

**“NO OTHER NAME”
LUKE’S RECENTRALIZATION
OF THE CULT OF ISRAEL**

Part 2 (Chapter 1)

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CHAPTER ONE

**“Holy Is His Name!”
Reaffirming and Reforming the Messianic Hope of Israel**

The collection of announcements and hymns which follows Luke’s prologue to begin his two-volume set underscores the significance of two births. Zechariah and Mary understand and explain the births of their respective sons as fulfillments of Yahweh’s promises to Abraham and David (Luke 1:54-55,68-69). While functioning in position and purpose as a Hellenistic *prooimia*, Luke’s “preface” immediately plunges his readers into the recorded memory of God’s people.¹

Angelic appearances and prophetic priestly oracles announce and recollect the LORD’s intervention in the individual lives of righteous servants to foretell and enact a larger plan in the history of the people of God in Israel and scattered throughout the Roman world. The unmistakable resonance between the birth accounts of John and Jesus on the one hand, and the Deuteronomistic history’s record of the odd beginnings of Samson (Judges 13:2-25) and Samuel (1 Samuel 1:1-2:11, 18-21) on the other, triggers expectations of a divine visit within Luke’s story world.

By retrieving the memory of Yahweh’s promises, Luke establishes an *interpretive context* of continuity with Israel’s history, and intertextuality with Israel’s scripture. Through direct quotation, allusion and, most uniquely, by giving Scripture one voice to speak as one body of writings, Luke defines

and progressively clarifies the messianic expectations of the characters inside and the readers outside his narrative.² By revealing more recent promises made and fulfilled within his account (διήγησιν), Luke establishes an *interpretive conduct* for displaying the “things fulfilled” (πεπληροφορημένων) as “the plan/will of God” (ἡ βουλή τοῦ θεοῦ) for the people who bear the LORD’s name (Acts 15:14).³

Luke follows the pattern set forth in his prologue which combines continuity with his sources (καθὼς παρέδοσαν ἡμῖν; Luke 1:2) and a narrative arrangement unique to his own investigation (ἔδοξε καμοὶ παρηκολουθηκότι; Luke 1:3). In form and content, Luke develops an engaging two-part comparison and contrast between John the prophet-baptizer and Jesus the son-savior.⁴ Luke’s formative characterization sets Jesus at center-stage, while adding depth and dimension through multiple points of view to create ambiguity, irony and suspense for the shaping and reshaping of reader expectations about Jesus.⁵

The two-part *prooimia* coheres through the constancy of its two main characters and its two-step alternating pattern of attention from John to Jesus, illustrating both the continuity of their message as *prophets* and the superiority of Jesus as *son*. By pacing events with (ἐγένετο) and (καί), setting historical context and marking important scene shifts with three *dramatis personae*, and concluding nine of ten episodes with departures or summaries (Luke 1:23,38-39,56,80; 2:20,39-40,51-52; 3:18-20; 4:13), Luke composes a tight overture for his two volumes.⁶

Through a supporting cast of characters, most of whom are praying, torah-abiding Jewish worshippers, Luke demonstrates the spiritual/cultic nature of the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promises. The promised salvation has the expressed purpose of affecting a true, unhindered and enduring worship of the LORD by the LORD’s people (Luke 1:69-75). Indeed, Luke’s two volumes document the eschatological fulfillment of that promise by: exposing Israel’s cultic sin or false worship; re-identifying the proper place of worship around “the NAME”; and re-forming the people of God and their leadership through “the preaching of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus’ name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47).⁷ This chapter shows Luke’s reaffirmation of Israel’s messianic hope in a bold characterization of Jesus as the long-awaited Davidide, introduced by God’s messengers as “Christ the LORD!”

Unlike his sources, Luke begins at the center of Israel's socio-political and cultic life "in the temple," then completes his introduction by incorporating the existing accounts of John the Baptist and Jesus "in the desert." The following chart outlines Luke's "preface" depicted in two parts within these two primary settings: 1) "in the temple of the LORD" (Luke 1:5-2:52); and 2) "in the desert," (Luke 3:1-4:13).

Part One
LUKE'S UNIQUE INTRODUCTION OF JOHN AND JESUS
"In the Temple of the LORD"
(Luke 1:5-2:52)

1:5-7 Brief Dramatis Personae

- I. 1. A. 1:5-25 Gabriel's Announcement to Zechariah
- II. 1. B. 1:26-38 An Angel's Announcement to Mary
- III. C. 1:39-45 Mary Visits Elizabeth
- B' 1:46-55 Mary's Song
- IV. 2. A. 1:57-66 The Birth and Naming of John

A' 1:67-79 Zechariah's Song

2:1-3 Brief Dramatis Personae

- V. 2. B. 2:1-21 The Birth and Angelic Naming of Jesus
- VI. B" 2:22-39 Presentation to and
Prophetic Response of
Simeon and Anna
- VII. D. 2:40-52 Jesus Answers Teachers
of the Law About the
Things of His Father

Part Two
LUKE'S INCORPORATION OF EXTANT INTRODUCTIONS OF JOHN
AND JESUS
"In the Desert"
(Luke 3:1-4:13)

3:1-2 Brief Dramatis Personae

- VIII. A. 3:3-20 Summary of John the Prophet's
 Preparation of the People for the
 LORD in the Desert
- IX. B. 3:21-38 The Ratification of Jesus'
 Sonship by the Heavenly Voice
 at His Baptism and Summary of
 His Genealogy
- X. C. 4:1-13 A Diabolically-Designed
 Test of Jesus' Sonship
 in the Desert

Having drawn out the staff lines for the musical notation of Luke's overture, we now listen for the movement and theme(s) which thread the two parts into the whole. First we hear the supra-natural *voices* (be they heavenly or hellish). The alternating two-step progression of the narrative from John to Jesus follows next, comparing and contrasting the promised and fulfilled arrivals of both the prophet-preparer-baptizer and the prophet-son-messiah. Last comes the sustaining, center-most chord of the LORD's oaths to Abraham and David, namely, his promise to re-establish and re-centralize the authentic, fearless worship of the people of God around "the name of the LORD," "the holy one of Israel"!

Part One: Luke's Unique Introduction of John and Jesus
"In the Temple of the LORD" (Luke 1:5-2:52)

Luke begins by setting a cast of characters in the panorama of Herod's reign in Judea (Luke 1:5), but quickly arrests his readers' attention

by “zeroing in” on Zechariah’s family. The narrator gives glowing commentary to Zechariah’s and Elizabeth’s priestly pedigrees and torah-abiding piety (Luke 1:6), but upsets the perfect family portrait by highlighting the absence of children (Luke 1:7). The specific wording of “barrenness” (στει̅ρα) and “having advanced (beyond child-bearing) days” (προβεβηκότες ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις) makes the allusion to Sarah and Abraham unmistakable (Gen. 18:11).

Luke adds further emphasis by slowing the pace of his narrative to “real time” with an extraordinary dialogue. “An angel of the LORD” appears to Zechariah and speaks in response to the prayers Zechariah has offered in his priestly service at the temple of the LORD (Luke 1:13). The allusion to Sarah and Abraham turns out to have been a preview of Zechariah’s unbelief, which is indicated by quite similar responses to the heavenly voices bringing the birth announcements (Gen. 17:17; 18:11-12; Luke 1:18). Only after Zechariah’s question, “How (or by who’s authority) shall I know this?” (Luke 1:18), does the angel give his name, a name revealed only to Zechariah in the narrative (Luke 1:19) and to Luke’s readers through the narrator (Luke 1:26). Neither Mary nor the shepherds are shown to have known or required the angel’s name.

1. Gabriel: First Heavenly Voice

Gabriel, “who stands in the presence of God” (Luke 1:11,19,26) links the two diptychs as the herald sent to publish the “glad tidings” (εὐαγγελίσασθαι; Luke 1:19; 2:10) of the LORD’s power and purpose through the births of John and Jesus. Zechariah and Mary hear instruction and comment from Gabriel which is similar both in content and order, including: 1) a reassuring directive, “don’t be afraid!”; 2) the announcement itself that a son will be born; 3) the particular name to be given; 4) a testimony as to the nature of his future greatness; 5) a question for Gabriel; and 6) Gabriel’s departure.⁸

The fact of the angel’s name should not go unnoticed.⁹ Like Daniel, Zechariah sees Gabriel in a vision responding to his prayers at the evening incense offering.¹⁰ Like Daniel, Mary receives the blessing of God’s favor in the angel’s greeting (Dan. 9:23; Luke 1:28). By naming the angel, Luke establishes a strong link for intertextual conversation, not the direct

eavesdropping of quotation, but the more subtle resonating echo of contextual allusion.¹¹

Gabriel is sent to bring “insight and understanding” (Daniel 9:20-23), answering Daniel’s prayer of repentance for himself, Jerusalem and the people who bear the LORD’s name (Dan. 9:17-19). The answer is a puzzling mix of eschatological hope and desolation: Israel’s sin will be atoned for, restoring Jerusalem and its worship, but the anointed, most holy one who brings it about will be cut off, and the city and its sanctuary will be destroyed (Dan. 9:24-27).

The correspondence of contexts is remarkable. The specific prayer of Zechariah for a son is answered simultaneously with the prayers of “all the multitude of people” (Luke 1:10) to bring about that for which Daniel had prayed on behalf of “all Israel” (Dan. 9:7,11). Specifically, the answer brings the salvation of the LORD’s people through the forgiveness of their cultic sins of unbelief and idolatry, restoring authentic worship “wherever the LORD causes his name to dwell” (Exod. 20:24) in the city and among the people who bear that name (Dan. 9:4-19; Luke 1:8-17,67-69).

Decrees of pagan kings (Dan. 9:25; Luke 2:1-3) define broader contexts in both the Danielic and Lukan settings for the reproach of God’s people before the nations (Dan. 9:16) to be reversed to “good news . . . for all people” (Luke 2:10). The one who met Daniel among the LORD’s people in exile to explain his vision of the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple by the coming of Messiah the Prince (מָשִׁיחַ בְּנֵי דָוִד), this same Gabriel, reappears in Luke’s narrative to announce the arrival of “a savior, who is Christ (and) LORD” (Dan. 9:25; Luke 2:11)!¹² As we will see later in part two of Luke’s overture, Gabriel’s stunning announcement will be ratified and challenged by other supranatural voices.

2. John to Jesus: Striking Similarity and Superiority

As the chart above illustrates, narrative form backlights Luke’s comparison and contrast of John with Jesus. Part one is uniquely Lukan and comprised of two parallel diptychs first announcing then narrating the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. They are interlocked by the episode of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and the chiasmic structure of Mary’s and Zechariah’s songs. The angelic announcements seem equal in form and

length, but the alternating two-step pattern — Zechariah to Mary; John to Jesus — is reversed by the order of their hymns. When the two-step pattern is reestablished in the birth stories, the weight of emphasis obviously shifts to Jesus in the comparative length of the episodes concerning their births, naming and circumcisions.

The stories of Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38) are epexegetical, adding contour and complexity to Mary's understanding of her son's messianic mission recorded earlier in her hymn (Luke 1:46-55). Luke adds nothing beyond the second portion of Zechariah's song (Luke 1:76-79) to his readers' understanding of John's role. The chiasmic order of Mary's and Zechariah's hymns is repeated in the very structure of Zechariah's song itself. He sings first about Jesus, "a horn of salvation . . . in the house of his servant David" (Luke 1:69), then about John, "a prophet of the Most High (who) will go before the LORD to prepare the way for him" (Luke 1:76). While Luke continues the comparison with similar childhood summaries (Luke 1:80; 2:40,52), the contrast is weighted further by the story of Jesus' boy-come-of-age encounter with Israel's teachers in the temple (Luke 2:41-51). Nothing is recorded of John's interim years.

Circumstantial parallels of difference also catch the reader's eye to heighten this sense of movement from John to Jesus:

1. John's story begins in the temple (Luke 1:8-22) and moves to the desert (Luke 1:80), while Jesus' story begins in the Galilean countryside (Luke 1:26-38) and moves to the temple (Luke 2:21-50).
2. Zechariah and Elizabeth are of priestly descent (Luke 1:5); Mary and Joseph are of Davidic descent (Luke 1:27; 2:4).
3. Zechariah and Elizabeth become parents late in marriage by God's power over the natural barrier of barrenness in advanced age. Mary and Joseph, only betrothed to be married, become parents by God's power over the natural barrier of not having consummated their marriage sexually (Luke 1:35-38).

Differences in the parallel angelic dialogues further illuminate the similarity, yet superiority, of Jesus' mission to John's. Startled by their encounters, Zechariah and Mary are comforted by the angel's words, "Fear not" (Luke 1:13, 30), but only Mary is greeted as "the favored one" (Luke

1:28). The angel promises “greatness” (μέγας) for both sons, but steadies the bright spotlight of messianic titles on Jesus: “son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32, 35); “son of David” (Luke 1:32); “holy one” (Luke 1:35); “Christ the LORD” (Luke 2:11).

Zechariah and Mary both respond to the angel’s promises with questions, but only to set Mary’s belief over against Zechariah’s unbelief. Zechariah has both the authenticating context of the temple (see Isa. 6:1-13) and the angel’s name to answer his doubt, Mary has neither. Her question does not challenge whether the angel’s words will materialize, but in what manner it will “be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:34-38). Elizabeth’s commentary underscores Mary’s faith as a model: “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the LORD” (Luke 1:45). Zechariah and Mary both sing in confirmation of the angel’s promise, but Mary sings first, in anticipation, while Zechariah sings after the fact.

3. Jesus: Christ the LORD, Son of God, Savior

Luke further shifts the weight of his *sygkrisis* between John and Jesus from comparison to contrast, by interrupting his diptych of birth stories with an amended *dramatis personae* (Luke 2:1-3). This second cast of characters features Jesus’ Davidic lineage, instead of John’s priestly family as in the first. The panorama expands dramatically beyond the parochial reign of Herod to Caesar Augustus’ decree throughout “all the (known) world” (οἰκουμένην; Luke 2:1). Luke is preparing his readers for bigger things.

Like John’s, Jesus’ promised arrival is fulfilled (Luke 2:4-7), but its magnitude is greater in almost every respect — similar, but superior. At John’s birth, “neighbors and relatives” rejoice with Elizabeth and Zechariah, while “a multitude of heavenly soldiers suddenly appear” to celebrate Christ’s arrival (Luke 1:58,64; 2:13). “Fear” comes with the news of John’s birth as it spreads to the neighbors in “the hill country of Judea”; “terror” seizes the shepherds, who first hear the “good news” of Messiah’s birth and who then “spread the word” (Luke 2:17) to “all the people” (Luke 1:65; 2:9-10). This pattern of escalation, noticeable in the first diptych, crescendos at a fevered pitch between the birth stories of the second diptych to zenith in the angels’ song celebrating “Messiah LORD’s” birth.

“Glory (to God) in the highest!” (Luke 2:14; 19:38) is the refrain later recalled by “the whole *multitude* of disciples, *praising God* (Luke 2:13; 19:37) at the “visitation” of “the One who comes in the name of the LORD” (Luke 13:35; 19:38; both quote Ps. 118:26).

Within the framework of the second and third casts of characters (Luke 2:1-3 and 3:1-2), Luke’s readers hear nothing directly of John. The entire focus is on the one Gabriel names “Jesus” (Luke 1:31; 2:21), “Christ” (Luke 2:10), “LORD” (Luke 2:10). The narrator marks “the days of fulfillment” (Luke 2:6,21-22) at both Jesus’ birth and presentation to close the loop between the angel’s promise and the events that made the promise good (Luke 1:31; 2:6,10,21-22). Both Jesus’ birth and naming, first to the shepherds, then at his presentation in the temple, catalyze acts of authentic worship witnessed in: the praises of the angels and Simeon (Luke 2:13-14,28-32); Mary’s and Joseph’s sacrifice of turtledoves and pigeons at the presentation of their firstborn in accordance with the law of the LORD (Luke 2:21-24); the prayers and fasting of Anna (Luke 2:36-38); and the annual journey of Mary and Joseph to the temple at the Feast of Passover (Luke 2:41). This promise/fulfillment pattern culminating in authentic worship offered by believing Israel at its worship center, in keeping with the law of Moses, traverses the entire Lukan landscape even to Paul’s final visit to Jerusalem and its temple (Acts 21:17-26).

The Danielic backdrop implied by Luke’s specific identification of the Lord’s angel crystallizes in the ironic announcements which mark Jesus’ arrival. The Messiah Prince (Dan. 9:25), identified as *χριστὸς κύριος* (Luke 2:11) by the reappearance of Gabriel himself, is brought to Jerusalem in accordance with the law of the LORD (Luke 2:22-24), but received there amidst the first indications that he would be “opposed” (Luke 2:34), even “cut off” as Gabriel had explained to Daniel (Dan. 9:26; Luke 2:35). Simeon, having seen the *τὸν χριστὸν κυρίου* (Luke 2:26), blesses Mary as Gabriel did, but adds the painful prophesy of a “sign” and “sword” (Luke 2:34-35).

The narrator’s description of Simeon places him favorably alongside Mary’s model of faithfulness as the “Lord’s bondservant” (Luke 1:38,48; 2:29). Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; 2:25), Simeon patiently awaits the fulfillment of the Lord’s word (Luke 1:38,45; 2:25,29) in righteous devotion to the Law (Luke 2:25). By drawing Simeon and Mary so close together on such equal terms, the narrator prepares Luke’s

readers to give Simeon a priority hearing. Like Mary, Simeon praises God for keeping both personal and corporate promises (Luke 1:48-49,54-55; 2:26,29-32), but adds Isaiah's commentary to the astonishing news brought to Mary by the shepherds. Mary's son is the embodiment of God's salvation "prepared in the presence of all peoples," for "the glory of his people Israel," and "a light of revelation to the Gentiles" (Luke 2:31-32; Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). Here, Simeon gives Luke's readers their first inkling of the controversy that will swirl around Paul in Luke's second volume: "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, they also will listen" (Acts 28:28).

Holding Jesus in his arms, Simeon tells Mary that "this one" is the instrument of God's "mighty deeds" of which she sang (Luke 1:49,51; Acts 2:22). By her firstborn, called "holy to the LORD" (Luke 2:23; Ex 13:2, 12), the one whom Mary named holy (Luke 1:49; Ps. 111:9) "brought down" "the falling," and "exalted" "the rising" in Israel (Luke 1:52; 2:34). Jesus is set as "a sign of opposition" dividing "the many in Israel" like "the sword which will pierce through (Mary's) life" (Luke 2:34-35). As in her song, Mary is identified with corporate Israel (Luke 1:48,54), a symbol of the heart rending which will reveal the thoughts of "the many in Israel," namely, the nature of their worship (Luke 2:35). Here again, Luke chooses a metaphor from Israel's scripture — the condition of the heart, divided or whole towards God (i.e. Pss. 24:3-6; 51:17; 78:8,17-18,36-37; 86:11-12; 119:2,7,10,69-70; Isa. 6:10; 29:13; Jer. 11:7-8; 17:5; 24:7).¹³

Similar childhood summaries (Luke 2:40,52) "frame in" the final episode in the first movement of Luke's overture. The opening frame recalls John's childhood summary word-for-word in its initial phrase "the child continued to grow and become strong" (Luke 1:80; 2:40), then diverges, in keeping with the pattern of escalation from John to Jesus. Luke's readers are prepared for an immediate illustration of Jesus' "increasing wisdom" (Luke 2:40) while anticipating something more about John "at the day of his commissioning to Israel in the desert" (Luke 1:80).

Mary's and Joseph's annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast (Luke 2:41) is in keeping with their careful attention to the Lord's law at Jesus' presentation (Luke 2:22-24). The presentation of the "firstborn" and the celebration of Passover are acts of authentic worship remembering the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egypt on the day following his protection of Israel's firstborn sons from the final plague of

death upon all the firstborn sons of Egypt (Exod. 12:1-13:3,12; Lev. 12:6-8; Num. 3:13; 8:17). The Passover and Exodus are at the heart of Israel's messianic hope and, as we shall see, Luke's characterization of Jesus.

With this brief episode, Luke introduces Jesus' understanding alongside the lack of understanding about him. Jesus' "necessary" role (δεῖ) in his "Father's" affairs (Luke 2:49) among the teachers of Israel will be met with "amazement" (Luke 2:47) and "ignorance" (Luke 2:50) by those who "have been anxiously searching" for him (Luke 2:48). This encounter "in the temple" foreshadows the climax of Luke's first volume at Jesus' return to the temple, "teaching daily" (Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:37; 22:53), and "answering well" (Luke 20:39-40) all the questions of Israel's teachers (Luke 20:1-47). The closing frame recalls the opening summary's description of Jesus' increasing wisdom under God's favor, but also retrieves "all the words Mary was guarding in her heart" (Luke 2:19,51), words she had heard about her son from the shepherds' reports and now from his own lips.

Part Two: Luke's Incorporation of Extant Introductions of John and Jesus "In the Desert" (Luke 3:1-4:13)

Luke forms the second movement of his overture from extant introductions to the prophetic ministries of John and Jesus. A third *dramatis personae* clearly marks the shift in time and immediate context to "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar . . . in the desert (near) the district around the Jordan" (Luke 3:1-3). The narrator "fast-forwards" past the transition of power in Rome with only a brief acknowledgement of the Roman "hegemony" (ἡγεμονίας) under Tiberius. The events of real importance arise from the first movement of Luke's overture as the dramatic flow slows to direct reader attention again to "Zechariah's son," whose "day of commissioning to Israel" (Luke 1:80) has arrived. With strong allusion to Jeremiah's prophetic call (Jer. 1:2,4), "the word of God (comes) to (John) in the desert" (Luke 3:2). Though other supernatural voices will speak in the Lukan narrative, prophets now replace angels as the Lord's messengers throughout the remainder of the two volumes.

1. John the Forerunner: Fulfillment and Foreshadowing

Gabriel's announcement (Luke 1:15-17) and Zecharias' prophetic praise (Luke 1:76-77) are fulfilled in Luke's summary of John's message and "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3,7-14). John's words (Luke 3:7-14) are placed as a midrash of Isaiah (Isa. 40:3; Luke 3:4) to recollect Israel's prophetic history and to set forth the pattern of prophets in Luke's continuation of that history. As *forerunner* and *preparer* (Luke 1:17,76), John's preaching clearly anticipates Jesus': call to repent (Luke 3:3; 13:3-5); search for fruit (Luke 3:9; 6:43-45; 13:6-9); instruction to give goods (Luke 3:11; 6:29-30); saying about stones (Luke 3:8; 19:40); and baptism of fire (Luke 3:16; 12:49).

John's baptism of repentance is offered to "the multitudes," introducing a cross-section of audiences which will reappear in the progress of the narrative. The presence of "tax-gathers" (τελωῶναι; Luke 3:12) and "soldiers" (στρατευόμενοι; Luke 3:14) foreshadow Jesus' encounters with Levi (Luke 5:27-32), Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10) and Roman centurions (Luke 7:2-10; 23:47), lending credibility to Simeon's description of a "salvation . . . prepared in the presence of all peoples" (Luke 2:30-31). Isaiah's commentary (Luke 3:6; Isa. 40:5) and John's preview of Christ's baptism of Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16-17) lay in coordinates for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on "all flesh" (πᾶσαν σάρκα; Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28) in Luke's second volume. This salvation will be extended to "all who will call on the name of the LORD" (Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32).

Throughout Luke-Acts, John's baptism identifies initiates to the eschatological community of God's people (Luke 3:7; 7:29-30; Acts 1:5; 11:15-17; 19:1-6). The "thoughts from many hearts" (Luke 2:35; 3:15; 5:22; 7:29-30) are revealed — either to wonder about the Christ (Luke 3:15) or to "set aside the plan of God" (Luke 7:29-30) — by their response to the gospel (Luke 3:18). The wonder in the hearts of "the people" about John (Luke 3:15) foreshadows John's question about Jesus (Luke 7:19-20): "Are you the coming one?" It also recalls the question asked about John at his birth (Luke 1:66): "What will this child be?" Jesus answers both questions with the words of the prophets at the coming and going of John's disciples later in Luke's narrative (Luke 7:17-30).

Jesus and John not only interpret Isaiah (35:5; 61:1) and Malachi (3:1) to Luke's readers, they anticipate the prophetic ministry of the apostles, who will continue their call of repentance to Israel for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 24:47).¹⁴ "The way of the Lord" is posted with this

warning: “One is coming . . . and his winnowing fork is in his hand to thoroughly clear his threshing floor” (Luke 3:16-17)!

“Herod the tetrarch” appears briefly as a flat, functional character endowed with evil credentials, not the least of which is imprisoning John (Luke 3:19-20). As a historian, Luke is treating Herod with some contempt by relegating him to the periphery of events in Galilee and Judea. At each of his few appearances, Herod is the thoroughly corrupt embodiment of *realpolitik*, doing whatever is expedient to buttress his arrogance and power (Luke 9:7-9; 13:31-33; 23:6-12), especially abetting the executions of John and Jesus. Luke’s final analysis, however, depicts Herod’s complicity in the death of Jesus as ancillary to the greater plan of God (Acts 4:27-28) to make Jesus both LORD and Christ (Acts 2:22-24,36)!

2. Jesus the Son: Anointed With Heavenly Voice and Spirit

With the use of ἐγένετο (Luke 3:21) and repetition of the aorist infinitive βαπτισθῆναι (Luke 3:7, 21), Luke opens a new episode within the same setting. Again, Luke’s form indicates continuity and contrast between John and Jesus. “At the time everyone was being baptized, also Jesus was baptized” (Luke 3:21), but not by John. Luke sequesters John from the scene to depict Jesus’ baptism as solely with and by the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22). Gabriel’s promise is ratified (Luke 1:32,35) and Jesus’ prayer is answered by the physical and audible response of heaven. Heaven opens, the Holy Spirit descends and the heavenly voice intrudes into the narrative, not merely to commission a prophet, but to honor a son (Luke 3:21-22)!

Luke crafts the scene of Jesus’ baptism with incredible economy. The sound of the heavenly voice and the symbol of the Holy Spirit’s descent as a dove are enough to mark indelibly the imagination of Luke’s readers about Jesus. Twice, they will hear heaven, without the mediation of angels or prophets, directly ratify Jesus’ divine sonship (Luke 3:22; 9:35) amidst questions about his identity (Luke 3:15; 9:18-20).¹⁵ Both his baptism and transfiguration depict Jesus continuing in prayer (Luke 3:21; 9:18,29), foretelling his example to the disciples at the Mount of Olives, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40,46), and anticipating the severest tests of his identity and mission as the Son of God (Luke 4:1-13; 9:22,31,44,51; 22:39-46).

Though somewhat anticlimactic after the drama of heavenly testimony, Luke follows the accepted practice of Hellenistic and biblical historians by presenting the credentials of Jesus' genealogy (Luke 3:23-38). As the only character in the whole of Luke-Acts endowed with such an extensive family file, Jesus is identified as the epicenter of "the things fulfilled" (Luke 1:1). Jesus — not Caesar, Pilate, Herod, or either of the high priests Annas and Caiaphas (Luke 3:1-2) — is the hero of Luke's διήγησις (Luke 1:1), chronicling the restoration of David's fallen tent and formation of a people for the LORD's name (Acts 15:14-18). Jesus is the Son of God (Luke 3:38), not the natural son of Joseph, as was "supposed" (Luke 3:23).¹⁶

3. The Diabolical Design For Testing Jesus' Sonship

The benediction of the heavenly voice and Holy Spirit — "You are my beloved son! I am pleased with you" (Luke 3:22) — is overtly and persistently contradicted by the devil's testy refrain: "If you are the son of God . . ." (Luke 4:3,9). The common setting "in the wilderness" and common theme of sonship ring in the decisive contenders for ultimate authority over the people and events of the οἰκουμένη that is Luke's story world.¹⁷ The closing movement of Luke's overture reveals the diabolical design behind those who disbelieve and "oppose" Jesus' authority in his "father's affairs," and, again, gives loud expression to the spiritual/cultic nature of Israel's consolation and temptation.¹⁸ Jesus' return from the Jordan to Galilee "in the Spirit" (Luke 4:1,14) frames forty days of devil-directed tests in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-2). The contest will demonstrate whether Jesus will be "led by the Spirit" (ἤγετο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι; Luke 4:1) or "led (astray) by the devil" (ἀναγαγὼν αὐτὸν; Luke 4:5,9).¹⁹ A threefold exchange of questions and answers recalls Israel's test of sonship in the wilderness and Moses' speech to a new generation journeying into the land (Deut. 8:1-3). Each of the three temptations is designed to defraud true worship through the usurpation of power in God's kingdom economy:

1. Instead of asking the Father for daily bread in prayer (Luke 11:3) or inviting the poor to share the bread of his banquet (Luke 14:12-15), the devil seeks a demonstrative sign of Jesus' power over God's natural order.

2. As a strongman unaware of the intrusion of “someone stronger” to repossess his house and belongings (Luke 11:14-22), the devil plays the role of “gentile lord” offering political power and its glory to extort the worship due only to the Father and true benefactor of the kingdom (Luke 22:25-29).
3. Finally, the devil employs the trappings of Israel’s worship — Jerusalem, the temple and the writings (Ps. 90(91):11-12; LXX) — to advocate a test of inviolability. Ironically, it is Jesus who will watch “Satan fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18), and it is Jesus who, by his rejection of the slanderer’s hermeneutic, will become “the stone of falling” (Luke 20:17-18).

In as much as Israel failed by craving bread (Exod. 16:3; Ps. 106:14), worshipping other gods (Exod. 32:1-14; Ps. 106:19-27), and putting God to the test (Exod. 17:1-7; Ps. 106:14,32-33), Jesus prevails by revealing the humble heart of a son (Deut. 8:3) and the understanding of a “Moses-like” prophet to speak and obey the word of God (Luke 4:4, Deut. 8:3; Luke 4:8, Deut. 6:13; Luke 4:12, Deut. 6:16; Luke 11:28; Acts 7:37) “in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:1,14).

Summation

Luke’s opening fanfare retrieves the familiar scriptural melodies of Israel’s eschatological hope to accompany supra-natural and prophetic lyrics in a transposed arrangement of Messianic promises and fulfillments. The two-part *prooimia* moves in a two-step *sygkrisis* of character-forming events between John the prophet-preparer-baptizer and Jesus the prophet-son-messiah. The reappearance of the angel “Gabriel” to Zechariah, Mary and the shepherds establishes a Danielic templet for introducing “Messiah the Prince” to Luke’s characters and readers. “In remembrance of mercy” (Luke 1:50,54-55,73,78; Daniel 9:4,18) and in response to prayer (Dan. 9:3-4,17-21; Luke 1:10,68-75,77; 2:37-38), “the anointed one” (Dan. 9:24-27; Luke 2:10) arrives “to give his people the knowledge of salvation” by atoning for their cultic sin and restoring authentic worship among the people who bear the LORD’s name (Dan. 9:24-25; Luke 1:16-17,49-50,54-55,68-75). Luke’s double-deployment of the names “Savior” (Luke 1:47; 2:11), “Holy One” (Luke 1:35,49; 2:23), and “LORD” (Luke 1:28,32,43,46; 2:11) exalts Jesus to divine sonship as the embodiment of God’s salvation for and visitation to his people, a verdict

heard from heaven and seen in the symbol of the Spirit descending upon Jesus as a dove.

But, Simeon's painful promise to Mary (Luke 2:34-35) and the diabolical test of Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13) resonate with the disturbing elements of Daniel's messianic vision. Will the anointed one set as "a sign to be opposed" also be "cut off" (Dan. 9:26)? Does Jesus' refusal of the diabolical teaching of inviolability amidst the trappings of Israel's worship foretell his own destruction with that of the city and its sanctuary (Dan. 9:26-27)? If so, how do these disturbing elements reconcile with the language of exaltation spoken of Jesus and Israel's house — "a horn of salvation raised up in the house of David" (Luke 1:69) "to reign over the house of Jacob forever . . . a kingdom that will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33)? These are the questions Luke suspends in the thoughts pondered by Mary and his readers. In two volumes, Luke will reveal an ironic mix of eschatological hope and desolation from "the hearts of the many rising and falling in Israel."²⁰

Endnotes — Chapter One

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1. Audet first suggested that chapters 1-2 of Luke's gospel function as Hellenistic *prooimia* (prefaces) which prepare the reader to understand the balance of the work. See the discussion and reference in Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary of the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1979) 242, n21. This fascinating interplay of Hellenistic and Semitic categories reveals Luke's commitment to the work of *apologia*. This thesis gives the balance of attention to the Jewish background and intertextual links to the Hebrew scriptures.
 2. See Jacob Jervell, "The Center of Scripture in Luke," in *The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 122-137.
 3. Groundbreaking articles on Luke's use of Scripture, specifically his promise→fulfillment motif include Paul Schubert, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 24," *Neutestamentliche Studien Fur Rudolph Bultmann* (Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1954), 165-186; Nils Dahl, "The

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- Story of Abraham in Luke-Acts,” *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck; J. L. Martyn (New York: Abingdon, 1966), 139-158; and, more completely, Jacob Jervell, “The Center of Scripture,” *The Unknown Paul*, 122-137.
4. For a full discussion of the literary structure in Luke’s birth narratives see Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 248-253. Brief, but helpful summaries are found in Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 211-214, and *The Gospel of Luke*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 3, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 34.
 5. For a helpful discussion of characterization technique and point of view, see Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 23-82.
 6. See Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 248-253.
 7. See Chapter 2 below.
 8. This parallel is well-known and fully discussed by Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 292-298 and Charles Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 16-19. Talbert begins by identifying this pattern with Greco-Roman biography, such as the “Life of Augustus,” but seems to shift gears quickly in the following chapter to identify the pattern more specifically (and correctly) with theophanic births in the Hebrew Scriptures.
 9. Many major commentators such as Tannehill say nothing of the significance of Luke’s specific identification of “Gabriel” and the importance of the Danielic backdrop. See Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 20-26. For a full discussion we must look to Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 270-271.
 10. A connection between “the evening sacrifice” (Dan. 9:21) and “the hour of the incense offering” (Luke 1:10) is quite possible. This is noted also by Luke Johnson, *Luke*, 32.
 11. For an excellent discussion of allusion to and quotation of OT in the NT to shape context, plot and characterization see Donald Juel,

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- Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 17-29, and the foundational work of C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952).
12. See below the important discussion of the ambiguity of Daniel's "Holy of Holies" in this chapter's section, "Holy is His Name!" See also Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 271, n27-28.
 13. Notice the pervasive use of "heart" language in the prophetic orations against Israel and her kings in the Deuteronomistic history. For complete references, see Appendix A. V. in Moshe Weinfield, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (London: Oxford University, 1972), 332-341.
 14. The continuity of Jesus' and John's role as prophets to Israel is established by the fact that their message of *repentance for the forgiveness of sins* is the same throughout the Lukan text (Luke 1:16-17,77; 3:8,18; 5:20-26; 7:16-34; 13:1-5,31-35; 15:7,10; 20:1-8; 24:46-47; Acts 1:5; 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 10:43; 11:15-18; 13:23-25; 17:30; 19:4-5; 20:21; 26:17-18).
 15. Luke continues the theme of Jesus' sonship with particular prominence in his second volume (Acts 1:5; 2:36; 3:20; 5:31a; 11:15-16; 13:23-25,32-33; 17:3; 19:4-5).
 16. Johnson notes that "with no exceptions, Luke uses *νομίζω* to mean a false apprehension (see Luke 2:44; Acts 7:25; 8:20; 14:19; 16:13,27; 17:29; 21:29)." See Luke Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 70.
 17. See the excellent work of Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 37-46.
 18. See Luke 4:1-13; 8:26-39; 9:1,37-42; 10:16-20; 11:14-28; 12:8-10; 13:15-16; 22:3-4; Acts 5:3; 8:4-25; 13:8-12; 19:13-20.
 19. See Susan Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil*, 38-43.
 20. See Chapter 2 below.