

## ***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.

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

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

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

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.
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.
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).

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

<sup>26</sup>*Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,*  
<sup>27</sup>*to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph...<sup>28</sup> the angel said to her, "Rejoice,*  
*highly favored one, the Lord is with you...<sup>31</sup> You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a*  
*Son, and shall call His name Jesus.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> And He will reign over the*  
*house of Jacob forever..."<sup>35</sup> The 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.<sup>36</sup> Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her*  
*old age; and this is now the sixth month for her...<sup>37</sup> For with God nothing will be impossible."*  
<sup>38</sup>*Then 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).

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

<sup>39</sup>*Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah...*  
<sup>41</sup>*When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was*  
*filled with the Holy Spirit.<sup>42</sup> Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you*  
*among women..."<sup>43</sup> But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to*  
*me?...<sup>44</sup> As soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb*  
*for joy. <sup>45</sup>Blessed 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.

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.

<sup>46</sup>*And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord,* <sup>47</sup>*And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*

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

<sup>50</sup>*And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation...* <sup>52</sup>*He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly...* <sup>53</sup>*He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty...* <sup>56</sup>*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.

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

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."

<sup>67</sup>*Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying: <sup>68</sup>"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, <sup>69</sup> And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David... <sup>72</sup>to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant... <sup>74</sup>to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear... <sup>76</sup>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, <sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to His people... <sup>78</sup>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.

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

*<sup>18</sup>Now 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. <sup>19</sup>Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup>But...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. <sup>21</sup>And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." <sup>22</sup>So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup>"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 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.

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

*<sup>80</sup>So 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.

*<sup>1</sup>And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. <sup>3</sup>So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. <sup>4</sup>Joseph went...out of the city of Nazareth...to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem...<sup>6</sup>So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. <sup>7</sup>And 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.

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

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

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

***<sup>21</sup>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).

***<sup>22</sup>Now when the days of her purification...were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord...<sup>24</sup>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.

***<sup>25</sup>Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon...the Holy Spirit was upon him...<sup>27</sup>So he came by the Spirit into the temple...<sup>28</sup>he took Him [Jesus] up in his arms and blessed God and said...<sup>30</sup>"My eyes have seen Your salvation...<sup>32</sup>a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel"...<sup>34</sup>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 against"<sup>35</sup> (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." (Lk. 2:25-35)***

- 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.

*<sup>1</sup>Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East..." <sup>3</sup>When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup>And when he had gathered all the chief priests... he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>'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.'" ... <sup>8</sup>He [Herod] sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child..." <sup>9</sup>Behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was <sup>11</sup>And 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. <sup>12</sup>Then, 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)*

- 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)

*<sup>40</sup>The 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.

*<sup>41</sup>His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. <sup>42</sup>And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem... <sup>43</sup>When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; <sup>44</sup> but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances.... <sup>46</sup>After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup>And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding... <sup>48</sup>His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously." <sup>49</sup>And 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.

*<sup>51</sup>Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them... <sup>52</sup>And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Lk 2:51-52)*