

Christmas Luke Prophecy 18-12-23

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We have a Christmas special that we're going to undertake this morning. You can be turning to the Gospel of Luke.

This is December the 23rd, 2018. And normally we're in 1 Corinthians, but we are in need of muting my speaker, which hopefully that will do. Let's take a moment as we begin our fellowship in time of study this morning by going to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we're grateful for Your grace and Your faithfulness toward us. We celebrate the coming of our Savior, Your Son, at this time of year, and we thank You for Him and for everything that His incarnation accomplished in securing our salvation, in revealing You to us in a unique, perfect, and full way. We thank You for the Lord Jesus' ongoing ministry at Your right hand as He intercedes for us and represents us before Your throne.

We pray that as we look at these aspects of His birth this morning, that the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, will illuminate our hearts and help us to appreciate and understand not only the content, but also what it means to us as we exercise stewardship over the time that remains to us, the resources that You've given to us so that we can live our lives in a way that's pleasing in Your sight, that prepares us for eternity and for service and function in the kingdom that is to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, once again, you get all of the polish and professionalism that my personal engineering skills bring, but be that as it may, we're going to take a look this morning at something in keeping with the season, and it is from the Gospel of Luke. And we have the Christmas season bringing to our hearts and our minds the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Lord Jesus. And what I have titled my study this morning, our investigation, is Christmas Prophecies in Luke.

It reminds me of when the fellow wrote the book looking at portraits of Christ in the Bible, and he realized it was too big a subject. And so he said, well, I'll just do portraits of Christ in the Old Testament. And he couldn't get that down to a book size.

And so he said, well, portraits of Christ in the law, that was still too large. And he finally ended up publishing his book on portraits of Christ in Genesis, and that's a fairly thick book. Well, as you look at the Christmas story and the events that surround the birth of Christ, there are so many different things you can look at.

We have seen the very interesting details of where Jesus was born, what it was that contained the manger, how the shepherds knew where to find him in times past. And I think those studies, if you don't remember the details, are worth reviewing at this time of year. But this is something we've not specifically looked at before.

And as I say, Christmas Prophecies in Luke will probably be doing well to cover the first one or two, but you'll get the idea. And any of the rest of it that you'd like to look at, I think this will establish a pattern that will help us appreciate what is here. But the Luke narrative, as you remember, is one of only two that contains the birth of Christ with its details.

Both Mark and John begin with the ministry phase, the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist. And if you turn to the first chapter of Luke and verse 5, there was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias of the division of Abijah.

His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. So one of the first things we figure out from this is that Elizabeth is a great name. If you have a daughter, I suggest you name her Elizabeth.

And she is prominent in this part of the story, as is Zacharias. But it says that she is of the daughters of Aaron, and of course he is of the sons of Aaron, or he would not be a priest. So they are both not only Levites, but in the line of Aaron that is qualified to function in and around the tabernacle and later the temple.

We also know as the story progresses that Elizabeth is a relative of Mary. So if Mary is descended from David and Elizabeth is descended from Aaron, two different tribes, Levi and Judah, then how are they related? And we don't know. But they are related, and evidently closely so.

So they have no child because Elizabeth is barren, and they were both well-advanced in years. It's interesting to me that we have this regular translation that they are advanced in years because in Greek it says days. So it says in Hemera, Hemera is the word for day, and you've got the plural there, but they are advanced in days, which I guess means years.

But they are advanced in days. The reason I think that's significant is it's one thing to say, well, it's been years since something happened. But if you think of it in terms of days, there is a daily challenge.

There's a daily opportunity to either be depressed over something that you're wishing for that isn't true or some other test that we face. It's daily. And being well-advanced in days without a child when their hope and their goal is to have a child, I think helps us understand just what an omnipresent circumstance this was.

And we're going to find out that Zechariah has been praying to have a child, to have a son. But it's time for him to, according to the custom of the priesthood in verse nine, to burn incense when he goes into the temple of the Lord. So there's a multitude of people praying outside at the hour of incense.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Now, if you remember your tabernacle layout, what's in the holy place? Where is the altar of incense,

first of all? You go into the outside door and you're in the holy place. Across from that door is the curtain, the veil, that goes into the holy of holies, right? And in front of that curtain is the golden altar of incense.

So as you walk in and you look at that veil and that altar, there is something on the left and there is something on the right. On the left is the seven-branched candlestick. On the right is the table of showbread with the loaves.

And so why are we told where the angel is standing? It means something. He could have been in the flame of the incense. He could have been in the flames on the branches of the menorah, the candlestick.

But he is standing on the right-hand side, which is the side that contains the loaves of bread. The bread is perishable and it is replaced and speaks of the incarnation, the humanity of the people of Israel who are there for a season, have the opportunity to honor the Lord and reflect His glory, and then are replaced. I was asking myself the question, why was Jesus born at all? He could have come any one of the number of ways.

He could have simply appeared and nobody knew from whence He came. It could be like Melchizedek without father or mother or antecedents that are recorded. But He's born and the details of His early life are almost entirely unrecorded, unmentioned.

So why didn't He just arrive at 30 years of age and begin the way He does in the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Mark? But we have the nativity, we have the birth, and He comes as a baby, as a little child. And part of this is signaled by the location of Gabriel when He appears to Zachariah, because He's on the right side of the altar of incense, which sits before the veil. And that is the incarnation side, that's the bread side.

You've got the oil of the Holy Spirit burning in the menorah, the golden candlestick on the left, which speaks of wonderful things, but they are different things. But on the right, you've got the perishable bread, and the bread is made of grain that has been crushed and ground and mixed, anointed with oil and so on. You remember the details of the showbread.

But He's on that right hand side, right side of the altar of incense. So when Zachariah sees Him, He's troubled and fear falls on Him. Just make a note of the two reactions that Zachariah has.

It's understandable. Many people that have come in contact with heavenly things, angelic messengers, have been troubled and fearful at the sight. But the angel says to him, do not be afraid, Zachariah, for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

Yohanan would be the Hebrew of this, and Yahweh is Hanan, is the idea there, is gracious, but Yohanan, it's shortened to John here. So your prayer is heard. This tells you that in these advancing days, year by year, day by day, Zachariah has prayed.

And even though he and his wife are very old, evidently, he has continued to pray. We don't know how much actual hope he had in it. He doesn't believe it when he is told that he's going to have a child.

But his prayer has been heard, and his prayer was for a son. Now, look at verse six, back up to verse six. Both Zachariah and Elizabeth are three things.

They are righteous before God. It doesn't mean they never sin, but before God they are righteous, meaning that their faults and failures and any sins they've committed have been cleansed. There's a difference between never having gotten dirty or having been defiled in some way and then being clean.

And before God they are righteous, so they have acknowledged their sins, as is the pattern in Psalm 51 and elsewhere in the Old Testament. They are righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless. So they're righteous.

They acknowledge their sins and secure God's cleansing by grace. They walk in God's commandments and ordinances. This is lifestyle of obedience and faithfulness, and they are blameless.

There's no shortcoming or falling down. This takes dedication in all of these days, but you can imagine in being righteous, in walking in the commandments of the Lord and being blameless, and yet having this great unfulfilled desire, it would create a question. Why is it that we're doing everything we're supposed to do, and yet we don't seem to receive this particular blessing? We can ask ourselves that question.

We say, I don't understand. I seem to be doing everything right, and yet there's a great longing and desire in my heart that's unfulfilled, or there's a goal I would like to achieve. There's a place I would like to be.

There's a person I would like to be. There is a particular accomplishment that seems to be out of my reach, and time has passed, and I just don't know if it's ever going to happen. Why are Elizabeth and Zechariah childless through all of these long years? Why? Is it just God, in His whimsical timing, saying, well, I'll just make them wait? Why do they have to wait? They are a rare, scarce commodity in Israel.

They are a genuinely faithful, genuinely obedient couple that loves the Lord and serves Him in a blameless way, and their son can't come until God's time is right, because John's life and ministry are going to be related to that of the Lord Jesus. There is something else in God's plan that is hidden to them, that is unknown to them, and so the ways of God seem mysterious and inscrutable and perhaps nonsensical. Why would you not bless us? You have the power to bless us.

You have said that you will bless faithful people, that children are a blessing from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. So why are we not receiving this blessing? I don't

understand. But they quietly continue in faithfulness and obedience, and they discover at this point when Gabriel appears to Zechariah in the holy place, standing by the table of showbread, your prayer is heard.

Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son. You will call his name Yohanan, and you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. You've been hoping for this joy and gladness for a long time.

You are going to have it, and many are going to share in it. Why? Verse 15, He will be great in the sight of the Lord. What better blessing could you ask for than that your child not only arrives, but that they are blessed, that their life is something God smiles on and approves of.

He will be great in the sight of the Lord and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. Now, what does that mean? What is that the sign of? I was just reading an article about this apropos of something completely different, having to do with the Nazarite vow. Drinking neither wine nor strong drink is exceptional.

The norm was that these were a part of ordinary life. If you were going to be set apart and distinct as a Nazarite, N-A-Z-I-R-I-T-E, Nazirite, they did several things. They didn't cut their hair, and they partook of no alcohol whatsoever.

Why? Because it made them better people? Because wine and strong drink are inherently evil? No. Look at the rest of the verse. Drink neither wine nor strong drink.

Why? He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. Have the same thing, be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. And symbolically, instead of having an external influence come from a cup or a glass or a wineskin, it comes from the presence of God's Spirit.

So it was symbolic. There will no Spirit drive this person but the Spirit of God. He will turn, look at verse 16, he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.

He will turn many to their God. Depending on how far you want to press this, in my view, I think it supports the idea that God viewed all of Israel as already belonging to him. This is not like he's going to evangelize them and get them saved.

They are already believers in God. They are the people of God, but they have not turned to God. And there's a difference between being in a category and fulfilling that category.

I was looking at my great nephew-in-law who has joined the Marine Corps and completed boot camp. He's got a great picture of him standing there in his Charlies. He's a private.

The picture was taken before he finished boot camp, I guess, because he doesn't have his PFC rocker which you normally get on graduating. But he's got a long way to go. He still needs to go to his MOS school.

He still needs to go to a unit and learn the ethos of the Marine Corps. But he's been initiated. He has signed on the dotted line.

He's gone and been issued his uniforms and he's standing there in a uniform. He's got a national defense ribbon. He's got an expert rifle badge.

And he has begun to be a Marine. He is a Marine in name. Now he's embarked on a career of becoming a Marine in practice.

You can belong to God in name, but how do you become a child of God and a servant of God in practice? They are two different things. And so John's mission is going to be to take these people who are God's in name and turn them to be the people of God in practice, to understand who they are and why they are here. We saw in Psalm 19 that the word of God that came to Israel is going to be like the sun streaking across the sky and it is going to produce heat that is felt all around the world.

You feel the heat, but you've got to come to the light. You feel that there is the presence of God and the word of God and the power of God and a need for a relationship with God, but there is the necessity to come to the light. And the rest of that Psalm talks about how the law of the Lord and the statutes and the precepts and the ordinances, the revelation of God in David's day, it was early Old Testament, illuminates.

It shines a light on us. It shines a light on our path. It shines a light on the rest of the world.

The world makes sense. We understand what's right and what's wrong. We understand who we are and why we're here, and it gives to us the key to eternity.

We have the potential for eternal life. Death doesn't need to be the end of life. God is light and God is life.

So John's mission is going to be to turn many of the children of Israel, notice not all of them, many. Why doesn't he turn them all? God wants them all turned. Why aren't they turned? He's got the power to turn them.

He could just flip a switch and they would all turn. He doesn't just go into their heart and say, okay, now you're a servant of God. What does he do? He sends John as a messenger.

John is going to give a message and that creates a decision point for the people who hear him. Some of them are going to turn. Many of them are going to turn to the Lord, their God.

Others are not. He will also go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah. Who is him? He's going to be great in the sight of the Lord.

He's going to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord, their God. He will also go before him, before God in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. And that's a quote from the very end of the Old Testament.

Malachi chapter four closes the Old Testament in both our Bible and the Hebrew Bible. In chapter four, verse four, it says, remember the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, statutes and judgments. Just like we talked about in Psalm 19, behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse. So there is a consequence.

This isn't just an option that says, well, you can maintain the status quo or you can gain a benefit. There is a consequence for rejecting the message once it comes. And if their hearts do not turn, Gabriel tells Zachariah, some of these people, many of them are going to turn to the Lord, their God.

And that's great. But the ones who do not turn the land in which they dwell will be stricken with a curse. Why? Because there's no opting out of responsibility before God.

He is the creator. We owe him. We have the opportunity to serve him and to fulfill his purpose for us.

So turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Now that doesn't follow Zachariah. Zachariah said, turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and turn the hearts of the children to the fathers.

Here it says, turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. And you get the idea that this is kind of like an interpretation, a restating of the latter part of what Malachi says. Because I ask myself, why doesn't he say to turn their hearts to God? It says to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

What does that even mean? Well, you get a clue by looking at the second part that is interpreted for us. Turning the hearts of the children to the fathers, Gabriel says, is turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. And this is, if children turn their hearts to the fathers, if the fathers are the elders, if they are the ones who have wisdom, who are saying, I'm trying to train up my child in the way that he should go so that when he's old, he will not depart from it, then a child who responds to that, who is subject to that, who recognizes its value and chooses to follow it, is blessed.

In the same way that when the fathers turn their hearts to the children, they recognize their responsibility is not just to themselves, but also to those who God gives them to nurture and to train. So people say, well, my decision is just for myself. If I don't feel like being faithful to God, that's for me.

But why in Malachi is God going to send Elijah, the prophet, to turn the father's hearts to the children? It is to remind them not only of the Lord, their God, and their responsibility before him, but also their responsibility in continuity. Remember those tables, those loaves of bread

on the table of showbread? The loaves get changed out. They are there for a time, and then they're gone.

We are here for a season, and then we are gone. And as Scripture says in another place, no one lives to himself and no one dies to himself. We're connected.

And in Israel, the connection was emphasized as patriarchal. You're known by your father's name. You are David, Ben, Jesse.

You are Simon, Bar, Jonah. You are connected to your father. It's Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the father to the son, the father to the son.

Jacob is the father of the twelve tribes, which end up being thirteen tribes, because Joseph is the father to two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. And so to emphasize the importance of relationship, God picks one, which is the father. He could have picked the mothers.

It could all be matriarchal, like the Cherokee Nation, and everybody could have been known by their mother's name. And then we would have had a women's lib movement turn into a man's lib movement, because all of the women would have been dominant down through history. And God picked one and said, this is what it's going to be as a symbol, in the same way that He picked the Levites, one tribe, to be the priests.

He could have picked the tribe of Asher. He could have picked the tribe of Naphtali. He could have waited until Joseph's son came along, and it could have been the tribe of Manasseh, the tribe of Ephraim.

But He chose Levi. And it didn't make them any better. It didn't make them any worse.

It assigned them a function. Fathers are no better than their children. Children are no better than their fathers.

Neither one can blame the other for how they turned out or why they're happy or miserable. They are related, and it is this relationship, the fact that people are connected. The loaves of bread, each loaf represented a tribe, and they are interconnected.

Now in the days of the church, we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are connected. That fellowship and that unity is always featured in Scripture, Old Testament and New. So when it says to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, this was a God-given responsibility.

One of the primary responsibilities given to Israelites under the law was to nurture their children, to teach them God's laws and ordinance and statutes. They didn't have synagogue in the Old Testament. They didn't have church in the Old Testament.

They didn't have a Sunday school teacher. They didn't have a pastor. The Levites didn't wander around giving Bible classes.

Who taught the Word of God in Israel? The fathers. In order to teach it, you have to know it yourself. To be a good teacher, you have to be a good example.

The instructors that they send to boot camp that my nephew recently completed, those instructors have been in the fleet. They are good Marines. They are chosen to become instructors at boot camp or later on at the School of Infantry or at another MOS school, to go to the Field Artillery School or Tank School.

I was talking to a Marine that I tuned his piano earlier this week. Patty met him. He was a small arms maintenance guy, worked on 45s.

His specialty was M16s. You learn that. If you're good, you get sent to the school and you teach others.

The fathers were supposed to be good and faithful so that they could teach their children. That makes them good teachers. If they are not interested in the things of God, how can they turn their hearts to their children and raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, train them up in the way that they should go, have the commands of God on the doorpost when they rise up and when they lay down, when they go out and when they come in.

The stones that they brought out of the middle of the Jordan were a memorial. God told Joshua, take those stones and pile them up. In later days, when somebody says, what's that pile of rocks? Fathers tell their children this was the day that God brought us into the land and fulfilled his promises.

Fathers tell their children. John's mission foretold by Gabriel to his father Zachariah is his mission is going to be to wake up the fathers to their responsibility before the Lord as people of God and not just for themselves but in their family. Their decision makes a difference to those around them.

Turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. There's a long history of faithful fathers in Israel that they're not listening to in that day. They are largely apathetic and indifferent and John is sent to wake them up.

The last thing he says is to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. The people are always looked at as basically two generations. You've got the fathers and you've got the sons.

You've got the parents and you've got the children. That's the two living functional generations. You've got a few very small infants and you've got a few very old people but generally you've got two active generations at any given time.

If 40 years is a generation and your life lasts about 80 years, when you slice a population that's essentially what you're looking at. Fathers and sons, parents and children. So to prepare a people for the Lord and a people who are prepared for the Lord, you're going to be talking to those fathers and talking to those sons.

The fathers need to pay attention to the fact that they have a heritage of their own to pass on. There's a great effort in a lot of the Native American tribes to preserve their heritage and their culture, their language, their customs, their dances, their recipes for meals, the way of life. I watched somebody showing some of the traditional dishes that were made.

It's perishing if the older ones don't teach it to younger ones. I saw tears come to the eyes of some older Cherokees because someone showed them a film of children in a classroom talking Cherokee, asking and answering questions in Cherokee and singing Cherokee songs. It made them very emotional because they were certain that they were the last of their kind and that when they died all of that would be lost and here's a new generation coming up.

That's the fathers with their hearts toward the children and being gratified when they follow and take up that heritage. So Zachariah, when he hears this, that his son, it's not Zachariah's job. Why didn't Zachariah do it? Well, A, the one he's going to be the forerunner of is not on the scene yet, but it's going to be his son.

But this is told to his father. Why? Because the father is going to turn his heart to his son. He's going to be the embodiment of this very mission.

Zachariah is going to raise his son, Yohanan, raise his son, John. He and Elizabeth are going to do it. But Zachariah says to the angel in verse 18, How shall I know this? I'm an old man and my wife is well advanced in days.

Hameris, well advanced in days. You can't help but think of Sarah laughing when the angel told Abraham that Sarah was going to have a son in a year and they're both old. He's 100 and she's 90.

And Zachariah echoes that. The angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel. I'm almost glad that Zachariah doubted.

If he had just said, let it be to me according to your word, we wouldn't know who the angel was. But because he doubts, Gabriel sort of crosses his arms here and looks just under his eyebrows and says, I'm Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God.

If I'm telling you this, you need to believe it. I'm Gabriel who stands in the presence of God. I was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings.

This isn't something you dreamed. I'm the angel that stands in the presence of God. I was sent here.

Do you think this is a small thing? How many times has Gabriel been sent? Last time we saw Gabriel, who was he talking to? Daniel. Gabriel evidently has not been back in several centuries. Daniel is circa 600 BC.

He was taken captive in 605. It's been 600 years since Gabriel came down and gave somebody a

message. So he says in verse 20, but look, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their own time.

Whether you believe them or not, they are going to happen. But you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place. So the people are waiting for Zachariah and they marvel that he lingered so long in the temple.

It doesn't take that long to go in, light the incense, say a prayer, come back out. Okay, people, we're done. And so they're out there, kind of like the beginning of class this morning.

The music is playing and the Christmas lights are blinking, but where's the guy? He's supposed to come out and tell us something. Well, they waited and waited. And when he came out, he could not speak.

And so they figured out, they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. Now, if God has delivered this detailed message to Zachariah and he didn't have HSL, he didn't have Hebrew Sign Language where he could fingerspell everything and tell them the details, this is a revelation that is sealed until the time of its fulfillment. It's been told to Zachariah, but on what seems to me to be a little bit of a flimsy excuse, I mean, it's understandable that he would be surprised and questioning when he's told this.

How do I know this is going to happen? Gabriel says, well, because you don't think it's going to happen, you're not going to be able to talk until the time of the fulfillment. Guess who else Gabriel told this very same thing to? Read the last few verses of Daniel. Shut up the vision until the time of the end.

It's not going to speak. It's not going to have its details come forth until the time of the end. There's a reason for this.

Why? We don't need to know everything. The nature of faith is to take God's Word for something without having all of the details. So he could not speak.

And as soon as the days of his service were completed, he departed to his own house. He had to continue for the rest of his cycle in the order of the priests to go and burn incense, but he couldn't talk that whole time. You can imagine the next day when he went to do his incense thing.

Can you imagine his apprehension? Is he going to see the angel again? Is something else going to happen? So he keeps going back in and he is going to have a reinforcement. He's going to remember exactly where Gabriel was standing and exactly what Gabriel was saying, but it's only for him. And he can't share it with anyone.

He is prevented from sharing it. It's like the seven thunders in Revelation. John starts to write

him down and the angel says, don't write that.

That's not to be revealed until the time of the end. After these days, Elizabeth conceived and she hid herself five months. Five is the number of Israel, five is the number of the law, five is the number of the law of God.

The Lord has dealt with me and in the days when he looked on me, he has taken away my approach among people. Five months. So in the sixth month, verse 26, 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.

We've had the house of Aaron. Now we have the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

Having come in, the angel said to her, rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you. And that last part, the Catholics love it, but it's not there. Blessed are you among women? That's later.

It's migrated up to verse 28, but it doesn't belong. Verse 28 says, rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you. Verse 29, also the first line, when she saw him, is not there, just line that out.

She was troubled at his saying and considered what manner of greeting this was. Now, we just had the story of Zechariah. What was Zechariah's response? It was twofold.

He was and what else? Fearful. And it mentions his fear twice. It says, when Zechariah saw him, he was troubled and fear fell upon him.

And the angel said to him, do not be afraid, Zechariah. He's afraid. The angel says, don't be afraid.

Mary is troubled. She's tempted to be afraid, but Gabriel says the same thing to her. Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son. You will call his name Yeshua. You will call his name Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the son of the highest. And the Lord God will give 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. Now, when is that going to take place? Has it ever taken place? He's not on the throne of his father, David. He wasn't when he came.

He wasn't when he left. The throne of David is not in heaven. So the Lord Jesus sitting in heaven is not on the throne of his father, David.

So this is yet to be fulfilled. And yet it is one of the first things prophesied here in the New Testament is that he is going to be, first of all, called the son of the highest and the Lord God

will give him the throne of his father, David. He's the son of the highest and his father is David.

So what does that tell you? There's a sense in which he has two fathers, right? His father is David, Gabriel says, but he will be called the son of the highest. The highest, of course, is God in heaven. So he's got a dual identity.

He is the son of God and he's son of David. He's the son of a man. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Of his kingdom, there will be no end. So the house of Jacob, that's the throne of David. Of his kingdom, never ending, that speaks of his son of the highest status.

So Mary says to the angel, how can this be since I do not know a man? The angel answered and said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you. The power of the highest will overshadow you. The highest that was just mentioned up in verse 32.

The power of the highest will overshadow you. You therefore, therefore also, that which 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.

This is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. We were told that in verse 26, six months. She hid herself five months.

She came out when she's manifestly showing and says, God has taken away my reproach. And a month later, Gabriel appears to Mary. And Mary says, behold, the maid servant of the Lord, let it be to me according to your word.

She says, okay. So now look at verse 39. This is what I find interesting.

Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah. Where was she when Gabriel appeared? Nazareth, right? Nazareth is up north, north of the sea of Galilee, north and somewhat west. So Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah.

There's a city of Judah in the hill country. This is where the house of Zechariah is. So she enters the house of Zechariah and greets Elizabeth.

Happened when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, now, we said this is prophecies, Christmas prophecies in Luke.

The first one was Gabriel's prophecy that he gave to Zechariah. The second one was Gabriel's prophecy that he gave to Mary. The third one is about to come from Elizabeth.

This is the first one that isn't delivered by an angel. You get one to Zechariah about John and that he will be the forerunner. You have one from Gabriel to Mary talking about the Lord

himself and his dual nature.

Now Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and she speaks with a loud voice and says, blessed are you among women. That's what migrated back up to verse 28 mistakenly at a later date. 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? Now, how does she know that Mary is the mother of the Lord? She has heard nothing from Zechariah. He is still mute. He can't talk.

So unless they've had an extended, you know, yes and no 20 questions session to find out what happened in the temple, she doesn't know, but the Holy Spirit reveals it to her. And when she sees Mary, she says, you are the mother of the coming one. You are the mother of the one of whom the prophets have spoken.

For indeed, as soon as the voice of the 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. So this is a confirmation to Mary.

Mary believed it and now she gets reinforcement. And so then Mary gives out with this beautiful song. We've covered it before and I wish I had time to review it now, but I want to skip that unfortunately.

Go down to verse 56. Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her house. What month did she get there? Six months.

How long is a human pregnancy? How much longer did Mary stay after she got there? Three months. So you'd say, well, she must've, then it says in verse 57, now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered and she brought forth a son. So Mary must've left just before John was born.

No, she did not leave. She stayed three months. She stayed until the birth.

Mary saw John born. How do I know this? It's the way Luke's narrative works. And it's a common thing in Hebrew narrative in general.

And in Luke in particular, it says, Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her house. Now he's finished with the Mary visiting narrative and he's going to go into the birth narrative and he's going to back up a little bit. How do I know this? Go forward in Luke to talking about the ministry of John the Baptist.

He's out in Luke chapter three, baptizing and preaching. His winnowing fork is in his hand. He will gather the wheat into the granary.

The chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. So with many other exhortations, he preached good news to the people. That's 3.18. In Luke 3.19, Herod the Tetrarch, who had been reprov-

by John for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he shut up John in prison.

And that's the story of John's ministry. And it ends with John being shut up in prison. But then in verse 21, it says, Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, Thou art my beloved son, with thee I am well pleased.

Well, verse 21 happens before verse 20, because John baptized Jesus in the Jordan before he was imprisoned. But as he tells the John story, the way that Luke tells the story is such that he wants to complete a subject, and he's not as concerned with strict chronology. In chapter 2, verse 39, I'm sorry, when they performed all the things according to the law of the Lord, this is when they dedicate the child, they returned to their own city.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. When he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the Feast.

Mary and Joseph are faithful and obedient parents, faithful and obedient Israelites, just like Elizabeth and Zechariah, right? Zechariah and Elizabeth live in the hill country of Judah. So every year at Passover, what do they do? He's a priest. He works at the temple.

So what do Zechariah and Elizabeth do every year at Passover? They go to the temple. What do Mary and Joseph do every year after the birth of the Lord Jesus? They go down to Jerusalem to the temple. Mary spent three months with Elizabeth up to the point of her birth.

They know each other pretty well. If I know somebody really well who is a relative and we're both going to the same place, will we meet? Will we talk? Will we see each other? Every year for 12 years, this story in Luke 3, the last part of chapter 2, when his parents go every year at the Feast of Passover, when he was 12 years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, they went every year. This is the 12th year they've done this with Jesus, right? Well, Zechariah and Elizabeth live in the hill country of Judah, so they're taking John every year and going to Jerusalem.

He's a priest. How would he not be there? So every year for 12 years, Mary and Joseph, Elizabeth and Zechariah, Jesus and John have gone to the temple for Passover at a minimum. There's actually three assembly feasts, but it specifically tells us Passover.

So is there any possibility that Jesus and John did not know each other? Is there any possibility that Mary and Elizabeth did not know the respective roles that their sons will play? Does Mary know who Jesus is? Gabriel told her. Does Elizabeth and Zechariah know who John is? Gabriel told them. Your son is going to be the forerunner of the Messiah.

And Elizabeth, when she sees Mary, says, you're the mother of the Messiah. So they know. They

know this when the two boys are babies.

Jesus is a year or less younger than John. John's born first, but they're going to Jerusalem year by year. And for at least 12 years, they go every year and probably beyond that.

So in my view, given what Luke says here, there's no chance that they didn't already know each other, which you want to keep in mind when John is down at the Jordan baptizing and Jesus comes and he says, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. This is not a fresh flash of insight. He's known this his whole life.

But when Jesus comes, because the word of the Lord comes to John and tells him, get started. And he does. And then Jesus comes and John identifies him.

And that's when everything begins. But this is the background. This is what happens at the nativity.

So Mary remained there about three months. And then on the Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered. She brought forth a son.

The neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her. They rejoiced with her. On the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child.

They wanted to call him Zachariah Jr. His mother answered, no, he shall be called John. They said, 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.

He says, call him John. So they do. Now, how does his mother know his name is going to be John when Zachariah can't talk? I don't know because he's not been able to speak.

He has to write it down. But evidently he wrote and Elizabeth understood it before this. So he wrote, his name is John.

They all marveled. His mouth was open, his tongue loosed. He spoke praising God.

Fear came on all who dwelt around them. All these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. All the hill country of Judea.

What's important about the hill country of Judea and the birth of John and all of these prophetic things, the story of the angel, the story of Zachariah being mute, the story of what the child is destined to do and why he has the name John. It's noise about all through the hill country of Judea. Why? Where's Bethlehem? Where are the shepherds watching their flocks by night? Where are they? Hill country of Judea.

So when the shepherds appear, when the shepherds see the appearance of the angels and they say, there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, they know this story. They're not hit as a shot out of the dark. This has been noise all through the hill

country of Judea.

They've heard the story of John. They've heard the story of the announcement that the time is near. So just in these short reviews and this short level of detail, what conclusion can we draw? Those who are faithful, those who are watchful, those who recognize that God has timing and his timing transcends the desires and the perceptions and the goals that we might have for our own personal life.

We are caught up in something larger. We're not just a person. We're a father.

We're not just a person. We're a child. And there is a larger context in which our lives and our decisions and our actions have an effect.

And for the people of God, this is not just earthly. It is also eternal. What you think and what you do, what you decide, what you believe, how you act matters.

It matters now and it matters in the ages to come. And to be awakened to that perspective, that you are part of something bigger than yourself, that was John's mission. And that prepared the way for the Lord Jesus who is going to... John is like the heat in Psalm 19 that prepares and warms everyone to the fact that something is going on in the sky.

And then the sun becomes clear and sheds light to those who are looking and those who are watching. And what is the opportunity? When a new thing happens, there's a context. It makes sense.

It's very fascinating. I wish I had time to go on to the visit of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem. And when his parents return and he's not with them, and it takes them three days to eventually find him, they had been there for the feast of Passover.

Well, Passover, they always stay until the Feast of Firstfruits, right? And so they were there several days and then it takes three more days before they recognize that he's not in the party and they return. There are days during the way it takes them a day to come back and then a day to find him. And when they do find him, he says, Mary says, Mary and Joseph are both looking.

But Mary says, why have you done this to us? And he says, why were you seeking me? How is it you didn't know that I would need to be in the things of my father? Some place it says about my father's business. Other translations say at my father's house, it doesn't say house and it doesn't say business. It just says that those things, it's a demonstrative and it just means the things of my father.

She says, your father and I have been worried. And he says, didn't you know, I would need to be about the things of my father. And you have that same duality of human father mentioned by Mary and heavenly father mentioned by Jesus.

But as I say, I don't have time to cover that. But what we do recognize here is the importance. There is always preparation.

There is an announcement that is made. There is information that comes and it is the opportunity to believe and to watch for what is further revealed or not. All of this is noise around the hill country of Judea.

And when Jesus is eventually born and presented at the temple, a lot of those people are around. And so Simeon and Anna are going to come and they are going to tell their circle of acquaintances, I have seen the salvation of God. It's a baby.

Why did he come as a baby? There is a time of preparation and there is a time of waiting. There's many reasons why Jesus was incarnate. You can read Philippians chapter two.

You can read Hebrews, someone who is sympathetic to our weaknesses because he has walked in our flesh and has been subject to the we are. It is a picture of his humility in emptying himself and taking on the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men. It seems nonsensical.

The Pharisees couldn't figure it out. Many people couldn't figure it out and it didn't meet their expectations and so they rejected it and they missed it. It takes humility and it takes recognition of the opportunity when revelation comes.

So what is our goal when we are hoping for a thing, waiting for a thing, praying for a thing and it doesn't come? Recognize what the patience meant for Zechariah and Elizabeth who remained faithful and when the fulfillment came, they had a privilege unlike any that any couple has had, short of Mary and Joseph themselves, to have a child born at the right time in the right place to fulfill the right function. Was it worth the wait? Did many rejoice? Were their hearts fulfilled? Of course. Zechariah had to wait to share the details of what he heard in the temple.

There's a lot of waiting in life but we wait in expectation. We wait in hope. We wait now for the second coming of the Lord Jesus and it is just as certain and it is just as real as the first coming.

And those who wait for him, as it says, to those who wait for him he will appear a second time, not having to deal with sin but for deliverance. The first time his coming was to deal with sin. The second time it is for deliverance and we will join him and be with him in his new life in the same way that he shared this earthly life that we have now.

Well, it's a brief look at a few things related to the prophecies in Luke for Christmas and I trust that they will be meaningful as we celebrate the holiday season. Let's close here in a word of and then we'll enjoy our special music. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, his willingness to come counter to expectation. He did not come in glory. He did not come on clouds descending.

He came in humble circumstances with what many thought was an unlikely birth and yet for those who were watching and those who were faithful and obedient it was revealed. They were ready. They saw it and they rejoiced.

We pray that we can be the same as we relate and wait for the second coming of the Lord Jesus for us and that we can be similarly faithful and obedient in that light. We ask your blessing on each person and each family as we celebrate the holiday season. Bless our fellowship.

Bless our time of reflection and appreciation on the coming of the Lord Jesus. We ask all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.