

3A. THE INCARNATION OF GOD

1B. Annunciation to Mary, Luke 1.26-38.

1C. The messenger, Luke 1.26-27:

- ²⁶ And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,
²⁷ To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

1D. As to the place.

1E. The place in time of Gabriel's dispatch was the sixth month. The sixth month of what? Saying "the sixth month" without a reference point is confusing. The sixth month of what is Luke referring to? He refers to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

1F. We have already learned that the Messiah was to have a forerunner. We already know that it is only proper and fitting that someone announce the arrival of a king. That was to be John's job. That was why he was to be born and begin his ministry six months earlier than our Lord.

2F. Another thought in regards to this idea about the place in time of our Lord's conception in the womb of Mary. In Galatians 4.4, Paul told us that Christ came forth in the "fullness of time." That assures us that our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived at the right time, was born at the right time, was baptized at the right time, died and was raised again on the third day at the right time in history.

2E. The place in territory of Gabriel's dispatch was a town named Nazareth, in the region of Galilee. Quite an unusual town for the woman who would bear the Christ child to live in. A town of poverty, a town of filth, a town of horrible sin. Nevertheless, this is where Mary did live, and this is where Gabriel was sent.

2D. As to the person.

1E. Notice her experience. She was a virgin. She had never been with a man. So, as regards her experience... she had none. This is a most important fact to

know. The whole Bible doctrine of the virgin birth of the Son of God rises and falls on the question of this young woman's experience.

2E. Notice her espousal. The Bible indicates that she was espoused to Joseph, of the house of David.

1F. An espousal, such as the one Mary was involved in, meant that she and Joseph were, in every sense of the word but one, married.

2F. If this was a normal espousal, Mary's parents would have arranged her marriage with Joseph, would have had a contract written up and signed, and would have agreed to present Joseph with a dowry or wedding gift at the time of the wedding feast, after which the marriage would be consummated.

3E. Notice her name. Her name is Mary. In the Old Testament, her name appears as Miriam, the same name as the sister of Moses. The meaning of her name is unclear but possibly from Egyptian, or from the verb *hmr* (mara), to be rebellious, or from the word *rm* (mor), myrrh, or perhaps the noun *My* (yam), sea, west or future."¹ But whereas Moses' sister might have just been a rebellious woman, Mary's depiction in God's Word seems nothing like Moses' sister. If her countenance was fallen for any reason, it would be the result of the suffering and agony she would see her Son endure for the sins of mankind.

4E. So, we have seen the place the messenger was sent, and we've seen the person to whom the messenger Gabriel was sent. Now let us examine the message that he brought to her.

2C. The message had to do with Mary's position before God and Gabriel's prophecy about the Son of God, Luke 1.28-33:

1D. Note, first, the position of Mary, Luke 1.28-30.

1E. Gabriel's remarks, Luke 1.28:

"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women."

¹ <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Miriam.html>

- 1F. Notice some things about Gabriel's remarks to Mary. Was she a woman greatly blessed and favored by God? Yes.
 - 2F. Was she a woman who was indicated as having been in a particularly good mood before Gabriel arrived on the scene? No.
 - 3F. Did what Gabriel told her alter her position of blessing or favor with God? No, he simply informed her of facts that existed whether or not she knew about them.
 - 4F. This is rather similar to the position many Christians today have in Christ. We are in the position of favor. We are in the position of blessing. And though we are sometimes unaware of this or are ignorant of this, the fact remains... the child of God is greatly blessed by God.
- 2E. Mary's reactions, Luke 1.29:
- "And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."
- 1F. What troubled Mary? Was it the appearance of this mighty angel of God, or was it what this mighty angel said to her? I believe the message troubled her.
 - 2F. Mary had no trouble accepting supernatural wonders. She believed in a miracle-working God. Do you? She knew God sometimes sent angels to His people. Why? Because, according to First Corinthians 1.22, "Jews require a sign." This is because of their history as a people redeemed by the supernatural power of God.
 - 3F. Her reaction to Gabriel's initial words indicates her swift mind. She was troubled at how this angel could address her with such gracious language.
 - 4F. For all we know, her mind flashed back to Daniel 9.23, where Gabriel appeared to Daniel and said, "for thou art greatly beloved."
 - 5F. Gabriel's greeting to Mary was more gracious than his greeting to Daniel, that great statesman of God. Mary might have quickly thought on this fact and wondered, "What's going on here?"
- 3E. Gabriel's reassurance, Luke 1.30:

John 1.13: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Philippians 2.13: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.”

4F. There is no kind of assurance like the assurance that your relationship with God, and the basis upon which you receive blessings from God, is dependent not upon you but on the faithfulness and power of an Almighty and loving heavenly Father.

2D. Having established the position of Mary before God, or at least having established what that position is, Gabriel then gave forth his prophecy, Luke 1.31-33.

You may have noted that the prophecy is in two parts: what will be fulfilled immediately and what will be fulfilled later.

1E. First, the prophecy with immediate fulfillment, Luke 1.31-32a:

- ³¹ And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.
³² He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest

Examine each phrase of the prophecy individually.

1F. “thou shalt conceive in thy womb”

1G. We must examine what manner of conception this is, since some “men of God” maintain that this conception in the womb of Mary was an ordinary conception, that it was the product of a liaison between Mary and Joseph, or perhaps Mary and a Roman soldier. Such statements are not made by men who are genuinely converted.

2G. So far in verse 27, it has been mentioned twice that Mary is a virgin. And in Isaiah 7.14 is a prophecy of a virgin-born Messiah, which would require a virginal conception. Right?

3G. The conception Gabriel is predicting is not unusual. It is not even rare. It is nothing short of the miraculous power of the omnipotent God!

- 4G. To deny the virgin birth of the Savior is not only to deny His sinless perfection and impeccability, but it also denies the veracity of the Word of God, and calls God a liar!
- 5G. My Messiah was virgin born. My Savior was virgin born. He had to thus be born to be sinless. He had to thus be born to avoid the curse of Jechonias that we studied about in Matthew 1.12.
- 6G. If not virgin born, then He had no right to die for my sins. If not virgin born, He had no right to say “Go and sin no more.” If not virgin born, He will have no right to rule as King of kings.
- 7G. Jesus Christ, my Lord, is the virgin born Son of God!
- 2F. “and bring forth a son”
- 1G. Yes, Jesus Christ was God’s Son, Bella Abzug!
- 2G. Yes, God is His Father, Gloria Steinham!
- 3F. Gabriel went on to say, “and shall call his name Jesus.”
- 1G. Jesus, or in the Old Testament, Joshua. A common name among the Jewish people, but a name with an uncommon meaning.
- 2G. Jesus means “Jehovah-salvation.” And of all of the men who have ever been born of women, this One’s name would prove to be absolutely true to His calling.
- 3G. As Joshua of old provided physical deliverance for the children of Israel over their enemies in the land, our Lord Jesus provides complete deliverance from every enemy that opposes the plan and purpose of our holy and righteous God.
- 4G. Of all men Who have ever walked the face of this earth, there has never been one who had a name which was so perfectly descriptive of its owner as the One who bore this name.
- 4F. “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the highest.”

- 1G. All of the prophecies we have looked at in verse 31, and this one in verse 32, were fulfilled in the earthly ministry and life of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2G. You may say, “Well, I know the others were immediately fulfilled, but I didn’t know this one was.” Yes, this prophecy was fulfilled during Christ’s earthly ministry. And Who called Him the Son of the Highest? The Highest did.
- 3G. As we shall study, at the baptism of John in the Jordan River, as well as on the Mount of Transfiguration, God spoke audibly and referred to our Lord Jesus as His Beloved Son, fulfilling this prophecy of Gabriel.
- 5F. These, then, are the immediately fulfilled prophecies that Gabriel declared to Mary.
- 2E. Then, in Luke 1.32b-33, Gabriel referred to prophecies that are eventually fulfilled:
- ³² ... and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
- ³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
- 1F. “and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.”
- 1G. Does anyone know when this event will take place? It will occur at the beginning of Christ’s millennial reign.
- 2G. Look at the rough diagram below, which I hope will help you visualize these events.
- 3G. Though Christ is presently enthroned at the right hand of His Father in heaven, He is not sitting on the throne of David and reigning over Israel. When He establishes His millennial kingdom, He will.
- 4G. Gabriel says nothing new here. This is the Davidic Covenant that God made with David while he was yet alive on earth that Gabriel refers to.

2F. “and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever.”

This phrase speaks of Christ’s eternal rule over Israel.

3F. Turn to First Chronicles 17.11-14:

- ¹¹ And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go *to be* with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.
- ¹² He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever.
- ¹³ I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* that was before thee:
- ¹⁴ But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

Careful study of this passage will reveal three things promised to David. Through this covenant with David Israel will be blessed by a Davidic dynasty that will possess an everlasting throne, an everlasting kingdom, and an everlasting King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

4F. Thus, Gabriel was informing Mary, without any mystery in the manner of his words, that she would bear the Messiah. Not only will His miraculous birth, and life, and death fulfill these prophecies and make these prophecies come true, but many, many others besides.

3C. Now that we have examined the verses which gave us a glimpse of the *messenger*, and the verses which showed us the *message* he brought to Mary, let’s take note of the *meaning* of all this, Luke 1.34-38.

1D. First, there is the examination of Mary, Luke 1.34:

“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”

1E. Mary’s examination of Gabriel does not seem at all to be the result of any lack of faith. She had not questioned the truthfulness of what Gabriel had said, as Zacharias had done with regard to the announcement of John the Baptist’s coming.

2E. What we see in Mary is something altogether different. We see a young lady who had no doubt about God’s workings, but was intensely curious about them. She simply wanted to know how the things that were going to happen would happen.

2D. Second, there is the explanation to Mary, Luke 1.35-37:

Notice that Gabriel's response to Mary was in three parts.

1E. First, there was the explanation of God's plan, Luke 1.35:

“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

Gabriel did not explain in detail how miracles take place. He simply stated, very briefly, how God would perform the miracle He promised to bring about.

1F. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.”

1G. In case you are wondering what difference there is between the word “ghost” and the word “spirit” in the Bible, there is no difference whatsoever. In the Greek New Testament there is but one word, πνευμα, that can be translated “spirit,” “ghost,” or “wind.”²

2G. So, we see that the Holy Spirit of God is the Agent of the God-head involved in the miraculous conception of the Lord Jesus Christ's human body in the womb of the virgin named Mary.

3G. It is at this time, I might add, that the Word became flesh. The Word became flesh at the precise instant the humanity of Christ began, which was at the instant of conception.

3F. “and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee”

1G. It is very interesting that Luke chose to record these exact words of Gabriel, just as it is interesting that Gabriel chose these exact words to say.

² Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pages 832-836.

2G. This same word “overshadow” is used in Matthew 17.5 to describe the effect of the bright cloud which appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration and from which God spoke:

“While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”

3G. This speaks of the presence of God, the Father, Himself.

4F. “Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

1G. The first phrase of this verse speaks of the Holy Spirit of God. The second phrase of this verse speaks of the Father. And the previous phrase speaks of the Son.

2G. What do we conclude from this? We have nothing less than substantiation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

5F. The plan, then, by which the Incarnation was predicted by Gabriel to take place, involved all three Persons of the divine godhead... the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God.

2E. After the explanation of God’s plan, in verse 35, there was the explanation of God’s proof, in verse 36:

“And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.”

1F. The proof that God was, indeed, embarking on such a great and wonderful plan as Gabriel had just laid out was the experience of Mary’s aged cousin Elizabeth.

2F. She, the angel tells Mary, was already in her sixth month of pregnancy “who was called barren.”

3E. Finally, there was the explanation of God’s power, Luke 1.37:

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

1F. Can you explain God's power? You cannot explain God's power. It is far beyond our limited comprehension.

2F. For that reason, instead of trying to explain God's power, Gabriel simply attested to the fact that nothing is impossible for the God we serve and worship.

3D. To recap, in verse 34, Mary *examines* the angel. In verses 35-37, Mary hears his *explanation* in response to her questioning. Now, in verse 38, we see her personal *evaluation* in light of all that she has heard and seen.

1E. "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord"

This is the admission Mary was led to. She realized that, as a child of God, she was at His disposal to do as He pleased.

2E. "Be it unto me according to thy word."

Here is Mary's submission. Would that more Christians would evaluate the facts surrounding our Christian faith and submit to God's will as Mary did here.

3E. The spiritual greatness of this young woman lay in the fact that she simply submitted herself to the will of Almighty God.

4D. With this phase of his mission completed, the angel departed from Mary.

2B. The retirement of Mary, Luke 1.39-56.

Note: Let me make you aware of some differences of opinion as to the order in which certain events occur in the Word of God. Read Matthew 1.18-25:

- 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
- 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

- 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
- 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
- 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
- 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Some Bible teachers believe the events we just read occurred before Mary's retirement to the South to visit her aged cousin Elizabeth, which we are about to examine. They also feel that while Joseph was making up his mind about divorce, Mary was with Elizabeth.

I do not agree. I do not believe Joseph had any idea about Mary's condition until she returned from her visit with Elizabeth. Though she was only three months pregnant at the time, and because of the clothing styles worn in those days, she could have fooled Joseph if she wanted to, I think Joseph found out about Mary's condition from her own mouth. Then, while he was contemplating what he should do with her, the angel appeared to her in Matthew 1.18-25.

For this reason, I shall proceed on the premise that Mary's retirement to the hill country occurred before Joseph, her espoused husband, was aware of her condition.

1C. Mary's journey, Luke 1.39-40:

- 39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;
- 40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

1D. First, allow me to comment on the home.

- 1E. As mentioned before, it was Elizabeth's home, or rather Zacharias' home. But in that household lived the only other woman in the entire world who could even hope to understand the situation Mary now found herself in.
- 2E. If you are wondering why so little is said of Zacharias here, remember that he was mute until his son was born, and his son would not be born for three more months after Mary's arrival.
- 3E. Why was it that only Elizabeth might understand Mary's situation? Because, being the mother of the forerunner of the Messiah, she found her life to be bound up in this portion of God's wonderful plan along with Mary.

4E. So, as Mary stayed with her and helped the aged woman with her pregnancy, and shared in the excitement of an old woman who had watched so many other friends and loved ones swell as the child inside them grew, but who never thought she would experience such delight, Mary was being prepared for her own most difficult task.

2D. Now, the haste with which Mary went South.

1E. It might seem as though my logic is out of order, dealing with the home Mary went to for three months, and only now addressing the reasons she might have gone there, and the reasons for her haste. But when you know where Mary was bound for you better understand how Elizabeth's home might have seemed a refuge for this tender young virgin.

2E. There are several reasons that should be put forward to explain why Mary went to Elizabeth's, and why she went with such haste. To be sure, these reasons are highly speculative, but they are also highly possible.

1F. First, we must consider that Mary might specifically have been directed by the Holy Spirit to proceed South with all haste. Remember, in Luke 1.36-37, Gabriel specifically told Mary that Elizabeth was with child and that nothing was impossible with God. That might have been enough to prompt her journey.

2F. Second, Mary might have hurriedly removed herself from any possible scandal and gossip which surely would have developed when word got out that she was with child, or more likely, when word got out that her normal cycles of life appeared to have ceased. Such gossip did follow out Lord throughout the course of His earthly life, as John 8.19, 41 indicates:

¹⁹ Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.

⁴¹ Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, *even* God.

Imagine what Mary must have gone through when she returned to Nazareth. Her retirement had only delayed the inevitable.

3F. The third reason she probably wanted to go South was simply to share her wonderful joy with her cousin Elizabeth's joy. Neither woman was trying to outdo the other, but simply rejoicing that God was marvelously blessing them.

3E. We do not know for sure what reasons Mary had for going to the hill country of Judah to the south. It could have been any one of these reasons I have mentioned, or a combination of all three, or other reasons we know nothing about.

2C. Elizabeth's beatitude, Luke 1.41-45.

1D. The reason for her beatitude is found in verse 41: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."

1E. When Mary arrived at the home of Zacharias, Elizabeth's husband, she greeted her cousin Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard the salutation of the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the babe, John the Baptist, as yet unborn, leaped in her womb.

2E. When this event occurred, God miraculously filled Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit and, apparently, empowered her to speak prophetic utterances. This, then, was the reason for her beatitude.

2D. The response of her filling with the Holy Spirit, Luke 1.42-45:

42 And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb.

43 And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

44 For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

45 And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

Notice that she spoke loudly. That fits the pattern of boldness found whenever a person is filled with the Holy Spirit. The book of Acts reports boldness in those who are filled with God's Spirit.

1E. "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

- 1F. Has it ever troubled you that Elizabeth seemed to put Mary's blessing and the blessedness of Christ on the same footing here? If it seems dishonoring to you for Elizabeth to seemingly place Mary and her Child on equal footing here, it is only because we generally misunderstand what she is saying.
- 2F. Attend to the word "and." Though it translates the typical Greek word for "and," it was oftentimes used to communicate a great deal more than just the idea "and." Greek scholars Dana and Mantey indicate that the emphatic use of this word is unquestionable and frequent. Oftentimes this normal conjunction, which we translate into our ordinary English word "and," oftentimes carried the meaning of "indeed, verily, really, in fact, yea, certainly and even."³
- 3F. This verse, therefore, does not require us to believe that Elizabeth thought that the Lord Jesus Christ and Mary should be given equal respect and honor. It is well within the scope of the words that Elizabeth used for her to have meant something like this: "Blessed art thou among women, in fact, blessed is the fruit of thy womb."
- 4F. Taken together with what the Bible says about Mary, and what the Bible says about the Lord Jesus Christ, to give the Savior and His mother equal honor and equal respect is nothing short of blasphemy. I do not reckon the Holy Spirit worked in Luke's life to record an incident of blasphemy. No, Elizabeth was not treating Mary and her unborn Child as equals here. It was because she was carrying blessed fruit in her womb that she was, therefore, a blessed woman among women.
- 5F. I want you to notice, too, that she was not blessed *above* all women. Rather than setting her apart above all other women, God chose Mary and set her apart. Blessed, yes. Superior? No.
- 6F. When we examine Mary's Magnificat, we will see that she agreed with and understood Elizabeth's inspired words.
- 2E. In verse 43, despite the fact that she was Mary's senior, with regard to age and station in life (being the wife of a priest), she showed humility to this one who was chosen by God to bear her Savior:

³ H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (Toronto, Ontario: The Macmillan Company, 1955), pages 249-252.

“And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

- 3E. In verse 44 Elizabeth recounted the event of the babe within her leaping for joy:

“For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.”

How can a mere fetus have joy? Could it be that this “fetus” was actually a living, intelligent human being, though his little body was extremely immature? I am so persuaded. This child in mommy’s womb demonstrated an intelligent reaction to the presence of his Creator in the womb of nearby Mary.

- 4E. In verse 45 we read of a second reason why Mary was blessed:

“And blessed *is* she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

- 1F. Blessed was Mary who believed. That shows faith, does it not? Mary trusted in her God and in His ability to do what she had been told.
- 2F. Mary’s faith indicated that she was a woman who did not understand all of the things which were said to her, and could not see how all of these things would be brought about... but she did know the One Who could perform the doing of it.

- 3C. Mary’s Magnificat, Luke 1.46-55.

- 1D. Let us examine her experience, Luke 1.46-49a:

We scrutinize these words of Mary. These words are her personal estimation of what had happened to her, from the time the angel Gabriel first made his stupendous announcement to her, up to this point.

- 1E. First, Mary related her response to her experiences in two parts, then she detailed the two facets of her experience. Notice the visual aid set up below:

Luke 1.46-49a

REACTION:

#1 “My soul doth magnify the Lord”

#2 “And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior”

REASON:

#1 “For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed”

#2 “For He that is mighty hath done to me great things”

2E. Is it not wonderful that her soul magnified, or made larger, the Lord? That is exactly what we should *always* try to do in our own lives.

3E. Notice the next phrase:

“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.”

This statement contains extremely important implications for every Roman Catholic to consider. Mary said “God my Savior.” That is how *she* identified God.

1F. This must, of course, mean that Mary was a saved person, if she had a Savior. Therefore, she must have seen herself a sinner, since only sinners need salvation from their sins through a Savior.

2F. If Mary was a sinner, which she must have been if she had a Savior, then she cannot possibly have been the product of so-called Immaculate Conception, which is the Roman Catholic doctrine that Mary was conceived in her mother’s womb without sin so that she might someday be the sinless “mother of God.”⁴

3F. But the Bible does say that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” I cite that not by way of personal attack on anyone, but to show error where I find it and shed the glorious light of truth where it does not presently shine.

4F. If Mary was saved, and she was, and if she was a sinner and blessed, as she was, then she was a sinner saved by grace. That she was a sinner saved by grace through faith shows that the whole body of teaching that Rome puts forth concerning the veneration of Mary must be called into serious question.

⁴ <http://www.pax-et-veritas.org/BVM/imacula.htm> 9/7/03

5F. In this regard, let me assure you that in her Magnificat, which we now study, Mary referred to herself personally not more than five times. However, she referred to God at least 19 times in 10 short verses. That woman knew Who was worthy of veneration... God!

5E. This was Mary's view of her experiences, from her own mouth!

2D. Now for her explanation, which is a marvelous recital of Old Testament passages. Do not ever forget that Mary was a Jewish girl, Luke 1.49b-55:

1E. She first spoke of the holiness of God. She paraphrased Psalm 111.9 in verse 49 by saying,

"Holy is His name."

2E. Then, in verse 50, she spoke of the mercy of God:

"And His mercy *is* on them that fear Him from generation to generation."

This is from Psalm 103.13. Does it seem as though she is well versed in Scripture? It surely does.

3E. The third thing she spoke about was God's might:

⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

⁵² He hath put down the mighty from *their* seats, and exalted them of low degree.

⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

4E. And finally, she made mention of His faithfulness:

⁵⁴ He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of *his* mercy;

⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

4C. With no mention made of any of the specific details of her three months with cousin Elizabeth beyond their initial greeting, Luke records that she went back home, Luke 1.56:

"And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house."

5C. I have no doubt that these three glorious months with Elizabeth were a gift to Mary from God. She was given three months to live with and under the care of a godly woman who did not grasp, but came closer to grasping, what her future would be like than anyone else. Precious memories that would sustain her in times of great loneliness and trial. A place to retreat, if you will, and be reminded how good God is to His children.

3B. The birth of John the Baptist, Luke 1.57-79.

1C. The delivery of the Baptist, Luke 1.57-58:

⁵⁷ Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.

⁵⁸ And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.

1D. Notice how that, in the midst of her labor and delivery, Elizabeth told them of the mercy of the Lord. It had to be Elizabeth telling folks, since Zacharias still could not speak.

2D. What an example this is of a woman remembering to glorify God in her life, even when she was experiencing most exciting and difficult time of her life, and at an advanced age.

3D. Then, too, Elizabeth's excellent stewardship of her time resulted in her neighbors and her other cousins joining with her in celebration of God's goodness and blessing.

4D. You might be thinking, "Why did Mary leave before Elizabeth delivered? Why did she not stay and celebrate with her?" I think Mary left because she loved Elizabeth and she did not want her presence, carrying her glorious Son, to take away anything from Elizabeth's experience. Besides, the neighbors would not have understood a delivering mother spending all her time talking about the baby another woman was carrying. No, it was best that way.

2C. The naming of the Baptist, Luke 1.59-63.

1D. As related to the Law of Moses, Luke 1.59:

"And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father."

- 1E. It was a requirement established in the Law of Moses that a male child be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth.
 - 2E. An interesting fact scientists discovered decades ago was how a certain clotting factor in a child's blood is related to this command handed down by God for His chosen nation of Israel.
 - 3E. It seems as though a child is born with very little, if any, of certain chemical substance in his bloodstream, called Prothrombin, which enables blood to clot normally, thus preventing excessive loss of blood which would result in death. However, for a number of reasons which I am not aware of, the tendency for blood to clot is dangerous at birth, so God designed a newborn's physiology so babies would have little problem with blood clotting at birth.
 - 4E. Shortly after birth, however, the need for a body's normal defense mechanism makes this clotting factor very necessary so a child will not bleed to death in case of injury.
 - 5E. Curiously, when the baby's body begins to mass produce this clotting chemical it will manufacture an abnormal amount at first. Would anyone like to hazard a guess as to when the quantity of this clotting factor is at its peak in the baby's bloodstream? Right. On the eighth day.⁵
 - 6E. When God began to insist upon circumcision for His people, He chose the day in which circumcision would be least dangerous for that boy. Is it not wonderful how God accomplished this?
 - 7E. At any rate, it was on this eighth day, when the male child was circumcised, that he was also to be named. This is what verse 59 has to do with the Law of Moses.
- 2D. What does verse 59 have to do with the custom of the people?

Friends and relatives wanted to name this young child Zacharias, for several reasons:

- 1E. First and foremost, they wanted to name him Zacharias because it was a custom in the land to name a son after his father or after some male ancestor.

⁵ Jean Sloat Morton, *Science in the Bible*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), pages 243-244.

2E. Second, knowing that Zacharias, owing to his age, would probably sire no more children, at least not by Elizabeth, it would be nice to have a young Zacharias around after his death.

3D. We have looked at the naming of John the Baptist as it relates to the Law of Moses and the customs of the people. Now see how it is related to the will of God, Luke 1.60-63.

1E. Look back at Luke 1.13:

“But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.”

Remember where Zacharias was when Gabriel told him this. He was in the holy place of Herod’s Temple, with no one else around.

2E. I have no doubt Zacharias communicated much of what happened to Elizabeth during the nine months of her pregnancy. I also have no doubt that even if he had not wanted to talk about it, and remember that he was not able to talk, Elizabeth’s curiosity surrounding the circumstances of her pregnancy would have compelled her to get all the information out of him that she could.

3E. At this point, Elizabeth probably knows God’s will concerning the name of her son. Zacharias knows God’s will for his son’s name. The only ones who do not know God’s will regarding the name of this now eight-day-old baby are the friends and the immediate family.

4E. So Elizabeth stood her ground against the in-laws. They attempted to go over her head and get Zacharias’ opinion. When he wrote that the child’s name was to be John, they marveled all, according to verse 63:

“And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.”

3C. The benedictus of Zacharias is recorded in Luke 1.64-79.

Commentators refer to the passage we are about to address as a “benedictus” because “benedictus” means to speak well, in Latin.⁶ In this passage Zacharias, who had been silent for something more than nine months, broke forth in a paean of praise toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1D. Notice the praise of Zacharias, Luke 1.64:

“And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue *loosed*, and he spake, and praised God.”

1E. You will remember, from Luke 1.20, that the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that he would be dumb and not able to speak until his prophecies were fulfilled. It turned out that on the day that Gabriel’s short-term prophecies were fulfilled, John’s father did begin to speak.

2E. What kind of words came out of the mouth of a man who had been silent for nine months? Praise of God! It had been just over nine months earlier that Zacharias had doubted the messenger bearing God’s message and was silenced for speech that was not of faith. Now, when he could speak again, he made sure not to repeat the same sin. So, given the opportunity to speak, he turned to praise of the omnipotent God.

2D. Notice the protection of the child, Luke 1.65-66:

⁶⁵ And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.

⁶⁶ And all they that heard *them* laid *them* up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.

1E. All of the circumstances surrounding the conception and birth of John the Baptist, from the age of his parents to the miraculous prediction of his birth, could have joined together to make him a very spoiled child.

2E. All of the people asked themselves, “What manner of child shall this be?” Truly, John was under more scrutiny and pressure as a boy than even a preacher’s kid is.

3E. But “the hand of the Lord was with him.” This was no ordinary child born here. In Luke 1.15, we are informed that John would be filled with the Holy

⁶ *Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1996), see page 193 for *bene* and page 550 for *dictum*.

Spirit of God from his mother's womb, and we have no reason to doubt that such a filling occurred.

- 4E. Therefore John, led and guided by God's Spirit, would be able to understand both his life's circumstances and his life's mission from God's point of view, as no other child of human father before him could.
- 5E. Was John a sinner? Yes! He was a sinner saved by God's grace, by God's unmerited favor. When was he saved? I do not know, but it had to be after his conception in the womb of Elizabeth and before his birth, since the Holy Spirit does not indwell, much less fill, an unsaved person.
- 6E. "Well, how do you explain that, pastor?" I don't. I simply point to the sovereignty of God. He ruleth over all things... not only because of His power, but also because of His right as sovereign ruler of all things.
- 7E. Yes, the hand of the Lord was on him to protect him.

3D. Notice the prophecy of Zacharias, Luke 1.67-79:

Three months earlier, Zacharias' wife Elizabeth had similarly been filled and evidently overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit, and was then given an inspired prophecy. Now it is God's time for her husband to do the same. Notice how God worked here. Not only did He forgive Zacharias' sinful speech of nine months earlier, but in His Own good time He filled him with His precious Holy Spirit, Luke 1.67:

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying."

How does he prophesy, being filled with the Spirit? He blessed the Lord God of Israel.

- 1E. First, he blessed God for the salvation which is provided by the Messiah that his son was to prepare the way for.

1F. In sending the Messiah, God visited His people, Luke 1.68:

"Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people."

This does not mean to visit and leave, like some of you may hope your mother-in-law will do the next time she visits. No, this word "visit,"

επισκεπτομαι, refers to something like a governmental visit. It does not mean to visit, to then see what is going on, and then to leave. It refers to visiting and doing something! This is what God did when He sent His Son. He visited and did something about man's problem.⁷

- 2F. In sending the Messiah, God redeemed His people. The word translated "redeem," λυτρωσις, refers to the act of actually setting at liberty those who were once slaves.⁸
- 3F. How much of what Zacharias said was fully understood by him, we do not know. But we understand that Zacharias was foretelling a Messiah Who would set people free from the slavery we were born into... a slavery to sin.
- 4F. In sending the Messiah, God began to fulfill His covenant with David. That is, the powerful salvation of God would come through the house of David, servant of God, king of Israel. In sending the Messiah, God fulfilled many of the predictions of the Old Testament prophets. In sending the Messiah, He began to fulfill the covenant He made with father Abraham. This involved deliverance from our enemies, so that we might serve Him without fear, and it involves holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives.
- 2E. Second, Zacharias blessed God for the preparation that will be made through his son's ministry, Luke 1.76-79.

Luke recorded the general ministry of John that was prophesied by his father Zacharias.

- 1F. He would prepare people for salvation by preparing the way of the Savior, Luke 1.76:

"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."

- 2F. He would instruct people about salvation, Luke 1.77-79. That is, he would set forth the necessity for repentance from sin, and he would direct men to the Lord Jesus Christ:

⁷ Bauer, page 378.

⁸ Ibid., page 606.

- 77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,
- 78 Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,
- 79 To give light to them that sit *in* darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

4B. Annunciation to Joseph, Matthew 1.18-25:

- 18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.
- 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
- 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.
- 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
- 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
- 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
- 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Please note that the Word of God does not specifically say that Gabriel's notification to Joseph that his betrothed was with child after she had visited with her cousin Elizabeth, but the facts of the four Gospel accounts seem to fit best when taken in this way.

1C. Mary's pregnancy, Matthew 1.18:

1D. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise"

- 1E. With this opening phrase, Matthew sought not to give details concerning the birth of our Lord, but to give details surrounding Mary's pregnancy and how Joseph fit into the picture.
- 2E. Notice that Joseph was the central figure here, not Mary, as in Luke's Gospel account. Why is that so? Possibly, because Matthew has written from a dif-

ferent perspective, a perspective suited primarily to Jewish readers who would be far more concerned with information about Joseph than they would be about Mary.

2D. “When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph.”

I have already dealt with this espousal question at some length, but allow me to review the matter.

- 1E. You might look at man/woman relationships in Judea during New Testament times as though they existed in four stages: informal acquaintances, engagements, espousals or betrothals, and marriages.
- 2E. Acquaintances were informal relationships between people who knew each other on a casual basis, possibly because they were neighbors or attended the same synagogue. Let us not assume, however, that casual friendships between young people of the opposite sex were anything like those that exist in the West in modern times. Those few casual friendships that existed would be between a young man and a young woman who had no designs on each other.
- 3E. The next type of relationship was known as an engagement. This was the relationship between a young man and a young woman who were exploring the possibility of marriage. Or rather, their parents were exploring the possibility of marriage, since such things as dating were completely unknown except when the female was a prostitute or when she wished to have a prostitute’s reputation. Unchaperoned encounters with men were absolutely forbidden. With this understood, engagements, where the compatibility and the financial arrangements of a potential union were thoroughly examined, were fairly common and could be easily made and terminated.
- 4E. The next step in a relationship between a man and a woman was the espousal or the betrothal. This usually entailed the legal and contractual binding together of a man and woman whose parents had decided, after exploring the possibilities and compatibilities during an engagement. This legal arrangement, in which the young man oftentimes had considerably more voice in the outcome than did the young woman, established a legal marriage in every respect except for the consummation. Once such betrothals or espousals were duly established, only a formal divorce proceeding could terminate the relationship.

- 5E. Those people who were married, in the complete and full sense of the word, were those who had gone through their approximately one-year period of espousal which was normally used to enable them to become acquainted with each other, in chaperoned situations of course, and had then consummated their marriage in the marriage bed.
 - 6E. As we examine Matthew 1.18, it becomes obvious that Gabriel's announcement of Mary's pregnancy came after Joseph had discovered, somehow, that Mary was pregnant during this period of time in which they were legally husband and wife, but during which time no consummation of the marriage had occurred.
- 3D. "before they came together...."
- 1E. Matthew wanted to make it very clear to his readers that their marriage had not been consummated.
 - 2E. To establish the authenticity of the doctrine of the virgin birth of the Savior, it was critical to establish that this union had not been consummated prior to His birth.
- 4D. "She was found with child of the Holy Ghost."
- 1E. It might be thought by some that the way Joseph had discovered Mary's condition was in the marriage bed. But this was not possible when considering the facts stated in the Bible.
 - 2E. Matthew was very clear in his indication that the discovery of her condition came prior to them coming together. If that is the case, then how did Joseph come to know that Mary was with child?
 - 3E. Although the Bible does not provide us such details, we need to remember that all of this occurred after Mary's return to Nazareth from the southern hills of Judea... when she was three months along in her pregnancy.
 - 4E. Perhaps Mary's condition was known to women in Nazareth, and from them it eventually got around to Joseph. Perhaps her pregnancy affected her such that, even though the kind of clothes women wore in those days would have made concealment normally possible, she became bloated, and women who knew her knew that she was with child.
 - 5E. It is most likely that Mary told Joseph.

6E. Whatever, Matthew does want us to know the Cause of the pregnancy. It was “of the Holy Ghost.”

2C. We saw Mary’s pregnancy, and now our attention is directed to Joseph’s perplexity, Matthew 1.19:

1D. “Then Joseph her husband”

Because we are aware of the customs of the Jewish people during this era, we remember that during a betrothal time, such as with Joseph and Mary, couples were genuinely married even though the marriage had not been consummated.

2D. “Then Joseph her husband being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.”

1E. Joseph apparently had an inner conflict of the heart. He was a just man, according to Scripture. Therefore, he felt that to ignore sin, as he thought that his beloved had committed it, was impossible without completely abandoning the principles by which he lived. What unprincipled people do not appreciate is that principled men, men and women of integrity, are compelled to do right even when it involves pain for their loved ones.

2E. On the other hand, Joseph apparently had a tremendous love for Mary. He did not want her held up to public ridicule and scrutiny for the sin of adultery, so he made up his mind to divorce her quietly and privately.

3E. All of this brings up a question which we will deal with later on in our study of “The Life And Lessons Of The Lord Jesus Christ.” That question is, Does God permit divorce? Although we will not address the question at this point, you might want to consider this one thing: Thinking that his wife had committed adultery, Joseph was described in God’s Word as a “just man” for his intentions to put her away, to divorce her.

4E. Does “put away” mean that Joseph was really divorcing Mary? Yes. The word ἀπολῦω, translated “put away” refers to divorce.⁹ Additionally, the whole concept of a legal “separation” is unscriptural, according to First Corinthians 7.5, and only adds to the problems of a troubled marriage.

⁹ Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 1.

5E. Joseph was torn by his desire to do right and his love for his young bride. Scripture did not require that Joseph divorce Mary for what he thought she had done, but no one can properly question that he had Scriptural permission to do so, since he is described in his contemplation of divorcing Mary as a “just man.”

3C. The pregnancy of Mary, the perplexity of Joseph, and now the prophecy of the angel, Matthew 1.20-21:

- ²⁰ But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
- ²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Several observations in these two verses:

1D. First, notice Joseph’s dream.

- 1E. We know that Joseph’s dream had little to do with the Joel prophecy that Simon Peter referred to in his Pentecostal sermon, but maybe we can learn something about Joseph by application or extrapolation.
- 2E. Turn to Acts 2.17: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”
- 3E. Who will dream the dreams? Old men. Might we possibly infer from this that Joseph is a bit older than Mary? We do not want to make too much of this prophecy, which does not directly have to do with Joseph’s dream.
- 4E. But considering the fact that Joseph will never be referred to in our Lord’s adult life, and considering the possibility that God’s use of dreams, when He uses dreams, tends to be in the lives of older men, it might be that Joseph was considerably older than Mary. At any rate, God made this dream possible to address Joseph’s dilemma.

2D. Second, notice the reference to David in the dream.

- 1E. Remember, if you will, that Joseph was a direct descendant of King David. He was Israel's most glorious king of 1000 years earlier.
 - 2E. Also remember, in connection with King David, the so-called Davidic Covenant. This covenant that God established with King David promised a king to sit on David's throne in David's kingdom.
 - 3E. Such a reference to David, stirring up all of the ancient memories and Biblical promises that had not yet been fulfilled, but which no doubt would someday be fulfilled in their entirety, had to make Joseph's dream very stirring.
- 3D. Now, notice the Savior's deliverance.
- 1E. Joseph was comforted and told not to fear taking Mary to be his wife because the child she was carrying was of the Holy Ghost.
 - 2E. Furthermore, the Child would be a son Whose name Joseph was to call Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins.
- Note: Be mindful that the Lord Jesus Christ is nowhere said to save sinners from Hell. He saves from sins. He delivers from God's wrath. He does not save from Hell, which is a consequence of God's wrath and a sinner's sins. That distinction is profound.
- 3E. What is the most important kind of deliverance any human being can experience? Is it deliverance from the chains of slavery? No. Is it deliverance from the burden of debt and obligation? No. Deliverance from the oppression of injustice? No. Deliverance from the prison-house of a body that is racked by illness or injury? No.
 - 4E. The greatest kind of delivery, the deliverance beside which all other deliverances pale in comparison, is deliverance from the bonds of sin. This He would do for His people.
- 4C. Having looked at the pregnancy of Mary, the perplexity of Joseph, and the prophecy of the angel, we now move to the parenthesis of Matthew, 1.22-23:
- 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
 - 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

- 1D. I would suggest that you go through the Gospel of Matthew and underline these “that it might be fulfilled” kinds of phrases, as a means of helping you to realize the extreme importance of our Lord as a Fulfiller of these ancient predictions that were made by the Old Testament prophets.
- 2D. Things simply do not happen by accident. God had a plan. We read Matthew’s account of God fulfilling His plan and how He kept to it all the while.
- 3D. The specific prophecy that is referred to here is found in Isaiah 7.14. There is an issue that has direct bearing on this particular passage:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

The precise Hebrew word for “virgin” in Isaiah 7.14 is said by some liberal and modernistic theologians to actually mean “maiden” or “young women.” Since what such men say this verse says has a direct bearing on the very nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are going to deal with it.

- 1E. First, this Hebrew word is found seven times in the Old Testament. It so happens, in the other six places it is found it is easy to see that the Scripture writer was always referring to a virgin and not a maiden.¹⁰ Therefore, unless our context dictates otherwise we must assume that “virgin” is what is meant here as well.
- 2E. Second, how are we to consider it to be a sign for a young woman to be with child? Do not such “signs” occur at high schools with tragic regularity, and even in some junior high schools periodically? No, it is no sign when a young woman gets pregnant. But it is a sign when a virgin gets pregnant.
- 3E. Finally, how can a Savior be sinless and undefiled by the taint of this race if He had a human father? No, my Savior was “virgin” born. My Savior’s Father was not some Roman soldier. My Savior’s Father is God, Himself.

5C. Closing out the first chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, we note Joseph’s purpose, 1.24-25:

- ²⁴ Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

¹⁰ Genesis 24.43; Exodus 2.8; Proverbs 30.19; Psalm 68.25; Song 1.3; 6.8

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

1D. Observe that Joseph did what God wanted him to do. He was obedient, even though it certainly meant mockery for him in the community in which he lived, and for Mary as well.

2D. So, Mary remained a virgin until after Christ was born and Joseph called the name of her firstborn son Jesus.

5B. Birth of the Son of God, Luke 2.1-20.

1C. The *place* of His birth, Luke 2.1-7.

1D. As to the location, Luke informs us of the details in Luke 2.1-6:

- ¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
- ² (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)
- ³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- ⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
- ⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

I will deal with portions of these six verses.

1E. Luke 2.1-2:

- ¹ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.
- ² (*And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.*)

1F. There has been a great deal of controversy in the past regarding the information Luke gives us in these two verses.

2F. Scholars and archaeologists discovered that when the taxation occurred during the governorship of Cyrenius, Christ would have had to have been about 15 years old. What a great blow to the integrity of the

Bible in the minds of a great many people who did not implicitly trust God's Word.

- 3F. But in the 1800s, a British scholar discovered conclusive evidence that showed that this fellow, Cyrenius, occupied the office of governor over Syria on two different occasions. Sure enough, the first time that he was the governor there was a taxation, which corresponded to the time Christ was actually born.¹¹
- 4F. So much for those who thought that the integrity of the Bible was suspect. Amen? Given enough time, the scientists oftentimes catch up with and agree with the Word of God.

2E. Luke 2.3: "And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city."

- 1F. Years ago, I read that it was the manner of the Romans to allow each province and governed area to gather taxes in the way which seemed best to them. As well, quite frequently they allowed private contractors to collect the taxes they imposed. As long as Rome received her money, she was happy.
- 2F. To the consternation of the Romans, the Jews began to collect taxes in such a way as to reinforce their ancient national pride, which the Romans would just as soon have had removed.
- 3F. Jewish authorities required all Jews to go to the city of their tribal ancestry. In this way their sense of nationalism would be strengthened instead of weakened. And though the Romans did not enjoy this provision, they did not, apparently, oppose it.

3E. Luke 2.4-6:

- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
- 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

¹¹ Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary On The Gospel of Luke*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), pages 104-106.

- 1F. Joseph and Mary both had to journey to Bethlehem, for two reasons. Even if she hadn't been the wife of Joseph, she would have had to go to Bethlehem since she, too, was a descendant of David. But since she was Joseph's espoused wife, she had to go with him to register for taxation.
- 2F. Though Joseph and Mary were legally married, their marriage was not yet consummated. Consummation does not make a marriage, but the eyes of the law of the land.
- 3F. Also remember, though the Bible does not directly say, these two people did not travel to Bethlehem alone together. A considerable number of people from the more prosperous region of Galilee had originally come from economically depressed Judea, especially Bethlehem. Besides, in order for Joseph and Mary to maintain the testimony of her virginity, though she was with Child, they had to carefully abstain from the very appearance of evil that traveling alone together without the benefit of a chaperone would have accomplished. Finally, there was the danger. It was simply too dangerous in those days for anyone to travel without the safety of large numbers.
- 4F. It was while they were in Bethlehem that Mary delivered her Son, the Son of God. At this point, I might say that I don't know whether or not Joseph or Mary were expert in Old Testament Scriptures, but it really does not matter in this regard, since God is.
- 5F. In Micah 5.2 there is written a prophecy which Micah recorded more than 500 years before the event which took place in Bethlehem that night:

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.”
- 6F. There is no doubt among Jewish and Christian Bible scholars that Micah is forecasting the birthplace of the Messiah to be Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David.
- 7F. Is it not interesting? There are two cities of David in the Bible. Of the two, God chose little Bethlehem instead of big Jerusalem to be the city of David favored to be the birthplace of God's only begotten Son.

8F. Interesting, also, is the fact that God placed it in the heart and mind of Augustus Caesar to tax the known world at that particular time. Truly, “The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”¹² Had the taxation not occurred, I doubt very much that poor couple would have made that costly, time consuming, and, for Mary, uncomfortable journey during the last days of her pregnancy to arrive at the right place and at the right time to fulfill prophecy.

9F. But God did put it in Caesar’s mind, and He still does move behind the scenes in such ways, His unseen but all-powerful hand, accomplishing the things which He has purposed to come to pass.

2D. In Luke 2.7, Luke informs us regarding the accommodations in Bethlehem:

“And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

1E. What information is given to us by Luke in this short sentence! It is information that is all too often misinterpreted. Think about it. God enters into the affairs of men, and Luke records,

“And she brought forth her first-born son....”

2E. You would expect the King of kings and Lord of lords to be attended by glorious maids and nurses, but the Bible says that Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes herself. Not silk and velvet, which befits the King, but ordinary cloth. The significance of the swaddling clothes? Some have said that it portends His burial. And, truly, the Son of God did come to this earth to die for man’s sin.

3E. Placed upon a royal throne? Laid within a royal crib? No. The Son of God was placed in a manger. What is a manger? From the word *φάτνη*, it is a stall, or possibly a trough or a groove dug out of the floor in which animal feed was placed.¹³

¹² Proverbs 21.1

¹³ Fritz Rienecker & Cleon Rogers, *Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, 1980), page 142.

4E. “Because there was no room for them in the inn.”

1F. Please take note of that word “inn.” This word καταλυμα, translated “inn,” is used only two other times in the New Testament, Mark 14.14 and Luke 22.11:

14.14 And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

22.11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

2F. Now, consider Luke 10.34, where the good Samaritan took the injured man who was set upon by thieves to an “inn”:

“And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

3F. The Greek term found in Luke 2.7, Mark 14.14, and Luke 22.11 is καταλυμα. But the word we find here in Luke 10.34, referring to a place of business in which rooms are normally rented out for money, is the very different word, πανδοχειον.

4F. Allow me to describe the situation in Bethlehem on the night that the Savior was born to the virgin girl named Mary. Understanding that they probably responded to the cultural imperative of staying with someone who was in some way related to them in this town of their

ancestry, the problem Mary faced was that there were so many of the house and lineage of David in Bethlehem for the taxation that the guest room on the second story of this particular dwelling was already occupied.

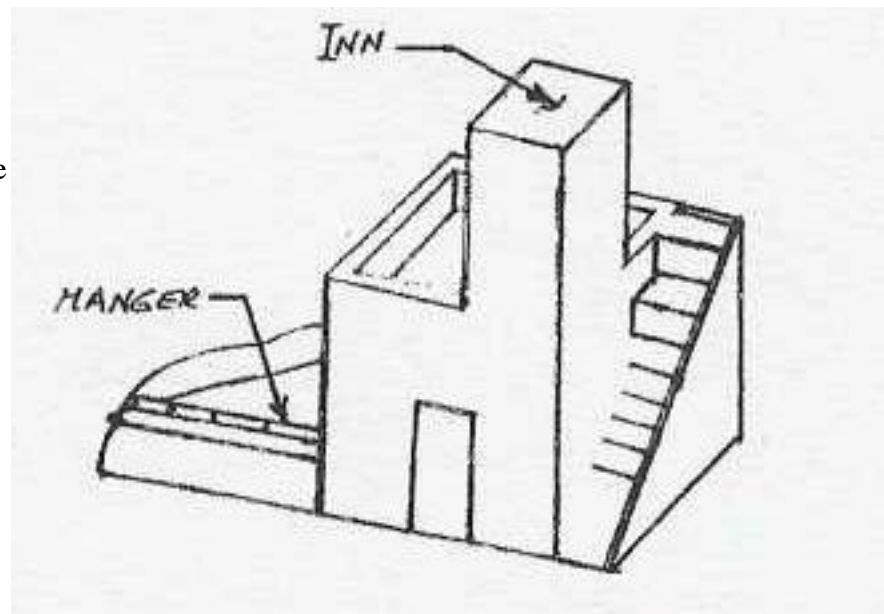
5F. This being the case, and with no other place in that tiny village where they could reasonably expect to spend the night, Mary probably gave birth to the Christ child on the floor of the main room of the house and

then placed her Child, now wrapped in swaddling clothes, in a trough dug out of the floor just outside the living quarters where the animals were kept.

- 6F. With the view seen above of the house, showing that there was normally a main residence area and a roof top with an “inn” for warm summer nights and for guests, the “manger” might have been just outside, in one of the numerous caves in that region. The trough, the “manger” if you will, would normally have been used for feeding the animals.
- 7F. Imagine the Creator of the universe spending His first night, after experiencing human birth, in such a humble place as that manger. What condescension!

2C. That was the *place* of His birth. Now we the *praise* of birth.

1D. Luke



see
 His

2.8:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

- 1E. Some scholars from time to time question the date of Christ’s birth and insist that He was not born on December 25th. But the noted Jewish Christian scholar Alfred Edersheim wrote this footnote in his classic, “The Life And Times Of Jesus The Messiah”:

“There is no adequate reason for questioning the historical accuracy of this date. The objections generally made rest on grounds, which seem to me historically untenable. The subject has been fully discussed in an article by *Cassel* in *Herzog’s Real. Ency.* 17, pp. 588-594. But a curious piece of evi-

dence comes to us from a Jewish source. In the addition to the Megillath Taanith (ed. Warsh. p. 20a), the 9th Tebheth is marked as a fast day, and it is added, that the reason for this is not stated. Now, Jewish chronologists have fixed on that day as that of Christ's birth, and it is remarkable that, between the years 500 and 816 AD the 25th of December fell no less than twelve times on the 9th Tebheth. If the 9th Tebheth, or 25th December, was regarded as the birthday of Christ, we can understand the concealment about it. Comp. Zunz, Ritus d. Synag. Gottesd. p. 126.”¹⁴

2E. I anticipate the next verse with these words, again from Edersheim:

“It was, then, on that ‘wintry night of the 25th of December,’ that shepherds watched the flocks destined for sacrificial services, in the very place consecrated by tradition as that where the Messiah was to be first revealed. Of a sudden came the long-delayed, unthought-of announcement. Heaven and earth seemed to mingle, as suddenly an Angel stood before their dazzled eyes, while the outstreaming glory of the Lord seemed to enwrap them, as in a mantle of light. Surprise, awe, fear would be hushed into calm and expectancy, as from the Angel they heard, that what they saw boded not judgment. But ushered in to waiting Israel the great joy of those good tidings which he brought: that the long-promised Saviour, Messiah, Lord, was born in the City of David, and that they themselves might go and see, and recognize Him by the humbleness of the circumstances surrounding His Nativity.

It was, as if attendant angels had only waited the signal. As, when the sacrifice was laid on the altar, the Temple-music burst forth in three sections, each marked by the blast of the priests’ silver trumpets, as if each Psalm were to be a *Tris-Hagion*; so, where the Herald-Angel had spoken, a multitude of heaven’s host stood forth to hymn the good tidings he had brought. What they sang was but the reflex of what had been announced. It told in the language of praise the character, the meaning, the result, of what had taken place. Heaven took up the strain of ‘glory’; earth echoed it as ‘peace’; it fell on the ears and hearts of men as ‘good pleasure’:

Glory to God in the Highest—
And upon earth peace—
Among men good pleasure!”¹⁵

¹⁴ See footnote, Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah: New Updated Version*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993), page 132.

¹⁵ Edersheim, page 132.

- 2D. Luke 2.9: “And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.”
- 1E. Is it not just like God to send an angel to shepherds, men whose lives focused upon delivering and raising little lambs, to tell them of the Lamb which has just been born of Mary in Bethlehem?
- 2E. These shepherds, being Jewish men, were given the visible sign of the Lord’s glory to remove all doubts about the source of information they were about to receive, as well as the Dispatcher of the messenger they were observing.
- 3E. So, there was authentication here such as no Charismatic or Pentecostal who claims to see visions and hear audible words from God has ever experienced.
- 3D. Luke 2.10: “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”
- 1E. It seems a rather frequent thing, when God appears to men or communicates to men, to scare the willies out of them and then to allay their fears. It is thought by some that He does this to secure their rapt attention and also to secure their reverence. John Bunyan, however, recognized that there is a sinful fear of God and a proper fear of God.¹⁶ The angel on this occasion was merely dismissing an improper and ungodly fear.
- 2E. Notice the scope of the good news that this angel is about to share. He used the phrase “all people.” What is meant by the phrase “all people”? Do all people rejoice at the coming of the Lord Jesus *or* the salvation which He brings? Or do all kinds of people rejoice at the coming of Jesus Christ *and* the salvation which He brings? It is obviously the latter, since few sinners will be saved by Him, as He said in Luke 13.23-24:
- “Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”
- 3E. Thus, we see that from the very beginning of our Lord’s stay on this planet His purpose was to bring salvation to all kinds of people, not to all people. That this would be a source of great joy is the obvious result of such good

¹⁶ John Bunyan, *The Fear of God*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1999), page 36.

news only to those who are saved through faith in the Lord Jesus. To apply what the angel said to every sinful individual, including those who die without Christ, is a cruel mockery and an injustice.

- 4D. Luke 2.11: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
- 1E. We do not know for sure that Christ was born at night, as the nativity scenes always depict His birth. “Born this day” suggests God allowed some time to pass after His birth for Mary to rest, to tend to her young Child, and to become modest and presentable again. What did occur at night was the delivery of this message to the shepherds.
- 2E. The place where He was born is told, the purpose of our Lord is also told. He is the Savior. He is also the Messiah, which informs us that He is indeed the promised One for whom these shepherds, and many other Jews, were waiting so long for.
- 5D. Luke 2.12: “And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”
- 1E. The sign is not specifically that He would be wrapped in swaddling clothes, in all probability. It was that He was lying in a manger which was the unusual aspect. This was what narrowed down the shepherd’s field of search.
- 2E. You could probably find a dozen babies in Bethlehem wrapped in swaddling clothes at any point in time on such a night so long ago. But how many of those babies could be found in a manger? Only Him.
- 6D. Luke 2.13-14:
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.
- 1E. It seems almost as if the angels in heaven could not hold it in any longer. They just had to break into a song of praise and adoration because that is what they were created for, and they knew it. The Bible says that is what we were created for, but few of us realize it.

- 2E. Notice what the results of Christ's birth will be. To God there will be great glory. To mankind, here on earth, there will be peace and good will. On our side of the situation, there will be:
 - 1F. First, peace with God. This, according to Romans 5.1, comes about when a person comes to faith in Christ, Who died, was buried, and rose for his sake.
 - 2F. After, there is the peace of God. That is, when the war of rebellion against God's authority is over, the peace of God can be experienced. This is actually the peace of heart and mind the Lord makes possible for the believer. This can only occur when your sins are forgiven and your heart is right with God.
 - 3F. Then, when our Lord comes again to set up His kingdom there will be peace among men. And how will this come about? It will be the direct result of the intolerance the Prince of Peace has for war. The Lord Jesus will not tolerate war among men when while He rules. But it will not be just the absence of war. There will also be good will toward men.
- 7D. Luke 2.15: "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."
- 1E. Obviously, the shepherds could not leave while the angels were talking to them and praising God before them. That would be rude. So they waited until the angels departed and then they went to see those things which the Lord brought to pass.
- 2E. Their journey was probably not all that far. It may even have been less than a mile or two. But how appropriate that shepherds of Israel go to see the newly born Lamb of God.
- 8D. Luke 2.16: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."
- 1E. Can you imagine what most people would think if you told them that God's Son was lying in a feed trough? They wouldn't believe you, that's for sure. If those shepherds were like most people these days who call themselves Christians, they would have felt frustrated at the inconvenience; they would

take note of the kind of clothes Joseph and Mary were wearing, they would take note of the kind of cloth the Infant was wrapped in, they would object to the kind of nursery He was kept in, and they would certainly take exception to having to worship without the proper amount of climate control and air conditioning.

- 3E. Want to know why these shepherds did not notice such things? They were more interested in looking upon the Person of Christ than upon the physical surroundings. Would to God more people were like them. Amen? Too many professing Christians notice the clock and the thermometer and the carpet, but pay no notice of Christ.
- 9D. Luke 2.17: “And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”
- 1E. Were these men told to go and tell others? No. Why do you suppose they went and told others? And why was it that throughout the earthly ministry of Christ men went and told others when they were not commanded to do so?
- 2E. It is my conviction that the so-called Great Commission of Matthew 28.18-20 is not a commission at all. It’s a release. Beginning here and going all throughout the Gospels we will see men and women who are eager to share the Good News about Christ. Men and women who did not need to be told. They just went.
- 3E. As we continue our study through *The Life and Lessons Of The Lord Jesus Christ*, be very sure that I will point out to you those individuals who, despite being told not to tell of Christ, were so full of joy that they went and told folks anyway. That is what prompted these shepherds to tell what they knew to be true. That is what prompts our evangelists to tell what they know to be true.
- 10D. Luke 2.18: “And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”
- 1E. Did the shepherds have an impact upon those that they told? Yes, they did. I wonder how many people would remember, years later, what the shepherds had told them this one night?
- 2E. Don’t you know that when the Lord began His public ministry, and raised the dead, and healed folks, and taught the multitudes, the old people re-

marked to themselves, “I wonder if He’s the one Who was the baby those shepherds told me about so many years ago?”

11D. Luke 2.19: “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.”

1E. A very unusual woman, this young Mary. Truly blessed of God, she nevertheless maintained a steady head on her shoulders, and approached these situations in a very mature and spiritual way.

2E. I have always wondered just how she pondered these things in her heart. I cannot help but think that through all of the hoopla Mary realized that her life would be a life of extreme pain. She knew there would be many who would accuse her of wrongdoing unjustly, and there was nothing she could do about it. She must sit quietly and allow God to vindicate her at last.

12D. Luke 2.20: “And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

1E. The shepherds then returned to their flocks to keep watch over them. But they were glorifying God for what they had heard and seen.

2E. Notice the phrase, “as it was told unto them.” This is a very important phrase that sheds light on an important truth. Did they evaluate the words of the angel in light of what they saw? Or, did they evaluate what they saw in terms of what they were told by the angel?

3E. Do you use life to interpret the Word of God, or do you use the Word of God to interpret the life you live? Which should we do? We should heed the example of the shepherds. Amen?

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS IN THE GOSPELS

Matthew

1.23a	Is 7.14 LXX ¹⁷
1.23b	Is 8.8, 10 LXX
2.6	Mic 5.2
2.15	Ho 11.1

¹⁷ LXX is the abbreviation for the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament in use during Jesus’ earthly ministry.

2.18	Jr 31.15
3.3	Is 40.3 LXX
4.4	Dt 8.3
4.6	Ps 91.11-12
4.7	Dt 6.16
4.10	Dt 6.13
4.15-16	Is 9.1-2
5.21	Ex 20.13
	Dt 5.17
5.27	Ex 20.14
	Dt 5.18
5.31	Dt 24.1
5.33	Lv 19.12
	Nu 30.2
5.38	Ex 21.24
	Lv 24.20
	Dt 19.21
5.43	Lv 19.18
8.17	Is 53.4
9.13	Ho 6.6
10.35-36	Mic 7.6
11.10	Mal 3.1
12.7	Ho 6.6
12.18-20	Is 42.1-3
12.21	Is 42.4 LXX
12.40	Jon 1.17
13.14-15	Is 6.9-10 LXX
13.35	Ps 78.2
15.4a	Ex 20.12
	Dt 5.16
15.4b	Ex 21.17
15.8-9	Is 29.13 LXX
18.16	Dt 19.15
19.4	Gn 1.27
	Gn 5.2
19.5	Gn 2.24
19.7	Dt 24.1
19.18-19	Ex 20.12-16
	Dt 5.16-20
19.19	Lv 19.18
21.5	Is 62.11
	Zch 9.9

21.9	Ps 118.25-26
21.13	Is 56.7
21.16	Ps 8.3 LXX
21.42	Ps 118.22-23
22.24	Dt 25.5
22.32	Ex 3.6, 15
22.37	Dt 6.5
22.39	Lv 19.18
22.44	Ps 110.1
23.39	Ps 118.26
24.30	Dn 7.13
26.31	Zch 13.7
26.64a	Ps 110.1
26.64b	Dn 7.13
27.9-10	Zch 11.12-13
27.46	Ps 22.1

Mark

1.2	Mal 3.1
1.3	Is 40.3 LXX
4.12	Is 6.9-10 LXX
7.6-7	Is 29.13 LXX
7.10a	Ex 20.12
	Dt 5.16
7.10b	Ex 21.17
10.4	Dt 24.1, 3
10.6	Gn 1.27
	Gn 5.2
10.7-8	Gn 2.24
10.19	Ex 20.12-16
	Dt 5.16-20
11.9-10	Ps 118.25-26
11.17	Is 56.7
12.10-11	Ps 118.22-23
12.19	Dt 25.5
12.26	Ex 3.6, 15
12.29-30	Dt 6.4-5
12.31	Lv 19.18
12.32a	Dt 6.4
12.32b	Dt 4.35
	Is 45.21
12.33a	Dt 6.5

12.33b	Lv 19.18
12.36	Ps 110.1
13.26	Dn 7.13
14.27	Zch 13.7
14.62a	Ps 110.1
14.62b	Dn 7.13
15.34	Ps 22.1

Luke

2.23	Ex 13.2, 12, 15
2.24	Lv 12.8
3.4-6	Is 40.3-5 LXX
4.4	Dt 8.3
4.8	Dt 6.13
4.10-11	Ps 91.11-12
4.12	Dt 6.16
4.18-19	Is 61.1-2 LXX
7.27	Mal 3.1
8.10	Is 6.9 LXX
110.27a	Dt 6.5
10.27b	Lv 19.18
13.35	Ps 118.26
18.20	Ex 20.12-16 Dt 5.16-20
19.38	Ps 118.26
19.46	Is 56.7
20.17	Ps 118.22
20.28	Dt 25.5
20.37	Ex 3.6
20.42-43	Ps 110.1
21.27	Dn 7.13
22.37	Is 53.12
22.69	Ps 110.1
23.30	Ho 10.8
23.46	Ps 31.5

John

1.23	Is 40.3 LXX
2.17	Ps 69.9
6.31	Ps 78.24
6.45	Is 54.13
10.34	Ps 82.6

12.13	Ps 118.25-26
12.15	Zch 9.9
12.38	Is 53.1 LXX
12.40	Is 6.10 LXX
13.18	Ps 41.9
15.25	Ps 35.19
	Ps 69.4
19.24	Ps 22.18
19.36	Ex 12.46
	Nu 9.12
19.37	Zch 12.10