

LUKE
Chapter 1

Dedication to Theophilus

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

Luke

The materials found in Scripture for a life of Luke are very scanty and seem to yield the following results: (1) That Luke was of Gentile origin. This is inferred from the fact that he is not reckoned among those “who are of the circumcision” (Col 4:11). When and how he became a physician is not known. (2) That he was not “an eyewitness and minister of the word from the beginning” (Luke 1:2). (3) On the supposition of Luke’s being the author of the Acts we gather from those passages in which the first person *we* is employed the following information: That he joined Paul’s company at Troas and sailed with them to Macedonia (Acts 16:10-11); he accompanied Paul as far as Philippi (16:25-17:1), but did not share Paul’s persecution not leave the city, for here the third person *they* is used. The first person *we* does not reappear until Paul comes to Philippi at the end of his third missionary journey (20:6), from which it is inferred that Luke spent the intervening time – a period of seven or eight years – in the city or neighborhood; and the *we* continues to the end of the book, that Luke remained with Paul during his journey to Jerusalem (20:6-21), was that apostle’s companion to Rome (27:1, sharing his shipwreck (28:2), and reaching the imperial city by way of Syracuse and Puteoli (28:12-26). According to the epistles he continued to be Paul’s fellow-laborer” till the end of Paul’s imprisonment (Philemon 24; Col 4:14). The last glimpse of the “beloved physician” (2 Timothy 4:11) discovers him to be faithful amid general defection. Tradition, since the time of Gregory of Naianzus, makes Luke a martyr; yet not unanimously, since accounts of a natural death slip in. Where he died remains a question; certainly not in Rome with Paul, for his writings are far later. (Unger’s Bible Dictionary)

The author’s name does not appear in the book, but much unmistakable evidence points to Luke. This Gospel is a companion volume to the book of Acts, and the language and structure of these two books indicate that both were written by the same person. They are addressed to the same individual, Theophilus, and the second volume refers to the first (Ac 1:1). Certain sections in Acts use the pronoun “*we*” (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16), indicating that the author was with Paul when the events described in these passages took place. By process of elimination, Paul’s “dear friend Luke, the doctor” (Col 4:14), and “fellow worker” (Phm 24) becomes the most likely candidate. His authorship is supported by the uniform testimony of early Christian writings (e.g., the Muratorian Canon, A.D. 170, and the works of Irenaeus, c. 180). (CSB)

Luke was probably a Gentile by birth, well educated in Greek culture, a physician by profession, a companion of Paul at various times from his second missionary journey to his first imprisonment in Rome, and a loyal friend who remained with the apostle after others had deserted (2Ti 4:11). Antioch (of Syria) and Philippi are among the places suggested as his hometown. (CSB)

Theophilus

The traditional connection of Luke with Antioch has disposed some to look upon Antioch as the abode of Theophilus, and possibly as the seat of his government. All that can be conjectured with any degree of safety concerning him comes to this, that he was a Gentile of rank and consideration who came under the influence of Luke or under that of Paul at Rome, and was converted to the Christian faith. (Unger's Bible Dictionary)

The Gospel is specifically directed to Theophilus (1:3), whose name means "one who loves God" and almost certainly refers to a particular person rather than to lovers of God in general. The use of "most excellent" with the name further indicates an individual, and supports the idea that he was a Roman official or at least of high position and wealth. He was possibly Luke's patron, responsible for seeing that the writings were copied and distributed. Such a dedication to the publisher was common at that time. (CSB)

Theophilus, however, was more than a publisher. The message of this Gospel was intended for his own instruction (1:4) as well as the instruction of those among whom the book would be circulated. The fact that the Gospel was initially directed to Theophilus does not narrow or limit its purpose. It was written to strengthen the faith of all believers and to answer the attacks of unbelievers. It was presented to displace disconnected and ill-founded reports about Jesus. Luke wanted to show that the place of the Gentile Christian in God's kingdom is based on the teaching of Jesus. He wanted to commend the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. (CSB)

He was the recipient of Luke's account. Possibly a patron who helped Luke produce and publish his Gospel. Because "Theophilus" means "friend of God," some interpreters take this name as a symbolic to anyone who reads the Gospel in faith. (TLSB – V-3)

Gospel of Luke

A certain "framework" is always assumed by interpreters—such things as the author and his audience, the place and date of composition, and the setting in which this gospel is first received. Fundamental to these issues is the question of purpose: why is the evangelist writing this gospel? (CC)

A tentative answer has already been given in the opening paragraphs and will now be expanded upon. Luke is writing a gospel primarily for Jewish Christians to use in evangelizing and catechizing God-fearers and pagan Gentiles. (*God-fearers were Gentiles who had learned of the true God from Jews and who had partially embraced Judaism. The use of "Gentiles" in this commentary will usually mean pagan Gentiles who were familiar only with the Greek and Roman religions and philosophies.*) The concept of revelatory instruction as catechesis for pilgrims serves as a helpful formulation for considering the unity of God's work in Jesus' ministry, in Luke's church, in the early catechetical communities, and in the church's ministry today. The gospel was used in catechesis, which we may define broadly as the instruction of those who have come to faith and who look forward to Baptism or who have been baptized already. Catechesis is centered in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was promised in the OT and became incarnate to accomplish the Father's plan of salvation. Jesus continues to be present—spiritually and in his flesh—in preaching and in the sacraments, where he offers the gifts of the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. (CC)

Luke's gospel is a book of the church, written for the church, to be used by the church in its proclamation of the Gospel to the unbaptized and the baptized. The community that receives Luke's gospel is a catechetical and eucharistic body that already *in the first century* had a method for making Christians. That method originated in Christ's own ministry, then was continued by the Jewish followers of the Christ. Thus, the context in which Scripture is received is *liturgical*,

that is, a church that worships Christ, who is present in the reading and preaching of the Word and the receiving of the Sacraments. (CC)

The Word gets *written* within communities that regard the Word worshipfully. This means that rather than being Scripture's stepchild, worship is Scripture's home. Thus Scripture and worship are a function of the Word spoken and received. Neither Scripture or worship is *about* God; they are *of* God, each in its own proper way. They are strictly correlative; neither can exist without the other. To take a lead from Luther, if the authority of Scripture arises from its being the cradle in which Christ lies, then Christian worship is, in Samuel Terrien's phrase, the liturgy of the Word that pervades the Scripture and is incarnate in the living Christ. And what Christ is by nature, his Body the church is by grace, particularly in its worship, where his Spirit flourishes. (CC)

Since Scripture's home is the worshipping community, it is likely that Luke's gospel was first received by a worshipping community. The original first-century audience was composed of two primary groups: (1) those who participated in the events of Jesus' life (the ministry of Jesus in A.D. 30) and (2) those who first received the gospel (Luke's church in A.D. 55–60). Many who participated in Jesus' life (first audience) also were part of the second audience. (CC)

Luke's gospel was written with a specific context in mind. The evangelist was recording the ministry of Jesus (A.D. 30) for a community (A.D. 55–60) that worshiped in a particular way and in a particular space. Already in this early period, a process of initiation was in place. In what follows here, a description of Baptism as a "rite of passage" precedes a discussion of the participants (catechumens in the two first-century audiences); this becomes a point of departure for discussing the various periods of evangelization and catechization and then the space in which the gospel was read (the house church). (CC)

Baptism as a Rite of Passage

A "rite of passage" involves *separation* from the old life, *transition* to a new life by means of some ritualized act, and then *incorporation* into a new life. The OT is replete with examples of such passages. Noah and his family were *separated* from their heathen world by the flood, entered a period of *transition* in the ark, which represented the church, and then were *incorporated* into a new world where they were the only eight people alive to repopulate the world. The number "eight" suggests the eschatological community. The children of Israel were *separated* from their bondage in Egypt through a series of miracles that climaxed when the angel of death passed over their homes, sparing their firstborn. After fleeing Egypt, they passed through the Red Sea on dry ground as their *transition* and "baptism" (1 Cor 10:2) and were *incorporated* as the journeying people of God in the wilderness. After forty years of wandering, Israel was *separated* from the wilderness, made *transition* through the Jordan River (Joshua 3–5, another "baptism"), and was *incorporated* into the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. The return from the exile was like a second exodus as God's people again traveled to the land of promise and rebuilt the temple. While those events were unique in history, circumcision was to be performed on each male throughout Israel's generations. Circumcision represented the cutting off of the old sinful flesh, marking transition and incorporation as a member of God's people and a welcomed guest at the Passover feast. (CC)

Baptism is the supreme rite of passage *because of what God does in Baptism* (Romans 6; Ephesians 5; Colossians 2). To be sure, separation, transition, and incorporation each are ongoing aspects of the Christian life. Each continues throughout earthly life as the Christian daily repents, remembers his Baptism and Christ's promises, and leads the new life in the Spirit in communion

with the whole church. Separation, transition, and incorporation continue until death and Christ's return, when the body shall be raised incorruptible and the Christian shall enjoy full and direct communion in the unveiled presence of God. (CC)

With that in mind, we may still speak of major stages in the Christian life, stages that can be characterized as predominately separation, transition, or incorporation. *Separation* begins when one hears the Gospel and comes to believe through the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is the way out of death to life. For baptized infants, separation and transition both occur in Baptism. But for adults, the church, following NT practice, enjoins a period of instruction and catechesis prior to Baptism in order to teach the ramifications of what faith in Jesus Christ entails. It is a way of life that calls for separation from the sinful practices of natural man. The new Christian life must be understood *in light of God's unified revelation in the Old and New Testaments*. In other words, catechesis involves instruction in how Jesus thinks (because this is how God thinks) and how Jesus lived, particularly the mercy and compassion he showed toward our dying world, which needs to be freed from its bondage. *This catechesis is Christological in its instruction and in the lifestyle it inculcates*. It is similar to Jesus' catechesis of the Twelve and the seventy(-two) with respect to their proclamation and behavior (Lk 9:1–6; 10:1–24). (CC)

Transition into fuller communion with Christ and his church comes at the moment of Baptism—a water bath with Word and Spirit. Baptism moves a person across a boundary from one status to another, effecting a transformation from darkness to light, from being a child of Satan into new birth as a child of God. Those baptized enter an eschatological community where they *now* receive the gifts of heaven and look forward to the consummation and full enjoyment of those gifts at death and the second coming of Christ. Baptism into Christ is *death* to the old world and *resurrection* into the new one (John 3; Romans 6). (CC)

In the earliest Christian communities, Baptism was rich in its theological and liturgical depth. It often began with an anointing with olive oil intended to represent the casting out of Satan and cleansing. After the actual Baptism in the font, it often ended with chrism: an anointing with perfumed oil. The similarity of the Greek words “chrism” (χρίσμα) and “Christ” (χριστός) accented the Christological character of Baptism, so the newly baptized are properly called “Christs.” Oil was applied in the OT anointing that prefigured the Messiah—the Anointed One. In the Mediterranean world even today, oil is a staple in cooking, bathing, and healing. In the public baths in the ancient world, it was difficult to imagine bathing without both oil and water. Thus, it was not unusual for the baptismal bath to be accompanied by anointings with oil since water and oil both had biblical and cultural connotations. (CC)

Incorporation comes particularly in the Lord's Supper. The baptized, who are in communion with Christ through Baptism, continue to be sustained and nourished by God in that communion through the holy food of Jesus' flesh. The baptized are preserved to life everlasting in their status as “Christs” through *Holy Communion* in Christ's body and blood. In the Lord's Supper, heaven and earth are joined together in the flesh of Jesus as angels, archangels, and all the saints worship the Lamb who was slain and raised again. Communion in Christ and participation in his flesh means communion with the eschatological community of heaven and earth and participation in the ongoing feast of heaven. (CC)

This passage that involves *separation/catechesis, transition/Baptism, and incorporation/Supper* may be called Christian initiation. The process of evangelization that sent the church into the highways and byways to seek the lost (Luke 14) and proclaim the Gospel of release (Luke 4) had as its goal the enrollment into this process of initiation that begins with catechesis and climaxes with Baptism and Supper. *The rhythm of the early Christian communities was the rhythm of*

evangelization, catechesis, Baptism, and Supper. This pattern was established by the earthly ministry of Christ himself, in fulfillment of the pattern of the OT. (CC)

Catechumens

St. John Chrysostom points out in his Baptismal Homily that “catechumen” comes from the Greek for “echo” because “instructions were to be so internalized that they ‘echoed’ not only in one’s mind but in one’s conduct.” In its use in the early baptismal and catechetical texts, “catechumens” are those who are preparing for Baptism, and a clear distinction is made between those who are “catechumens” and “the baptized.” The catechumens would be dismissed after the Liturgy of the Word, while the baptized would remain for the Liturgy of the Lord’s Supper. Only the baptized were admitted to the Holy Supper. The Liturgy of the Word came to be known as the “Liturgy of the Catechumens” or the “Mass of the Catechumens” because it was through the *Liturgy of the Word* that the catechumens were instructed in the Christian faith. (CC)

In the unique genre of the “mystagogical catecheses” of the fourth century, an explanation of the mysteries of Baptism and Lord’s Supper was saved until *after* the catechumen was baptized during Easter week. For eight days, catechists, who came to be known as “mystagogues,” explained to the newly baptized what happened to them at the font and at the table (see comments at Lk 8:9–10). Even though they had been catechized about the doctrine of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, they had not yet heard about the *rites* that accompanied these two great sacramental moments. Pedagogically, the catechists believed that it was more important for the catechumens to first *experience* Baptism and the Lord’s Supper and then have these rites explained to them. (CC)

The Two Audiences of the Gospel

This broader definition of “catechumen” may be illustrated in the two intended audiences addressed by the evangelist in his gospel, both of which taken together constitute the *first-century audience*. The first of these two audiences include the twelve apostles, the seventy(-two), the crowds/people, and the religious establishment, that is, those people who were actually present for the historical events described in the gospel. For example, the first audience would be Mary at the annunciation or the leper when he was cleansed by Jesus in Luke 5 or the widow and her son at Nain and the crowds who saw Jesus perform that great miracle. The first audience historically participates in the very life of Jesus himself, even though during his earthly life they never fully understand what was happening. *The first audience never fully understands the gospel until the end of the story.* They fail to comprehend that Jesus must go to Jerusalem, give up his life in an atoning sacrifice to release the world from its bondage, rise on the third day, and ascend on the fortieth day. To use the language of Luke, they didn’t know about his departure (9:31) or his lifting up (9:51)—his movement from heaven to earth and back to heaven. Not only did the first audience fail to understand what was happening, they rejected Jesus when he spoke about himself in the language of the cross and the Great Reversal, e.g., the first shall be last and the last first (13:30), the humble shall be exalted and the exalted shall be humbled (14:11; 18:14), and those who want to be leaders in the church must first be servants (22:27). Particularly when Jesus issues his passion predictions about how he must go the way of suffering and death, the disciples become increasingly confused and cannot comprehend what he must do (9:22, 44–45; 17:25; 18:31–34). *This first audience does not understand God’s plan of salvation in Jesus until after the resurrection and Pentecost!* (CC)

The *second audience* is the community of believers who received Luke’s gospel. It is composed of catechumens: both those preparing for Baptism and those already baptized, who continue to be catechized and who commune with Christ in the Eucharist. These are liturgical Christians who are living in a eucharistic community. They receive and use Luke’s gospel in the context of

liturgy as part of the Liturgy of the Word, along with readings from the OT and other NT documents. The difference between the first and second audiences is that Luke's eucharistic community of catechumens *knows the end of the story*—they know that Christ has gone to the cross, risen, ascended, and that after Pentecost he is continually present in the church through his Spirit. Jesus' presence in both his human and divine natures is just as real in his church now as it was in his earthly ministry. It is a *real presence* in body as well as in spirit. It comes through the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Lord's Supper. (CC)

Luke's audience can now hear the historical events of Luke's gospel with ears that hear. Their eyes are opened to see what God has revealed about his plan of salvation in Jesus. Like the Emmaus disciples, their eyes have been opened through Jesus' teaching on the road and in the breaking of the bread. For Luke's audience, the "teaching on the road" occurs in the Liturgy of the Word (catechesis), and "the breaking of the bread" occurs in the Liturgy of the Lord's Supper. For unbaptized catechumens, the Liturgy of the Word explained what would happen when they entered into this eucharistic community of the baptized. For baptized catechumens, the Liturgy of the Word illumined and strengthened their baptismal union with Christ and prepared them for his coming in the Lord's Supper and at the parousia. *It cannot be overemphasized that those who receive Luke's gospel hear in light of the passion and resurrection facts, Pentecost, and Christ's ongoing presence in the church.* (CC)

Instead of referring to "readers" of the gospel, which in the first century would refer primarily to those who "read" Scripture in church or studied it in order to interpret it for the hearer in the preached Word, this commentary will use the word "hearer" to reflect the reality that most in Luke's church would "hear" the gospel as it was read and explained to them. ***Thus, a catechumen among this second audience includes any hearer of the Word, whether baptized or unbaptized. "Hearers of the Word" became a technical term for catechumens in the third century (Hippolytus' Apostolic Tradition). When used in reference to Luke's church (ca. A.D. 60), it includes all catechumens—both those preparing for Baptism and the baptized, who hear the Word in preparation to receive the Sacrament.*** (CC)

Matthew's highly semitic perspective assumes that the hearer is familiar with OT and Jewish customs and beliefs. Therefore, Matthew may not have satisfied the increasingly Gentile audience that became a force in the church. Theophilus may have been a literary patron, as many have suggested, who underwrote Luke's gospel for Gentiles like himself who need to know more about the OT and Judaism in order to understand Jesus. The dominance of the temple in Luke (episodes in the temple frame both the infancy narrative and the conclusion of the gospel) and his detailed description of the structure of the Passover (Luke 22) are two examples where Luke takes care to describe Jewish things to an audience that may not be that familiar with them. Theophilus and the (Pauline) Gentile mission make up this *third period of evangelization and catechization*, from A.D. 46 to 58, as recorded in Acts 13–28. More Gentile catechumens flooded into the church, requiring the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15) in A.D. 49. The dates of this period correspond to the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey (A.D. 46–48) and his imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 58). The mission during this period is directed toward the greater diaspora of Jews and to Gentiles in Asia and Greece, with a direct appeal to Gentile God-fearers. Luke's gospel is written during this period, most likely toward the end (ca. A.D. 57–58), when the church's need for a "Gentile" gospel was finally acute. Paul had been arrested and imprisoned in Caesarea (A.D. 55–57), journeyed to Rome (A.D. 57–58), and is there when Luke writes his gospel (A.D. 58–60). (CC)

Luke would then be used extensively during the *fourth period of evangelization*, from A.D. 58 to 70, when the congregations established by Paul begin to expand and develop a clearly defined

order of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. The *fifth period of evangelization* for the church takes place from the destruction of temple in A.D. 70 until the deaths of John in Ephesus in ca. A.D. 98 and Herod Agrippa II in A.D. 100. The mission of the church in the fifth period is now directed almost exclusively to Gentiles. Catechesis is now couched in Gentile terms. Thus, the five periods of evangelization in the first century look like this:

First Period	A.D. 28-30	Twelve and Seventy (two)	Jesus' Ministry
Second Period	A.D. 30-46	Jewish (Peterine) Mission	Acts 1-12
Third Period	A.D. 46-58	Gentile (Pauline) Mission	Acts 13_28
Fourth Period	A.D. 58-70	Established Congregations	Captivity Letters
Fifth Period	A.D. 70-100	Post-Temple Church	

House Churches

Luke's writings provide most of the NT information about house churches. Jesus sets the precedent for a mission to houses when he sends the Twelve (9:1-6) and the seventy(-two) (10:1-24) into various houses. Jesus institutes what would become a natural pattern for early mission activity. Acts provides us with the most detailed descriptions of house worship, and further evidence for them is scattered throughout the NT, particularly in the Pauline epistles. Christians were not the only ones to worship in houses, for this was common among the Jews during the first century, particularly on Friday night in the Sabbath evening Seder. That house meal was the probable setting for much of Jesus' table fellowship during his ministry (e.g., with Levi at 5:27-39, the Pharisees at 7:36-50 and 14:1-24, and Zacchaeus at 19:1-10). Pagans also had their house gods and house religions. It was natural, therefore, for Christians to use the house as a place for their liturgical assemblies. (CC)

Until the Edict of Constantine ensured tolerance for Christianity in A.D. 313, Christians worshiped primarily in houses. Only after Constantine was there a widespread building of basilicas. Synagogues were used during the second period of evangelization and catechization (A.D. 30-46), and some synagogues were later converted into Christian churches during the end of the third century, but that seems to have been rather rare, and many were not much larger than a house church. (CC)

The gospel is addressed to specific first-century hearers in a specific cultural, social, and political milieu. Most of these hearers are converts to Christianity who have come from the ranks of God-fearers or pagan Gentiles who knew not Christ but are now believers through hearing the Gospel. (CC)

While those groups are Luke's hearers, the gospel itself is written to be read by *Jewish-Christian interpreters* who lead the worship in a house church. They will read the gospel and interpret it for the God-fearers and pagan Gentiles. This is the reason the gospels are more reticent than we might expect, preserving a *disciplina arcani*, for they are written to be read *in the church* by those who are trained both to read and to interpret. The primary Lukan community is different from the communities addressed by the other gospels. As a catechism for Jewish-Christians to use in catechizing God-fearers and pagan Gentiles, it presents a new narrative of the same events recorded in the other gospels, but in a manner that is accessible to a Gentile catechumen who needs a more detailed explanation of the OT background and Jewish culture to understand the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation in Jesus. (CC)

The Journey

Luke's gospel is a narrative of Jesus' journey from heaven to earth and back to heaven. Jesus descends from heaven to become one of us, to live among us as teacher and miracle worker and

rejected Prophet, to die our death on a cross, to be buried in the earth, to rise from the dead on the third day, and to ascend back to heaven on the fortieth day. This movement from heaven to earth to heaven is described by the evangelist in several places, particularly at the transfiguration, where the “exodus” Jesus is about to fulfill in Jerusalem is his death, resurrection, and ascension. This is the new exodus, where Jesus does what Israel did not and could not do (Lk 9:31). Luke also refers to it as Jesus’ “being taken up” (9:51), which is the noun form of the verb Luke uses in Acts 1:2, 11 for Jesus’ ascension. (CC)

In fact, the Nicene Creed captures this journey best:
... who for us men and for our salvation **came down from heaven** [κατελθόντα]
and **was incarnate** by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary
and **was made man**;
and **was crucified** also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He **suffered** and **was buried**.
And the third day he **rose again**
according to the Scriptures
and **ascended into heaven** [ἀνελθόντα]
and sits at the right hand of the Father. (CC)

There are many journeys in the OT, such as Abraham’s pilgrimage from Ur of the Chaldees to the land promised him by God. These are not self-initiated trips but are responses to God’s call, travels under his guidance, aimed toward the destination he designates. God accompanies the pilgrims and promises to meet them in grace. The most important journey is the exodus, as the children of Israel travel from Egypt through the Red Sea, sojourn in the wilderness for forty years, and finally arrive in the Promised Land. Here the exodus as journey and rite of passage coalesce to describe how God delivers his people. Israel’s journey to the Promised Land was rehearsed every year at the Passover as Israelites from around the world journeyed to Jerusalem to eat a lamb that had been sacrificed in the temple and whose blood was poured out on the altar where God was present for salvation. The psalms of ascent (Psalms 120–134) celebrate that annual journey. Indeed, the entire OT revolves around the journey of God’s people to Jerusalem and God’s promise to meet them there. (Similarly, the entire Christian life may be viewed as a pilgrimage to the new Jerusalem, a journey to follow Christ into the heavenly sanctuary, as in Heb 9:11–10:25; 11:13–16; 12:22–24.) The OT sacrificial system awaited completion when God would fulfill his promise and return to Jerusalem in the flesh as the final *once-for-all-sacrifice* for the sins of the world. When Jesus speaks of his destiny as a journey to the holy city of Jerusalem and turns his head to go there (Lk 9:51), those who know the OT would see that the final “exodus” (9:31) was imminent. As the journeying prophet, Jesus always seems to be in motion, homeless with no place to lay his head (9:58) except on a cross in Jerusalem. (CC)

The significance of Jerusalem as the goal of the journey of God’s OT people and their Messiah cannot be overemphasized. Every gospel ends in Jerusalem with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Luke’s gospel is purposely created to be a circular journey: the infancy narrative and the whole gospel both begin and end in the temple in Jerusalem. Even the Emmaus story (Luke 24) involves a round-trip journey away from, then back to, Jerusalem. Luke uses πορεύομαι (“to journey”) as a technical term for Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus teaches his disciples about himself and the kingdom of God. Jesus uses the journey as a time of catechesis to help them understand the meaning of the events that have happened and will happen and to help them understand their baptism, their mission, and his ongoing presence among them in the Lord’s Supper. (CC)

This journey has two stages: a Galilean period (4:14–9:51) and the extended journey to Jerusalem (9:52–19:28). Jesus reveals to them *in words and deeds* that he is the Messiah; that he must suffer, die, and rise from the dead; and that he will continue to be present with them through his Spirit. Luke calls Jesus' journey a "way" and the disciples follow him in the "way" as well. In fact, catechesis is "the way" as the catechumen follows Jesus and travels with him along the catechetical road to Jerusalem. The first recapitulation of Jesus' journey occurs when he travels alongside the two disciples from Jerusalem to Emmaus in the first catechetical journey after Jesus' resurrection. The Emmaus disciples acknowledged the catechetical nature of the journey and passed on Jesus' catechesis: when they returned to those gathered in Jerusalem "they were expounding the things he taught on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread" (24:35). It is not surprising that the first name for the Christian faith was "the Way" (Acts 9:2). (CC)

Life itself is a journey from birth to death. For the Christian, life is a pilgrimage from Baptism to death, which is the entrance into eternity. In the waters of Holy Baptism, the Christian gets death over with as he dies and is buried with Christ and is reborn to new life in Christ that never ends. But as the Christian journeys to his destination of full communion with Christ in heaven, he lives under the cross, where he is continually living *in Christ* as he hears his holy Word and feeds upon his Holy Food to sustain him on the journey. The Christian's pilgrimage climaxes in his physical death, which is an entrance to *full communion with Christ* in his heavenly home. The goal of the journey is to live in Christ's presence forever and to feast at his table for eternity. The Christian pilgrimage is a recapitulation of Christ's journey, toward the inheritance he has won for all. (CC)

The Prophet

Jesus journeys to Jerusalem as the Prophet whose destiny is to fulfill the prophetic pattern of the OT (Lk 13:31–35). As he makes his way to Jerusalem, a *prophet Christology* develops that stretches back to the OT prophets, comes to fulfillment with Jesus, and continues with the NT apostles. Jesus reveals himself as the antitype for whom the prophets prepared: as teacher and miracle worker he is rejected and killed. All the OT prophets, corporately, prefigure him, with various individuals representing various features: Moses as leader and teacher; Elijah and Elisha as miracle workers; Isaiah and Jeremiah as persecuted, suffering servants; the priest Ezekiel and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi as prophets concerned with the temple and sacrificial atonement. The pattern of Luke's Christology follows the prophetic categories that Jesus embraced and fulfilled: first, teaching and miracles, then rejection. (CC)

First, Jesus' teaching and miracles demonstrated that the new era of salvation was present in his messianic ministry. His teaching proclaimed that in him the new aeon, the kingdom of God, had arrived; his miracles showed that this was true. Christ's preaching and teaching "declared what God was doing among them today: This day is this scripture fulfilled" (Lk. 4:21). At the same time, however, Jesus is rejected by many because of his teaching and miracles, i.e., for proclaiming that in him the kingdom of God had come. This rejection led to suffering and the shameful death that became the ultimate expression of the essence of the kingdom in all its poverty and humility. This horrible rejection was overcome by the resurrection, which proclaimed to the world that God in Christ was making all things new. (CC)

Table Fellowship and Real Presence

In the OT, God communicated his desire to save his people in the setting of table fellowship, as with the Passover meal; the meal on Mt. Sinai in Ex 24:9–11, where Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders "beheld God and ate and drank"; and the meals that often accompanied sacrifices. In many of the covenants Yahweh made with his people, a meal of sacrificial food was eaten. All these meals looked forward to communion with God at the eschatological table when

the saints will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29). Meals were one of the ways God provided for intimate communion with himself in a context of salvation. (CC)

The theme of divine presence is an important one in the OT, and this theme continues into the NT with the birth of Jesus. In his infancy narrative, Luke accents that God's presence is moving from the temple to the infant conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary. The OT prepares for this movement of God's presence. God's presence in fire and cloud led the people during the exodus (Ex 13:21) and took up residence in the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–38) and later the temple (1 Ki 8:10–11). Shortly before the first temple was destroyed, God's presence left it (Ezekiel 10). God promised that there would be an even greater incarnation that would supersede the second temple (Haggai 2; Zechariah 8–9). The Jerusalem temple would be destroyed in A.D. 70. No longer would God be present in the temple. The new temple is Jesus (Jn 1:14; 2:19–22), and wherever Jesus is, there is God offering the eschatological gifts that Israel received through the sacrifices at the dwelling place of God. Luke portrays Jesus as the final, eschatological prophet journeying to Jerusalem. Along the way, he sits down with all manner of people at meals and Sabbath evening Seders, teaching them about the kingdom of God and giving them a foretaste of the messianic feast as he breaks bread with them. This table fellowship was the combination of teaching and eating in the presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! (CC)

Jesus' table fellowship was a form of self-revelation. Jesus would teach about himself as the journeying Prophet, and so the theme is part of Luke's prophet Christology. Table fellowship was an occasion for fellowship with God, who was present to teach about the kingdom and to offer the gifts of that kingdom at a table of reconciliation. (CC)

In each of Jesus' table fellowship meals, three elements are found: the presence of Jesus Christ; his teaching as proclamation of the kingdom; and eating that demonstrates fellowship and reconciliation. (CC)

During his earthly ministry Jesus was present at table *in the flesh*; at the Last Supper (Lk 22:14–23) he was present for the first time *in the flesh and in the Sacrament*; at Emmaus (Lk 24:28–35) he was present for the first time *as the crucified and risen Lord*; after Pentecost in celebrations of the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7; 1 Cor 11:23–34), he is present *in the Sacrament as the crucified and risen Lord, who gives his flesh and blood for the forgiveness of sins. (CC)*

At the Last Supper (Lk 22:14–23), Jesus established the liturgical pattern of Word and Supper. Jesus reinforced this pattern by his *teaching* on the road to Emmaus and his self-revelation *in the breaking of the bread* (24:28–35). ***This pattern set by Christ himself became the structure of early church liturgies: Word and Sacrament.*** The prophetic pattern of teaching and miracles is recapitulated in today's liturgies as they proclaim that in Christ the kingdom is present and active for salvation. In the Liturgy of the Word, Christ *teaches* his people that even "today" these words are fulfilled in their hearing as he continues to be present to absolve sin and release from bondage. In the Liturgy of the Lord's Supper, Christ *performs the miracles* of today as he is present in the bread and wine to feed his church with his very body and blood for forgiveness, life, and salvation. Through the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, the resurrected Christ is present with his church, conferring the benefits of his death for the sin of the world and his victorious resurrection to new life. (CC)

These three motifs merge to produce a consistent picture: the journeying Jesus reveals himself as the suffering, righteous Prophet in teaching and signs, including meals. He calls together and gives instruction at the ongoing feast to a pilgrim band of disciples. (CC)

The Trajectory from Luke into Acts

Jesus' own ministry, as recorded by Luke, shows Jesus' careful training of his disciples, "and this Gospel itself contains material for such training." Luke indicates his purpose in 1:4, when he says he wrote his gospel so that Theophilus would "come to recognize completely the reliability concerning the words by which you have been catechized." Luke's story of the emerging church in Acts continues the initiatory pattern of making disciples, or catechumens, through evangelization, catechesis, Baptism, and Lord's Supper. (CC)

As many have observed, the church grew in a dramatic fashion during the Jewish mission in Acts 1–12, with three thousand souls added at Pentecost (Acts 2:41) and another five thousand after Peter's sermon at Solomon's portico (Acts 4:4). These numbers reflect *Jewish converts* who already were catechized in the OT and were waiting for the Messiah to come and complete God's work of salvation. When they hear that Jesus of Nazareth is *the Messiah/Christ*, their catechesis is complete, and they are baptized and receive the Spirit, which initiates them into the body of Christ. The classic example of a Jewish convert is Paul himself, whose sudden conversion was not preceded by lengthy catechesis, since he was thoroughly educated in the OT. What he lacked was the revelation that it was Jesus who fulfilled the entirety of the OT. (CC)

However, with the beginning of the Gentile mission (Acts 13–28), there are no longer any reports of fantastic numbers of quick converts. The church now moves ahead more slowly as it encounters Gentiles who need a great deal of catechesis in the OT so that they might rightly understand the person and work of Jesus in light of the prophetic Word. Thus, Luke innocently reports that when Paul was at Corinth, "he stayed *a year and six months*, teaching the Word of God among them" (Acts 18:11). At Ephesus "he entered the synagogue and *for three months* spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). When he met resistance from the Jews, he "withdrew from them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued *for two years*, so that all the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:9–10). Paul's lingering in Corinth and Ephesus was to carry on catechesis for Gentile God-fearers and pagans who needed to be informed of the OT and Jesus' fulfillment of it. Already the missionary journeys of Paul reveal that more time must be given to those who are not versed in the OT Scriptures. We are not told whether this catechesis was before or after Baptism—or both, as seems likely. The Didache describes an initiatory process in which extended catechesis precedes Baptism and Supper, but the catechesis of the baptized would continue in the Liturgy of the Word, which includes the hearing of Luke and the other gospels. (CC)

Jesus' table fellowship anticipated the table fellowship vision of Peter, the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10, and the agreement between Paul and Barnabas and the Jerusalem church at the apostolic council in Acts 15. It also enlightens the controversy over table fellowship between Paul and Peter at Antioch recorded in Gal 2:11–21. Table fellowship with Gentiles is *table fellowship with sinners*, the very issue addressed by Jesus in his table fellowship in Luke's gospel, and intimately associated with an acceptance or rejection of the death of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. (CC)

The table fellowship of Christians was an important theological and social difference that increasingly separated the church from Judaism. Table fellowship in Acts is a continuation of the hospitality of Jesus in his ministry. For the Jew every meal had religious significance, for all food came from God and was the fruit of his blessing, a gift given day by day from the heavenly Father, a foretaste of the messianic banquet, and so was considered eschatological bread. The schematic location of the meals in Acts reflects the centrality of early Christian table fellowship.

In Acts meals are recorded at the beginning (1:4; 2:42, 46), middle (10:41–11:18; 15:1–35) and end (27:35; cf. 28:23). (CC)

The breaking (κλάω, κατακλάω, κλάσις) of bread occurs in Lk 9:16; 22:19; 24:30, 35; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11; 27:35. Of these passages, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is indicated in Lk 22:19; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7. While the other occasions do not seem to have been celebrations of the Supper, they all occur in the context of events that confirm the Gospel message that Jesus is the Christ: the feeding of the five thousand (Lk 9:16), the Christophany at the Emmaus meal (24:30, 35), the resurrection of Eutychus (Acts 20:11), and St. Paul's prophecy of divine rescue (27:35). (CC)

In both Jesus' earthly ministry and the church's ministry, the breaking of the bread is the occasion for instruction concerning the person of Jesus and his death and resurrection. The breaking of the bread as a community meal in Acts has a fixed association with missionary instruction. The teaching about Jesus' passion and destiny and the breaking of the bread belong to Luke's blueprint for the itinerant Christian mission in Acts, where Paul is the prototype. But the religious significance of the breaking of the bread is never explained in Acts. *The trajectory of Luke's gospel indicates that these meals in Acts (2:42, 46; 20:7) go beyond fellowship among believers to include communion with the risen Lord.* (CC)

From the Jewish perspective, Jews ate with Gentiles in the Christian community at the price of denying their distinctive identity as Jews, and, therefore they renounced their Jewish faith. Acts suggests that this was a major problem in the spread of Christianity throughout the Jewish diaspora. Luke's community continued the table fellowship practice of Jesus and Paul (contrast Peter in Gal 2:11–21), in which Jewish Christians engaged in table fellowship with Gentile Christians. (CC)

The Lord's Supper in Acts is characterized by joy in the midst of eschatological tension. These meals (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7) celebrate the beginning of the messianic age and are a foretaste of its eternal banquet. *The messianic age has dawned, and with it the ongoing feast of the church—the Lord's Supper—which will continue until the whole church now in heaven and on earth reclines at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6–9).* (CC)

1:1–4 Using language similar to classical Greek, Luke begins with a formal preface, common to historical works of that time, in which he states his purpose for writing and identifies the recipient. He acknowledges other reports on the subject, shows the need for this new work and states his method of approach and sources of information. (CSB)

Written in excellent Gk style, the prologue not only displays Luke's literary prowess, but also more important, identifies his purpose, his method, and who received his Gospel. (TLSB))

Luke begins like no other gospel. The prologue is a brilliant periodic sentence written in elegant koine Greek that would impress a Hellenistic audience, in the style of other significant works of first-century literature. In this opening paragraph, Luke describes the purpose of his gospel in terms of catechesis. The gospel is written for an individual by the name of Theophilus who has been "catechized" and so is familiar with the basic tenets of the faith. Luke's first words inform Theophilus, and by extension all Christians, that the purpose of his literary work is to instill greater confidence and assurance in the Gospel whose rudiments have already been learned. (CC)

How far had Theophilus' instruction progressed? Had he already been converted from one of the many syncretistic mixtures of pagan Hellenistic religion? Had catechesis already led to Baptism in the name of Jesus according to the early church pattern documented in Luke's second volume? Luke does not say, but his very silence on the matter suggests that his gospel is equally beneficial for those who need instruction toward Baptism and for those who need instruction flowing from their Baptism—the baptized who regularly feast at the Lord's Table. Through Luke's gospel, all will receive greater certainty in the Christ, who came to be baptized, to teach and eat at table with sinners, to complete his appointed journey to Jerusalem, and through the "exodus" (Lk 9:31) of his cross to enter into his glory—all as spoken by Moses and the Prophets (Lk 24:25–27). (CC)

The opening periodic sentence is a complex one. The main clause tells Theophilus that it seemed good to Luke to write an orderly account to him. Luke justifies this bold attempt by a series of four adverbial clauses. The first two clauses (1:1–2) describe Luke's reason for attempting another gospel in view of the already available sources. The third adverbial clause (1:3b, "after investigating ...") is temporal, describing Luke's methods of investigation. The final subordinate clause (1:4) is a purpose clause, telling the hearer why Luke is writing his gospel. (CC)

By describing it as a "narrative" (διήγησις), Luke places his gospel into a literary category that was a familiar genre in the first century and was subject to literary analysis. The gospel is not merely a historical narrative but also a kerygmatic one, a theological presentation of the events of the life of Jesus of Nazareth that bring to "fulfillment" God's plan revealed in the great Hebrew literary work, the OT. The catechumen will listen to Luke's gospel to hear how Jesus fulfills the OT, and he will not be disappointed. As the catechumen listens to each part, he also knows the end of the story. He knows the facts about Jesus, his teaching, his rejection, and his vindication. But in hearing the facts of the gospel, he will also hear the theological significance of these events as they are interpreted by the inspired evangelist, a catechist who knows their meaning for salvation history. And so the prologue instructs hearers of all times to seek to discover the theological significance of the events that are about to be narrated. (CC)

Luke the catechist does not give an unbiased, "neutral" narration, but a persuasive, confessional one filled with Christological meaning. As catechesis about Christ, it is a Christology. But at the same time, it is catechesis about the OT understood messianically, as Luke 24 narrates. The evangelist is a recipient of a tradition that was handed down by those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and became ministers of the Word. Luke is dependent on the witness of those who have seen and heard Jesus and have delivered a tradition to him. The gospels are books of the church to be read in the church for those who are members of the church—both for their own benefit and as a catechetical resource for incorporating still others into the church. Luke is not only continuing this tradition, but he is shaping it for a particular "Theophilus" who represents a particular audience, a community of catechumens—the baptized and those to be baptized. (CC)

Luke writes that he has followed all things accurately from the beginning in order to write an orderly account to Theophilus. Luke researched his gospel from the very best sources *from the beginning* (ἀνωθεν), i.e., from the moment when salvation history is first recorded as "apostolic tradition." The juxtaposition in the Greek of ἀκριβῶς and καθεξῆς, "carefully" and "systematically," not only illustrates the quality of Luke's Greek, but the character of his narrative as a reliable source for catechesis. It provides a single, Christological interpretation, which may be discerned by careful analysis. (CC)

The stated purpose of the gospel is also catechetical: "in order that you [Theophilus] come to recognize completely the reliability concerning the words by which you have been catechized"

(1:4). γινώσκω (“to know”) and its derivatives are part of the Lukan language for faith. The goal of the gospel is a fully informed, steadfast faith that endures to salvation. This faith comes through the gospel’s additional catechesis (κατηχήθης) that assures of reliability (ἀσφάλειαν). (CC)

κατηχέω (“to catechize, instruct, inform”) occurs four times in Luke-Acts (Lk 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24) and three times in Paul (Rom 2:18; 1 Cor 14:19; Gal 6:6). Acts 18:25 has the same meaning as here: Apollos “had been catechized [ἦν κατηχημένος] in the way of the Lord.” Other key Lukan themes stand out in Acts 18:25: “the way” (τὴν ὁδόν) relates to the journey motif (see commentary on Lk 9:51 and the excursus “Luke’s Travel Narrative”) and is a catechetical designation of the Christian faith (see comments on Lk 1:76, 79). As a result of his catechesis, Apollos taught about Jesus ἀκριβῶς, “accurately, carefully” (Acts 18:25), even as Luke investigated his sources ἀκριβῶς, “carefully, accurately” (Lk 1:4). (CC)

Paul says that in the Christian assembly, he prefers rational words, not speaking in tongues, so that he may “catechize” (κατηχήσω) those present (1 Cor 14:19). In Gal 6:6, Paul uses the verb twice: he refers to one who is “catechized” (κατηχούμενος) regarding “the Word” (λόγος, as in Lk 1:2) by a “catechist” (κατηχούντι), and the verse implies that such a teacher-student relationship was common among the Christian churches to whom he writes. Paul also uses κατηχέω in the sense of Jewish catechesis in Rom 2:18, concerning a Jew’s instruction in Torah, and this catechesis would also enable him to be a “leader ... instructor ... teacher” (Rom 2:19–20) as was the Christian Apollos. Jewish catechetical schools led by rabbis were well developed institutions by the NT era; the schools of Rabbis Hillel and Shammai, often cited in the Talmud, flourished ca. 30 B.C. to A.D. 10 and reportedly had students numbering in the thousands. (CC)

These NT passages provide abundant evidence of formal catechesis as a method of Christian instruction in the early Christian environment. In the context of Luke’s prologue, κατηχήθης, “you were catechized,” implies that his gospel is a kerygmatic narrative that is to complete or possibly correct Theophilus’ earlier catechesis. Luke concludes this single, beautifully crafted periodic sentence with ἀσφάλειαν (“reliability, assurance”), indicating that the goal of the gospel is the certainty of faith, which will come from accurate, systematic instruction in the events that are going to be narrated. (CC)

1:1 *many undertaken to compile a narrative* – Inasmuch as, since, seeing as is well known: the strong particle implies that the fact which the evangelist is about to state is well known, that it is important, and that it introduces the reason why Luke enters upon his great undertaking. Many persons had taken into their own hand to set forth in a connected narrative the great things that had been fulfilled, brought to their full consummation in their midst in the fulness of time. The Gospel-account had been transmitted in the form of episodes and individual stories, not in a long connected narrative. And there were many that wished a connected story concerning the events which now lay before the Christians as a complete whole. But many of these went ahead on their own initiative, and the word used by Luke implies a slight censure. They acted without authority of the great teachers of the Church, using their own judgment as to the authenticity of the stories that were circulating. Their efforts were on a par with those of the later apocryphal writers, a mixture of truth and falsehood. But the things that form the subject of Christian belief should not be left to scribes that wrote and edited without authority, without the certainty of full and divine truth. (Kretzmann)

compile – ἀνατάξασθαι—“To reproduce” suggests that the gospel writers carefully followed previous oral and written traditions. They were not creating new narratives, but recasting the gospel traditions in new contexts for different audiences. (CC)

a narrative – διήγησιν—Luke describes the gospel tradition as a “narrative” and therefore will encourage the hearer of his gospel to interpret his narrative as part of a literary tradition. (CC)

accomplished among us. Things prophesied in the OT and now fully accomplished. (CSB)

things – πραγμάτων—“Events,” the neuter will be used throughout the gospel to suggest “the facts of salvation,” or “the passion and resurrection facts.” (CC)

have been accomplished – τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ... πραγμάτων—“Events that have come to fulfillment” immediately shows that a major theme of the gospel will be the relationship between the OT as promise and the NT as fulfillment. The infancy narrative will accent this theme in the relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus. (CC)

Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection fulfill all that the OT foretold concerning the Messiah (cf 24:25–27, 44–47). (TLSB)

among us – ἐν ἡμῖν—From the first verse of the gospel, the Christian community is comprised of those people who have been shaped by the fulfilled events—the hearers of Luke’s narrative and the other narratives of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Cf. D. Tiede, *Luke*, 18, who asks whether the “we” sections in Acts may reflect more than “historical memories of traveling companions” and “include the travelers, the author, and the reader who have sojourned together in the story.” If the latter is true, then Tiede speculates that “the ‘us’ among whom these ‘things which have been accomplished’ (1:1–4) would be all the Christians whose testimony is borne in the narrative.” (CC)

1:2 delivered. A technical term for passing on information as authoritative tradition. (CSB)

παρέδοσαν—The object of “delivered” are the events that have been recorded in the gospel traditions. In 1 Cor 15:3, the verb has the same nuance as here: “to pass down” the Gospel facts and the Christian doctrine. Thus the implied object of “delivered” is supplied in the translation: “these traditions.” Catechesis delivers the traditions about Jesus, his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. (CC)

eyewitnesses and ministers of the word. Luke, though not an eyewitness himself, received testimony from those who were eyewitnesses and were dedicated to spreading the gospel. Apostolic preaching and interviews with other individuals associated with Jesus’ ministry were available to him. (CSB)

from the beginning were eye witnesses – οἱ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου—The single Greek article suggests that the eyewitnesses and the ministers of the Word are one and the same group and that these designations describe their role first before and then after the resurrection and Pentecost. ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς is taken with αὐτόπται; γενόμενοι with ὑπηρέται, and both phrases are modified by τοῦ λόγου. In this way, Luke and Acts are linked, for the participants in Luke were the “eyewitnesses of the Word from the beginning,” and in Acts they have now become the “ministers of the Word.” Here we see Luke’s first use of structure to accent the origins of the eyewitnesses (*from the beginning*) and their destiny (*having become*) as ministers of the Word. (CC)

Luke's account is based on firsthand testimony. He would have gathered information from some of the apostles, original disciples, and perhaps even members of Jesus' family (cf. ch 1-2). (TLSB)

delivered – This is technical term describing the transmission of oral tradition (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3). (TLSB)

the word – τοῦ λόγου—This expression betrays the liturgical and catechetical intent of Luke's gospel in a prologue that many think is purely secular in its language. It is a technical expression that suggests the Christian message. Grammatically, it goes with both "eyewitnesses" and "ministers," suggesting that for Luke, the Word is living in the flesh of Jesus, who spoke to these eyewitnesses before he ascended and continues to speak through his ministers in the preaching of the Word. (CC)

1:3 *carefully investigated*. Luke's account was exact in historical detail, having been checked in every way. Inspiration by the Holy Spirit did not rule out human effort. The account is complete, extending back to the very beginning of Jesus' earthly life. It has an orderly, meaningful arrangement that is generally chronological. (CSB)

παρηκολουθηκότι—"Investigating" conveys the sense of careful research of the sources. It is rendered temporally to note that this research has taken place. (CC)

all things – πᾶσιν—"Every tradition" refers to πραγμάτων in 1:1 and is the unmentioned object of παρέδοσαν, (1:2) i.e., "these traditions." (CC)

things closely – ἀκριβῶς—Luke is qualified to write his narrative because he has carried out his investigation "carefully, accurately." (CC)

orderly – καθεξῆς—"Systematically" shows that the "order" in the gospel is more than chronological. It is kerygmatic, structured so as to reinforce its catechetical message. (CC)

for you – σοι—"For your benefit" (dative of advantage) because this is written as catechesis for Theophilus' instruction in the Christian faith. (CC)

to write – γράψαι—"Compose" (instead of "write") indicates the literary character of the gospel. (CC)

account – Technical term for an orderly description of events. (TLSB)

most excellent.† Paul used this respectful term for governors Felix (Ac 23:26; 24:3) and Festus (Ac 26:25)—the only four occurrences of this phrase in the NT. (CSB)

Elsewhere directed at weighty Roman officials. (TLSB)

Theophilus. Recipient of Luke's account. Possibly a patron who helped Luke produce and publish his Gospel. Because "Theophilus" means "friend of God," some interpreters take this name as a symbolic reference to anyone who reads the Gospel in faith. (TLSB)

1:4 *you may have certainty* – Cf. John's purpose for writing (Jn 20:31). (CSB)

ἐπιγνώσῃ—“Come to recognize completely” (as opposed to “know”) reiterates the catechetical nature of the gospel. Theophilus will come to recognize in full that Jesus is the crucified and risen Messiah. The same word is used at the climax of the gospel when the Emmaus disciples recognize Jesus in the breaking of the bread (24:30–31). (CC)

taught.† An alternate translation could be “informed,” as it is used by Luke in Ac 21:21. The same word in Ac 21:24 is rendered “these reports.” Theophilus, a Roman official, may not have received “catechetical” instruction, but information (including false reports and impressions) concerning the new religious “sect.”

κατηχήθης λόγων—The gospel is a narrative used for instruction, or catechesis. “Words” coordinates with the technical expression in 1:2, “ministers of the Word.” (CC)

Theophilus had a basic knowledge of the Christian faith. Luke’s purpose in writing was to deepen his familiarity with Jesus’ life and teachings. (TLSB)

certainty – ἀσφάλειαν—“Reliability” in the sense of faith’s certainty and assurance, which is the goal of the gospel and the goal of catechesis. (CC)

1:1–4 Luke introduces the Gospel as a well-written, researched, and historical record of Jesus’ life and teachings. God’s people need clear, accurate teaching in order to grow in faith and in service. As you study Luke’s account, pray that the Lord would make you a faithful “friend of God” through Jesus, who has accomplished your salvation by His birth, life, death, and resurrection. • “Jesus, priceless treasure, Fount of purest pleasure, Truest friend to me, Ah, how long in anguish Shall my spirit languish, Yearning, Lord, for Thee? Thou art mine, O Lamb divine! I will suffer naught to hide Thee; Naught I ask beside Thee.” Amen. (LSB 743:1) (TLSB)

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. **7** But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. **8** Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, **9** according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. **11** And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. **12** And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. **13** But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. **14** And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, **15** for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. **16** And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, **17** and he will 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 for the Lord a people prepared.” **18** And Zechariah said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” **19** And the angel answered him, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **20** And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things

take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” **21** And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. **22** And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. **23** And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home. **24** After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, **25** “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”

1:5 – 2:52 The Infancy Narrative – Excursus

The Infancy Narrative

Matthew and Luke introduce the ministry of Jesus with their infancy narratives. By no means an appendage, Luke’s birth narrative is an integral part of the gospel. It establishes a sense of continuity with the OT and testifies to the identity of Jesus through structural parallels and the contents of canticles. (CC)

Immediately following the prologue, Luke shifts from brilliant Hellenistic Greek to archaic Septuagintal Greek. By this drastic shift in literary style, the gospel begins to sound like the OT Scriptures, suggesting that the story of Jesus continues the story of the OT and fulfills it. Luke’s narrative is ancient history with a long pedigree, tapping into Israel’s history and completing it. As the genealogy will relate, the seed of Jesus goes back to the first man, Adam. The Hellenistic world would have been impressed by this. Luke’s appeal to this history helps his God-fearing catechumens see that the church into which they are being initiated is an ancient one, fulfilling the promises of the venerable book of the Hebrew people, continuing the history of God’s work of salvation. When Luke begins and ends his gospel in the temple in Jerusalem, he also shows that Jesus’ Jewish roots are important. A catechumen who is a God-fearer and therefore familiar with Jewish things would understand Christianity as Judaism fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (CC)

A clear parallel exists between Jesus and John. This helps the catechetical hearers of the gospel grasp the significance of John and Jesus and provides them with a mnemonic tool to recall the theme of John and Jesus as they observe its development throughout the gospel. For to understand the relationship between John and Jesus is to understand the relation between the Old and New Covenants. (Luke addresses and answers this issue in chapter 7.) Luke clearly portrays John as the forerunner who prepares for Jesus but is inferior to him. The parallels between John and Jesus would also assist a catechumen’s understanding of the relationship of Christian Baptism to the baptism of John and John’s baptism of Jesus. (CC)

The major issue in the gospel is the identity of Jesus, and this is firmly established in the first two chapters. The one named Jesus (1:31) is fully God and truly human and is the royal successor to David’s throne—the same themes in the prophecy of Is 9:6–7: “This child will be great, and fully Son of the Most High will he be called, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will be King over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32–33). The angel will go on to tell Mary that the child conceived in her womb will be called holy, the Son of God (1:35). At Jesus’ birth, the angels announce to the shepherds that Jesus is the Savior, who is Christ the Lord (2:11). Simeon says that he will not die until he sees “the Lord’s Anointed/Christ” (τὸν χριστὸν κυρίου; 2:26). The infancy narrative attributes designations to Jesus that proclaim that now, in John and Jesus, God’s final end-time salvation is breaking in. (CC)

The identity of Jesus revealed through these designations would be reinforced for the hearer by the (Septuagintal) language of the infancy narrative and by allusions that place the events described in an OT setting. “Lk 1–2 is like a tapestry woven out of threads taken from the OT.” Zechariah and Elizabeth remind us of Abraham and Sarah, and parallels have been drawn between Luke 1–2 and Daniel and 1 Samuel 1–2. Further OT themes in Luke 1–2 are “everlasting kingship in the dynasty of David, the age of the Son of Man, the Day of Yahweh’s coming to his Temple, the salvation of a remnant of Israel, and the coming of redemption to the Daughter of Zion.” The infancy narrative is also filled with superb representatives of the OT remnant like Mary, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna. All of these are witnesses to the faith of those who wait in expectation for the coming of God’s Anointed One to be the suffering, righteous fulfillment of the OT prophecies. (CC)

The canticles in Luke’s first two chapters are especially rich in instruction in the themes that will unfold in the gospel. They also reinforce the ancient character of this new religion by sounding like the canticles of the OT. On the surface the Magnificat describes Mary, but in fact, it is more about the nature of the kingdom and the church, as it introduces the theme of reversal: “He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones, and he has exalted those of low position. The hungry he has filled with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty” (1:52–53). Mary foreshadows Jesus’ beatitudes, so programmatic for Jesus’ ministry to the outcasts of society. The gospel is filled with the litany of reversal: the last are first and the first last (13:30); the exalted will be humbled and the humble exalted (14:11; 18:14); the greatest is the youngest who serves at the table (22:26–27). But Jesus as the Son of God and the Son of Man is God’s ultimate reversal, consummated in death and vindicated in resurrection. This Gospel theme of reversal (which extends throughout Luke—indeed, throughout the entire Scriptures) will be called “the Great Reversal.” (CC)

The Benedictus complements the Magnificat by articulating its themes in theological language. Zechariah’s hymn is itself a catechetical summary of the major themes that span both the Old and New Testaments; it is another example of step-parallelism in its description of John’s relationship to the redemption of “the Lord God of Israel” (reflecting יהוה אלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ, which occurs one hundred nineteen times in the OT). In the form of an OT blessing, the Benedictus reflects magnificent Greek in a complex but clear structure, an easy hymn to memorize and recite as a compendium of Christian doctrine. It begins with the incarnation (“he has visited” [1:68]), the atonement (“made redemption for his people, and he has raised up a horn of salvation for us” [1:69]), the kingdom (“in the house of his servant David” [1:69]), and its fulfillment through the OT prophets (“as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old” [1:70]). The description of the work of John not only introduces his ministry but also strikes at the very core of the kingdom that John and Jesus institute. John is a prophet of the Most High who prepares the way of the Lord “to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins” (1:76–77) linking salvation and forgiveness, a critical issue in catechesis for baptismal initiation. (CC)

The Gloria in Excelsis is the angelic hymn at the birth of Jesus. (John’s birth evokes no corresponding hymn of angels.) The Gloria in Excelsis is a high point in the infancy narrative because it is the heavenly response to the incarnation. That response will now be spread throughout the inhabited world. But in Luke’s gospel, it also serves a literary purpose, anticipating the song of the people as Jesus enters into Jerusalem (19:38). At the birth of Jesus, there is “glory in the highest [heaven] to God, and on earth peace” (2:14; δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη). At his entrance into Jerusalem for his death, there is “in heaven peace, and glory in the highest [heaven]” (19:38; ἐν οὐρανῷ εἰρήνη καὶ δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις). Earth and heaven

are joined in peace at the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus. This simple catechetical link of incarnation (birth) and atonement (entrance into the city of his death) repeats the Benedictus' theme and encapsulates the simple structure of Luke's gospel: glory in heaven and earth through Jesus, whose life is described from conception and birth to death and resurrection. (CC)

The Nunc Dimittis parallels the Benedictus. But in true step-parallel form, it is greater than the Benedictus, for it shows how the promises described by Zechariah are now focused in this child brought to the temple for his presentation. Again, the same Lukan themes abound: peace, salvation, and glory. But the theme of hiddenness and revelation marks this passage as a significant step toward the catechumen's understanding of how faith is revealed; this is described here in terms of eyes that see the salvation of God. In the gospel, "the eyes" as metaphors describe the understanding or misunderstanding of God's revelation in Jesus. This is the language of initiation, of faith's openness to God's hidden kingdom. Simeon takes the infant Jesus in his arms, blesses God by saying that he may now depart in peace "because my eyes have seen your salvation" (2:30). Simeon sees with opened eyes of understanding that the infant Jesus embodies God's salvation. In catechetical language closed and opened eyes refer not only to physical vision but to eyes that do not see or do see God's eschatological work in Jesus. The messianic passion secret of Luke shows that the divine plan of salvation is either hidden from the disciples or they do not understand it. To get beyond the incomprehensibility of God's secret ways to the overpowering sense of joy when these ways are revealed is the goal of catechesis, illustrated in Luke by the contrast between closed and opened eyes. (CC)

But the Nunc Dimittis also describes why this salvation is hidden from people. God's violent solution will cause many to rise and fall, a sign to be spoken against (2:34). The catechetical value of this statement is enormous. It foreshadows the Lukan theme of rejection, ultimately, the scandal of the cross. But it also anticipates the acceptance of Jesus by the outcasts of society, the tax collectors and sinners, and his rejection by the religious establishment, the Pharisees outside of Jerusalem and the chief priests from within Jerusalem. The catechumen will see himself in these categories. He is moving from rejection to acceptance, from closed to opened eyes. Those who accept by faith the humility and poverty of Jesus' kingdom must suffer violence as Jesus did. The Magnificat's principle of reversal is now cloaked in the language of suffering violence. (CC)

The canticles forecast what the catechumen will encounter as he hears the gospel. A good interpreter of the gospel will guide the catechumen through the development of these themes. The canticles form the backbone of the gospel in its thematic development. The catechetical nature of these canticles was not lost on the church, for they are now the songs of the liturgy, showing how the liturgy transcends time by including OT hymns from a NT context in its divine liturgy and prayer offices. The church is a church of both the OT and the NT, whose single Gospel theme finds its fulfillment in the Christ. (CC)

1:5 Herod king of Judea.† Herod the Great reigned 37–4 B.C., and his kingdom included Samaria, Galilee, much of Perea and Coele-Syria (see note on Mt 2:1). The time referred to here is probably c. 7–6 B.C. (CSB)

Called "the Great"; ruled from 37 to 1 BC. Descendants ruled regions of Israel in successive generations (TLSB)

It is always important to observe the framework of a narrative, particularly the *time* when the event occurs, the *place* of occurrence, and the *persons* involved. This is true also here. In 1:5–7, Luke introduces the persons, Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the time, during the days of Herod, king of Judea. The time reference is broad and significant to the historical framework of Luke's

gospel. (The time will be narrowed in the ring structure to the moment when Zechariah is performing his priestly duties of burning incense in the Holy Place.) “The days of Herod” anticipates the longer historical time reference in 3:1–2 and links the beginning of the infancy narrative with the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. (CC)

Zechariah ... Elizabeth. Both were of priestly descent from the line of Aaron. (CSB)

John the Baptist’s parents were from the priestly line of Aaron. (TLSB)

priestly division of Abijah. From the time of David the priests were organized into 24 divisions, and Abijah was one of the “heads of the priestly families” (Ne 12:12; see 1Ch 24:10). (CSB)

Head of a priestly family (Ne 12:4, 7). (TLSB)

1:6 *upright ... blamelessly.* They were not sinless, but were faithful and sincere in keeping God’s ordinances. Simeon (2:25) and Joseph (Mt 1:19) are given similar praise. (CSB)

δίκαιοι—“Righteous” indicates their status in the eyes of God. Luke’s understanding of righteousness is in harmony with Paul’s doctrine of justification. (CC)

More important is the introduction of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who are described in language that suggests they are a continuation of the faithful remnant of the OT. Both are from priestly stock, Zechariah from the division of Abijah and Elizabeth a daughter of Aaron. Both are described as “righteous before God [cf. 24:19], walking in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord [and] blameless” (1:6). This is the language of justification: Zechariah and Elizabeth stand in a right relationship with God and so make their pilgrimage (walk) under grace. “Righteous” (δίκαιος) and “blameless” (ἄμεμπτος) are synonyms, though “righteous” is more of a legal term, while “blameless” is used more in liturgical and sacrificial contexts. The only other persons described as righteous in Luke’s gospel are Simeon (2:25) and Joseph of Arimathea (23:50); Zechariah and Elizabeth are in select company! In the OT, Noah is described as “righteous, complete” (Gen 6:9 [LXX] ὡς ἄνθρωπος δίκαιος, τέλειος). Abraham is commanded by God to walk before him and be “blameless” (Gen 17:1 [LXX]: ἄμεμπτος). The book of Job begins by describing Job as “blameless, righteous” (Job 1:1 [LXX]: ἄμεμπτος δίκαιος). And David calls himself “blameless” (2 Sam 22:24 [LXX]: ἄμωμος) and one whom the Lord considers to have “righteousness” (2 Sam 22:25 [LXX]: δικαιοσύνη). Jesus is the ultimate righteous one (Lk 23:47) to whom the OT points, and these men and women are righteous because of his innocence, which is accorded them by grace. (CC)

In accord with the theology of the cross, the righteousness of Zechariah and Elizabeth through faith is hidden from the religious world of Israel, which views them as cursed by God, possessing either sin or guilt, because they have no children. Elizabeth is barren and they are too old to conceive. Elizabeth expresses this in the conclusion of the story: “In this way the Lord has dealt with me at the time when he looked upon me in order to take away my shame among men.” The tension between righteousness in the eyes of God and sin in the eyes of the Jewish religious authorities is a major Lukan theme that will culminate in the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. (CC)

1:8 *now while – ἐγένετο δέ—*This is one of Luke’s Septuagintisms, that may also be found in the form of καὶ ἐγένετο. It occurs sometimes at the beginning of a new section (“And it came to pass,” cf. KJV) and sometimes at the climax or end of a section (“It happened”). It suggests the

writing of history in an ancient and identifiably biblical literary form. Luke makes his narrative sound like the OT. This phrase always hints to the hearer that a significant pericope is being introduced or an important climax in the story has been reached. (CC)

was serving as priest – The details Luke gives about the priestly duties of Zechariah are characteristic of his eye for detail and his catechetical concern to explain Christianity’s OT liturgical roots which would be unfamiliar to Gentiles. This may have been the only time in Zechariah’s life when he would have been accorded the privilege of burning incense in the “Holy Place.” By beginning his gospel with an OT saint like Zechariah performing cultic acts associated with the old covenant in the temple in Jerusalem, Luke immediately shows that his narrative must be understood in connection with Israel and the OT. For Gentile catechumens or God-fearers, catechesis about Israel and her history is necessary in order for them to understand John and Jesus. (CC)

his division was on duty – The outer frame of Luke’s ring structure (ABCD; 1:8–13a) introduces the other *persons* in the narrative (people of God in 1:10 and the angel in 1:11–13a), narrows the *time* focus (during Zechariah’s priestly turn in the temple in Jerusalem), and establishes the *place* (in Jerusalem, in the temple, in the “Holy Place,” where incense is burned). The gospel begins and ends in the temple, and so also does the infancy narrative (1:5–25, Zechariah; 2:41–52, Jesus). The temple is the place for Jesus’ final teaching before his death (19:45–21:38). The temple building continues to be important even in Acts. Luke is concerned to present Christianity as a continuation of the OT faith. (CC)

1:9 It was one of the priest’s duties to keep the incense burning on the altar in front of the Most Holy Place. He supplied it with fresh incense before the morning sacrifice and again after the evening sacrifice (Ex 30:6–8). Ordinarily a priest would have this privilege very infrequently, and sometimes never, since duty assignments were determined by lot.

τὸν ναόν—“Holy Place” indicates that this is within that section of the temple that only priests are allowed to enter for sacrificial offerings. *The only occurrence in Luke outside of this pericope is in 23:45, when the temple curtain is torn asunder. The gospel begins and ends in the sanctuary. In Luke 1, it is for OT sacrifices; in Luke 23, those sacrifices have come to an end with the sacrifice of Jesus.* Luke uses ναός for the “Holy Place,” where incense is burned (see figure 3). He does not use it for the temple building, although it may mean that in other NT references (cf. Mt 26:61; Mk 14:58). The Holy Place (“Most Holy Place”), is not the Holy of Holies (Most Holy Place), where, once a year, the high priest enters to make sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. (CC)

chosen by lot. Rare privilege, a high point of Zechariah’s life. Most of the time, priests lived rather ordinary lives in their hometowns. Scholars have calculated that only 56 priests officiated at the temple each day, and 28 more were needed on the Sabbath. Josephus tells us that Israel had c 20,000 priests and Levites (*Ag Ap* 2:108). (TLSB)

temple of the Lord. Holy Place within the larger temple compound where incense was offered during the morning and evening sacrifices. (TLSB)

1:10 *whole multitude* – τοῦ λαοῦ—Often in Luke, this is a term for the faithful remnant of Israel, “the people of God,” which Luke borrows from the Septuagintal use of this word for God’s covenant people. The hearer should have this meaning in mind, especially in the infancy narrative. It is used thirty-six times in Luke, predominantly in the infancy narrative and Jesus’ Jerusalem ministry. Curiously, it occurs during the preparation of Jesus’ ministry in connection

with John the Baptist (3:15, 18), Jesus' baptism (3:21), and his Galilean ministry (6:17; 7:1, 16, 29; 8:47; 9:13). But it only occurs in Jesus' journey to Jerusalem at the very end (18:43). Its final occurrence on the lips of the Emmaus disciples causes the hearer to go back and see how the people reacted to Jesus and what they thought of him (24:19). This is particularly instructive in Luke 23. ὁ λαός is used forty-eight times in Acts. (CC)

praying – προσευχόμενον—This is the most common form of prayer: petitionary prayer. Jews blessed (εὐλογέω) and petitioned God; εὐχαριστέω, “to give thanks,” is less frequent. Jesus will petition the Father at significant points in his life, e.g., at his baptism (3:21), in the Sermon on the Plain (6:12), at the confession of Peter and the first passion prediction (9:18), at the transfiguration (9:28–29), and before his betrayal (22:41, 44). Christian prayers are almost exclusively thanksgiving and petitionary. (CC)

1:11 *an angel of the Lord*. OT contains examples of the Lord or His angels appearing in the temple (1Sm 3; Zec 3). Note that angels play a prominent role in Lk, repeatedly making important announcements (1:11–20, 26–38; 2:8–14; 24:4–7, 23). (TLSB)

right side of the altar. The south side, since the altar faced east. (CSB)

1:12 *fear*. A common reaction, as with Gideon (Jdg 6:22–23) and Manoah (Jdg 13:22). (CSB)

1:13 *Do not be afraid*. This word of reassurance is given many times in both OT and NT. (CSB)

John. The name (derived from Hebrew) means “The LORD is gracious.” (CSB)

Hbr *yochanan*, “the Lord has shown favor” (cf Jer 40:8); emphasizes God's grace in giving Zechariah and Elizabeth a child in their advanced age. The name was popular among the Maccabees. “No prophet, neither Elijah nor Elisha, received the Spirit without the Ten Commandments <or the spoken Word>. John the Baptist was not conceived without the word of Gabriel coming first, nor did he leap in his mother's womb without Mary's voice” (SA III VIII 11–12). (TLSB)

The structure of the angel's announcement in Luke describes who John is and what he must do. The angel's announcement of the miraculous birth and the name of the child in 1:13b is preceded by a word of comfort (“Do not fear”) and a confirmation that Zechariah's prayer was heard. The naming of a child in Israel is a significant event because the meaning of the name may become inseparable from the life of the one who bears that name. (This is an OT pattern seen first in Adam, who names all the creatures and thus exercises authority over them. He also calls the woman “Eve” because she is the mother of all living things.) The pattern is particularly evident in heaven-sent names like Ishmael, “God hears” (Gen 16:11); Isaac, “He laughs” (Gen 17:19); and Immanuel, “God is with us” (Is 7:14). The angel tells Zechariah to name the child “John,” which means, “Yahweh/the Lord has been gracious.” John's miraculous birth and his role in salvation history bear out the meaning of his name. Lk 1:14–17 alternate between the angel's announcement of the person and work of John and the response to that birth. (CC)

1:14 *joy*. A keynote of these opening chapters (vv. 14, 44, 47, 58; 2:10). (CSB)

Recurring theme in Lk (cf 1:44, 47; 2:10; 8:13; 10:17; 15:7, 10; 24:41, 52). (TLSB)

καὶ ἔσται χαρὰ σοι—“He will be your joy,” instead of the impersonal “there will be joy for you,” emphasizes that John is the focus of their delight. This is justified in view of the next verse where he, John, will be great before the Lord. (CC)

The first response to John’s birth is joy for his parents. But this is not simply parental joy of a human character; it is for *many*. Joy is repeated three times in 1:14: χαρὰ, ἀγαλλίασις, χαρήσονται. It is joy at the inbreaking of the new era of salvation, which begins here with the precursor of the Messiah. “Rejoice” (χαίρε) is the first word of the greeting of the angel to Mary when he announces to her that she is the mother of the Messiah (1:28), and this becomes “great joy” (χαρὰν μεγάλην) when the angel tells the shepherds of the Savior’s birth (2:10). Joy is also the theme of the three parables in Luke 15 (see especially 15:32). And at the end of the gospel, the disciples return to the temple “with great joy” praising God (24:52). *The gospel not only begins and ends in the temple, but begins and ends with joy in the temple because God’s salvation has come.* The second term for joy, ἀγαλλίασις, “rejoicing,” in the LXX is almost exclusively found in the psalms, providing another link between this canticle and the OT hymns of faith. The word denotes the joy of salvation despite and beyond the suffering God’s people may endure in this present life. It is linked to God the “Savior” or to “salvation.” Moreover, this joy often stems from the first exodus or the new exodus. Luke will develop the new exodus theme in connection with Jesus’ “exodus”—his death, resurrection, and ascension (see comments on Lk 9:31). Jesus will lead God’s people to salvation through the waters of Holy Baptism and the new Passover Feast of his crucified body and shed blood (cf. comments on the Words of Institution, 22:19–20, and on 24:30–31, 35). (CC)

1:15 *he will be great before the Lord* – The reason for the joy is stated in 1:15: the child will be “great before the Lord” and the Holy Spirit will be with him from the moment of conception. Note that in keeping with the step-parallelism, Jesus in 1:32 is described as “great” in an absolute sense, “great” in and of himself because he is the Lord, and Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35). (CC)

Lk often uses this OT expression and similar expressions to describe God’s presence and one’s standing before God’s judgment (whether one is righteous or unrighteous, cf v 6). (TLSB)

be filled with the Holy Spirit – πνεύματος ἁγίου—The Holy Spirit is mentioned here by the angel Gabriel, but there is no mention of the Holy Spirit at John’s conception or birth. Perhaps this is to emphasize the superiority of Jesus, who is both God and man, while John is man only. (CC)

John’s relationship to the Spirit begins with the announcement of his birth and will be a critical issue for the hearers to work out as they read the story of John and Jesus (Lk 3:1–22; 7:18–35). John will distinguish himself from Jesus by pointing to the greater role of the Spirit in Jesus’ ministry: while John will baptize with water, Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Lk 3:16). Luke has nineteen references to the Holy Spirit, compared to twelve in Matthew and six in Mark. This fact, along with the fifty-seven occurrences in Acts, offers the possibility of tracing the intensified activity of the Holy Spirit as the shift takes place between the OT (John) and the NT (Jesus). Although John baptizes with water and awaits the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire (3:16), he is, from his birth, filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15) and proceeds before the Messiah “in the Spirit and power of Elijah” (1:17). The OT leaders were Spirit-filled (e.g., Moses and the elders in Num 11:25–29; Samson in Judg 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14; David in 2 Sam 23:2; Elijah and Elisha in 2 Ki 2:9–16; Ezekiel in Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24), and John now continues this pattern as he prepares the people for the Messiah. John is doing the work of the Holy Spirit, who will descend in bodily form at Jesus’ baptism (3:22) and be poured out abundantly on Pentecost

(Acts 2). The Spirit's role in connection with John the Baptist makes evident his place in salvation history. (CC)

The Spirit plays a much more prominent role in Lk than in any other Gospel. (TLSB)

wine or a strong drink – It appears likely that John was to be subject to the Nazirite vow of abstinence from alcoholic drinks (Nu 6:1–4). If so, he was a lifelong Nazirite, as were Samson (Jdg 13:4–7) and Samuel (1Sa 1:11). (CSB)

Like Samson (Jgs 13:4–7) and Samuel (1Sm 1:11) before him, John lived as a Nazirite. Cf Nu 6:1–21. (TLSB)

John's continuity with the OT is also seen in his ascetic lifestyle. It accents his priestly character as a son of two Levites and the content of his message of repentance. His precinct of service is not the temple but the wilderness, conforming to his ascetic lifestyle and his austere message. He is like a Nazirite, since Nazirites were not to drink wine or strong (alcoholic) drink and were to lead an ascetic life (Num 6:3; Judg 13:7). The theological significance of John's not drinking wine and strong drink can be viewed in light of Jesus' saying in 7:33: it illustrates the relationship between the old and the new, between John and Jesus (cf. the parables of the garments and wineskins in 5:33–39). John is a priest of a different order who prepares the people for the coming of the Messiah in a different way from that of the Levitical priesthood. The response of the people to the person of John confirms this, for the "many" (πολλοί) of 1:14 are now the "many of the sons of Israel" (πολλοὺς τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ) in 1:16 who will return in repentance to the Lord God (Yahweh Elohim). (CC)

1:16 *will turn many* – ἐπιστρέψει—This is one of the many Lukan words to signal conversion. This could almost be rendered "return in repentance" (cf. 1:17—ἐπιστρέψαι). It also describes Peter's restoration in 22:32. (CC)

1:17 *he will go before him* – ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ—The antecedent for αὐτοῦ is "the Lord," suggesting that John will prepare the way for Jesus, who is Yahweh, the Lord. (CC)

Elijah. John was not Elijah returning in the flesh (Jn 1:21), but he functioned like that OT preacher of repentance and was therefore a fulfillment of Mal 4:5–6 (see Mt 11:14; 17:10–13). (CSB)

John's ministry paralleled Elijah's prophetic career in key ways. Cf Mt 3:4. John fulfilled the prophecy that Elijah would reappear before the Messiah. (TLSB)

to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children. The specifics of this repentance are explained in 1:17 in language reminiscent of Mal 3:1 ("to prepare the way before me") and Mal 4:6 "he will return the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers"). By preceding the Messiah "in the Spirit and power of Elijah," John will accomplish the following: (CC)

"To return the hearts of fathers to children
and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous."

It appears that Luke reads Malachi as synonymous parallelism: the fathers (Jewish leaders) are the disobedient and the children (Gentiles/"sinners" as the "new" children) are the righteous. Words from 1:17 recur in passages about John the Baptist, e.g., "We have Abraham for our

father'; for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham" (3:8) and "Wisdom is acknowledged as just by all her children" (7:35). The stones in 3:8 refer to Gentiles, and the children in 7:35 are John and Jesus. In both Luke 3 and 7, the Jews, because of their rejection of John or Jesus or both, are contrasted unfavorably with those who receive John and Jesus, i.e., the sinners, tax collectors, and Gentiles. (CC)

This announcement previews and accents a major Lukan theme: the Jews reject Jesus (as they do John) but the Gentiles and sinners receive the promises of the OT. This is a major theme in the ministries of both John and Jesus, as seen in Jesus' frequent contrasts between Pharisees and sinners. Jesus and John are united in being rejected by the Jewish religious establishment. (CC)

The goal of turning fathers to children and the disobedient to the righteous is "to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (1:17). The repetition of the idea of preparation (ἐτοιμάσαι, "to make ready" and κατεσκευασμένον, "prepared") emphasizes John's work of preparing Israel for the coming of Jesus. The work of preparation for the Messiah cannot be separated from the work of the Messiah himself. Although on the surface it may seem as if the rejection of Jesus by Jewish leaders shows John's work to have been in vain, Luke's gospel and Acts will demonstrate otherwise. (CC)

ready for the Lord. John helped fulfill Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 40:3–5), as Luke shows in 3:4–6. (CSB)

1:18 *How can I know this?* Like Abraham (Ge 15:8), Gideon (Jdg 6:17) and Hezekiah (2Ki 20:8), Zechariah asked for a sign (cf. 1Co 1:22). (CSB)

Zechariah demands proof and earns God's punishment (v 20). (TLSB)

γνώσομαι—"Come to recognize" in accordance with the translation of γινώσκω and its derivation ἐπιγινώσκω in 1:4. "To know" would not capture the sense that this is recognition that comes from faith. (CC)

It is now Zechariah's turn to respond to the remarkable announcement of the angel (1:18). He uses language similar to Abraham's response to the vision of God that he would have a son (Gen 15:8): "How shall I come to recognize this?" The cause of Zechariah's question is the same as that of Abraham's. In the same language that the evangelist used in Lk 1:7 (προβεβηκότες ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτῶν, "advanced in their days"), Zechariah in 1:18 expresses his concern about his and Elizabeth's age (προβεβηκυῖα ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις, "advanced in her days"). The angel who began speaking in 1:13 now identifies himself as Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God and speaks prophetically to Zechariah to proclaim these good tidings to him (1:19). In the OT Gabriel is only mentioned in Daniel (8:16; 9:21), although he appears in other Jewish literature as one of the angels who stand in the presence of God. The parallels between Gabriel's appearance in Daniel and Luke leave no doubt that an allusion to Daniel is being made by Gabriel's appearance. For example, J. McHugh notes that Gabriel appears in Daniel and Luke at the moment of sacrifice (Dan 9:21; Lk 1:10), both Daniel and Zechariah are afraid (Dan 10:7–11; Lk 1:12), Gabriel introduces himself in similar fashion (Dan 9:20–22; Lk 1:19), and his greeting is almost the same (Dan 10:12; Lk 1:13). Both Daniel and Zechariah are unable to speak and the restoration of their speech creates a similar reaction (Dan 10:16–17; Lk 1:64–65). McHugh even notes a possible parallel with Gabriel's prophecy that in seventy weeks there will be deliverance for Israel. With some careful maneuvering, seventy weeks may be counted between the announcement of John's birth to Jesus' presentation in the temple. From the announcement to Zechariah to the announcement to Mary is one hundred eighty days; from the conception of Jesus to his birth, two

hundred seventy days; from the birth of Jesus to his presentation, forty days. Thus 180 + 270 + 40 = 490. In both Daniel (9:24–27) and Luke, seventy weeks bring an eschatological climax of deliverance by the Messiah, who will enter the temple to rebuild it. (CC)

1:19 Gabriel. The name can mean “God is my hero” or “mighty man of God.” Only two angels are identified by name in Scripture: Gabriel (Da 8:16; 9:21) and Michael (Da 10:13, 21; Jude 9; Rev 12:7). (CSB)

One of two angels named in the Bible (Dn 8:16–26; 9:20–27). The other is Michael (Dn 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rv 12:7). Gabriel later visits Mary (vv 26–38). (TLSB)

The angel who interpreted visions to Daniel (Daniel 8:16-27; 9:20-27) and announced the births of John the Baptist (Luke 1:11-22) and Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). (Lutheran Bible Companion Volume Two, page 888)

in the presence of God – παρεστηκώς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ—“In the presence of God” signals that Gabriel comes from God and therefore also bears God’s presence as he appears to Zechariah. (CC)

I was sent – ἀπεστάλην—This is one of many of Luke’s theological passives in which God is implied to be the agent of the sending, i.e., “I was sent (by God).” (CC)

to speak to you – λαλήσαι—In some significant places, Luke uses λαλέω in the context of proclamation. Since he follows λαλέω with εὐαγγελίσασθαι, it is difficult to translate it “proclaim.” “Speak prophetically” conveys the sense. It is also used again in this pericope at 1:20 and 22. (CC)

this good news – εὐαγγελίσασθαι ... ταῦτα—“To proclaim these good tidings” captures both the neuter ταῦτα and the infinitive εὐαγγελίσασθαι. “Proclaim” or “announce” emphasizes the proclamatory character of Luke’s prophetic announcements (cf. 4:18). (CC)

1:20 and behold – καὶ ἰδοὺ—Like καὶ ἐγένετο and ἐγένετο δέ, this introduces a significant pericope. “And behold” marks it as such. (CC)

The angel also announces Zechariah’s silence (1:20), the reasons for which are complex. John Nolland proposes a three-fold significance based on OT precedents: a punishment for lack of faith (ἀνθ’ ὧν οὐκ ἐπίστευσας, “because you did not believe”), a sign to give Zechariah assurance that the announcement is true, and an explicit command for secrecy until the proper time of fulfillment (οἵτινες πληρωθήσονται εἰς τὸν καιρὸν αὐτῶν, “which will be fulfilled in their proper time”). All three are likely, but the third reason is most compelling in view of Luke’s theological program to show how the relevant facts of salvation are kept from the human participants in the story until God chooses to reveal them (cf. 9:36 at the transfiguration; 9:45 and 18:34 in the passion predictions; 24:16, 31 at Emmaus). The final words of the angel support this, as the infancy narrative is sprinkled with references to fulfillment. The parallel of Ezekiel’s speechlessness also sheds light on this (Ezek 3:26–27).

1:21 the people were waiting for Zechariah. They were waiting for him to come out of the Holy Place and pronounce the Aaronic blessing (Nu 6:24–26). (CSB)

Zechariah’s advanced age likely contributed to the people’s concern. The sanctity of the Holy Place, however, would have discouraged another priest from going to check on him. (TLSB)

1:23 *his time of service.* Each priest was responsible for a week’s service at the temple once every six months. (CSB)

Zechariah finished his priestly service (an additional week or two) without speaking and then returned home. (TLSB)

service – λειτουργίας—The LXX uses this noun for priestly service in the temple (e.g., Numbers 4; 18). In Hellenistic Greek, it described a citizen’s service to the state for the common good (cf. Rom 13:6). Christians adopted this word to describe their priestly service of worship, whereby they stood in the presence of God to receive the gifts of God. This concept is reflected in the term for worship, “Divine Service.” In worship Christians fulfill their calling of service in the church and service to the world. The worshipping church testifies to the world that God is present for salvation. (CC)

1:24 *kept herself hidden.* In joy, devotion and gratitude that the Lord had taken away her childlessness. (CSB)

1:25 *The Lord ... done for ,me in the days..my reproach.* Not only did lack of children deprive the parents of personal happiness, but it was generally considered to indicate divine disfavor and often brought social reproach (see Ge 16:2, Sarai; 25:21, Rebekah; 30:23, Rachel; 1Sa 1:1–18, Hannah; see also Lev 20:20–21; Ps 128:3; Jer 22:30). (CSB)

1:5–25 Zechariah receives word that the Lord will bless him and Elizabeth with a son who has a special calling. Children are a blessing from God to be treasured and raised according to His good purposes. Pray for the children in your family, and support their nurture in the faith. Give thanks to God the Father, who nurtures us in His Holy Child, Jesus, our deliverer from sin, evil, and doubt. • “Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! ‘Christ is near,’ we hear it say. ‘Cast away the works of darkness, All you children of the day!’ ” Amen. (LSB 345:1) (TLSB)

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. **30** And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” **34** And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” **35** And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God.” **38** And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

1:26–35 This section speaks clearly of the virginal conception of Jesus (vv. 27, 34–35; see Mt 1:18–25). The conception was the work of the Holy Spirit; the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, while remaining God, also “became flesh” (Jn 1:14). From conception he was fully God and fully man. (CSB)

1:26 *In the sixth month.* That is, from the time of John’s conception. (CSB)

This is the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, not the sixth month of the Roman calendar year. Luke characteristically dates events within the narrative, and the length of time here suggests a total of around four hundred ninety days between Elizabeth’s conception and Jesus’ presentation in the temple. (CC)

That is, of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. “The angel Gabriel”: see Dan 8:16; 9:21. Along with Michael, Gabriel is one of two angels named in canonical Scripture. Raphael gets mention also in the Apocrypha in Tobit. “Nazareth”: Not mentioned in the Old Testament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Like any good historian, Luke carefully notes time and place. He maintains the close linkage between John and Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

Gabriel was sent from God – *apestalan...apo tou Theu*. The verb makes clear that the angel is sent at the command and with the authority of someone else; the prepositional phrase expressly states that it is from God. Gabriel is last seen and heard in Daniel 9:20-27. This may be prophetically significant. In the vision of Daniel, Gabriel decrees “seventy sevens” for the fulfillment of God’s promise and the atonement of sin. From the time of Gabriel’s appearance to Zechariah at the incense altar to announce the conception of John until the time Jesus is presented at the temple 40 days after his birth is 490 days (counted in 30 day lunar months). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

Nazareth. Never mentioned in the OT. Jesus’ hometown is obscure and insignificant. (TLSB)

Galilee is called “Galilee of the Gentiles” in Is. 9:1, and the Hebrew phrase could also mean that it is a territory in which a “circle of nations” come together. It is the place where the light of salvation first dawns (Is. 9:2). Nazareth is not mentioned in the OT. The town was close to several main trading routes on the outskirts of Zebulun in lower Galilee. Its independence and aloofness gave rise to proverbial scorn on the part of the Jews of Judea. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:27 *to virgin* – An unmarried woman. Mary was probably between 16 and 18 years old at the time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

See Is 7:14, which the LXX clearly understood to refer to one who had never known intercourse. “Of the house of David”: Assuming that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke reflect the differing family trees of Joseph and of Mary, it appears that both are of the house of David, but descended from different sons of David. “The virgin’s name was Mary”: A remarkably common name at the time in Judaism, and indeed, ever since! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

pledged to be married. Jewish betrothal was binding in ways that modern engagements are not. Betrothal usually preceded marriage by at least nine months to assure that the bride was not

pregnant. The young man would give the bride's family a gift. The fathers of the families would sign a marriage document (Hbr *kethubah*). (TLSB)

house of David – ἐξ οἴκου Δαβίδ—Jesus' Davidic ancestry is a key theme in the infancy narrative (Lk 1:32, 69; 2:4, 11), is affirmed in the genealogy (3:31), is declared publicly by a blind beggar who desires his sight (18:38–39), and is a source of controversy during Jesus' Jerusalem teaching (20:41–44). Cf. Acts 13:34. (CC)

1:28 *Greetings*. *Ave* in the Latin Vulgate (from which comes “Ave Maria”). (CSB)

χαῖρε—As a greeting, χαίρω, “rejoice,” is used either in the imperative (as here) or the infinitive. The infinitive greeting is a Greek expression: “salutations!” or “greetings!” (Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1; 2 Jn 1:10–11). But the imperative greeting reflects Hebrew expressions. It occurs six times in the NT; five are singular, one is plural. Only here is the singular a sincere expression of goodwill and favor; the others are sarcastic (the mocking soldiers, Mt 27:29; Mk 15:18; Jn 19:3) or hypocritical (Judas, Mt 26:49). The plural, spoken by the risen Jesus, is also sincerely gracious (Mt 28:9). One of the most common Hebrew greetings is *shalom*, “peace,” reflected in εἰρήνη in Lk 10:5; 24:36, but the LXX never translates *shalom*, “peace,” by the imperative χαῖρε. J. McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 38–39, notes, “The imperative form χαῖρε, far from being a conventional greeting, always refers to the joy attendant on the deliverance of Israel; wherever it occurs, it is a translation of a Hebrew verb meaning ‘Rejoice greatly!’ (CC)

(ESV). A generic translation, at best. Although the word could be used as a greeting, it is better to translate literally here: “Rejoice!” The angel greeting the Virgin with “Howdy” hardly seems to capture the intent. The very source of all joy is about to take on flesh. *kecharitōmenē*, “O favored one.” Traditionally, “full of grace.” For a fascinating take on the meaning of this phrase, see LW 43:40. *ho kurios meta sou*, “The Lord is with you.” Almost a pun—Immanuel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

favored one – κεχαριτωμένη—The perfect participle “has the strongest connotation of the present: ‘having been favored and as a result still being in this blessed condition’ ” (Lanski) – (CC)

the Lord is with you – The Lord is with Mary (1:28) in two senses. He will come upon her and overshadow her, and the presence of the Lord will be in her womb. The new era of salvation begins with the conception of Jesus in Mary. Luke contrasts this in step-parallel fashion to Zechariah and Elizabeth, whose son John the Baptist is born according to the old era with its laws and regulations. The new era of salvation comes through the baby to be conceived by the gracious action of God upon Mary, who finds favor with God—not due to any superiority over other women or any merit in God's estimation, but simply because of God's good pleasure (cf. 10:21). (CC)

1:29 *diatarachthē*, “greatly troubled.” The lowliness of the Virgin is accentuated. She did not think of herself as one who was highly favored; thus the challenge to grasp what the angel is saying. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:30 *mē phobou*, “Do not be afraid.” The standard angelic line when the messengers make themselves visible. See also Lk 1:13; 2:10. *charin para tōi theōi*, “favor with God.” See Gen 6:8. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:31-33 From 1:31b to 1:33, Mary is instructed by the angel concerning the child she will conceive and bear. This is her catechesis. Messianic designations abound: “Jesus” (1:31), “great” and “Son of the Most High” (1:32), “King” (1:32–33). For the hearer of Luke’s gospel, there should no longer be any doubt about the identity of the one who is the subject of the gospel. While Luke does not explain the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς), it is the Greek form of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ or יֵשׁוּעַ, “Joshua,” meaning “Yahweh is salvation” or “Yahweh saves.” Matthew sums up both the person and work of the Messiah: “He will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). John the Baptist will be “great before the Lord” (Lk 1:15), but Jesus himself is great, the Son of the Most High (1:32). (CC)

Jesus is the culmination of the Davidic line. All the promises of God in the OT are now coming to fulfillment in Christ. The promise of an everlasting kingdom to the house of David (Is 9:6–7) is reflected in the words “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will be King over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32–33). The royal line of the kingdom of Judah, prophesied by Jacob in Gen 49:10ff., merges with the royal line of David that comes in 2 Sam 7:16: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” Despite David’s sin, and the sin of all those in his human royal succession, God’s redemptive plan will be accomplished through his Descendent. Jesus will reign over the house of David, for the royal messianic succession will continue forever in him. (CC)

1:31 *Jesus*. The phrase appears to be formulaic; see Gen 16:11; Judg 13:3; and especially Is 7:14, which the angel seems to be evoking. The given name Immanuel in Is 7:14 is replaced by the name Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” That is, Yahweh Saves will be the one whom she conceives and bears. When Moses (the Law) couldn’t get the Israelites to the Promised Land, Yahweh Saves (Joshua!) did the job. The One who brings his people all the way into the land of promise is thus the One within her. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:32 *will be called* – This is not saying that he is “the Son of the Most High” in name only, but that his being called that confesses who he is. “The throne of his father David.” See today’s Old Testament Reading. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

the Son of the Most High. This title has two senses: (1) the divine Son of God and (2) the Messiah born in time. His Messiahship is clearly referred to in the following context (vv. 32b–33). (CSB)

Most High. A title frequently used of God in both the OT and NT (see vv. 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Ge 14:19 and note; 2Sa 22:14; Ps 7:10). (CSB)

In post-exilic Israel, it was the second most common name after Lord as a substitute for the divine name Yahweh. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

throne. Promised in the OT to the Messiah descended from David (2Sa 7:13, 16; Ps 2:6–7; 89:26–27; Isa 9:6–7). (CSB)

his father David. Mary was a descendant of David, as was Joseph (see Mt 1:16); so Jesus could rightly be called a “son” of David. (CSB)

1:33 *he will reign over* – βασιλεύσει—“He will be King” emphasizes the kingship of Jesus. This corresponds with the next phrase, which refers to the “kingdom” (βασιλείας). (CC)

Refers to Davidic covenant, wherein God promised the Messiah would descend from David and rule eternally (2Sm 7:16; Ps 2:6–7). Cf Lk 1:27; 2:4. (TLSB)

“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” The promise is that the Child conceived in her womb would be eternal; if his kingdom never ends, that means his life goes on forever! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

forever. See Ps 45:6; Rev 11:15. (CSB)

of his kingdom there will be no end. Although Christ’s role as mediator will one day be finished (see 1Co 15:24–28), the kingdom of the Father and Son, as one, will never end. (CSB)

The angel appears to be referring to a number of different prophecies concerning the Davidic throne. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:34 *How will this be ... ?* Mary did not ask in disbelief, as Zechariah did (v. 20). See v. 45. (CSB)

In contrast to Zechariah’s skeptical question (v 18), Mary wonders in faith. Zechariah walked away unable to speak, but Mary burst forth into holy song (vv 46–55) after Gabriel’s departure. (TLSB)

pōs estai touto, “How will this be?” Not “How *can* this be?” Mary does not dispute the angel’s words in unbelief nor ask for a sign like Zechariah, but she does ask for more information. *epei andra ou ginōskō*, “since I am a virgin.” Literally, “since I know not a man.” The present tense here is interesting. One would have expected: “Since I *have not known* a man.” Some of the Fathers see this as perhaps obliquely hinting at her intention to remain a virgin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Like Zechariah, Mary knows she is hearing something beyond her ken. It will take a miracle surpassing all that God has done before. But unlike Zechariah, her wondering is not laced with skepticism. It is a simple and honest question she poses: “How will this be, since a man I know not?” (CC)

Mary’s question is contrasted with Zechariah’s. Mary seeks further information, while Zechariah seeks a sign. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:35 *Holy Spirit* – Gabriel speaks of the Holy Spirit coming upon (ἐπελεύσεται) Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) her. This same Spirit hovered over the waters and brought forth creation (Gen 1:2). During the exodus Yahweh’s presence was over Israel as he led, protected, and fought for her in the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–31). The pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the tabernacle when Yahweh spoke with Moses (Ex 33:9–10). The presence of Yahweh in a cloud overshadowed (ἐπεσκίαζεν [LXX]) the tabernacle, and the glory of Yahweh filled it (Ex 40:35). The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism (Lk 3:22), and a cloud overshadowed him at his transfiguration (9:34, where ἐπεσκίαζεν is also used). The same Spirit that overshadows Mary will also be promised to the disciples by Jesus just before his ascension: they will be “clothed with power from on high”

(24:49). As the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary, she conceives Jesus as holy, the Son of God. This is the moment of the incarnation of our Lord (1:35). (CC)

Cf Is 32:15 describing the Spirit bringing fertility and life to the land. (TLSB)

“The Holy Spirit.” As over the waters of the first creation, so now over the waters of Mary’s womb the new creation begins with the Holy Spirit at work. “Holy.” In other words, the child to be born will be the Holy One of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

overshadow. Used in LXX Ex 40:35 to describe God’s presence in the tabernacle. Cf Gn 1:2. Accordingly, Gabriel’s announcement implies that through Mary’s pregnancy, God will be present among His people in a more wonderful way (cf Jn 1:14). (TLSB)

This denotes the advent of the Holy Spirit. A noteworthy use of *episkiadzo* in the LXX is Exodus 40:35, where the cloud of the Lord’s presence overshadowed the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle. Now the creative Spirit overshadows the Virgin Mary, and she is filled with the glory of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

will be called holy. Jesus never sinned (2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1Pe 2:22; 1Jn 3:5). (CSB)

ἅγιον—This describes that which is begotten in Mary (τὸ γεννώμενον) and therefore applies to Jesus. It could either be part of the subject of κληθήσεται, modifying τὸ γεννώμενον, “the holy child to be born will be called. (CC)

Son of God. Title forcefully underscores Jesus’ divine nature. “The divine and human natures in Christ are personally united. So there are not two Christs, one the Son of God and the other the Son of Man. But one and the same person is the Son of God and Son of Man” (FC Ep VIII 5). (TLSB)

1:36 *Elizabeth your relative*. It is not known whether she was a cousin, aunt or other relation. (CSB)

The pregnancy of barren Elizabeth serves as a sign that the word of the angel is faithful. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:37 Echoes the question God asked Abraham while announcing that Sarah would bear Isaac in her old age. (TLSB)

Nothing will be impossible with God – Ultimately this is a matter of trust, of taking God at his word. There is a possible allusion to Sarah (Gen 18:14). Jesus himself says the same thing regarding salvation (Mt 19:26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

“Nothing will be impossible with God.” This might be rendered, “Not possible for any word of God to fail” (*pan hrēma*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

ῥήμα—This denotes both a word and the event(s) the word promises. πᾶν ῥήμα with οὐκ means “nothing.” The reference here is to the conception of John in Elizabeth’s old age and especially to the miraculous conception of Jesus in the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. (CC)

1:38 *servant of the Lord* – ἡ δούλη—Mary describes herself as a female servant. This is the same expression used by Hannah in the LXX in 1 Sam 1:11. By her declaration, Mary shows her faith

in and faithfulness to the word of God through the angel and the promise that is now present in her womb. As a servant of the Lord, she now replaces Israel, who is barren. (CC)

Demonstrating great humility and purpose, Mary identifies herself as a household slave. (TLSB)

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” This is Mary’s “fiat,” which is the response of faith to the gift of God. *genoito*, “Let it be.” A variation of “Thy will be done.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

according to your word – *genoito moi kata to rama sou* which means according to your word. The NIV translation is considerably weaker and draws attention away from the Word to the angel. Mary trusts the word from God through the angel. Similarly, Simeon prays for his promised departure “according to your Word.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:26–38 The angel Gabriel announces Jesus’ birth to Mary, who responds in faith. By announcing the Gospel, the Lord likewise calls us to faith and to bear Christ—not as our child—but as the Holy One of God, our Savior. • “O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!” Amen. (*LSB* 361:4). (TLSB)

Mary Visits Elizabeth

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, 40 and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

1:39 *in those days* – Literally, “in those days”: Perhaps a pick up on verse 35, marking the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

ἐπορεύθη—This is an important Lukan word that will later refer to Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. It will be consistently translated as “journey” unless the context indicates otherwise. See comments at 9:51. (CC p. 72)

went with haste – *poreuomai* – To travel, journey, traverse, walk.

Literally, “with haste.” Perhaps better translated “eagerly.” With a certain determination Mary wanted to share with Elizabeth the excitement of their astonishing conceptions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

the hill country...Judea – An interesting series of parallels between Mary’s journey to the hill country of Judah and the movement of the ark of the covenant to the same locale on its way to Jerusalem has been pointed to by J. McHugh, “The Mother of Jesus,” page 62.

- David and Mary made a journey (2 Sam 6:2; Lk 1:39)
- Greeted with shouts of joy (2 Sam 6:12,15; Lk 1:42,44)
- Source of blessing (2 Sam 6:10-12; Lk 1:41,43-44)
- A sense of awe (2 Sam 6:9; Lk 1:43)
- Remained three months (2 Sam 6:11; Lk 1:56)

Mary appears to fulfill the purpose of the ark of the covenant. (CC p. 72)

Zechariah and Elizabeth lived somewhere near Jerusalem, where Zechariah had recently served in the temple (vv 5–20). (TLSB)

She lost no time in journeying up into the mountainous country of Judea, where the city of priests was situated in which Zacharias lived with his wife Elisabeth. (Kretzmann)

No easy trip for Mary. It would require a few days. She would need to convince a companion to accompany her. Her city of destination is unnamed, probably because Luke did not know it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

1:40 *greeted* – *aspazomai* – To enfold in one’s arms, to salute, or to embrace.

1:41 *baby leaped* – *brephos* which means an infant born or unborn.

Perhaps a medical word for the movement of children in the womb. John’s leaping in his mother’s womb fulfilled the promise made to Zechariah (1:15). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

βρέφος—“Baby, infant” is used for babies both before and after birth, implying that an unborn child is a fully human person. The word occurs eight times in the NT, six of which are in Luke-Acts. It refers to John the Baptist while in his mother’s womb in Lk 1:41, 44; to Jesus after his birth in Lk 2:12, 16; to the young children brought to Jesus in Lk 18:15; and to newborn babies in Acts 7:19; 1 Pet 2:2. St. Paul describes Timothy as knowing the Scriptures ἀπὸ βρέφους, “from [the time he was an] infant” (2 Tim 3:15). The biblical usage of this term has important ramifications for human-life issues. It supports—even mandates—a concern for the sanctity of human life from conception onward and makes disregard for such life morally reprehensible. (CC pp. 72-73)

The word of leaped is *skirtao* which means to jump or move quickly.

What clearly stands out in this structure is the presence of Jesus. Everything that happens is a response to the presence of God in the flesh – the baby inside Mary. Luke accents this by repeating twice John’s leap in his mother’s womb (1:41,44). In Gen. 25:22 Jacob and Esau leap in Rebecca’s womb, foreshadowing the relationship they will have with one another, i.e. the firstborn will serve the second born, so also with John and Jesus. In John’s leap are foreshadowed the miracles of Jesus, who will cause all creation to leap (*allomai* in Acts 3:8 of a

healed lame man “leaping” into the temple.) at His presence: “Blind are seeing again, dead are being raised, poor are proclaimed the Good New” (Luke 7:22) (CC p. 75)

filled with the Holy Spirit – The prophecy that John will be filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15) is already coming to fulfillment in his mother. (CC p. 76)

Elizabeth recognized that Mary was carrying a child who was the “Lord,” knowledge that only the Holy Spirit could reveal. Even more remarkably, John reacted from within her womb as well! Cf 2:25–38. (TLSB)

1:42 *with loud cry* – ἀνεφώνησεν—“Intone,” specifically “intoned [the words] in a loud voice” is suggested by the LXX usage of this word. (CC p. 73)

blessed – εὐλογημένη ... εὐλογημένος—The words εὐλογημένος (twice in 1:42) and μακάριος (1:45; verb in 1:48) reflect בָּרַךְ and בֵּרַךְ, respectively, which they regularly translate in the LXX and NT. The two words are close synonyms in meaning but have distinct usages. Because of these distinctions, 1:42 will be called a “blessing,” while 1:45 will be called a “beatitude. (CC p. 73)

”בָּרַךְ= εὐλογητός or εὐλογημένος can be used to praise God, to describe people as “blessed,” and even to describe inanimate objects, as in Deut 28:5: “Blessed will be your be your kneading trough,” meaning that you will be blessed by God with abundant bread. בָּרַךְ(CC p. 73)

Mary’s blessedness is a state of faith that grasps the future promises of God that are already beginning to come to fulfillment for her and in her. (CC p. 76)

1:43 *my Lord* – ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου—Remarkably, Elizabeth identifies the child in Mary as the Lord. (CC p. 74)

She considers herself unworthy of receiving, in her modest home, the mother of her Lord. She knew that Mary was to be the mother of the Messiah; she knew that her Lord would be born a true human being, and that her trust in Him would bring her salvation. She was one of the few in Israel that understood the prophecies concerning the Seed of the woman, the Child of the virgin, in their right sense. (Kretzmann)

1:44 *for joy*. In some mysterious way the Holy Spirit produced this remarkable response in the unborn baby. (CSB)

Elizabeth repeated what happened when Mary greeted her. John the Baptizer, the son in her womb, leaped for joy. Thus Luke made explicit the connection between the mover of John and Elizabeth’s prophetic insight. Also, for Luke, the repetition underlines the importance of the action of the unborn John. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

ἀγαλλιάσει—This word occurs twice in the infancy narrative (1:14, 44), and the verb occurs in 1:47. This is the eschatological joy that accompanies the expectation of salvation. (CC p. 74)

1:45 *blessed is she who has believed* – What a contrast she was to Zechariah! He did not trust the angel’s announcement; Mary believed. She was blessed because what the Lord said to her would be accomplished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 11, Part 1)

This is the key verse, the fulcrum on which balance the narrative preceding and the Magnificat following. Jesus clearly states the means by which such blessedness is given: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it” (11:28). Mary’s blessing comes not by any presupposed sinlessness, rationally-assumed immaculate conception, or co-redemptive character. Rather, as with all the faithful, it comes from outside of her – from God’s Word. And such Word-engendered faith trusts alone in that which was spoken... from the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

would be fulfilled – τελείωσις—“Fulfillment” (rather than “accomplishment” or “completion” or “perfection”) continues Luke’s emphasis on the promises of God coming to fulfillment already in the lives of John and Jesus. This echoes Luke’s promise in the prologue that he will produce “a narrative concerning the events that have come to fulfillment among us” (1:1). (CC p. 74)

spoken to her from the Lord – HAS SAID – λελαλημένοις is used occasionally of human speech in general (1:65; 7:14; 22:60), but the vast majority of instances are solemn utterances by the Lord, or for the Lord preaching (cf. 1:19; 1:55; 1:70; 2:17, 20; 9:11; 24:25, 32) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

1:39–45 As Mary greets Elizabeth, baby John leaps for joy in Elizabeth’s womb. The work of God’s Spirit is not limited by age, gender, or socio-economic status. He is poured out for all people according to the good and gracious will of God, who blesses motherhood and children and, through them, all humanity, even as He promised Eve (Gn 3:15). Like baby John, leap for joy that salvation comes from the Lord in humble and unexpected ways as the Good News of Jesus is shared. • “Thou Christian heart, Whoe’er thou art, Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee! For God’s own Child, In mercy mild, Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!” Amen. (LSB 372:4) (TLSB)

Mary’s Song: The Magnificat

46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on 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 for those who fear him from generation to generation. **51** He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; **52** he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; **53** he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. **54** He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, **55** as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” **56** And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

1:46–55 One of four hymns preserved in Lk 1–2. This hymn of praise is known as the Magnificat because in the Latin Vulgate translation the opening word is *Magnificat*, which means “glorifies.” This song is like a psalm, and should also be compared with the song of Hannah (1Sa 2:1–10). (CSB)

One of four canticles in chs 1–2. Zechariah similarly bursts into song at John’s birth (1:68–79), the angels intone their announcement of Jesus’ birth (2:14), and Simeon sings a blessing (2:29–32). Mary’s canticle (called the Magnificat from the first word in the Latin translation) is the most prominent of these four songs of praise, still sung in the Church’s liturgy (*LSB*, pp 248–49). They introduce an important Lukan theme: God delights in exalting the poor and humble, while bringing down the rich and proud (vv 48, 51–53; cf 14:11; 18:11). See Hannah’s song (1Sm 2:1–10). (TLSB)

The Magnificat itself follows the Hebrew device of poetic parallelism. While probably spoken *ex corde* by the Blessed Virgin, many OT phrases and themes are woven in. It can easily be translated into the elegant classical Hebrew of the psalms, and its closest parallel is the Song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10). In contrast to the generally catholic character of Luke’s gospel, its outlook is particularistic: the Messiah embodies the entire nation of Israel, and is the culmination of God’s promise to Abraham’s seed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

1:46 *Mary said* – Biblical Gk commonly uses verbs of speaking when presenting chanting/singing (cf Rv 5:9). In antiquity, poetic compositions were typically chanted or sung. (TLSB)

magnifies – μεγαλύνει—“Magnifies” preserves the liturgical name of this hymn, “the Magnificat.” In the LXX the Greek word often translates forms of לָבַח in the psalms and is used to praise God. In fact, most of the vocabulary of the Magnificat has a rich history in the OT via the LXX. Cf., for example, textual note on 1:51. (CC p. 78)

So thoroughly familiar was Mary with the writings of the Old Testament that her hymn is cast, almost involuntarily, in the words of the Old Testament poets. All the psalms that had been sung in honor of the Messiah served to give her the thoughts and phrases for her great hymn of the New Testament. (Kretzmann)

First, Mary magnifies the Lord and rejoices (ἠγαλλίασεν) because of his mercy (τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ; 1:50, 54), and then Elizabeth’s “neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had magnified [ἐμεγάλυνεν] his mercy [τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ] with her and they rejoiced with her” (1:58; the only other occurrence of μεγαλύνω in Luke). The Lord is magnified because of the births of Jesus and John, which are interpreted to be acts of God’s mercy. On the threefold purpose of the Magnificat, Luther says:

Just as a book title indicates what is the contents of the book, so this word “magnifies” is used by Mary to indicate what her hymn of praise is to be about, namely, the great works and deeds of God, for the strengthening of our faith, for the comforting of all those of low degree, and for the terrifying of all the mighty ones of earth. We are to let the hymn serve this threefold purpose; for she sang it not for herself alone but for us all, to sing it after her (LW 21:306). (CC p. 79)

1:47 *my spirit rejoices* – Rejoices exceedingly. This is the springboard for the entire song, from which stanza after stanza cascades. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

ἠγαλλίασεν—See 1:44. Luther notes that Mary rejoices in God and not the gifts that God gives, as opposed to most human beings who “delighted in their salvation much more than in their

Savior, in the gift more than in the Giver, in the creature rather than in the Creator” (LW 21:309). (CC p. 79)

God my Savior – Title often used for God, especially in Psalms. Underscores not only His rescue from physical calamity but also His saving power in spiritual matters (Ps. 18:46; 24:5; 25:5; 27:9). (TLSB)

τῷ σωτηρῷ μου—The word σωτήρ and its derivatives are part of Luke’s vocabulary of salvation. Luke is the only synoptic gospel to refer to Jesus as σωτήρ, and he alone uses the two nouns σωτηρία and σωτήριον. σῶζω is also more common in Luke (seventeen times in the gospel and thirteen times in Acts) than in Matthew (fifteen times) and Mark (thirteen times). (CC p. 79)

1:48 on the humble estate – Because God looked with tender care upon the lowliness of His female slave, whom all generations will consider blessed. This particular verb for blessing occurs only here and in 11:38. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

τὴν ταπεινῶσιν—Following Luther, this is translated “low estate” rather than “humility” or “humiliation” to capture Mary’s condition in its totality. Cf. Luther: “The word ‘low estate’ has been translated ‘humility’ by some, as though the Virgin Mary referred to her humility and boasted of it” (LW 21:312). Luther offers extensive comments on this word (pp. 312–24). This word announces the major theme of the Magnificat, and one of the major themes of the gospel, the Great Reversal. (CC p. 79)

Mary humbly acknowledges herself as God’s servant (v 38) and thanks Him for exalting her through the conception of Jesus in her womb. This parallels Israel’s status as an exalted servant in v 54. (TLSB)

1:49 mighty – Why will Mary be blessed? Not because of anything in her, but because the Almighty One showed mercy, He has done great things to and with her. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

1:50 those who fear him. Those who revere God and live in harmony with his will. (CSB)

It refers to the holy awe and respect which one has for the Mighty One of whom Mary has just spoken. Such fear will call forth worship and obedience. Mary herself is an example of one who fears the Lord. The Lord’s mercy surrounds those who reverence Him. (PBC)

Mary’s hymn recalls, not only the song of Hannah, but also many passages in the Psalms, as well as in the songs of Miriam and Deborah. We might compare Ps. 113 and 126, also Ps. 31,8; 34,2,3; 138,6; 71,19; 111,9; 33,10; 34, 10, and others. The grace of God, His holiness, His justice, and especially His faithfulness are celebrated. The whole forms an animated doxology of singular beauty and power, a fitting hymn for the Church of the New Testament to sing the praises of the God of its salvation. (Kretzmann)

generation to generation – Recalls covenants given to Abraham (Gn 12:1–3) and David. Thus, the climax of Mary’s song emphasizes fulfillment (cf vv 54–55). (TLSB)

1:51 *strength with his arm* –κράτος—“Mighty deed” refers to the actions of God in the next five verses. The wording reflects Ps 77:14–15 and 89:10 (MT 89:11), both of which speak of God’s might exercised by his arm. (CC p. 80)

his arm. A figurative description of God’s powerful acts. God does not have a body; he is spirit (Jn 4:24). (CSB)

ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ—J. Nolland sees in this expression a reference to the “new exodus typology”: “ ‘His arm’ is a frequent OT image for the power of God, especially as manifested in the exodus (e.g., Exod 6:1–6) and in the new exodus of eschatological salvation (e.g., Ezek 20:23; Isa 51:5)” (Luke 1–9:20, 76). See also Ex 15:6, 12, 16–17; Is 53:1. (CC p. 80)

proud in the thoughts of their hearts – διανοία—“The way of thinking” of the arrogant is pride and conceit. The more general term is preserved here to imply that this is the state of mind of those who are arrogant in their thoughts and hearts. (CC p. 80)

1:53 *hungry.* Both physically and spiritually (Mt 5:6; Jn 6:35). The coming of God’s kingdom will bring changes affecting every area of life. (CSB)

The hungry He has filled with good things, giving them not only the necessities, but more than they need. Those that hunger and thirst after the gift of righteousness, because they realize the manifold shortcomings in their own life, these He fills with the wonderful gifts of His rich, store. (Kretzmann)

1:54 *remembering to be merciful.* The song ends with an assurance that God will be true to his promises to his people (see Ge 22:16–18). (CSB)

For God remembers His mercy, the covenant of grace which He made with Abraham and renewed with the patriarchs, according to the promise that in Abraham and his seed all nations of the earth should be called blessed. (Kretzmann)

Here remembering expresses the cause rather than the result of God’s action. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 1)

1:56 *remained...about three months* – Mary remained with Elisabeth for about three months, showing her kinswoman all sympathy and kindness. After that time, tact and the regard for her own condition made her return home imperative. (Kretzmann)

1:46–56 The Lord delivers His people amid suffering and disappointment. Today, no matter what troubles assail you, trust in the Lord as your deliverer, and commend all cares to Him in prayer. Rejoice in His surpassing mercy through the Holy Child, who delivers the generations from sin and sorrow. • Pray or sing the Magnificat (vv 46–55; LSB, pp 248–49). (TLSB)

The Birth of John the Baptist

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. **58** And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. **59** And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, **60** but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” **61** And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” **62** And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. **63** And he asked for a

writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. 64 And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. 65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, 66 and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

1:57-80 The song of Zechariah at the birth of his son is one of the great canticles of the Church taken directly from Holy Scripture. It has been titled the Benedictus, using the first word of its Latin text in Jerome’s Vulgate translation. Luke, the educated and cultured physician, is alone among the evangelists in supplying the Church with the rich heritage of Spirit-inspired canticles that graced the lips of saints around the time of the birth of our Savior. Since it is doubtful that these praises were originally uttered in Greek, the translation of these canticles as found in the New Testament was also Spirit-inspired. Luke provides for us the Magnificat of Mary (Lk 1:46–55), the Benedictus of Zechariah (Lk 1: 67–79), and the Nunc Dimittis of Simeon (Lk 2:29–32). It has been suggested that the Magnificat deals with regal themes appropriately put forth by a descendant of royal David. The Benedictus has a sacerdotal tone to it as one might expect from a descendant of Aaron. One might see a prophetic motif in the *Nunc Dimittis*. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Zechariah’s inspired song draws richly on the hymnal of the Old Testament, the Psalter. Further, the Greek version we have (again, likely a translation) draws heavily on the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX). Therefore, for those who wish to compare the two, the LXX references are given below in parentheses. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:58 In the case of John, a miracle baby given to aged parents, such a celebration would be all the more joyous. (TLSB)

Now Elisabeth no longer hid herself and shut herself away from the interest of friends and neighbors. Those that were living near as well as the relatives at a distance heard the news very soon. Note: The text expressly states that the Lord had made great His mercy upon Elisabeth; it was His favor and grace that was here made evident. And everywhere there was rejoicing with the happy parents. (Kretzmann)

1:59 *on the eighth day* – In the OT, circumcision on the eighth day suggested that incorporation into Israel included the eschatological hope of life in the age to come. This foreshadowed the “eighth day theology” of the early Christians, who worshiped on Sunday, the eighth day. (Jesus is also circumcised on the eighth day.) The eighth day is a significant number for Luke’s identification of the time of the transfiguration (9:28). And even though the evangelist does not use the number “eight” in connection with the day of the resurrection (23:56b–24:1), his careful notes of time will suggest that the first Easter is the eighth day of eschatological salvation. (CC)

In commenting on circumcision in Gen 17:10–11, Luther makes the following observation:

The mystic reason which the Master of the Sentences and other teachers adduce is passable. They maintain that circumcision was deferred to the eighth day because in the resurrection, which is signified by the eighth day, we shall be perfectly circumcised, in order that we may be free from every sin of the world. (CC)

We not only do not reject this thought, but we confirm it as godly and learned. In an allegorical sense the eighth day signifies the future life; for Christ rested in the sepulcher on

the Sabbath, that is, during the entire seventh day, but rose again on the day which follows the Sabbath, which is the eighth day and the beginning of a new week, and after it no other day is counted. For through His death Christ brought to a close the weeks of time and on the eighth day entered into a different kind of life, in which days are no longer counted but there is one eternal day without the alternations of night. (CC)

This has been thought out wisely, learnedly, and piously, namely, that the eighth day is the eternal day. For the rising Christ is no longer subject to days, months, weeks, or any number of days; He is in a new and eternal life. The beginning of this life is perceived and reckoned, but there is no end. In that life the true circumcision will be carried out. At that time not only the foreskin of the heart will be circumcised—which happens in this life through faith—but the entire flesh and all its essence will be cleansed from all depravity, ignorance, lust, sin, and filth. Consequently, the flesh is then immortal. (CC)

This allegory is a prophecy that when Christ rises again there will be a spiritual, true, and perfect circumcision outside time in eternal life. (CC)

circumcise. Cf Gn 17:9–14. This sign marked John as heir to the covenant described in Gn 12:1–3. (TLSB)

name him after his father. An accepted practice in that day, as seen in Josephus (*Life*, 1). (CSB)

Common to name a male child after his grandfather or father. (TLSB)

1:60 *but mother answered* – But here Elisabeth objected. Zacharias had, in the mean time, communicated to her the story of the wonderful appearance in the Temple, and she knew the name which the Lord had selected. ((Kretzmann)

John – The name “John” means “the Lord has been gracious.” (CC)

1:62 *they made signs to his father.* Apparently assuming that since he was mute he was also deaf. (CSB)

1:63 *a writing tablet.* Probably a small wooden board covered with wax. (CSB)

Board covered with wax that could receive letters made with a stylus. Zechariah would likely have used this tool during the nine months he was unable to speak. (TLSB)

he wrote – And then he wrote, he said in writing and probably spoke at the same time: John is his name. His form of putting it left no alternative, the matter was fully and completely settled at this time. God's command was carried out to the letter. The punishment for his lack of faith was now removed, and speech returned to him. Thus God has pity on His children when they have faltered or fallen, He helps them .to conquer the evil with good and unbelief with belief. And thus faith is enabled to grow all the stronger, since all doubts have been conquered by the Word of God. But the assembled company wondered at this strange agreement of the parents in giving a name which was unusual in their family. It was their first intimation that this child was truly exceptional. (Kretzmann)

1:64 *mouth was opened* – ἀνεώχθη—Both the mouth and the tongue are construed as subjects of “opened,” a grammatical construction called a zeugma. Nevertheless, the translation supplies “loosed” for his tongue since the Greek verb λύω, “loose,” is used when the tongue (γλῶσσα) is enabled to speak (Mk 7:35). (CC)

1:65 *all these things were talked about* – ῥήματα—“Things” includes both the words that were spoken and the miraculous birth and naming of the child. (CC)

The effect upon the assembled company and upon all the inhabitants of the hill country of Judea was a very deep one. Not superstitious fear, but reverent awe took hold upon them. Wherever the story of these events was told, the people were similarly impressed. They felt that such singular and peculiar circumstances surrounded the birth of this child that God Himself must be concerned in his welfare, that all things pointed to an uncommon future for the boy. The usual comment was: What, then, will this child come to? And the people made a mental note of the circumstances with a view of watching further developments. (Kretzmann)

1:66 *hand of the Lord* – χεῖρ κυρίου ἦν μετ’ αὐτοῦ—Cf. 1:28 and 1:51—“arm.” The idea is frequent in the OT, often in a hostile sense (e.g., Ex 9:3; Deut 2:15), but usually the presence of Yahweh’s hand with a prophet implies that God’s mighty power is at work in his ministry. (CC)

God was active in John’s life to guide, protect, and lead him into the way of godliness. (TLSB)

1:57–66 Elizabeth gives birth to John; Zechariah confirms his son’s name. John is truly the Lord’s gift to you as well because he prepared the way for your Savior, Jesus. Do not doubt, but dare to proclaim what the Lord has promised and accomplished for your salvation. His blessings never cease to amaze! • “When all the world was cursed By Moses’ condemnation, Saint John the Baptist came With words of consolation. With true forerunner’s zeal The greater One he named, And Him, as yet unknown, As Savior he proclaimed.” Amen. (LSB 346:1). (TLSB)

Zechariah’s Song

67 And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,
68 “Blessed be 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, **70** as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, **71** that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; **72** to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, **73** the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us **74** that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, **75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. **76** And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, **77** to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, **78** because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high **79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” **80** And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

1:67 *filled with the Holy Spirit ... prophesied.* Prophecy not only predicts but also proclaims God’s word. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth (vv. 41–45) were enabled by the Holy Spirit to express what otherwise they could not have formulated. (CSB)

We have here another wonderful hymn of praise and prophecy, couched, for the most part, in terms of the Old Testament songs of praise. The Holy Ghost Himself, speaking through the mouth of Zacharias, was its author. Luther has written comments on many sections of it in various parts of his books. (Kretzmann)

1:68–79 This hymn is called Benedictus (“Praise be”) because the opening word in the Latin Vulgate translation is *Benedictus*. Whereas the Magnificat is similar to a psalm, the Benedictus is more like a prophecy. (CSB)

The Benedictus (from the Latin translation of the first word, “Blessed”). Sung as part of the Church’s liturgy (*LSB*, pp 238–40). (TLSB)

The *Benedictus* has a chiasmic structure that is superbly displayed in Arthur Just’s Luke 1:1–9:50, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 94. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:68 *blessed* – εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ—The Benedictus begins like a typical OT song of blessing and praise. As the first word, εὐλογητός (blessed be) sets the tone for the entire hymn. OT examples include Gen 14:19–20; 24:27; 1 Ki 1:48; Psalm 144; 1 Chr 29:10–19. (CC)

The first beatitude is virtually identical to that of Ps 41:13a (40:14a); Ps 72:18a (71:18a); and Ps 106:48a (105:48a). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

redeemed his people. Not limited to national security (v. 71), but including moral and spiritual salvation (vv. 75, 77). (CSB)

Pair of verbs recall some of God’s mightiest acts of salvation. *visited*. Gk *episkeptomai*, “look after, appear in order to help” (LXX: Gn 50:24–25; Ru 1:6; 1Sm 2:21; Ps 8:4; Ezk 34:11). *redeemed*. Gk *poiein lutrosin*, “redeem or ransom from slavery” (LXX: Ex 6:6; Dt 7:8; Ne 1:10; Ps 49:8) (TLSB)

ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν—God is blessed because he has “visited” (ἐπεσκέψατο) his people in Christ’s incarnation, and in Christ he has provided atonement as he “made redemption” (ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν) for his people. The opening lines of the Benedictus highlight the two most significant aspects of the mission of Jesus. God’s “visiting” in Jesus will be acknowledged again in 1:78 and by the people after Jesus raises the widow’s son at Nain (7:16). The noun, “visitation,” occurs in 19:44. See comments there on the OT background of God’s visitation in both a Law and a Gospel sense. (CC)

Redemption is what Anna has been waiting for in the temple and now sees in Jesus (2:38). The Emmaus disciples had hoped to see redemption in Jesus, but their hopes were crushed by his death (24:21). (CC)

Ps 111:9a (110:9) has four identical Greek words in the LXX; only the verbs differ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:69 *horn*. Indicates strength, as in the horn of an animal (Dt 33:17; Ps 22:21; Mic 4:13). Jesus, the Messiah from the house of David, has the power to save. (CSB)

ἤγειρεν κέρασ σωτηρίας—“This word [κέρας], used for animal horns, is also a symbol of divine or human strength. In the OT it depicts God’s power in a prophetic action (1 Kgs. 22:11) and is also a direct term for power. (CC)

"To visit is nothing else than to come to us, to lay before us and proclaim to us the wholesome Word, whereby we are saved." In order to prepare this salvation for us, the Lord has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David, His servant. As in Ps. 2, the word horn signifies a strong, firm, unwavering help. Our Lord is a strong, powerful Defender, the Redeemer out of the race of David that brought us full salvation. Horn' in the Hebrew language means power, defiance, rule, whereon one may rely. . . . But He adds: A horn of saving or salvation. Other kingdoms have their names and goods from which they are called. Some kingdoms are large, have much goods, many people, great honor, but only temporal goods; but this Kingdom is called a kingdom of salvation, a kingdom of grace, a kingdom of life, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of truth, and whatever serves unto salvation. . . . God has here established a principality and kingdom, in which there is nothing but welfare and salvation. (Kretzmann)

This verse parallels Ezek 29:21, where God raises up a “horn” in the “house” of his covenant people. Ps 132:17 (131:17) also speaks of God raising up a “horn of David” to benefit his people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:70 This verse is parenthetical in the sentence structure but expresses an extremely important thought. It modifies the three verbs in 1:68 and 69 (ἐπεσκέψατο, ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν, and ἤγειρεν) by emphasizing that these events are in continuity with the OT and in fulfillment of Scripture. (CC)

These great blessings are the result of the promises which the Lord made through the mouths of His holy prophets, from the beginning of the world. The culmination of all the prophecies is always the same theme, salvation through the Messiah, liberation from the enemies and from the hands of all those that are filled with hatred toward us, the believers in Him. The spiritual enemies have been unceasing in their plans and attacks against the children of God, but God has carried out the plans of His mercy toward us, as to the fathers of old that trusted in Him. For He remembered His holy covenant and the oath which He swore to Abraham, that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. (Kretzmann)

1:72-73 Micah 7:20 reflects the same theological themes. In Ps 105:8–9 (104:8–9), God declares that he will “remember” his “covenant” and his “oath” to Israel’s patriarchs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:72 *holy covenant* – Central to this hymn is God’s remembrance of his holy covenant (1:72b) and the oath he swore to Abraham (1:73). Surprisingly, διαθήκη (“covenant”) is used in the synoptics only at the institution of the Lord’s Supper and here in the Benedictus. “Holy covenant” expresses that it is from God. This is the covenant promised to Abraham, as is confirmed in the next verse by ὄρκον, but it also embraces the Passover, the Sinai covenant, and the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 34. “Remember” (μνησθῆναι) is an OT theme in which either God remembers us for salvation or we remember his saving acts. Here it is the former. Remembrance is an important concept in table fellowship language, both at the Last Supper and in the ongoing Eucharist of the church (cf. Lk 22:19, ἀνάμνησις). It is also part of the hermeneutic of Luke’s gospel, as in 24:6, 8, where the women are instructed by the angels to recall Jesus’ words in Galilee about his suffering, death, and resurrection. (CC)

The use of “covenant” (διαθήκη) suggests a link between the Benedictus, the series of covenants in the OT, and the Last Supper. The common theme is sacrifice. The covenant with Abraham was a bloody one, sealed by the presence of the Lord in the smoking pot as it passed through the two cut pieces of the animal (Gen 15:17–21). This bloody covenant was applied to each individual male through the circumcision of the foreskin of the flesh. Abraham’s covenant of blood signified a right relationship between God and his people. This was a covenant of promise that would be brought to completion in the blood of the Messiah. God’s presence in the smoking pot assured that this was true. (CC)

In Lev 26:42, God promises to “remember” his “covenant” with Israel’s patriarchs. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:73 ὄρκον stands in apposition to διαθήκης, “attracted from a genitive of apposition (to διαθήκης) to the case of the relative pronoun” (I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 92). Together, they form the central thought of the Benedictus: God remembers his covenant. This the only occurrence of ὄρκος in Luke, and it occurs only once in Acts (2:30), concerning the oath God made to David that one of his descendents would be king. By using “oath” as a synonym for “covenant,” the Benedictus ties together the promise to Abraham, Jeremiah, and David as it is now fulfilled in Christ, the King. See Heb. 6:13–20 on the oath of promise to Abraham. (CC)

As a result of these promises God has given to the believers to serve Him without fear, since they are torn out of the hands of all their enemies. Such service may now be performed in holiness, in personal cleanness and sinlessness, and in righteousness, in the right relationship toward God, a perfect description of a New Testament Christian, Eph. 1:24. That he says He would deliver us from all our enemies must again be understood that this Kingdom is in battle and in the midst of the enemies; but they shall not win, but lose; and this deliverance and salvation shall serve that we serve Him eternally without fear. . . . The word 'without fear' includes that we are sure of the goods of this life and of that yonder. For a Christian is sure and certain that his sins are forgiven, though he still feels them; he is also sure that death cannot harm him, the devil cannot vanquish him, the world cannot prevail against him. (Kretzmann)

For the oath God made to Abraham, see Gen 12:3; 22:16–18; and 26:3–4. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:74 *we being delivered*. No doubt including liberation from all kinds of oppression and bondage as well as deliverance from sin. (CSB)

λατρεύειν—This is the only present infinitive in this section and suggests continuation, i.e., continual service in the presence of God in vocation in everyday life. (CC)

All of God’s covenant and victories on Israel’s behalf had one purpose – to redeem His people and enable them to serve Him freely. Such service was characterized by holy and righteous living. (TLSB)

1:76 *called a prophet of the Most High*. Whereas Jesus will be called “the Son of the Most High.” (CSB)

Zechariah knows the prophecies that his son will fulfill from Is 40:1 and Mal 3:1. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

From a contemplation of the wonderful gifts of the redemption Zacharias turns to a prophecy concerning the future of the son that had been born to him according to the promise of the Lord. John would be a prophet in the highest and fullest sense of the word, Matt. 11:9.) (Kretzmann)

prepare his ways. ὁδοῦς—The “way(s)” will be a prominent theme throughout Luke and Acts. It is the way of catechesis; for example, Jesus in truth teaches “the way of God” (20:21). It is also the way that leads to Jerusalem and the cross, so it is part of the journey motif. The word occurs again in 1:79. (CC)

John’s mission is to “prepare his ways” (1:76; ἐτοιμάσαι ὁδοῦς αὐτοῦ). The “way” is catechetical language from the OT. Moses encourages the Israelites to “remember all the way [τὴν ὁδὸν in the LXX] that Yahweh your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut 8:2). Then he exhorts them to “keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, by walking in his ways [ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς in the LXX] and by fearing him” (Deut 8:6). The way was both a journey in faith and a catechetical lifestyle, i.e., a path to the Promised Land (on which the Israelites were “catechized” through the Word of God that came to them through Moses and through suffering) and a posture of confession in which they should walk. (CC)

John’s purpose is to “give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins.” “Knowledge” is a Lukan synonym for faith (cf. 1:4); it is drawn from the OT Wisdom literature, like the “two ways” theme just discussed. “Knowledge” is the theme of Proverbs (Prov 1:7) and Ecclesiastes (12:9) and is prominent in many psalms and other passages. Wisdom themes such as “knowledge” and the “two ways” are most frequent in the OT Writings, but they are rooted in the Torah and God’s covenant of grace with Israel. (CC)

His life’s work would consist in going before the face of the Lord as a true herald to prepare His ways before Him, as the prophets had said, Is. 40, 3; Mal. 3, 1. And when the proclamation of the Law would have prepared the hearts in removing all self-righteousness and supposed piety. (Kretzmann)

1:77 *knowledge...salvation...forgiveness* – These were central to the Gospel message and are themes that echo the promise of a new covenant (Jer 31:33-34). (TLSB)

John is to come and give the people of God a knowledge, which is not to be a knowledge of sin, of wrath, of death, but a knowledge of salvation, that is, such preaching from which one learns how to be saved and delivered from death and sin. That is an art of which the world knows not one word. (Kretzmann)

The prepositional phrase “in the forgiveness of their sins” describes the content of salvation. Forgiveness of sins is a Lukan theme that is first announced here. To give salvation to the world is the essence of the ministries of John and Jesus. Salvation’s significance is heightened by its association with the forgiveness of sins. The connection is first made by Luke in the ministry of John the Baptist (Lk 3:3–6). The proclamation of forgiveness reaches fulfillment in the messianic ministry of Jesus. It is a major thrust of the programmatic sermon in 4:16–30. Luke’s use of “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) in 4:18 and 24:47 links together the first and last proclaimed words of Jesus in the gospel and shows that forgiveness is essential to Luke’s portrayal of the teaching of Jesus as a proclamation of salvation, “God’s ‘liberation’ of men *from sin’s bondage.*”

1:78 *tender mercy* – σπλάγχνα ἐλέους—These are essentially synonyms, hence “merciful compassion” instead of the literal “bowels of mercy.” (CC)

sunrise. A reference to the coming of the Messiah (see also similar figures in Nu 24:17; Isa 9:2; 60:1; Mal 4:2). Zechariah not only praised his own son, the “prophet of the Most High” (vv. 76–77), but also gave honor to the coming Messiah (vv. 78–79). (CSB)

The dawning of a new era (cf Is 9:2; 60:1). (TLSB)

This preaching is made possible through the bowels, the heart of mercy, of our God. His whole heart yearns toward us with inexpressible love and tender mercy, and for the sake of that the Daystar from on high has visited us, the light, star, or sun is risen upon us in Jesus the Savior. This true morning star with the rays of God's divine love illumined the darkness which had been caused by sin and enmity toward Him. (Kretzmann)

1:79 *those who sit in darkness*. The lost, separated from God (Isa 9:1–2; Mt 4:16). (CSB)

This anticipates the fulfillment of the word given in Ps 107:10 (106:10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

The result is that those that sat in such darkness and shadow of death have felt the light and the warmth of His glow, Is. 60, 1. 2. Those unable to find their way in the darkness of spiritual death, He will awaken to true life, illumine them with the light of the Gospel, and guide them to the way of peace, Rom. 5, 1. It is a beautiful and effective, as well as complete description of the work which God performs in us through the Gospel. This certainly means, as I think, cutting off all merit and good works from the forgiveness of sins, in order that no one may say: I have earned it. ... Remission of sins has only one reason, namely, because God is merciful, and out of such mercy has sent and given us His Son that He might pay for us and we should be saved through Him. Therefore it reads thus: Forgiveness of sins is not the result of our merit, nor of our good works, but of the sincere mercy of God, that He has loved us of His own free will. We had with our sins earned the fire of hell, but God looked upon His boundless mercy. That is the reason why He sent His Son and for the sake of His Son forgives us our sins. (Kretzmann)

peace. The final phrase of the hymn (1:79) speaks of the appearing of messianic light “to direct our feet in the way of peace” (εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης). God’s goal is to bring peace to his creation and to guide his people to peace. Peace will be a major theme throughout the gospel, e.g., in the angels’ announcement at Jesus’ birth (2:14), in Simeon’s song at Jesus’ presentation in the temple (2:29), in the greeting of the seventy(-two) disciples as they go out proclaiming what Jesus proclaimed (10:5–6), in the exclamation of the crowds at Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem (19:38), in Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem (19:42), and in his final greeting to the apostles after the resurrection (24:36). Since Jesus has gone along his path, our way is one of peace. John’s catechesis of repentance and forgiveness prepares for the Dawn from on high. Jesus’ whole birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension is “the way” and is the basis for Christian catechesis into the way of God, the way of life (cf. 20:21). (CC)

Contrast this to the judgment on the way of the wicked in Is 59:8. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

1:80 *grew and became strong in spirit*. Echoes descriptions of Samuel’s development (1Sm 2:26; 3:19), as well as Jesus’ (Lk 2:52). (TLSB)

was in the wilderness. John’s parents, old at his birth, probably died while he was young, and he apparently grew up in the Desert of Judea, which lies between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. (CSB)

Throughout Israel's history, the wilderness serves as a place of spiritual formation and testing in God's presence. Cf Nu 14:33; 1Ki 19:4–18. As such, this was an appropriate place for young John to live. (TLSB)

until the day of his public appearance. John's preaching and announcing the coming of the Messiah marked his public appearance. He was about 30 years old when he began his ministry. (CSB)

1:67–80 The theme of ch 1 is fulfillment. God faithfully keeps His promises by sending one like Elijah to prepare His people, and then by announcing the advent of the Son of God and Savior of all humankind. Nothing is impossible with God! Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we are bold to hope for an even more wonderful fulfillment of divine promises, including our glorification. • Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of Israel, for You have visited and redeemed Your people and raised up a horn of salvation for us. You have assured us that our final day of salvation will someday be completed, when Christ returns. Therefore, come, Lord Jesus. Come quickly! Amen. (TLSB)