

Session 4 Jesus and John: Birth to Manhood (Lk. 1-2; Mt. 1-2)

I. LUKE'S PURPOSE FOR WRITING HIS GOSPEL (LK. 1:1-4)

- A. From about 6 BC to AD 26—just over 30 years—we see from the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus to their manhood. Luke investigated this supernatural story with its many human dynamics and many social implications from beginning to end, drawing on eyewitness testimony of those who accompanied Jesus from the beginning of His ministry: His family, the apostles, and others.

¹Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses...³it seemed good to me ...to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Lk. 1:1-4)

In this session we are going to look at the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus from prior to birth right up until they begin their ministry at about age thirty. One really remarkable thing that sticks out is how many supernatural events happened at the beginning of the story and then there were thirty years of almost nothing supernatural that is recorded. It is like the purpose began with a bang, followed by thirty years waiting on the promises, no sign of them; everything is according to natural order. Where is the power? Where are the angels? Where are the visitations? Then after thirty years the next installment of the story began.

One reason that God often speaks about His purposes and lets time—sometimes decades or generations—pass is because when the fulfillment happens He wants it to be clear that nobody manipulated the situation in the present tense. So it is validated and established decades or generations earlier where nobody could manipulate the narrative or reinterpret it because it was set clearly by the Holy Spirit many years in advance.

An application we can get from this is that sometimes you have a promise from the Lord, ten years go by, twenty years go by, thirty years go by. You say, “Lord, what happened?” Now many of you are too young for this to have happened yet, but there are probably some of you in this room who have experienced this.

The Lord would say, “Read the story of Mary and Elizabeth, John and Jesus; that is how it happens.” So do not give up on the storyline. The Bible makes it clear this is how God establishes His prophetic purposes.

Well, we are going to start in Luke 1. I am going to be brief on some of these passages because we only have a short session here and we have a lot to cover, about four chapters. So we will just miss some of it. In Luke 1, Luke gives us his purpose. He said that many people have taken in hand to set a narrative in order. He was saying that many people had written the story of Jesus. They had written the narrative. There were possibly hundreds of stories that were circulating. Verse 2, he said that some of those went back to the eyewitnesses that were there from the very beginning, from the angelic encounters with Mary and Elizabeth, and Jesus' early days, as well as the beginning of His ministry at age thirty. Luke said, “I went back to the eyewitnesses, and I interviewed them.” Verse 3, he said he wanted to write an orderly account so he made a thorough investigation. Luke is the only author of a book of the Bible who was not Jewish; he was Greek. He was a Gentile, and he was a medical doctor.

So he wrote this orderly account, having made a deep investigation and eyewitness interviews. He went back and talked to everybody. I have no doubt that Mary and many of the apostles wrote down many of the events after they happened. I do not believe they were all just speaking out of memory.

When an angel visits or God speaks audibly or glorious things happen, I urge you to write it down with precision. Do not trust your memory and let a few years go by. Write it down. That is one thing I have learned

over the years and value. I journal everything the Lord says to me, or at least I try to. I like to write it all down including the situation surrounding it. Many times I will look at it, and it really makes a difference.

- B. Gabriel announced John's birth to Zacharias in the temple in Jerusalem (Lk. 1:5-25), early 6 BC.

⁵There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias...his wife... was Elizabeth. ⁶And they were both righteous before God...⁷But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. ⁸So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God...⁹his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. ¹⁰And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside...¹¹Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him...¹³The angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John...¹⁵He will be great in the sight of the Lord...¹⁶And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children ...and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."¹⁸And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."¹⁹And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God...²⁰Behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words..."²¹The people waited for Zacharias and marveled that he lingered so long...²²When he came out, he could not speak...²⁴Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months... (Lk. 1:5-24)

The story begins as Luke starts with introducing John the Baptist's parents. The first supernatural event is Gabriel. Things have been silent for 400 years. Since the last prophet, Malachi, in the Old Testament, there were 400 years from the last recorded time that God spoke to Israel. Suddenly the silence is broken. Gabriel appears from the throne of God and visits a couple of people in Israel, one in Jerusalem, one in Nazareth. There is a flurry of supernatural activity that happens for about a year. Then it goes back to normal again for thirty years as though that year of supernatural activity maybe is not going to turn out to mean anything. We know the end of the story, that Jesus fulfills it all. Now there have been 2,000 years delaying from the fullness of everything that Jesus was promised, 2,000 years since His earthly ministry and death and resurrection.

Well, Gabriel visited John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, in the temple. Zacharias was a priest, and he lived in the area of Israel just a few miles down the road from Jerusalem in Judea.

1. David organized the priesthood in 24 divisions (1 Chr. 23-24). Twice a year, each division of priests went to Jerusalem to serve in the temple for one week. They carried fire from the altar of burnt offerings (outside the temple) to the golden altar of incense in the holy place. The priests decided by casting lots who was to offer the incense at the time of the daily sacrifice.

Now the priests of Israel were divided into twenty-four divisions. All the priests came from Aaron. You know Moses and his brother Aaron. All the descendants of Aaron were the priests. Over time David divided Aaron's descendants into twenty-four different categories, twenty-four divisions. Every week one of those divisions would come to Jerusalem. About twice a year each division would come to Jerusalem to serve in the temple, because there are twenty-four divisions and that means twenty-four times two, so forty-eight weeks a year they served individually. It was a great privilege, and it was like going to the capital, to the temple where the glory of God was. It was an amazing, amazing thing to do.

So we will pick up the story here. Verse 5, this was in the days of Herod. Now this is Herod the Great. History makes it quite clear Herod the Great died in 4 BC. This is just before 4 BC, so it is probably about early 6 BC. It is a year or two before, while Herod is still living. Again, many, many historical sources make it pretty clear that he died in 4 BC.

So in the days of Herod there was a certain priest, Zacharias, and his wife Elizabeth. Verse 6, Luke makes it clear they were both righteous. They were godly people. It did not mean they were sinless, but that they were devout and really sincere for the Lord. But they had no children. One of the reasons why Luke wanted to really establish that they were godly, righteous, and blameless was because some people had the idea that if someone did not have children, it meant they were accursed or they did something wrong. Luke made it clear that their barrenness had nothing to do with their character or anything to do with that. They were both advanced in years, though we do not know how old.

Verse 8, he was serving as a priest before God because he was in one of the twenty-four divisions of the priests. Remember there were twenty-four different divisions, and twice a year every division went to Jerusalem. Again that covers the fifty-two weeks a year approximately. They would cast lots because in every division of priest there were hundreds of priests. So they would cast lots as only one guy got to go into the holy place each day, one guy out of the hundreds. So maybe once in a lifetime this happened.

Verse 9, so they cast the lots for the hundreds of priests in Zacharias' group, and the lot fell to him. He got to go from the outer court into the holy place to burn the incense. He would go there and bring fresh coals and put them on the altar of incense in the holy place right by the Holy of holies, right next to it. Again this was really a special privilege for a priest to be able to go to the holy place. It would happen maybe once in a priest's lifetime.

Verse 10, there was a whole group of people on the outside, Zacharias' friends and family. He got to go in; I mean this is amazing. They were praying on the outside. There was this drama building as there was this whole company of people who were wondering, "What was it like, going in the holy place?" I mean it is the only place on the earth which God called the holy place, so very rare.

Well, Zacharias went in, in verse 11. Gabriel appeared to him. Now at first we only know it is an angel, but in a few verses he identified himself as Gabriel the archangel. Gabriel said to him, verse 13, "Do not be afraid." You know, normally in the biblical record when an angel visits the first thing they say is, "Do not be afraid." There must be a reason for that. He said, "Do not be afraid" because Zacharias was absolutely shocked to see this this angelic being filled with the glory of God.

2. **Your prayer is heard:** God's timing is often very different from ours. Often God hears our prayers long before we see the manifestation of them.

Then he gave Zacharias kind of the shock of his life. He said, "Your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son."

Now Zacharias was probably saying—and I am just making this up because we do not know the age they were—"Wait, you know we are in our eighties. That has not been on our prayer list for forty years. What do you mean, 'Our prayers have been heard?' We have not prayed that prayer for years and years." This is a very important passage on prayer, because it shows us that you can pray prayers that God hears and He approves of them and releases them in the spirit in the sense that He approves of them. They may not show up in the natural for many years, but they have been heard and approved by God. Often in the delay even devout people give up on the prayers because they think that God has forgotten the prayers and God has given up on them.

Gabriel said, in effect, “You are going to have the child you cried out for in your twenties and thirties and forties and whatever, fifties, whatever it was.” Zacharias was shocked, and the angel went on, verse 15, “He will be great in the sight of the Lord.”

Do you know that you can live in a way that God considers great? You can have responses to God that God calls great. There is more in the Bible on that. It is not just limited to prophets like John. Jesus said in Matthew 5 that if anyone will obey the Lord and teach others to do the same, God will call their lifestyle great. I love this passage. I say that I want to put my name on this passage. I do not want to be like John the Baptist, but I want to fulfill my own calling. I want to live in a way that God says my choices were great.

3. **Spirit and power of Elijah:** John was a forerunner in the boldness, purpose, and power of Elijah. Malachi prophesied of Elijah bringing profound love and relational reconciliation (Mal. 4:6).

Gabriel went on to describe John in a forerunner ministry that is like Elijah. I am tempted to go on about that, but this is not really a teaching about John the Baptist. We are talking more about Jesus here in this series. Verse 18, so Zacharias looked at Gabriel and asked, “How shall I know?”

Gabriel was looking him right in the eye. He said, “Well, I am Gabriel. That is how you know.” The angel in verse 19 said, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of the most high God. He sent me here.” There had been 400 years since Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament and since there has been a prophetic word recorded. This ought to move your heart. What do you mean, how do you know? Because I just told you. He went on, “Well, here will be the sign,” verse 20, “you are going to be mute.” You want a sign? This will be the sign. It is like he is saying prophetically, “If you do not believe when the Lord visits, well then you will lose your testimony for a short time.” Some people think it is kind of cool to be cynical and not believe. You do not want to be gullible, but if the Lord establishes something and you do not take hold of it, there is a responsibility in it. This really accents this. Of course this was a major encounter, what with Gabriel visiting. Zacharias learned that when there is a special privilege—when God intervenes—then there is a responsibility to hold on to it. A lot of folks lose what God has said over the years. Well, Zacharias became mute. That is, in a prophetic sense he was losing his testimony because he would not take hold of the prophetic word God gave him. Now he was only mute for nine months, but still that woke him up. I look at that and I say that I do not want to be mute. I do not want to lose my testimony for a day. Gabriel made it clear, “It is because you did not believe my words.”

Verse 21, so there was this crowd of people praying outside. They could not wait until Zacharias came out to tell them what it was like in there in the holy place. I mean, who gets to go in the holy place? They marveled because Zacharias was in there for so long. He seemed to be going on and on. They were thinking, “Wait, you are just supposed to minister at the altar of incense; it should not take this long.”

Then when he came out, verse 22, he could not speak. “Zacharias, what was it like?”

“Mm-m-mm-m.”

“We cannot understand you. Speak up, Zacharias!”

“Mm-m-mm-m.”

“What? Zacharias, come on! What is going on?”

“Mm-m-mm-m.” Now this sounds funny, but this was the real discipline of the Lord on him and it has a message in it. We do not take lightly when God intervenes.

Verse 24, “Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived.” She hid herself for five months. She probably was thinking—again she was an elderly woman and she was pregnant—she probably was thinking, “I do not need people around. I have to make sense of this somehow.” Now her husband was mute so nobody knew what was going on at home. He could not say a word. She was hiding so her relative Mary who lived up north in Galilee in Nazareth has not heard any of the news because nobody knew because Elizabeth had hidden herself where she lived, down in the area of Jerusalem.

C. In Nazareth, Gabriel foretold Jesus’ birth to Mary (Lk. 1:26-38), late 6 BC.

²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph...²⁸the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you...³¹You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.³² 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.³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever...”³⁵The angel answered and said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you...that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her...³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible.”³⁸Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” (Lk. 1:26-38)

1. **Throne of David:** Jesus will rule the whole earth on David’s throne forever (Isa. 9:6-7).
2. **Jesus:** Jesus is the English of the Greek *Iesous*, from the Hebrew name *Joshua*, meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” The title, “Son of God” highlights Jesus’ deity (Ps. 2:7-9; 89:26-29).
3. **Overshadow you:** The Spirit was God’s enabling agent in Jesus’ supernatural conception.
4. **Nothing impossible:** Gabriel emphasized God’s power and willingness to do the impossible. He made reference to an angel’s promise that Sarah would have a son (Gen. 18:14).

Now Luke moves the storyline over to Jesus’ parents, Joseph and Mary. Of course Joseph was His stepfather, so to speak. Luke said, “I have thoroughly investigated”; now, let’s take the storyline to the main character. So this is up north, about seventy, eighty miles north of Jerusalem, in Galilee, in this fairly insignificant town of Nazareth. Nazareth is famous now because of its association with Jesus. In that day it was a poor, little, insignificant village.

Verse 26, in the sixth month—that is the sixth month after Elizabeth has been with child; in verse 36 it makes this clear—Gabriel comes a second time to visit. I mean two visits in six months, when the last visit was to Daniel. The last visit in the scriptures was 500 years before this. Gabriel visited Daniel on two occasions in his ministry. Now Gabriel visits twice in a six-month period. This is remarkable. Again, you think things are going to pick up in a big momentum. We do not know yet that after a year of a flurry of prophetic activity it is going to seemingly go silent for the next thirty years because God had established His purpose and He intended that the people would take it seriously, that it would take root and they would count on it, and their faith would be established.

So He sent the angel Gabriel to this little, out-of-the-way city up in Galilee: Nazareth. I mean it is just a poor town with no honor. As a matter of fact, later on in one of the Gospel stories someone says, “What good thing

could come out of Nazareth?" It was a town that had a reputation for not being very good. They thought, "Nazareth? Oh my goodness, what could come out of that?" because it had a bad reputation.

Well, that is where Mary was raised. Verse 27, she was a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Now we know that when they were betrothed that it was a legal arrangement. In their culture, when a man and woman were betrothed or engaged—we use the word engaged—they were legally married. When they made the covenant of engagement, though they did not live together and they did not have any sexual involvement yet, they were legally married together. They were legally married, though they did not live together. Typically, it was about a one-year wait, as a rule.

So there was this virgin and she was engaged to a man named Joseph. The angel Gabriel visited and said, "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you." Verse 31, "You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son. You shall call His name Jesus. He will be great and He will be called the Son of the Highest. The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David."

Now for anyone in Israel this is the greatest prophecy in the Old Testament: that a man would come and sit on David's throne and rule the whole earth forever and restore the whole earth. I mean it was the biggest, most glorious, most prominent prophecy in all of Israel. A Man would come and live forever. People could not figure that part out. He is going to live forever? Okay, how does that work, you know? Okay, we believe the prophets said it, and we will figure it out when we get there. They did not realize it was a Man who was fully God **and** fully Man. That was not made clear to the Old Testament prophets.

Verse 33, "He will reign forever over the house of Jacob," which means Israel. The house of Jacob is another term for the nation of Israel. Verse 35, the angel Gabriel said, "Here is what is going to happen, Mary."

She is probably with her eyes just big and kind of like overwhelmed, thinking something like, "What are you saying?"

He said, "The Holy Spirit is going to come on you, and the Holy Spirit will overshadow you..." That is how she became pregnant. This was the miraculous conception right there. She conceived a child because the Holy Spirit was the enabling power that caused this to happen. "...so the Holy One born to you will be called the Son of God." So Gabriel was saying, "God is His Father."

So here is this young gal, probably in her teens. This is just inconceivable that this could be said. "God is His Father?"

"His name will be Jesus." Gabriel told Mary that He would be called the Son of God. He would be called the Son of the Highest, right there in verse 31. "He will be called Emmanuel." He has several biblical names that are attributed to Him.

Now Mary did not ask for a sign, but Gabriel said, "I am going to give you one anyway." He said, "Your relative," verse 36, "Elizabeth has conceived."

She was probably thinking, "My aunt"—we do not know exactly know what, aunt, cousin—"is elderly." Mary was probably thinking, "My goodness! These are two very unusual conceptions!"

So Gabriel said, "As a matter of fact she is in the sixth month of her pregnancy." Again Elizabeth was hiding, so nobody knew. Then Gabriel made one of the most dramatic, important statements. I think this is going to be one of the key prophetic declarations in the generation the Lord returns, this declaration from Gabriel, "Nothing will be impossible with God." Nothing will be impossible with God.

When I read the end-time storyline, it is so outside of the realm of human understanding. I have one declaration over it—I am going to agree with Gabriel—nothing is impossible with God, nothing in a human situation, if God says it. This was the ultimate miracle of history right here. What is going to happen when Jesus returns? Again there is going to be an unfolding of miraculous events. Even the Body of Christ, as they are looking towards that day, knows it is going to get a little different. Beloved, it is going to be so radically outside of the realm of “business as usual,” of normal human history. When all of these come to pass, they will be one really important declaration, “Nothing is impossible with God!” We are going to have to declare that like Mary declared it undoubtedly in her heart over and over.

Mary said, “Behold”—yes, here I am—“the handmaiden of the Lord.” That is the response God wants. When He gives an assignment or when He calls us to believe something, He does not want us to retreat in unbelief. I mean if He makes it clear it is Him, He wants us to say, “The handmaiden of the Lord, here I am. So be it. Be it unto me according to Your word.” That is what the Lord is pleased by, by that response.

D. Mary’s visit to Elizabeth in the hill country of Judea (Lk. 1:39-45), early 5 BC

*³⁹Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah...
⁴¹When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women...⁴³But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?...⁴⁴As soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who believed...those things which were told her from the Lord.”
(Lk. 1:39-45)*

1. Mary’s journey south to Elizabeth’s home in Judah was probably about 80 miles and would have taken four days or longer.
2. The Spirit gave Elizabeth understanding of Jesus as Lord (v. 43). This was same revelation that the Spirit gave Peter (Mt. 16:15-18).
3. Elizabeth lived with a deaf husband at that time due to his unbelief. She grasped the value of believing God.

So, verse 39, Mary rose up with haste, and she went south, because she lived up in the north in Galilee, down to the hill country of Judea which is just outside of Jerusalem. It is probably about eighty miles south. This young woman went to Jerusalem and a little bit further past Jerusalem.

Again most scholars think that she was in her late teens. I mean who did she tell this story to? “Hey Dad, I am going on an eighty-mile trip.” I mean they did not have highways, they did not have cars, and they did not have the patrolmen to guarantee your safety. It was very dangerous, traveling eighty miles in that time without all kinds of protection. We do not know who she went with, but that was a pretty dangerous trip back in that day. It probably took about four to five days, if she was really moving fast, you know twenty miles a day, if she was really going for it.

Well verse 41, she got to Elizabeth’s house. Mary called out, “Elizabeth, how are you doing?”

When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, heard the voice of this young woman, the baby six months in the womb jumped. Little John jumped. He leapt. He said, “Yes, that is it! I know Him! I know where this is going.”

When Mary greeted Elizabeth, the Holy Spirit touched her. I mean there is even a correlation to learn here. You can speak words by the grace of God and stir up the prophetic spirit in other people; that is what is happening here. Mary spoke and the anointing of the Spirit came on Elizabeth. Of course there is a very dynamic moment here, but the principle is still there that a prophetic word often stirs the grace of God and the anointing of the Spirit on another person.

Verse 42, Elizabeth spoke out with a loud voice, “Blessed are you among women.” Verse 43, “Why has this been granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” This is staggering. She knows that the couple-week-old the baby, the newly conceived Jesus in Mary’s womb—it has only been a few weeks now—she knows that He is the Lord.

I mean this is the same revelation that Peter had when he looked at Jesus and said, “You are the Christ,” and Jesus said, “Flesh and blood did not tell you that.” That is not human reasoning. You did not get that from someone else. God told you that.

Well, Elizabeth was catching this by the Spirit. Mary had only been pregnant a few weeks at the most. Elizabeth was saying, “That is my God. That is the Lord in your womb.” It is a remarkable statement. She said, “As soon as we heard the voice of your greeting when you came to my house and said, ‘Hello, Elizabeth,’ my baby leapt for joy.”

Verse 45, she went on, “Blessed is she who believed the things God told her.” She could have gone on to say, “I know because my husband is under the discipline of God, and he has been for six months. I mean he has not said a word for six months. You are blessed because what you are believing is more intense than what we are believing. I mean what we are believing is that here we are elderly and we are having a child. What you are believing is that God impregnated you and your child is God.” She might have said, “How are you buying this? I mean the same Gabriel visited my husband and he did not take hold of it like you did.”

Beloved, there is something blessed about a heart that, when it really hears from God, lays hold of it. Over my years of watching this, I have seen a lot of folks hear from God and one, two, three, four, five years later they have already let go of it. Two decades later they have long forgotten it, but it really was God who encountered them.

Blessed is the woman who believes when the Holy Spirit visits. I have had a couple supernatural experiences, pretty extreme angelic ones, a couple of angelic encounters and a few other pretty intense encounters with the Lord over forty years. Let me tell you, you can have those encounters and they are so moving, but ten years later you look back and you say, “I mean I know it happened. I am positive it happened, but ten years later and twenty years later and thirty years later it just does not feel like it did when it happened.” Let me tell you, you are blessed if you take hold of the word God speaks to you. You do not let it fall to the side simply because you do not feel the same power of it as the years unfold.

- E. Mary’s song while visiting Elizabeth (Lk. 1:46-56): This prophetic song of praise is commonly referred to as “*the Magnificat*”—from the Latin word for “magnifies” (1:46). *The Magnificat* parallels Hannah’s song of thanks for her son Samuel (1 Sam. 2:1-10) and reveals God’s heart to us.

⁴⁶*And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord,* ⁴⁷*And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*

⁴⁸*For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.* ⁴⁹*For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*

⁵⁰*And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation...* ⁵²*He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly...* ⁵³*He has filled the hungry with good*

things, and the rich He has sent away empty..."⁵⁶**Mary remained with her about three months...**
(Lk. 1:46-56)

1. Notice all the past-tense references to Jesus' birth and ministry before it all happened, revealing Mary's spirit of faith. This song shows how well Mary knew the Old Testament.
2. **Rejoice:** Mary had confidence in God's love without fear of consequences. She rejoiced *before* Joseph knew about the pregnancy, which was not until several months later. Mary trusted God's leadership in this.
3. **My Savior:** Mary acknowledged her need of a merciful savior because she was sinful.
4. The song divides into four stanzas—verses 46-48, 49-50, 51- 53, and 54-55.

*Well, the Spirit came on Mary, and she offered this prophetic song. So first Mary greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth prophesied, and then Mary prophesied back. This is a very well-known prophetic song, **the Magnificat**. That term comes from the Latin word, magnifies. This is a very famous prophetic song. This is a song to study to learn how to respond in faith. These are phrases we can say back to God in our own situations in part.*

Mary started off, verse 46, "My soul magnifies the Lord." Remember she had only been pregnant a couple weeks, and she had fully bought into it. She said, "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Now God is not going to tell Joseph for a while. None of her family is going to be told by the Lord that we know of. She was saying, in effect, "Hey, God is going to work this thing out."

*Now again we look back and say, "Hey, well, you know it was **Jesus** who was her child." Think about it in the reality of it. She was going to go through this intense hour of stigma. Even when Jesus was in His public ministry thirty plus years later they said to Him, "Oh, yeah, we know the story. You were born in fornication." In John 8, "When You were born, your mother was in sexual sin. We heard the story from the elders of Nazareth." The story stayed alive, though it was thirty years later.*

She declared, "Lord, I know You are going to work it out. I know it is impossible to conceive of it happening. If it does happen, I am going to bear stigma for quite a while. You know what? I am Yours. I rejoice in the calling. I say yes to Your leadership. I accept the assignment. I do not care how impossible it looks. I do not care about the stigma that goes with it. I do not care how much I am going to be misunderstood." All of those were real in Mary's life.

Verse 48, "for the Lord has regarded the lowly estate of His maidservant." Now she is living in this really rough, not highly educated, economically poor city. Again, it is a city with a bad reputation. She does not have an education; she does not have money. A lot of folks think that if they know all the right people, are educated in the just right way, the right social status, and the right economic abilities, then they can do God's will. She would say, "I do not have any of those." Verse 48, I am poor, uneducated peasant girl with a poor family. You know what? If God said it, I believe it. He looked at my low estate. I cannot qualify for this, but I am in.

Beloved, if the Lord tells you He is going to use you to do this or that or give you a billion dollars or whatever, believe Him. Say, "Well, I do not know how to do that," if He says it. It is real if it is really from Him.

I love that verse 48, "He has regarded my lowly estate." He knows I do not have the qualifications to do this. Verse 49, "but He who is mighty has done great things for me."

Let's go down to verse 53. "He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich He has sent away empty." Now, the Lord is not against the rich, but what Mary is referring to is that sometimes the rich people think they

can buy their favors. They think that because of their status they might be able to buy God's favor. God would say, "My Son is not going to be moved by anybody's money in terms of a deal." If the rich are hungry, they are going to receive. If they are not hungry and are trusting their status, they are going to be turned away empty. It is a pretty bold statement for a young gal in the spirit of prophecy.

She went on, "But I know my soul is hungry."

I ask you, are you hungry? If you are hungry to go deep in God, to be a part of what God is doing, then I have a good word for you: the Lord fills the people that are hungry. Jesus would say it later in Matthew 5, the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the hungry, those that hunger for righteousness, for God will satisfy them."

Verse 56, now Mary remained there for three more months. Since Elizabeth had been pregnant six months already, three more months make nine. So we assume she is there for the delivery and the birth of John. That only makes sense. When you read this, **the Magnificat**, this prophetic song that she gave, the one thing that strikes me is how well Mary knew the Old Testament as a teenage girl. She was quoting, I think one scholar said sixteen or seventeen references to Old Testament prophecies here in this entire song; I do not have all the references in my memory right now.

She was a young woman in a poor, little, out-of-the-way town who knew the Bible as a sixteen or seventeen-year-old girl possibly, maybe younger, maybe a little bit older, nobody knows. I am impressed by the way she could just flow with her knowledge and revelation. Somebody said it was just that the Spirit gave it to her. Typically, when a person prophesies they might have a phrase that is completely "out there," but often the Holy Spirit will use the word that you have laid hold of and use that as the platform He uses to release the prophetic word in and through you.

So now Mary returned home. Three months pregnant, she was back in Nazareth. She made that eighty-mile walk back home or by mule, whatever. Now she was only three months along, so they did not get the story yet, you know. Elizabeth got it, but nobody at home got it yet, especially not Joseph.

Now another thing I want to point out. Mary said, "My spirit rejoices in God my **Savior**." The idea here is that Mary is acknowledging her need of a Savior. Now in the Catholic doctrine they say that Mary was sinless. There is no biblical testimony of that at all, that she was sinless. The fact that Mary needed salvation like everybody else did, that is the glory of the story: that God is intervening and participating with people like us. That is a point of the story, not the whole point, but that is one of the main points.

F. John's birth in the hill country of Judea (Lk. 1:57-66), early 5 BC

The next thing that happens is John's birth. We are going to skip that.

G. Zacharias' song of praise after John's birth in the hill country of Judea (Lk. 1:67-79). This song of praise is called "*the Benedictus*." It comes from the first word in the Latin, translated "blessed."

⁶⁷Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: ⁶⁸"**Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,** ⁶⁹**And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David...** ⁷²**to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant...** ⁷⁴**to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear...** ⁷⁶**And you, child [John], will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,** ⁷⁷**to give knowledge of salvation to His people...** ⁷⁸**through the tender mercy of our God..."** (Lk. 1:67-79)

1. The first part of the song praises God for the deliverance that comes from Jesus (1:68-75), while the second part is about John's role as the forerunner to prepare Jesus' way (1:76-79).
2. Zechariah alluded to God's promise to raise up a horn—symbolic of strength—of salvation from Jesus, the son of David (Ps. 132:17).
3. This prophetic song of praise gives us insight into Jesus' ministry to deliver us forever from every enemy—spiritually, physically, politically, economically, relationally, etc.
4. One reason God sent Jesus was so that people could serve God in confidence without fear.

*Then after John's birth, his father sang a song. He sang this prophetic song of praise, **the Benedictus**, and that is a well-known prophetic song as well. In this song, the part I want you to see particularly is in verse 74. I mean all of it is really good, but I want you to see verse 74 because we get insight into Jesus' ministry and His heart through these prophetic songs. The prophetic songs or statements of Elizabeth, Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon all give us insight into Jesus' heart, these prophetic oracles around at the time of His birth.*

Verse 74, I love it—that God is going to grant that we are delivered from the hand of our enemies, that we would serve God without fear all of our days. Underlying Jesus' ministry—it is not all that it is about but at its core to what it is about—He came to destroy the works of the devil, to liberate us from all of our enemies forever. Beloved, this is a most remarkable storyline. We have a God who has as one of His primary goals in salvation to free you from every enemy that touches your life: spiritually—all the demons, all the sin, all the judgment, all of it is gone; physically—perfect health, resurrected body forever; financially—gold so abundant that you walk on streets of gold; relationally—everybody in perfect unity and joy and love for billions and billions of years living in garden-of-Eden-type conditions. Jesus came to deliver us from everything that is against us.

He came so that we could serve God with no fear and with confidence. We are not afraid of God in the negative sense of a spirit of condemnation. We are not afraid of the devil, we are not afraid of challenges, and we live with confidence without fear. That is one of the things that right here in this song that is being highlighted about the ministry of Jesus.

H. Joseph's dream about the virgin birth (Nazareth) (Mt. 1:18-25)

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰But...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." ²²So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Mt. 1:18-23)

1. ***Betrothed***: Jewish law considered an engaged couple as legally married. Normally a one-year period of waiting followed the betrothal before the consummation of the marriage.
2. If Joseph declared that Mary was unfaithful, she might be stoned, though that was rare in the first century. Probably she would have suffered the shame of a public divorce (Deut. 22:23-24). He decided to divorce her privately, which upheld the Law yet showed compassion.

3. **Dream:** Joseph had a total of four dreams (Mt.1:20, 24; 2:13, 19).
4. Mary did not remain a virgin after His birth; Jesus had four brothers and sisters (Mt. 13:55-56). The Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary has no support in the Scripture.

So now John the Baptist is born, Mary is three months pregnant, and she is back in Galilee. Now it is Matthew who picks up the story from here. John the Baptist had just recently been born, and in verse 18, Matthew was taking a different approach than Luke, telling us parts that Luke did not tell us in the story.

Matthew 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus was as follows: after Jesus' mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together"—this is speaking sexually—"she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."

Verse 19, Joseph was shocked by this. He was thinking, "You have been gone three months. You come back after three months, we have been engaged, and you are pregnant? You are telling me God did it? I want to get ahold of this Elizabeth. I do not know your family that well. I want to figure out what is going on down there."

One thing that I do not like in terms of my life with the Lord: I do not like that the Lord waits until five minutes 'til twelve to give the information, five minutes 'til midnight. He could have given Joseph the dream a long time ago. He could have given Joseph the dream before Gabriel came and said, "Hey Joe, she is going to need your help. I am going to visit her next month, but just get ready. Do not say anything to her."

The Lord visits just in time, but to my flesh it is five minutes 'til midnight. I say, "Lord, how about ten minutes 'til midnight? That would be just a little bit nicer."

He comes to him, but it is months afterwards. Mary is free-falling. Joseph is free-falling. I mean Mary believes, but she was probably saying, "Lord, tell him. Come on, just tell him!" I do not know what she was really saying. That is what I would be saying!

In verse 19, we find Joseph wanted to divorce her. Verse 20, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream, "Joseph, son of David." I mean even that term, son of David. In other words, though the prophecy was about Mary's Son, the real Son of David, he was saying, "Joseph, you are in line with a great story here. Do not be afraid to take her as your wife for that which is conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit."

Joseph was in this dream, and he was probably thinking, "How on earth? How is this happening? Am I really hearing this?"

Well, here is the absolute verification, "She will bring forth a Son; you will call His name Jesus."

Now, I do not know how this worked. I look forward to talking to them one day. I will say, "Mary, Gabriel told you to name Him Jesus. Did you hold the name secret until Joseph had the dream, or did you tell Joseph and then in the dream, the angel said, 'Hey, it is even the name your fiancé told you; that is the real name' so that it was the confirming word right there?"

Joseph might say, "Wow, yeah, in this dream I was getting the name that Mary told me."

I can just imagine Mary telling this story, "His name is Jesus because He is going to save His people from their sins." We know that the name Jesus is the New Testament name. The Old Testament name is Joshua, "Jehovah is the Savior." He saves us from our sins, saves us from our enemies; all of that is included.

In the dream, in verse 22, the angel said, "You know that verse in Isaiah 7 about the virgin? Your fiancé is the fulfillment, the ultimate fulfillment, of that verse from Isaiah 7." I believe there was a partial fulfillment back in

Isaiah's day with Ahaz the king, in a partial way. "The ultimate fulfillment is your fiancé, the woman you are betrothed to." So Matthew quotes the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14.

I. Statement about John's early life in the Judean wilderness (Lk. 1:80)

⁸⁰So the child [John the Baptist] grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel. (Lk. 1:80)

J. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1-7), late 5 BC. Luke emphasized the political situation to explain why Jesus was born in Bethlehem, then highlighted Bethlehem as the city of David to validate the claim for Jesus' messiahship. Augustus was Caesar from 44 BC to AD 14.

¹And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. ⁴Joseph went...out of the city of Nazareth...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...⁶So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Lk. 2:1-7)

1. There is evidence that in 6 BC Augustus issued the type of decree that Luke described.

2. Herod the Great was still alive when Augustus issued his decree (Mt. 2); he died in 4 BC.

So now a few more months go by. They are up in Nazareth. A few more months go by. It is toward the end of Mary's pregnancy. You know, it is month seven, month eight, something like that; we do not know exactly. We are back in Luke 2 now. Luke picks up the story from where we just left off in Matthew.

"It came to pass," now again Mary was pregnant six, seven, eight months, something like that. All of a sudden the word came forth of the decree of a census. The Roman empire was going to force all the Jews to go to the city of their forefathers. Everyone had to go to the city of their forefathers.

Joseph had had the dream from the angel. Maybe he was thinking, "Well, my forefathers were from Bethlehem. Oh my goodness! This is amazing. The government is now demanding we go to the city of our forefathers for the government census, for taxation reasons. This is amazing because the prophecy"—the Old Testament prophecy, Micah 5:2, a very famous one, "said the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. Mary is seven or eight months pregnant. We have to go to Bethlehem. I mean God is moving on the government to set this in motion."

Beloved, there is no political obstacle that God cannot overcome to do His will. You know sometimes we look at the government or we look at the elections. We think that the kingdom of God is in the balance of who is in power in Washington or whatever city of the earth. I mean they have their impact, but there is a King on a throne at the right hand of the Father who is over everything. He can move all the kings of the earth at will.

I could imagine Mary saying, "Well, my great-great-many times great-grandfather was David too, and my city is Bethlehem.

He says, Well, that is my city. Let's get all of our family histories and put them all together." You go back a thousand years and David and Bathsheba were the great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents of Mary and Joseph a thousand years before. They did the whole history and they realize the government was making them both go back to Bethlehem. This is intense. She was seven, eight months pregnant, and the timing was perfect. The journey was going to be intense, but the timing was right.

So verse 3, they all went to their own cities to register. Joseph left from up north in Nazareth, and he went down south to Bethlehem. Remember, Bethlehem is only about five miles from Jerusalem. So it was down kind of near where Elizabeth lived.

Verse 6, “And while they were in Bethlehem,” the nine months “were completed.” So that is why we know that this census was set in motion some months earlier—because while they were down there the time for her delivery came. She brought forth her Son. “They wrapped Him in the swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Here is God intentionally identifying with the poor. There is no palace worthy of His Son, worthy of His throne, but He is born in a manger. That is what it looks like as He is identifying with the human race, the poor.

K. Angelic proclamation to the shepherds in a field near Bethlehem (Lk. 2:8-20)

⁸Now there were...shepherds living out in the fields...⁹Behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them...¹⁰The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.¹² And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”...¹⁶They came with haste and found Mary, Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.¹⁷ Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.¹⁸ And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. (Lk. 2:8-18)

1. One purpose of the gospel is to bring great joy and world peace to all nations (2:10, 14).
2. Jesus’ birth was announced by host of angels and His ordination by the Father’s voice (Lk. 3:22). A heavenly host refers to large company of angels (1 Kgs. 22:19; 2 Chr. 33:3, 5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5). These men in the field saw thousands of angels declaring glory to God.
3. Those who heard the eyewitness testimony of the shepherds marveled at the report (2:18).

Well, now they were down there in Bethlehem, and they have had their baby, who is lying there in the manger. There were some shepherds out in the field. Now I think one of the reasons God visited the shepherds out in the field is that He wanted to give a supernatural validation to a group of people who were not in the family circle of Mary and Joseph. I mean completely outside, a whole other sphere of people in a whole other city.

So they were not from around Nazareth. These shepherds did not know anything about Nazareth. They did not know anything about Mary and Joseph. Now the Lord was doing this for many reasons undoubtedly, but one of the reasons is that He was validating His purpose and confirming it by another group of people who had no relationship, no reason to back up the story, except for the angels appeared to them. Again there are so many points to make with every one of these passage of scripture. I am just making just the simplest points.

Verse 9, the shepherds were in the field. An angel stood in front of them. It was one angel to start with. These shepherds, we do not know how many there were. The glory of God shone around. You know maybe it was five or ten of them. In the Christmas stories it is a few guys, but it could have been five or ten or twenty of them, who knows.

The glory of God shone around these guys. They were thinking, “Oh my goodness, this is intense!”

The angel said, well they always say at first, “Do not be afraid.” These guys were absolutely terrified. “Good news is coming! Good news! It is great joy! It is not just for the Jewish people. It is for **all people**.” That is the key phrase there. This was new because many of the Jews imagined it would mostly or only be for them, but it is for the whole world. This was new. The good news had a new dimension to it.

Verse 11, “There is born to you this day in the city of David”—of course they were out in the field. They knew the city of David was Bethlehem, which was a mile or two down the road or whatever. They were very familiar with the local geography—“a Savior. He is the Christ.” The Christ means the Messiah. He is the Messiah, the Anointed One. He is the one the prophets prophesied. “This will be sign to you: you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger.”

They were probably thinking, “A babe in a manger? That does not make sense. Really?”

“Yeah.”

“He is the Savior of the world in a manger? Really? That is a little bit disconnected.”

“Just go and you will see.”

Verse 13, the other angels got so excited that all of a sudden a multitude of angels appeared. I mean it is like the veil was lifted and they were all shouting, “Glory to God! It is happening! It is real! It is happening in time and space! God became human, He is born.”

The angels declare these two great statements. First, “World peace is coming.” Beloved, I have good news for you! World peace is coming. When it comes, it is going to be here to stay. There is not going to be a coalition of nations to bring it to pass. It is going to be a Jewish King returning on a white horse to bring world peace. I promise you, world peace is coming to stay. I promise you nobody else will get anything close to any kind of stable, global, world peace besides Him. He is the only one person able and worthy of it.

Second, not only is world peace coming, the utopian dreams of the human heart are going to happen. That’s goodwill towards men. Whatever you can dream of, the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 2, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has never entered the heart of a man the depth of the glory He has prepared.” I mean you take Spielberg and Walt Disney and ten other guys, put them all together, and the best dream they could come up with cannot touch where this thing is going. Goodwill is coming to the earth. The utopian dreams of the human heart are coming.

Well, these shepherds got so excited, they ran. “Let’s go to that manger.” There was the babe just like the angel said!

Verse 17, These shepherds told everybody. They told everybody, and everybody that heard marveled. They said, “You are telling me an angel appeared, shined the glory on you guys, and then a host of angels? Then the babe was really in the manger, really?”

“Yes, it was.” Ten of them, fifteen of them, saying, “We all saw it! This is true.” I mean the word went everywhere.

Thirty years later the stories were still being told. Now some of you, if you are twenty, you may think, “Twenty years later? Oh my gosh, I mean will I even be alive twenty years from now?” Yet thirty years ago was only 1986. I tell a lot of stories from 1986. That was a minute ago.

So those stories from the shepherds were going everywhere. The whole city said, “Man, remember back when those guys came through and they said those angels came? Things sure got quiet for thirty years!” Well, a Man

was about to march into Jerusalem thirty years later, Jesus the Son of David. The purpose was not derailed though it went quiet for thirty years.

L. Jesus was named and circumcised after 8 days in Bethlehem (Mt. 1:25; Lk. 2:21).

21 And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. (Lk. 2:21)

M. Jesus was presented in the temple in Jerusalem 40 days after His birth (Lk. 2:22-24). After a son was born, a woman was ceremonially unclean for 40 days. (This uncleanness was not due to sin.) After those days a sacrifice was offered for the son in the temple (Lev. 12:2-6). Mosaic law required two sacrifices for a firstborn son—a lamb as a burnt offering and a pigeon as a sin offering. If the family was financially poor, then they were permitted to offer two birds instead. (Lev. 12:8).

22 Now when the days of her purification...were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord...²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice...A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. (Lk. 2:22-24)

N. Simeon and Anna saw Jesus in the temple in Jerusalem (Lk. 2:25-38). Simeon prophesied that believers in Jesus would rise to great heights (New Jerusalem) and unbelievers would fall (the lake of fire). Jesus was a sign spoken against—He would cause much opposition (Mt. 10:34-36) and be rejected by many.

25 Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon...the Holy Spirit was upon him ...²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple...²⁸ he took Him [Jesus] up in his arms and blessed God and said...³⁰ “My eyes have seen Your salvation...³² a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel”...³⁴ Simeon...said to Mary...“Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign which will be spoken against³⁵ (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” (Lk. 2:25-35)

Now here were Simeon and Anna. They were in the temple there. The Spirit of God fell on Simeon. You can read the notes here. It was about six weeks after the baby Jesus had been born. It was about six weeks later, and they went to Jerusalem from Bethlehem. It is only about five miles. They were going to present Him at the temple because that is what the Old Testament law said to do. So they went to present Him, and they were in the temple for that reason.

In verse 27, Simeon came into the temple led by the Spirit. He walked right over to this young couple with this six-week-old baby. Simeon, in verse 28, took the baby in his arms. He said, “My eyes have seen the salvation of God.”

You know Mary and Joseph were probably thinking, “So this is real! I mean we know it is real, but this really is real. I mean we know it is real, but this is amazing.” Maybe they asked, “How did you know, Simeon?”

“Well, the Holy Spirit told me. He is not just going to bring the glory of God to Israel, He is going to fill the whole earth, all the Gentiles. All over Asia, Africa, all the islands, everywhere, the glory of God is going to be established by His leadership.”

Verse 34, this elderly man Simeon looked at this young seventeen, eighteen-year-old girl or younger, Mary, this young teenager with this six-week-old baby. He said, “Let me tell you,” verse 34, “young lady, this Child is

destined for the fall and the rising of many.” Ooh, that is kind of a cryptic, ominous statement, that just the fact that He is come to the earth, many will fall because of Him. This is because He is going to require allegiance to Him, and if they do not want Him, that is going to be their fall, their downfall. Many, when He calls for their allegiance, will say “yes,” and they will rise. They will rise beyond anything they can imagine. They will live in the New Jerusalem one day. They will rule the earth with Him one day. They will rise in a way they cannot imagine. Those that fall will fall to a level they cannot imagine when they resist Him to the end; it is called the lake of fire.

Simeon said, “Your Son is destined to cause this result for two groups of people.”

Mary was listening. Maybe she said, “I just never thought of it that way.”

He said, “Well, let me tell you another thing, Mary. Your Son will be a sign that will be spoken against. He will have many more enemies than He has friends.” Well, how could this be? He is the Son of David. Gabriel appeared. The angels appeared. Yes, that is true, Mary, but He will have many more enemies than He will have friends. Many in Israel and many in the nations will stand against Him with all of their might. I mean we know the book of Revelation—all the kings of the earth will come against Him and He will be spoken against.

In Matthew 10:34, Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” In other words, “I came, and when I came I brought a sword. There is going to be opposition, and many will hate Me. They do not want My leadership. They do not love My Father. Though they have a rhetoric about loving God, they do not love My leadership.”

Then Simeon looked at Mary, and he said, “Mary, I have to tell you this because the Holy Spirit is resting on me: a sword will pierce even your own heart.”

“What?”

“A sword will pierce your heart, Mary. This glorious Son whom you love, who is the most glorious they could imagine, well, there will be pain and challenge and setbacks that you cannot imagine that will be involved. You are going to feel it.”

See, we would imagine that if Gabriel appeared to Elizabeth and Gabriel appeared a second time—so two times in one year after not having appeared in 500 years—two times in one year angels appear, and the wise men came, and those four dreams that Joseph had that we did not highlight but he had four prophetic dreams in the process of this year or two—four major prophetic dreams—you would be thinking that your Son is God and He is going to rule the earth...that’s pretty good.

The difficulties that Mary went through were just intense. I mean Mary’s husband Joseph died a few years later after he and Mary had seven or eight children. The Gospels make it clear that she had four sons and a number of daughters. So she was widowed with seven or eight children in Nazareth where they loved her Son because her Son had great favor when He grew up. He had favor with God and man, He was the most popular guy in Nazareth, until they turned on Jesus and wanted to kill Him. Then the nation turned on Him and wanted to kill Him, then they killed Him.

Mary might have been wondering, “Wait. I thought this thing was about an anointed person.” It was, but in context to a dark world with enemies and a raging devil. God wins, but there will be challenges and setbacks. You have to keep a hold of this thing. You have to take hold and keep hold of it. The thoughts of many are going to be revealed.

Like I said before, Jesus offends the mind to reveal the heart. He said and did many things that made people say, "Wait a second, what?"

Jesus would say, "If you really love Me, you will find a way to make sense of what I just said. If you do not really want Me, you will find a way to throw Me overboard because what I am saying that is offending your mind is only going to reveal your heart. Your thoughts will come to the surface."

When Jesus did all these different things, many people said, "He is an imposter."

Jesus said, "You have plenty of information to get rid of Me, if you want to."

Another groups said, "But we love You! This has to be right."

He said, "You have plenty of information to follow Me if you want to, but I am not changing anything. It is Me on My terms."

- O. The wise men visited Jesus in Bethlehem (Mt. 2:1-12). Herod the Great (73-4 BC) was made king of Judea in 40 BC. The gifts of the wise men spoke prophetically of Jesus' ministry—gold suggests His kingly calling, frankincense His priestly ministry, and myrrh His death. I assume the star was a manifestation of the shekinah glory that led Israel in the wilderness as a pillar of fire and cloud.

¹Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East..." ³When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴And when he had gathered all the chief priests... he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ⁶"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel."...⁸He [Herod] sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child..."⁹Behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was ¹¹And when they had come into the house...and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (Mt. 2:1-12)

The star, I just have to mention the star. I love the star. I think the star was not a literal star in the sky because it was moving and it rested over the house; it led the wise men right to the house. This is my opinion. I have read it from other sources. It is not original with me, I think it was the glory of God, like in the wilderness when the shekinah glory of God as a pillar of fire and the cloud moved and directed Israel in a bright and shining light.

So the star that they followed rested over the house. I do not think a star, you know like Venus, came down to the earth and rested over a house. I do not think that was what it was talking about. I think it was the glory of God in the brightest way and it was literally leading the wise men. You know the story well. They gave three prophetic gifts: the gold and frankincense and myrrh which spoke of His kingly ministry, His priestly ministry, and His death on the cross.

- P. **Bethlehem:** Messiah would be born in the very small village of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). This is where David was born. God moved them from Nazareth to Bethlehem by the census.

- Q. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt (Mt. 2:13-18), 5 BC.
- R. The returned to Nazareth, in Galilee (Mt. 2:19-23; Lk. 2:39), 4 BC.
- S. Jesus' growth in His early years in Nazareth (Lk. 2:39-40)
⁴⁰The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Lk. 2:40)
- T. Jesus asked questions in the temple at Passover at age 12 (Lk. 2:41-50), April AD 8.
⁴¹His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴²And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem...⁴³When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; ⁴⁴but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances...⁴⁶After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding...⁴⁸His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." ⁴⁹And He said to them, "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Lk. 2:41-49)
- U. Jesus' youth and early manhood (age 12-30) in Nazareth (Lk. 2:51-52), until AD 26.
⁵¹Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them...⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk. 2:51-52)

*Now I wish I would not have taken so long on the other stuff! So Jesus went to Jerusalem at age twelve. It is such a great story. A big part is that the human process comes out. He did not skip the human process. He really grew up and understood little by little. He dealt with all of the issues that people deal with. He **grew** in understanding and favor with God and people in terms of blessing on His circumstances.*

Well, amen! Let's stand before the Lord. Let's tell Jesus we love Him.

We love You Jesus. Jesus, we love You.

I want to invite people to come forward. Perhaps the Lord has given you a clear prophetic word and promise and the enemy has come to attack it or even the very delay of it has made it a challenge for you. You just imagined it would happen easier and faster, but it is being challenged and delayed in a way you did not imagine. I want to invite you to come forward. I am going to ask for a spirit of faith to touch you, for slumber to be driven away far away from you in this hour.

Lord, You gave us prophetic words, but the delay is longer than we thought and the challenges are greater than we imagined. Lord, we say what Mary said, "Be it unto me according to Your Word. I believe You." Lord, I say, "I am not going to let go."