



On Pilgrimage with Luke

Week 2

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Infancy Narratives for Adults
(Luke Chapter 1)
“Not Just a Christmas Pageant”



The Cast of Luke's Infancy Narratives (in order of their appearance)

- Zechariah – “YHWH has remembered”
- Elizabeth – possibly “God by whom I swear”
- Gabriel – “God is my strength.”
 - Interprets Daniel’s visions in Dan. 8:15–26, 9:21–27, notably the prophecy of the 70 weeks.
- Mary – *Miryam* meaning (literally) “height, summit” or, less literally, “excellence”
 - The mother of Jesus carries the name of Moses’ sister.
- John – *Yohanan*, “YHWH has shown favor”
- Joseph – “YHWH adds”
 - Named for the OT patriarch who sojourns in Egypt and saves the sons of Israel after they attempt to kill him.
 - Viewed in Christianity as a prefigure of Jesus
- Jesus – originally *Yehosua* meaning “YHWH, help!”
 - Gradually contracted in Hebrew to *Yosua* and then *Yesua*, a homophone for “YHWH saves.”
 - When the OT was translated into Greek, the Hebrew *Yesua* became *lēsous* from whence “Jesus” in English.
- Simeon – a form of “God has heard” Usual transliterated into Greek as “Simon.”
 - One of the sons of Israel and a half-brother of Joseph in the OT
 - Has Luke preserved it as “Simeon” because he prophesies Jesus will be a *semeion*, Greek for “sign”?
 - “This child is destined to be a sign...that will be opposed.” (Lk 2.34b)
- Anna – “Grace, favor”
 - *Hannah* from the same root as “John.”
 - In the OT, Hannah was the formerly barren mother of Samuel, the great prophet who anoints David.



Luke's Infancy Narrative Is Filled with OT References...

- Both Lucan birth announcements follow an OT pattern
 - The appearance of an angel (or the Lord) to someone (mother or father)
 - Fear on the part of the person so confronted
 - Deliverance of the heavenly message (often with stereotyped details)
 - An objection expressed by the person confronted
 - The giving of some sign of reassurance
- This pattern can be found in the birth announcements for
 - Ishmael (Gn. 16.7-13)
 - Isaac (Gn. 17.1-21, 18.1-15)
 - Samson (Judg. 13.3-20)
- Matthew's narrative has only the announcement for Jesus and it consists only of the first and third elements above (1.20-21.)
- Elizabeth's condition resembles that of several OT women...



OT References (continued)

- Elizabeth is like
 - Sarah (Gn. 16)
 - Rachel (Gn. 30)
 - Samson's mother (Judg. 13)
 - Hannah (1 Sam. 1, 2)

therefore

- John the Baptist is like
 - Isaac – inheritor of the promise
 - Joseph – forerunner of Jesus
 - Samson – Nazirite filled w/ the Spirit
 - Samuel – see below

Hannah	Elizabeth
Aging & childless; conceives a son <u>naturally</u> w/ divine help	Aging & childless; conceives a son <u>naturally</u> w/ divine help
Appears mute to Eli as she prays for a son*	Zechariah is rendered mute as a sign of God's promise*
She offers to make the child a Nazirite	Gabriel** tells Zechariah his son will be a Nazirite w/ the spirit & power of Elijah
Samuel becomes a great prophet	John the Baptist becomes a great prophet
Samuel anoints David as King of Israel	John baptizes Jesus, the son of David, son of God, and King of Israel
Hannah utters a canticle of triumph	Zechariah prophesies triumphant canticle

*There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth (Ps. 19.3-4)

**Dan. 8 and 9.



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Hannah	Elizabeth	Mary
Aging & childless; conceives a son <u>naturally</u> w/ divine help	Aging & childless; conceives a son <u>naturally</u> w/ divine help	Young & not yet living w/ husband; conceives a son <u>miraculously</u>
Appears mute to Eli as she prays for a son*	Zechariah is rendered mute as a sign of God's promise*	Elizabeth's baby leaps in her womb at the sound of Mary's voice*
She offers to make the child a Nazirite	Gabriel** tells Zechariah his son will be a Nazirite w/ the spirit & power of Elijah	Gabriel** tells Mary her son will be the Son of God, the King of Israel
Samuel becomes a great prophet	John the Baptist becomes a great prophet	Jesus is the Son of God ⁺
Samuel anoints David as King of Israel	John baptizes Jesus, the son of David, son of God, and King of Israel	Jesus is the Savior of humanity
Hannah utters a canticle of triumph	Zechariah prophesies triumphant canticle	Mary utters a canticle of triumph

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+ Compare to Rom. 1.3-4 and Acts 13.33



In Luke, John and Jesus Are the Paired Messengers of Salvation...

I. Announcement of the Children's Births

- Parents introduced, expecting no child
- Appearance of the angel Gabriel
- The perceiver is troubled
- Do not fear
- Your wife / you shall bear a son
- You shall call him John / Jesus
- He shall be great (but not equal!)
- How shall I know, how shall this be?
- I have been sent to you / The Holy Spirit will come upon you
- Here is a sign (muteness / Elizabeth has conceived)
- Zechariah "went back" / the angel "went away" (*apēlthein* in both cases)

II. Complementary Episode: The Visitation, The Magnificat

III. Birth, Circumcision, Manifestation of the Children

- Birth
- Joy of the family and neighbors / of the angels and shepherds
- Circumcision and Naming
- Amazement and Pondering: family & neighbors / Mary & shepherds
- Canticle: Benedictus / Nunc Dimittis
- Growth of the Children

IV. Complementary Episode: The Finding in the Temple

...Their Infancy Narratives Run in Parallel With Jesus Placed on a Higher Plane Than John.



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 - His relationship to the Father is unique in salvation-history.
 - He is of the “same substance” as his father (325 CE); “he has his DNA” (2019 CE)
 - Jesus is the Son of God from his conception, not his resurrection.
 - As Mary's first-born, He is **entitled to a birthright**.
 - A double share of his father's possessions
 - **Successor to his father in terms of authority and headship of the family**
 - Therefore, **Jesus is Lord** (how his disciples refer to him in Luke)
 - But to inherit he must be **obedient and faithful** to his father's wishes



The Image of the Virgin Birth and the Later Doctrine of “Same Substance”

- The First Council of Nicaea in 325 CE debated the terms *homoousios* and *homoiousios*.
- *Homoousios* means “same substance”
- *Homoiousios* means “similar substance”.
- The council affirmed the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *homoousios*.
- This is the source of the English idiom “differ not by one iota.”
- Note that the words *homoousios* and *homoiousios* differ only by one 'i' (in Greek, the letter iota).
- Thus, to say two things differ not one iota, is to say that they are the same substance.



READ LUKE 1.39-56



OT References: the Magnificat's Cento-like Structure (Fitzmyer)

<p>⁴⁶And Mary said, “My being magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in <i>God <u>my Savior</u></i>, ⁴⁸ for he has <i><u>looked with favor on the lowliness of his bondmaid</u></i>. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One <i><u>has done great things</u></i> for me, and <i><u>holy is his name</u></i>. ⁵⁰ His mercy is for <i><u>those who fear him from generation to generation</u></i>. ⁵¹ He has shown strength <i><u>with his arm; he has scattered</u></i> the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; ⁵³ <i><u>he has filled the hungry with good things</u></i> and <i><u>sent</u></i> the rich <i><u>away empty</u></i>. ⁵⁴ He <i><u>has helped his servant Israel</u></i>, <i><u>in remembrance of his mercy</u></i>, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to <i><u>our ancestors, to Abraham</u></i> and to his descendants forever.”</p>	<p>1 Sam. 2.1-10 Ps. 25.5 (LXX) 1 Sam. 1.11 Ps. 113.5-6 Dt. 10.21, Ps. 111.9 Ps. 103.17 Ps. 89.10 1 Sam. 2.4 1 Sam. 2.7, Job 5.11 Ps.107.9, 1 Sam. 2.5, Job 22.9 Is. 41.8-9 Ps. 98.3 Mic. 7.20</p>
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The Magnificat: Comments on Translation

- “My **being** magnifies the Lord”
 - The Hebrew word ,נְפֶשׁ *nephesh*, although translated as “soul” in some older English Bibles, has a meaning closer to “living being.”
 - *Nephesh* was rendered in the Septuagint as *ψυχή* (*psūchê*), the Greek word for soul.
 - The New Testament also uses the word *ψυχή*, but with the Hebrew meaning and not the Greek.
- “The lowliness of his **bondmaid**”
 - The Greek word is *doulē* and was also used in 1.38.
 - This word’s plain and primary meaning is “bondmaid,” i.e., a female slave.
 - The child follows the condition of the mother, so Jesus will be a *doulou*, the masculine word for slave.
 - *Doulou* is the word used in the poem that Paul quotes in Philippians 2 at right.

Who, though he was in the form of God,
Did not regard being equal with God
Something to be grasped after.
But he emptied himself
Taking on the form of a **slave**,
And coming in the likeness of humans.
And being found in appearance as a human
He humbled himself
Becoming obedient unto death— even
death on a cross.
Therefore God highly exalted him
And bestowed on him the name
That is above every name,
That at the name of Jesus
Every knee should bow
Of those in heaven, and on earth, and under
the earth.
And every tongue should confess
That Jesus Christ is Lord
To the glory of God the Father.

— Philippians 2:5-11, translated by Bart D. Ehrman



READ LUKE 1.57-80



OT References: the Cento-Like Structure of the *Benedictus* (Fitzmyer)

<p>⁶⁸ <u>Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,</u> for he has visited <u>his people</u> and brought them <u>redemption</u>.</p> <p>⁶⁹ He has raised up for us a horn* <u>of salvation</u> in the house of his servant David,</p> <p>⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,</p> <p>⁷¹ to save us <u>from our enemies</u> and <u>from the hand of all who hate us,</u></p> <p>⁷² <u>to show mercy to</u> our fathers, <u>mindful of his holy covenant,</u></p> <p>⁷³ and of <u>the oath he swore to our father Abraham,</u></p> <p>⁷⁴ to grant us to be rescued from the hands of our enemies,</p> <p>⁷⁵ that we might <u>serve</u> before him without fear, <u>in</u> holiness and <u>righteousness all the days of our lives</u>.</p> <p>⁷⁶ Now you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will <u>go before the Lord to prepare his way,</u></p> <p>⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.</p> <p>⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will visit us,</p> <p>⁷⁹ and shine on <u>those who sit in darkness, in the shadow of death,</u> to guide our feet into <u>the path of peace</u>.</p>	<p>Ps. 41.14, 72.18, 106.48 Ps. 111.9 Ps. 18.3, 1 Sam. 2.10</p> <p>Ps. 18.18, 2 Sam. 22.18 Ps. 106.10 Gn. 24.12 Ps. 105.8, 106.45 Gn. 26.3</p> <p>Josh. 24.14 Is. 38.20</p> <p>Mal. 3.1, Is. 40.3</p> <p>Ps. 107.10, Is. 9.2 Is. 59.8</p>
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*Gk. *keras*;
Hb. *keren*.



Parallels in the Canticles of Hannah, Mary, and Zechariah

1 Samuel 2.1-10

Hannah prayed and said,
“My heart exults in the Lord;
my strength is exalted in my
God. My mouth derides my
enemies, because I rejoice in
my victory. ²“There is no
Holy One like the Lord, no
one besides you; there is no
Rock like our God. ³Talk no
more so very proudly, let not
arrogance come from your
mouth; for the Lord is a God
of knowledge, and by him
actions are weighed. ⁴The
bows of the mighty are
broken, but the feeble gird
on strength.

Luke 1.46-55

And Mary said,
“My being magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷and
my spirit rejoices in God my
Savior, ⁴⁸for he has looked with
favor on the lowliness of his
bondmaid. Surely, from now on all
generations will call me
blessed; ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has
done great things for me, and holy
is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy is for those
who fear him from generation to
generation. ⁵¹He has shown
strength with his arm; he has
scattered the proud in the thoughts
of their hearts. ⁵²He has brought
down the powerful from their
thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

Luke 1.67-79

Then...Zechariah...spoke this prophecy:
⁶⁸“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his
people and redeemed them. ⁶⁹He has
raised up a horn of salvation for us in
the house of his servant David, ⁷⁰as he
spoke through the mouth of his holy
prophets from of old, ⁷¹that we would
be saved from our enemies and from
the hand of all who hate us. ⁷²Thus he
has shown the mercy promised to our
ancestors, and has remembered his
holy covenant,



Parallels in the Canticles of Hannah, Mary, and Zechariah (cont'd.)

(Hannah...)

⁵Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn. ⁶The Lord kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

⁷The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. ⁸He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and on them he has set the world. ⁹“He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness; for not by might does one prevail. ¹⁰The Lord! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in heaven. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed.”

(Mary...)

⁵³he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵***according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.***”

(Zechariah...)

⁷³***the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham***, to grant us ⁷⁴that **we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear**, ⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, ⁷⁷to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. ⁷⁸By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, ⁷⁹to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

