

7. The Songs & Prophecies

Read Luke 2:21-40

- Where does this scene take place, and why are they there?
- Who are the characters in this section of Luke's overture?

Read over Mary's, Zechariah's & Simeon's songs (insert)

- Note the themes in each of the songs.
- See also, Hannah's song: **1 Samuel 2:1-10**
- What are the reactions of each of the characters?

8. What stands out to you in this lesson?

- About John's birth
- About Mary
- Others



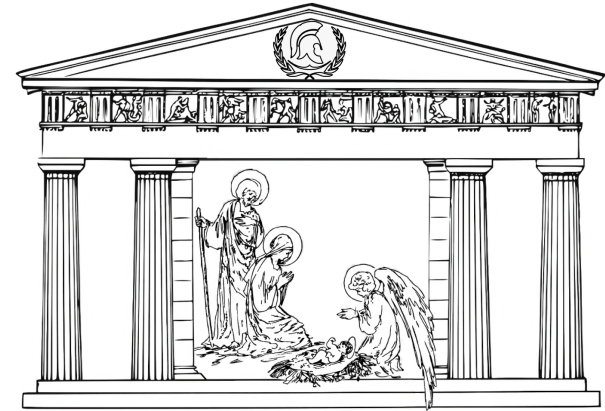
NEXT WEEK:

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

OR

SO WHAT?

A CHRISTMAS CAROL



OVERTURES FROM THE (HOLY) GHOSTS
OF CHRISTMAS PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

SESSION FIVE

LUKE'S OVERTURE PART II

"CLASH OF THE TITLES"

OR

"WHO ARE THESE GUYS?!"

With supplemental insert:

Lukan Songs of Praise (with Hannah)

LUKE 1 & 2

FOCUS SCRIPTURES:

LUKE 1:80

"The child (John) grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to Israel."

LUKE 2:52

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in divine and human favor."

^[1] <https://www.britannica.com/topic/covenant-religion>

^[2] Beyond the Veil of the Temple. The High Priestly Origin of the Apocalypses. Margaret Barker, first published in the Scottish Journal of Theology 51.1 1998.

TERMS:

Covenant: a binding promise of far-reaching importance in the relations between individuals, groups, and nations. It has social, legal, religious, and other aspects. This discussion is concerned primarily with the term in its special religious sense and especially with its role in Judaism and Christianity.^[1] Our Old and New "Testaments" are better understood as Old and New "Covenants," which is what they are, literally.

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Last week we saw in Luke's overture an overlapping of John the Baptist's and Jesus the Savior's birth narratives. It is essential to understand John's importance in the minds of first century Jews. Our Christian brains tend to put a dividing line between Jewish history (Old Covenant) and Christian history (New Covenant), making John the beginning of Jesus' and our Christian story. In Jewish history, however, John is Israel's next prophet, and the only prophet since Malachi. God is so fed up with Israel's behavior, God does not speak for five hundred years! John is born during the reign of Herod the Great and under the occupation of Rome, when the people are desperate for a savior.

John begins preaching and baptizing prior to Jesus' ministry, and he's gaining rock star status, as the Gospels reveal "all" Jerusalem, "all" Judea, and "all" the region around the Jordan are coming to hear him and to be baptized.

John's preaching style mimics that of Old Testament prophets, and it aids our understanding of Jesus' story when we realize the significance of John's arrival as the first real prophet in five hundred years, not just some weird, wild, wilderness guy with a new message. Luke wants us to know that John is the continuation of the Jewish story. For Luke, John is the final Jewish prophet, and Jesus is the culmination of God's plan for Israel.

The last two verses of the last book in the Old Testament (Malachi) claim that Elijah will come again, and the Gospel writers want us to know that John is he.

Luke's story begins in the Temple, in Jerusalem, in the sanctuary, the holy space separated from the Holy of Holies by the veil of the temple. The Holy of Holies represents Heaven and God's dwelling place,^[2] but before we go there, let's familiarize ourselves with John's importance for each of our Gospel writers.

STUDY:

1. The Foretelling

Read Malachi 2:1-3; 3:1-2; 4:4-6

a. What is the new Elijah's job according to Malachi?

2. John's Story

Read Matt 3:5-6, Mark 1:5; 8:27-28; 9:4, 11, 13

Luke 1:17; 3:15; John 1:20-23

a. How popular is John?

b. What do these passages tell you about the anticipation of 1st century Jews concerning John and Elijah and Jesus?

3. Elizabeth and Zachariah's Story

Open to Luke 1:5-10

a. List the things we learn about John the Baptist's parents.

b. What does that say about John?

Luke 1:11-25

d. What is Gabriel's message and what prophet is mentioned?

e. What is Zechariah's response, and what is the "sign" he asks for?

f. In these two passages, who fills the roles of the marginalized, women, God's Spirit?

4. Mary's Story

Luke 1:26-38

a. Where does this take place?

b. Compare Jesus' names and roles with those of Caesar Augustus and the Roman Empire

c. How is Mary's question different from Zechariah's?

5. The Cousins Meet

Read Luke 1:39-56

a. Who are the actors given voice in this passage, and why is this significant?

b. Where is the Spirit evident?

6. John's Birth

Read Luke 1:57-66, & 80

a. Who first names the child?

b. Why is verse 62 an odd sentence in this story?

c. What is the reaction of their neighbors?