatives who's called by this name. So they made signs to his father, what he would have him called. Now, the fact that they made signs to Zacharias suggests that either he couldn't hear or they just forgot that he could.

You know, when someone has one disability, sometimes you assume they have more. If someone can't talk, even if you know they can hear, you might forget it sometimes. Let's make signs.

Let's write it down. Oh, I forgot he can hear. We are not told that Zacharias couldn't hear, only that he couldn't talk, but these people act like he couldn't hear.

I sometimes have repeated in this connection a story of a friend of mine. We had an elder in the church, Calvary Chapel, Santa Cruz, back when I was there, who was paralyzed from the neck down. He was obviously in a wheelchair and pushed around by his wife in church, you know, and in fellowship and so forth.

And I was told by them that there were times when people would, you know, Charlie would be there in the wheelchair and his wife, Amy, was behind him with the wheelchair. And people would come up to Amy and say, do you think Charlie would like some coffee? And she'd say, well, he's right there. Why don't you ask him? You know, it's like, but he's disabled, you know, he can't be normal.

You can't expect him to hear and talk and do the things that normal people do. He's got this disability. He's paralyzed.

I mean, it's kind of an irrational way we are. We're uncomfortable around people who don't function in some way or another the way normal people do. And we think, we almost treat them like they're totally dysfunctional people.

And that we see it here. I think it's human nature. Unless in fact, unless in fact Zacharias really was deaf and we were not told that.

But since we weren't told it, I don't think we can assume it. I think this is just people doing what people do. Oh, he hasn't talked for months.

Let's make signs to see if we can get, do you want him to be named Zacharias like you? And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote this saying his name is John. And they all marveled partly because his name was John, which was not a family name, but also because 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.

I might say at this point, because we're about ready to pass from the consideration of Elizabeth, although her husband's going to give a prophecy for the remainder of this chapter. But Elizabeth, as we know, was an old barren woman. Mary was a young, pristine virgin.

John the Baptist came from an old woman. Jesus from a young, pristine virgin. Is there any reason God chose to do it that way? There might be.

The Bible doesn't tell us. But John the Baptist was the last voice of the old covenant. And Jesus, of course, was bringing in the new covenant.

He's the agent of the new covenant. Jesus himself made certain contrasts between himself and John the Baptist. He said John came neither eating or drinking.

He lived an austere life. But the Son of Man came eating and drinking. You know, Jesus' style was different than John's.

Jesus was a celebrant. Jesus was, you know, at a wedding feast, so to speak. I mean, his disciples couldn't fast because they were with the bridegroom.

His whole ministry was like a party, in a way. Whereas John the Baptist was like a fast. John the Baptist was austere.

He ate locusts and honey, lived in the wilderness. Representing, I think, the old covenant. He's the, you know, the ideal Old Testament man.

Jesus is the ideal New Testament man. And from an old barren woman comes the supreme representation of the Old Testament man. The New Testament man comes from a new woman, fresh, young, unspoiled, untainted.

And these two women, Elizabeth and Mary, may be seen as fitting to represent what the Old Testament, how it was different from the New. The Old Testament, the old law, it was old. It wasn't producing fruit anymore.

It was barren. And so the ultimate Old Testament representative, John the Baptist, comes from a woman that fits that very description. Jesus bringing something new and fresh, new wine for, you know, to be put into new vessels and so forth.

He comes from something fresh, something new, a young woman. And it's possible that the oldness of Elizabeth and the youngness of Mary is an intentional divine choice to contrast the status of the two covenants. The Old Covenant being old and no longer producing any fruit.

It was barren. Now, we don't have anything in the Bible that tells us that these women represent that, but we have something a little bit like it in Galatians 4, where Paul talks about the two wives of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar. One of them was barren.

The other was not. And while the comparison between Elizabeth and Mary is not very much like the comparison of Hagar and Sarah, nonetheless, Paul sees Hagar and Sarah as representing two covenants in their own ways. Hagar is a slave and brings forth children in slavery like the Old Covenant does.

Sarah is a free woman and brings forth free children like the New Covenant does. Paul argues that way in Galatians 4. It's a different comparison, but one thing it has in common with what I'm saying is that Paul sees two women and their children as representative of the two covenants. In that case of Sarah and Hagar, whether he would have seen it that way looking at Elizabeth and Mary also, I don't know, but I thought it could be seen possibly that way.

Okay, verse 67. Now, his father Zacharias 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, you'd expect this to be spoken at the birth of Jesus.

John the Baptist wasn't from the house of David. Jesus was, but this is John's birth, not Jesus. Jesus wouldn't come along for another six months.

But obviously, John's arrival was the herald of Jesus' arrival. John had almost no significance independently of Jesus, and he himself said, Jesus must increase, I must decrease. John was a famous Old Testament prophet.

He was known internationally. When Paul traveled around the Mediterranean world, he could refer to John without any explanation. In the synagogues, all the Jews knew who John was.

He was a phenomenon, but he was nothing compared to Jesus. His whole significance was that his birth meant Jesus was coming. He lived in the shadow of Jesus, at least he was intended to in the sight of God.

He did. He's a great man, but his birth significance is really the significance of Jesus. And so his father prophesied at his own son's birth, not about his son's significance, but Jesus' significance.

That God has raised up salvation in the house of his servant David. Well, that's in the case of Mary and Joseph, not Zechariah and Elizabeth. They're not of the house of David.

As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been since the world began, 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, 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, this part of the prophecy is interesting because he was clearly filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesying, so he wasn't wrong. Yet what he prophesied was the birth of Jesus was going to result in the deliverance of Israel from the hand of all their enemies.

Well, their enemies politically were the Romans. Israel was under occupation of the Romans, and that didn't change. As a matter of fact, it only changed after the Romans destroyed them.

The nation of Israel was destroyed 40, well, 70 years after this, and Jesus didn't deliver them from the Romans in any, you know, political sense. Therefore, if Zacharias was thinking that way, he was wrong, but since he's prophesying, he must be right, and it must be spiritual because the Bible certainly teaches that Jesus delivered us from our true enemies, our sins. That's what the angel Gabriel said to Joseph.

His name should be called Jesus. He will save his people from their sins. Our real enemies are not external to us.

Our real enemy is our own sins, and he did come to deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and that would include demonic powers. The nation of Israel was very much overrun with demonic powers. One of the main things Jesus encountered in his ministry was demon-possessed people in Israel, but he delivered them from the hand of those enemies.

He cast the demons out, and so Jesus did deliver his people from enemies, but not the political enemies that they hoped for. They hoped he'd drive the Romans up, but he had a more important mission than that. That's to save them from their real enemies, not their political oppressors, but their spiritual enemies, and so this Christ has done.

He has delivered us from the hand of our enemies. We do have victory over sin. We do have victory over demons, at least we're supposed to.

I realize some Christians may live below their privileges, but this is certainly what Jesus

came to provide and has done. Notice also in this section that Zechariah keeps referring to the promises God made to the fathers and the promise he made to Abraham that God has fulfilled it now, just like Mary had said. The birth of Jesus and John the Baptist heralded the beginning of that fulfillment, and it wasn't 2,000 years off at that time.

It was near. Then he speaks to the child, just like Isaiah speaks to his child. In Isaiah chapter 8, he has a child named Mehershal El-Hashbaz, and Isaiah actually addresses his child and gives a prophecy about Assyria being defeated and so forth, and he addresses his son as Immanuel.

But here, Zechariah speaks to his child, John, and says a new child will be called the prophet of the highest. Again, the prophet of God, the highest being a euphemism. 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, here's an interesting thing. Most Jews who look for the salvation of Israel wouldn't have described it as the remission of their sins, but rather salvation from the Romans or salvation from their oppressors in general. But Zechariah's under-inspiration recognizes who the real enemies are.

Our sins are enemies, and the Messiah is going to bring salvation in the sense of remission of sins. And I guess one could argue that if Zechariah under-inspiration understood salvation that way, that Mary might have too when she gave her reference to God being her Savior. Salvation from sins could have been in her mind if it was in Zechariah's, and it certainly was in Zechariah's.

So it leaves that question somewhat open. Was Mary talking about salvation from sin or salvation from the things that Israel usually sought salvation from? But here we have an enlightened prophet recognizing that real salvation is going to be the remission of sins. Isaiah 60 Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring, which means the dawning of a day, from on high has visited us.

So the coming of Christ in the world, heralded by John the Baptist's birth, is the dawning of a new day. So said Isaiah, arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. And it says the Gentiles should come to the light of arising and near dawning.

This is Isaiah 60. Even Malachi chapter 4 said, unto those who fear my name shall the sun, S-U-N, of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. This day of the Messiah would arise, according to Malachi and Isaiah.

And Zechariah says this is that day. The day spring, the dawning of the day from on high has happened. This is the day that the Lord has made, and he was clearly rejoicing and being glad in it.

To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace. All right, so he's looking to John's birth as the beginning of all these Old Testament promises that God's going to bring peace, salvation, and guidance to his people. But it's spiritual peace, not political peace.

Israel's going to have a lot of war in the years following this, right up until the one that destroys them as a nation. But Christians are going to have peace. Jesus gives peace to his people.

These promises are fulfilled, therefore, to the remnant of Israel, not to the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel did not receive any peace after Jesus came. In fact, Jesus said to his disciples, don't think that I came to bring peace on the earth.

I didn't just come to bring peace, but sword. But he does give peace to his people. So the child, John, grew and became strong in spirit, which probably means he is very spiritually oriented from his youth, and was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

So we'll never read of John again until Chapter 3 when he does manifest himself to Israel in his public ministry. In the meantime, the focus of Chapter 2 will be entirely on the birth of Jesus and the events happening immediately after that. But at this point, we take our break and we'll come back to Chapter 2.