

Expansions on the Gospel of St. Luke

Introduction

I approach the task at hand with some fear and trembling. Much of this hesitancy stems from the fact that I had done similar work on the Gospels of Sts. Matthew and John. That indirectly suggests that St. Mark is on the list...not just that but a vague feeling “to finish off” all four Gospels. However, I don’t like think of it that way. Actually it’s a bit repulsive. If and when the occasion arises, I’ll go for it but for now focus is upon St. Luke’s account. After all, he’s attributed as being the author of Acts of the Apostles. I had examined that book as well as part of the overall “expansions” approach to books from both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament.

Part of the fear and trembling stems from the fact that untold numbers of writers, including saints, have offered their thoughts on this Gospel as well as others biblical books. By comparison what’s offered here can’t match with their insights and influence. I had noted this in the Introductions of the Matthew and John documents, a position that holds true there as well. Also some of my hesitancy can be traced to the fact that over the years I’ve mined extensively plenty of incidents and verses from St. Luke’s Gospel. That means I had expounded upon them on a number of different occasions chiefly in the series of liturgical reflections. Then there’s the issue of familiarity many of us share at having heard Luke’s Gospel proclaimed during the liturgy. I’m especially aware of the first two chapters because they’re cited during the Christmas season. Just about everyone knows them which means as soon as we hear them, we’re in danger of tuning them out.

Nevertheless I felt a desire to carry through with this document. I figured it would be an uplifting experience to consider Luke’s Gospel as a whole right from the beginning all the way to the end, not just in bits and pieces. Looking at it as a unit complete and entire might just open up new insights. Besides, this view might prove a way to overcome hesitancy as to undertaking the project at hand. Practically speaking, I figure there are far worse things to do in life. Expanding on Luke’s Gospel, despite the inherent limitations on my part, at least would cause no physical harm. Then again, such hesitancies need to be put aside. Time to go ahead with the text with a view towards enjoying the task which, of course, is done in the spirit of *lectio divina*. Outside that this document has little or no value.

Two particular notes of importance, at least personally. I tend to stress looking at Greek prepositions prefaced to nouns or verbs as well as free standing. They can tell quite a lot of what's going on in the text...a kind of behind the scenes peek...which you don't get in translation. This will be pointed out numerous times. The second note concerns the conjunctive *kai* (sometimes the alternative being *de*) most often translated as "and." It occurs with great frequency throughout Luke's Gospel. It's purpose is to show the close connection between events as well as to move the reader along from incident to incident all the while keeping them united.

Postings will be made as I move along in the Gospel. As with all other documents of this nature, the English translation is from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** or the **RSV** (New York, 1973).

Please note that at the bottom of each page or where the page number is located are small check-like marks. They appeared each time I had converted the text into PDF format. The same happened when I tried converting the text from WordPerfect to Word as well as Libre Office.

Chapter One

When looking at the Greek text for the first time you can be thrown for a loop. An unusual word starts us off, *epeideper*. It's an intensification of *epeide*, this in turn being a stronger form of *epei* and *de*. As for *de*, it has the letter epsilon and is a shortened form of *ede*, by this time, already. You'd think one would be enough but three-in-one? Right away that gives a sense that we're dealing with an author who knows his Greek and is writing with the intent of making his Gospel known to educated folk. A bold move, indeed, for this represents making Jesus Christ known outside the bonds of his Jewish heritage. Awareness of being set apart to compose a document meant for such a vast and varied audience is important so as to have the account of Jesus Christ better known. Hopefully upon reading this these educated people not only will be won over but by reason of their position, will spread the good news more efficiently. Besides, the more sophisticated level of Greek has the advantage of showing that one of Jesus' apparently close followers was no schmuck from Galilee. If people knew that he had been won over, that increases the possibility that others at his level or higher will follow.

Luke's awareness that his style is different—of a higher grade but he's too modest to

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admit—comes across in his opening words by saying that many have put their hand to creating a narrative of the topic at hand. In other words, he is making the distinction with regard to *polloi* or many; not in a negative nor superior sense but in a way that hopefully will come across with the intent he wishes. He doesn't mention who these people are; a footnote to the **RSV** puts it best as "the writers of the gospels used sources of information now lost." Very intriguing. There comes to mind the other three evangelists, apostles and people like Jesus's mother Mary, Martha, Mary and Lazarus...of course vital...but surely others must be involved. When you think of all the characters involved, it's quite a formidable list.

Could someone like the centurion with whom Jesus interacted and whose faith he praised be among these sources? The same would apply to Paul about whom he had written in Acts. Also Luke may have garnered information in a discreet fashion from Jesus' enemies or at least those with whom they had been associated. They too would present information that despite being against the fledgling religion, would provide details necessary to give a rounded out picture. Last but not least are those whom Jesus had cured of which there were plenty. Just think. With all the information provided by such widely disparate sources, Luke would be overwhelmed by the resources at his fingertips for composing a narrative that would be invaluable. As for the word narrative, it's *diegesis* or an orderly explanation of facts, this typified by the preposition *dia-* or through prefaced to the noun whose verbal root is *ago*, to lead or to carry. Indeed, that's something Luke acknowledges at the very beginning of his *diegesis*.

As for the *diegesis*, it's associated with the verb *epicheiro*, literally to put one's hand upon or *epi-*, that is, upon the matter at hand. *Epicheiro* doesn't stand alone. It's with another verb, *anattoo* or to arrange in a series, the preposition *ana-* or above, upon suggests this is a clear organized fashion. Perhaps Luke has in mind a number of accounts that have filtered down and which he had examined. While some proved helpful, chances are he had rejected others. At least he had an insight into the fluid nature of what was going on around him and wanted to put some order into what was both confusing and informative.

Next follows a the passive participle *plerophoreo*, literally to fulfill completely: *pleres* or full prefaced to *phero*, to bear or to carry. It modifies the noun *pragma* which is a general term usually applied to business affairs or something practical; in other words, it acts as a kind of catch-word. Most readers might not be interested in such details. What does make this hit home is the simple yet telling phrase *en hēmin*, literally "in us." In

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other words, such a way of speaking makes it more personal. At the same time Luke is being discreet here, luring his readers by not mentioning the name Jesus Christ. Everyone knows whom he's talking about but speaking indirectly gives an added air of mystery. Once Luke uses this as a way to capture his audience, he will be in a better position to sustain it throughout his entire Gospel. Besides, he can always refer to *en hemin* as a reference point if anyone desires clarification. That brings in a much wider audience should that be required.

Vs. 2 continues as one unit; in fact, vss.1-4 form one extended sentence, pretty long-winded for an introduction. It begins with *kathos* or "just as" with regard to the plural inferring *plerophoreo* or things which have attained a certain fulness or perhaps better, a certain ripeness. These things or details about the life of Jesus were handed over to us, *paradidomai* where the preposition *para-* means beside, in the company of. Luke uses the first person plural even though he might be referring just to himself. That softens his approach, makes it more acceptable and in a way more authoritative by reason of incorporating others with whom he's associated. Clearly by this point so early on we get a clear idea that Luke isn't writing in isolation but with clear awareness of both the seminal church and educated persons who are not members but are so potentially.

The *paradidomai* or handing over is done by two general classes of persons who are not identified by name which given the nature of the document at hand, is secondary. Nevertheless, Luke finds it important to associate them as being as such from the beginning, *arche* which also means origin. In other words, *arche* means the two groups are utterly reliable sources for information. First Luke focuses upon the role of those who had been eyewitnesses or *autoptes*, persons who were seeing with their own eyes (*autos + opteuo* or *horao*). The second class applies to those who were ministers of the word, *huperetes* with regard to *logos*. The former applies to any kind of underling or attendant, here with respect to the lower case *logos* but suggestive of *Logos* or Jesus Christ. This word can be a frightfully difficult one to pin down. Here it seems to refer to what soon would evolve or already is in the process of evolving into what we know as the Gospel accounts. In this light *huperetes* can apply to those actively proclaiming what Jesus had said and done as well as those, like Luke, are in the process of collecting and processing all the information about Jesus they could. Everyone involved knew that time was of the essence because people were either getting old, forgetful or being persecuted.

Of the two classes, those designated as *autoptes*...those who see with their own

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eyes...are the most valuable for immediate preservation of any record about Jesus. This group includes all those persons who had interacted with him. His ministry had lasted approximately three years, very short. While Luke at first would focus there, we can assume he went further back, using Mary not just as a primary source as to Jesus' early years but for her to put him in contact with those who had known Jesus in Nazareth. The same too can apply to those who knew the apostles. Of course, we must add disciples of John the Baptist. So when you come right down to it, Luke had access to plenty of people...good, bad and indifferent. As for the ministers or *huperetes*, they too must have dealt with persons who had known Jesus but they are by circumstances one step removed.

In vs. 3 or a continuation of the extended sentence at hand Luke gets more personal as to why he's undertaking the task at hand. *Edoxe* or "it seemed good to me." This is a gentle as well as professional approach with regard to speaking of his attitude. He throws in *kamoi*, a combination of *kai* and *moi*, "and to me," to include himself in what seems to be a concerted effort to preserve the story about Jesus. Luke is spot on when he says that he has followed all developments closely. The verb *parakoloutheo* for this has the preposition *para-* or besides, in the company of prefaced to *akoloutheo* or to follow. In other words, *para-* shows Luke's resolve along with three adverbs:

-*Anothen* refers to the very first or literally, from above, *ana-* or upon suggestive of this. Compare with *apo* and *arche* of vs. 2, "from the beginning." *Anothen* here is more with reference to *parakoloutheo* or if we could put it a bit differently for emphasis, with reference to the preposition *para-* intimating being in the company of those people and events under consideration.

-*Akribos* infers strict conformity to a norm or guideline and again ties in with the preposition *para-* or *parakoloutheo*.

-*Kathexes* is translated as "for some time past" where the preposition *kata-* or in accord with is prefaced to *hexes* or one after another. It ties in with the verb *grapho*, or to write with the goal of putting down information in order.

All this attention to detail Luke directs toward a man named Theophilus ¹ described as *kratistos* or most noble, the noun *kratos* with which it's associated and is translated as strength or might. Theophilus also is mentioned in the very first verse of Acts of the

¹ Theophilus: his identity is unknown though the adjective *kratistos* suggest he's of some prominence which ties in with those of an upper, educated class with whom Luke would associate.

Apostles, that document attributed to Luke as well.

Vs. 4 at last brings to a conclusion the lengthy and somewhat convoluted sentence which begins this Gospel account. *Hina* or “that” (also, in order that) gets to the point forefront in Luke’s mind, addressing Theophilus who represents a larger audience. Perhaps by reason of his prominence he may be in a position to help the struggling church as well as give greater credibility to it by reason of his association. In a very real sense, then, Theophilus represents an influx of educated persons who will take up Luke’s endeavor not simply to gather information about Jesus Christ but to start doing theology on it.

Luke recognizes that Theophilus had been informed about his endeavors, *katecheo* meaning that he has received a report or information with regard to the *logoi* or words rendered here as “things.” They are not passing or belonging to hearsay but are endowed with certainty, *asphaleia* which literally means safe from falling. More than anything else Luke wishes that Theophilus know this certainty, *epiginosko* suggestive of something in depth by reason of the preposition *epi-* or upon prefaced to the verbal root. The way Luke couches this shows that he’s not quite sure where Theophilus stands. He can only hope that he is able to realize the nature of this *epiginosko*. If not, he will miss out on a lot. Surely Luke knows that same issue will apply to anyone who reads his account. And so with this introduction out of the way, Luke is ready to begin his *diegesis* or narrative mentioned in the opening verse. Surely he has in mind all those others whom he had contacted, hoping they will read this *diegesis* and if necessary, offering additions as well as corrections. After all, the *asphaleia* just mentioned is tantamount, the desire to get it right for future generations.

With vs. 5 Luke gets down to business, the niceties having been taken care of in the first four introductory verses. He does this by adopting a story-like to grab his readers’ attention with “In the days of Herod.” Note that the plural use of *hemera* or “days” serves to make the memory of Herod present, if you will. That means people either alive then or those who come after him or future generations will think back on what those days had consisted of. For some, nothing good but for others, prosperity. Thus “days” is a mixed bag but a necessary instrument for getting the *diegesis* at hand under way.

The general framework of the “days of Herod,” king of Judah, is now ready to be made more specific and far less known to Luke’s audience non-Jewish. That consists of the priest (*hiereus*) Zechariah who’s lineage can be traced back to Abijah, a division of the

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sons of Aaron noted in 1Chron 24.10. As for the word “division,” *ephemeria* pertains to a fixed period of priestly service in the Jerusalem temple. That, of course, gives him close association with the Jewish religious tradition which Luke finds important on which to base his narrative. By no means is his wife Elizabeth destined to play a subsidiary role, for she too as being among the daughters of Aaron means she shares the same priestly heritage as her husband. Although a casual reader may not pick up on it at this early stage, mention of this line stemming from Aaron is setting the stage for the appearance of Jesus who’s inferred as being a priest.

Vs. 6 has a nice almost homey touch to all this by calling both Zechariah and Elizabeth as righteous, *dikaios* often as applicable to a person who upholds existing religious behavior. Not only that, the two are as such before God, *enantion* connoting in his sight. Mention of their walking suggests they are actively in tune with being *dikaios*, that is, chiefly as without blame or *amempotos* also as without fault through the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, *entole* and *dikaioma*. As for the latter, it also pertains a regulation or requirement and of the same root as *dikaios*. These two terms fit in perfection with Zechariah and Elizabeth sharing Aaron’s lineage.

The conjunctive *kai* beginning vs. 7 translated as “but” throws a monkey wrench into this otherwise ideal marriage. They had no children because Elizabeth was barren, *steira* also as infertile. This was especially painful because of their advanced age, that they had to bear this for an extended length of time. To be incapable of bearing children was considered as a social stigma for the time and culture which meant the family name would not be carried on. That, however, gave the two impetus to continue on with their duties associated with the Jerusalem temple which they figured was the best way to be of service.

The conjunctive *de* beginning vs. 8 translated as “now” counters the negative conjunctive *kai* as “but” of vs. 7. *De* suggests something that is on the other hand and frequently with *men* which precedes it, usually as truly, verily. It introduces Zechariah as doing his thing, that is, serving as priest before God, his turn on the rotating schedule now at hand. In light of being childless at such an advanced age, this must have been welcomed relief though Zechariah wondered how long he’d be able to continue with this. Elizabeth surely thought the same. Nevertheless, both relied on all the years they had been faithful to their respective duties. This perseverance was surely enough to make them *dikaios* or righteous, and everyone with whom they came in contact were fully aware of this.

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Zechariah was now in line for entering the Lord's temple (*naos*), *eiserchomai* and *eis* or two occasions with the preposition *eis* or into. His task is laid out in accord with something he must have done for years if not decades, that is, offering incense as in accord with Ex 30.7-8: "And Aaron shall burn fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall burn it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." While doing this, Zechariah couldn't help but think of those who had come before him at various stages of Israel's history. Being old, he knew some of his predecessors who were unfamiliar to most living at the present. Also it'd come as no surprise that many a time he went through these liturgical gestures mindlessly. He was preoccupied with the thought that the Lord had not blessed him with children.

Vs. 10 begins with literally "all the number of the people," *plethos* also as number, this phrase intimating that virtually the entire population of Jerusalem was present praying at the hour of incense, most likely evening. *Proseuchomai* is the common verb to pray and refers mostly to making petition. Note their location, *exo* or outside. That means the congregation was in the large courtyard of the temple which could accommodate this gathering. To be sure, such a multitude seems unusual which intimates that the people were expecting something affecting their lives was about to happen. Perhaps Zechariah had a divine revelation that God was about to free them from the oppressive Roman yoke. That, of course, isn't mentioned but pretty much assumed. The people had great trust in this priest who certainly had earned it over the years. Furthermore, was the last time they would see him? If so, they felt deep sympathy for him not having any children.

While Zechariah was going about his duty, not fully with it but putting on enough show so as to benefit the people which is what he really wanted, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, *Horao* is the verb which commonly pertains to sight. *Aggelos* is the Greek for the Hebrew *mal'ak*, the two basically as a messenger. Here he took up position on the right side of the altar of incense, something perhaps he was accustomed to do down the ages but manifest now only to Zechariah, not to the throng gathered in the temple. Actually this turned out to work in favor of all involved. The smoke from the incense served to disguise the angel's appearance. Zechariah's response? Naturally, *tarasso* and *phobos* or to be troubled and the noun fear, the two essentially as one. Note that both fell (*pipto*) upon him. Nobody else, of course, saw the angel but felt some kind of divine presence visiting Zechariah by reason of his reputation for holiness. Fortunately this *pipto* pertaining to *tarasso* and *phobos* didn't have any physical manifestation. It was manifested through the expression on his face as well as some hesitancy while carrying

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out his priestly duties.

In vs. 13 the angel addresses Zechariah with words typical of his divine office, namely, not to be afraid meaning that *phobos* which had fallen on him is to be lifted at once. It was not just for his benefit but for the people so they won't get alarmed and think the troublesome expression alarm on his face was due to his age or the like. The angel, who has yet to reveal his name, reassures Zechariah by saying that his prayer is heard, *deesis* being a request which is literally heard-into, *eisakouo*. Into (*eis-*) whom isn't specified but obviously God and most likely other angels in his court who were tuned into it. Thus far Zechariah isn't mentioned as having made such a *deesis* but it's presumed.

At the exact same time the angel says that his wife Elizabeth will bear a son whom he's to name John, a fairly common one at the time and indicative of his role in life. John, of course, derives from the Hebrew *chanan*, to be favorably inclined. What's important is the idea of inclining, of being well disposed which is not a one shot deal but something that is continuous. Zechariah knew this, of course, which must have made him want to ask the angel a zillion questions. Also he had to maintain his composure on two fronts: fight the urge to rush home and inform his wife as well as tell the congregation assembled in the courtyard. While this was going on or better, continues to go on through vs. 20, the people must have been concerned. Surely their beloved priest was on the verge of losing it. Some felt compelled to rush up and take care of him but hesitated.

The angel continues speaking for the next four verses, quite long for such a heavenly being who normally drops in for a word or two, then beats it out there. Clearly this prolonged address means something ultra-important is at hand. Right off the bat the angel reassures Zechariah that he (his wife obviously included though not mentioned) will have joy and gladness, *chara* and *agalliasis*, the latter being a piercing-like, spontaneous exclamation. This won't be confined to the two; rather, many will rejoice at John's birth, *chairo* suggestive of prolonged gladness. Indeed, many will be involved by reason of Zechariah's popularity and term of long service in the Jerusalem temple.

In vs. 15 the yet-to-be-identified angel continues with saying that the child to be born will be not just great (*megas*) but be so before the Lord, *enopion* meaning in his sight constantly. His refraining from drinking wine and strong drink is reminiscent of when an angel appeared to Manoah, the father of Samson. The following applies to his unidentified mother which obviously is passed on to her son though it isn't said so

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explicitly: “Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son; so then drink no wine or strong drink and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death” [Judg 13.7]. As for being a Nazirite, this can be traced to the Lord’s word to Moses described in Chapter Six and summed up as “to separate (*nazar*) himself to the Lord” [Num 6.2].

This implied comparison with being a Nazirite as well as how it applied to Samson was certainly not unfamiliar with Zechariah. What will set the child apart is being filled with the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma*, the verb being *pleroo*, to fulfill or to bring to a completion. The angel gets very specific here. The baby will be such right from when he comes from the womb of his mother. That means between now and nine months later Zechariah and Elizabeth will be on pins and needles, wondering what will happen. Since the angel speaks of John being filled with the *Pneuma*, will he right-from-the-womb look and behave differently? Time will tell.

In vs. 16 the angel speaks of what John will do upon reaching maturity is a two-edge sword. In one way it takes away Zechariah’s immediate anxiety yet in another, increases it. While these words have far-reaching repercussions, how can anyone as a parent not be filled with anxiety? After all, John appears destined to turn many Israelites to the Lord. Note the verb *epistrepho*, literally to turn upon along with the preposition *epi*, two instances of *epi* resulting in “to turn upon-upon,” if you will. That’s putting it quite dramatically. Once again there comes to mind The Great Fear underlying everything and affecting everyone. What will the Romans do about this? They are in control, and the angel’s words could be a sign of impending disaster.

Vs. 17 continues as one sentence, namely, that John will go about this *epistrepho + epi* by going before the Lord, the *pro-* of *proerchomai* and *enopion*...to go before and literally in-the-face...after the example of Elijah. More precisely, he will do this in both the spirit and power of Elijah, *pneuma* and *dunamis*, the latter also as strength or capacity to effect something. Obviously John will not be a reincarnation of this, the greatest of Israel’s prophets, but will participate in his just mentioned two characteristics.

The next two verses spell this out more clearly with emphasis upon the two verbs *epistrepho*, this time without the preposition *epi* and *etoimazo* or to put things in a state of readiness. The former has to do with reconciling fathers to their children which implies inheritance problems. Here we have a partial quote from Mal 4.5-6 which runs

in full turning in Elijah: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse (utter destruction).”² The Hebrew verb corresponding to *epistrepho* is *shuv*, also as to return. In both instances heart is mentioned which signifies the deepest part of a person. If that can be turned in the sense of *epistrepho/shuv*, things are bound to turn out alright.

The second turning or *epistrepho* is with regard to those who are disobedient or *apeithes*, literally those who are not persuaded. They will prove to be a tougher nut to crack. If done successfully, they will be literally in (*en*) the wisdom of those who are just or *dikaios*, that word applicable to both Zechariah and Elizabeth as noted in vs. 6. As for *phronesis*, it refers to planning done in a thoughtful manner or better, the frame of mind for effecting this.

This talk about John turning, going before, turning again is summed up with vs. 17 saying that it's for making ready a people for the Lord, *etoimazo* (as above). Note that such people have been prepared beforehand, *kataskeuazo* being the verb where the preposition *kata-* or in accord with suggests this work that had been done.

In vs. 18 Zechariah finally gets the chance to blurt out to the angel question that's on top of his mind, of how he will know all this talk about John will be resolved. On top of it, his wife Elizabeth is barren. Chances are all this happened so quickly that he didn't have a chance to reflect upon Sarah, Abraham's wife, who was in the same position as his own wife (cf. Gn 18.14). We can be pretty certain over the nine month period of Elizabeth's pregnancy that the two poured over the Genesis text in a desire to see the similarity. Finally...at long last...the angel revealed himself as Gabriel. Not only that, he stands in God's presence, the *para-* or *paristemi* meaning he's right beside God, *enopion* again as right in front of him. In a very real way he's doing the same thing with Zechariah and continues by saying that he was sent or *apostello* which connotes being dispatched on a specific mission.

This mission consists of two parts: to speak to Zechariah, the preposition *pros* indicative of directness, and *euaggelizomai* where the adverbial form *eu-* of *agathos* (good) infers not just something good but something that never has been made known. As for the

² This is the first scriptural quote in Luke's Gospel. A footnote will be made for all subsequent references.

apostello which brought Gabriel to Zechariah, he has been in his customary position before God when suddenly God communicated him the words we have in vs. 13-17. They weren't imparted verbally but by reason of Gabriel's *enopion*. As soon as that had been accomplished, Gabriel did not leave this *enopion* but appeared or *horao* to Zechariah according to vs. 11.

In vs. 20 Gabriel comes off with a warning, that is, Zechariah will not be able to speak basically for nine months of Elizabeth's pregnancy rendered as the day (*hemera*) the things of which he had just spoken come to pass. This must have struck genuine fear into Zechariah both because of the length of time and knowing this period of time will begin at any moment. The reason for such a drastic measure? Zechariah didn't believe Gabriel's words or *logoi* which can be traced to what essentially seems an innocent enough question recounted in vs. 18. Although all this happened quickly and without warning, Gabriel's *logoi* don't come from him, he after all as an *aggelos* was simply conveying what he received from the Lord through that *enopion* combined with *paristemi*.

In essence, these words reveal that the Lord means business and basically reflects his true nature, of how he had acted throughout history. He doesn't like to be challenged in the slightest and being all-powerful, can enforce this as long as he desires. In other words, Zechariah is getting a first-hand taste of a certain divine immaturity, that he needs to mollify the ways he deals with human beings. So we could say that once Gabriel had slammed Zechariah's mouth—something he was compelled to do without liking it—the Lord started to wake up. After all, it is the Lord who's making the birth of John possible. John is the forerunner of Jesus Christ, and Jesus will be the one...God-in-the-flesh...who will at last wake up the Lord from these sudden, terrible bouts of immaturity which consists in giving lectures. By their very nature, lectures are one way. And so Gabriel concludes that his *logoi* (rather, the Lord's) will be fulfilled in their time, *pleroo* meaning come to perfection which is aimed as a specific *kairos*. *Kairos* itself can be translated as time but means far more, a special occasion.

Vs. 21 brings up a point that many readers were asking themselves ever since Gabriel came on the scene in vs. 11. What, they wondered, was going on with Zechariah? Like Moses, he seemed to have disappeared. Instead of a cloud on top of Mount Horeb, this venerable priest was swallowed up in clouds of incense. The verb *thaumazo* or to wonder, be amazed doesn't express immediate fear but it could devolve to that should Zechariah not reveal himself or is found dead. In the verse at hand *thaumazo* is linked

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with *chronizo*, this being the verbal root of time in the conventional sense.

To everyone's relief Zechariah came out of the temple or perhaps more accurately, came out of the clouds of incense, a very dramatic sight. They could tell by the expression on his face that something wasn't quite right. He couldn't speak which led to the natural conclusion that he had seen a vision, *optasia* with the verb *horaō*. This, it seems, is the first such occasion and concern not just for Zechariah but for what it meant for everyone else. It'd be a different story if Zechariah could communicate to them what had happened, but not this time. Nevertheless, he made signs, the verb *dianeuo* suggestive of nodding his head as well as hands in response to questions. Nothing is said of what came of this. Apparently no one could decipher this which was frustrating for everyone. The natural step was to gently ask Zechariah to step down, but given his age and reputation, he continued with his time of service or *leitourgia* most likely in a modified fashion and then went home.

Apparently being dumb didn't interfere with these priestly duties, for in this case *leitourgia* adaptations could be made with regard to acts not requiring speech. The concluding words of vs. 23 literally as "he went into his house" say more. It means that Elizabeth started to realize she was pregnant yet couldn't communicate with her husband in a normal way. Most likely he wrote on a table that this condition was temporary. Still, it was a hard lesson to bear. Elizabeth got the point through her husband's encounter with Gabriel, that is, the harsh treatment meted out by the Lord. Over time together Zechariah managed to communicate to her the details of Gabriel's visit. The over-the-top words about John surely struck fear into her. Was she going to be a victim of this in another way once she had given birth to John? One step out of line could bring down something far worse than nine months of not being able to speak.

The remaining two chapters tied in with this event form a paragraph in the **RSV**. Vs. 24 begins with the important preposition *meta* or after which signifies a period of anxiety for both Zechariah and Elizabeth. It was relatively short and associated with the time when Elizabeth she had become pregnant. She must have had mixed emotions. On the one hand she was thrilled at having conceived a child in accord with the signs and gestures her husband had communicated to her through the mediation of an angel. On the other hand she was fearful at what her child John would turn out to be even though the words to her husband from Gabriel spoke of his impending greatness. Where would that put her? Being elderly, Elizabeth knew she wouldn't live terribly long to see what would develop. The same applies to Zechariah.

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And so Elizabeth decided to go into hiding, *perikrupto* meaning to conceal herself in the most thorough manner possible which is what the preposition *peri-* or around implies. In other words, she was completely surrounded and in this way was not unlike her husband unable to speak. So for the next nine months the two of them remained together yet at the same time, apart. Actually this situation isn't in the least bit gloomy. After having gotten over the initial shock of her pregnancy and pondering what her husband tried his best to pass on to her through signs and gestures, she figured that at her advanced age, why be so concerned? She rejoiced at the Lord had done for her, namely, to have taken away her reproach. *Oneidos* is the noun which suggests loss of standing as well as disparaging words associated with it. That, of course, refers to Elizabeth having had to live so long with the stigma of barrenness. Although the text moves on from her, there's no record of what people thought once she had given birth. Better to present her child in a public manner all at once instead of putting up with all sorts of rumors for nine months. Thus another valid reason to go into hiding.

The tone of this opening chapter shifts more toward the direction of Jesus in vs. 26. there Gabriel is identified outrightly as an angel, something we learned back in vs. 11. However, there he doesn't make known his name nor his function as *aggelos*, again as messenger, until vs 19. Also vs. 26 clearly says that Gabriel is sent from God, *apostello* being the verb as in vs. 19. This *apostello* happens almost immediately and with no words though obviously God had to give him all the details so it's come off just right. The two knew that a lot hung in the balance, that Elizabeth was a kind of dry run for Mary later on.

Did the Father consult with Gabriel as to a contingency plan? And what about Jesus, Son of God? What was thinking of at this point? After all, he is at the very heart of this. Actually Elizabeth was a kind of trial run, that being known only between the Father and the Son and not let on to Gabriel. After all, he is a messenger, and it is out of place for a messenger to be privy to such delicate information. Jesus' consent with regard to Mary will depend largely on what happens with Elisabeth. Unlike Mary there's no consent regarding Elisabeth, ideal for a dry where Jesus would take careful note. As for Gabriel, the first time he's mentioned is in the Book of Daniel and has to wait until being sent to Zechariah. Now he makes himself known only six months later or quite a way into the pregnancy of Elizabeth. We can be sure that Gabriel was keeping a close eye on that as well.

In vss. 26-7 note four elements of the "route" Gabriel takes both temporally and

spatially: *in* the sixth month, *from* God, *to* a city of Galilee, *to* a virgin. We can assume that the Father and Son were together sending him off. Gabriel set off and accomplished all four literally in the blink of an eye. Although both are divine and all powerful, all their planning depended on the consent of a measly human being. This they had to drill into Gabriel so he wouldn't foul the meticulous planning that had gone into the details. Perhaps that's why he was given free reign to speak as long as he needed, far more that is the case with other angelic encounters. Given what's involved...God becoming man...we shouldn't be surprised. Thus vs. 27 has him speaking through vs. 37, a total of ten verses, quite long, and two verses longer than he had done with Zechariah (vss. 13-20). As for Mary, the common perception is that all this had come about unexpectedly, that she was doing her thing when suddenly an angel showed up on her doorstep.

Apart from yet included in the church's teaching as to Mary conceived without sin, ever since she became conscious of herself she knew something was different about her. She couldn't quite put her finger on it but instinctively knew she had to remain discreet and for the most part, silent. One of the chief ways of realizing this was how she interacted with children her own age as well as adults. Even her parents must not have been tuned into their daughter's uniqueness. Putting it somewhat crudely, she saw them sinning from time to time, this being completely alien to her nature. It was even worse when she saw this manifested in, for example, a metropolis like Jerusalem. Mary couldn't identify this clearly but had enough sense to know she was stood out and did her best to conceal it so as not to draw attention to herself.

Vs. 27 doesn't start off with mention of a proper name with regard to the person to whom Gabriel was sent. Rather, we have two designations which suggest something larger than individuals is at work. That is to say, *parthenos* or a virgin and house of David. Luke wishes to have these two fixed in the minds of his readers which, in turn, better help to situate Jesus when he is born. Note the almost casual "and the virgin's name was Mary;" important but as just noted, not as important as her being *parthenos*. Joseph as a descendant of King David similarly is important but he's mentioned even more casually, if you will, as a necessity.

Vs. 28 begins with the words "and he came to her." That is to say, Gabriel had gone through the four stages of approach mentioned in vss. 26-27. The significance of *eiserchomai* or literally "came into" (her) along with *pros* is indicative of immediate directness. Vs. 27 also has *pros* but the verb at hand in vs. 28 serves to intensify it. Also

eiserchomai and *pros* along with the conjunctive *kai* beginning this verse and translated as “and” hint at a pause or interval once Gabriel went through the just delineated four stages of coming.

In vs. 28 Gabriel is more direct with Mary than he was with Zechariah. After coming to her...again, *eiserchomai* (the *eis* or into also being direct)...he greets her with *chairo* which also means to be in a state of happiness and well-being. In other words, he recognizes that already she is as such, and that it will extend over the long term as transcending her hesitation and fear. Right after *chairo* come two titles or roles pertinent to Mary which she intimates but not fully: *kecharitomene* or *charitao* meaning to bestow favor and the Lord or *Kurios* being with her. Actually this *meta* with regard to the Lord surpasses the former, the equivalent of saying that the Lord God of Israel is involved.

The tiny word *de* or “but” says a lot. It reveals Mary’s state of mind, of being troubled, which is the natural response. The verb here is not the expected *tarasso* but the same verb prefaced with the preposition *dia-* or through, thoroughly distressed. If that wasn’t enough, vs. 29 has the preposition *epi* or upon with regard to Gabriel’s greeting rendered as *logos*. Note that at once we have another verb prefaced with *dia-*, *dialogizomai* or to think carefully about all the implications involved. This, of course, is directed toward the greeting or *asposmos*.

So while *diatarasso* and *dialogizomai*...a double-barreled *dia-* if you will...was transpiring in Mary, Gabriel wastes no words as is typical of an angel. He recognizes Mary’s state of mind but continues because he’s on a mission that needs to be fulfilled as soon as possible. He accomplished the first half with Zechariah and Elizabeth and now has moved on to the second more important second half. In vs. 30 Gabriel addresses Mary using her proper name, telling her not to be afraid just as he did with Zechariah in vs. 13. Mary has found favor with God, *charis* being akin to *kecharitomene* or favored one. Her *charis* has the same place, as it were, as when Gabriel says the Lord is *meta* or with her. Here the preposition is *para* which is more along the lines of being beside. Thus Mary has *meta* and *para* together, the two setting her apart.

Vs. 31 continues with Gabriel, the conjunctive *kai* as “and” along with *idou* or behold, the latter as way to get attention as well as an exhortation to sustain Mary in any fear or hesitation that naturally will come her way. He seems to overstate the situation by saying that Mary will conceive in her womb. Nevertheless, this statement makes sense

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insofar that she was free from sin. Given what's involved, it wouldn't be that far-fetched for her to consider the child will somehow pop into her life apart from the normal way of giving birth. As in the case of Zechariah's yet to be born son, Gabriel has a name Mary is to give her child, Jesus. The Hebrew *Yeshuah* needed no explanation to Mary, that is, from the verbal root *yashah* or to save. As soon as she heard the proper name, she knew what might be involved.

Just as in vss. 14-17 with regard to John yet-to-be-born, Gabriel describes the role of Jesus in vss. 32-33. He starts off by simply calling Jesus great or *me-gas* followed by being Son of the Most High which generally pertains to royal authority and later taken as being divine. Given the angelic nature of Gabriel and the sinless nature of Mary, both knew it pertained to Jesus as such. It was one of those things put out there and left unexplained. As for the royal authority, the same verse continues with a more earthly and statement more readily to be grasped by the majority of people. That is to say, Gabriel uses another title for God, namely, the Lord God who will give him David's throne and that Jesus' kingdom will have no end. In other words, it will lack a *telos* or completion because already it is complete.

Not only that, Gabriel connects Jesus directly to King David by Joseph who hasn't been mentioned except in passing, that is, in vs. 27 to whom Mary is described as betrothed. As the church later reflected on all this, Joseph was seen as a kind of step-father, not having had sexual intercourse with Mary. Thus physically speaking Jesus will not be of David's lineage. While this may appear confusing, it shows that Jesus as divine runs along side the human situation, as it were, taking from that what is necessary to enhance appreciation of his divinity. That's the whole goal from the very get-go. Awkward language is used with the expectation it may be misunderstood. If so, it is due to a deficiency of paying close attention to all the details and can't be argued down, a waste of time.

By way of summing up or comparing John and Jesus, both yet to be born:

John

will be great
shall drink no wine
shall be filled with Holy Spirit
will turn sons of Israel to God
will go in the spirit and power of Elijah

Jesus

will be great
will be called Son of Most High
God will give him David's throne
will reign over Jacob
kingdom will have no end

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will turn hearts of fathers to children
will turn disobedient to wisdom of the just
will make ready a people

In vs. 34 Mary decides to interrupt Gabriel, understandably so. Normally it's unheard of when coming to a divine being but perfectly fine by reason of Mary's unique nature as sinless. In other words, she has *parresia* to the max, that ability to speak frankly and openly which has its roots as a right reserved exclusively for a citizen of a Greek city-state or *polis*. The literal way of putting this runs as "How is this?" Coupled with the prepositions *pros* or towards concerning the angel, it reveals a directness coupled with a child-like quality only someone in Mary's position could pull off. She adds the logical fact that she doesn't have a husband.

Gabriel appreciates this and of course knows the situation far better than Mary. Without missing a beat in vs. 35 he comes off with two verbs prefaced with the preposition *epi-*. The first is *eperchomai* or to come upon which includes a free-standing *epi...* "will come upon upon you." This is in reference to the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma*. The second verb is *episkiazo* or to shadow-upon and in reference to the power of the Most High, *dunamis* involving the potential to do something. Thus we have two elements of the divine bearing down upon (*epi*) Mary. Gabriel continues while indirectly ignoring Mary's statement as to not having a husband, the *Pneuma* and *dunamis* taking this place with regard to the natural order of things. This indirect manner of speaking is further spelled out by the passive participle *gennomenon* or "to be born" with regard to Jesus called holy or *hagios* as well as Son of God, the latter lacking a definite article and leaning more towards Jesus' state of being, for lack of better words. As for the precise time of this *eperchomai* with *epi* and *episkiazo*, nothing is said. We can assume it happened as soon as Gabriel broke off his conversation with Mary.

Vs. 36 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as "and" along with *idou* or "behold," the two acting as one when Gabriel responds to Mary's question. Actually Gabriel used *idou* in vs. 31 when he spoke outrightly that Mary will give birth to Jesus. Now he informs her that Elizabeth too has conceived a son, she being far older. Perhaps this wasn't new to Mary since her cousin and her husband were well respected and word quickly got out about her pregnancy. However, hearing it from an angel was a verification as opposed to hearsay.

Furthermore, Elizabeth was now into her sixth month. If she is called barren or *steira* as

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in vs. 7, a well known public fact, why can't Mary conceive a child apart from the normal means of marriage? And so Gabriel concludes...rightly so...that nothing is impossible with God. The verb here is *adunateo* along with the preposition *para* regarding God which infers that this beside-ness of God makes all things open to change and work according to what he wishes. As for Gabriel's parting words, words said in typical angelic haste. His words thus echo the Lord's words in Gn 18.14: "Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son."³ Note it's the Lord himself speaking who alternates with the three mysterious visitors. The verb *pala'* is used for "hard" and more specifically means to be wonderful as well as to separate or to distinguish. Also *mohed* means "appointed time" and is akin to *kairos*. Chances are that someone even as young as Mary may have heard the story about Sarah in the synagogue which to her had become a living reality. And so Gabriel couldn't have left off with better words.

All this was a huge encouragement to Mary which made her give her consent at once in vs. 38 by expressing *idou* to balance Gabriel's *idou* in vs. 36. This immediacy is manifest by her being quick to add that she is the handmaid of the Lord, *doule* being a female slave which in many ways reflected her actual condition. Mary's acknowledgment is in accord with or *kata* the *rhema* or word uttered by Gabriel which here is his entire message. Gabriel didn't bother responding...not even a thank you on behalf of both him and God...and left at once. We can assume that the two looked at each other intently which was just as much if not more than the words exchanged. Vs. 38 puts this departure in terms of two uses of the preposition *apo* or from, the first prefaced to the verb *aperchomai* and the second as free standing. Gabriel now had to stand apart from Mary...very far apart...in order to give plenty of room for Jesus to come.

As soon as Gabriel returned to standing in the presence of God or in accord with vs. 19—*paristemi* meaning he's right beside God and *enopion* again as right in from of him—God turned to his Son Jesus. Obviously he was listening in on all this from the get-go with great attentiveness. If Mary declined Gabriel's offer, he wouldn't become incarnate. However, he concurred and echoed Mary's *genoito* or "let it be" following, as it were, the same route Gabriel had taken to Mary. However, once there, he'd remain for a substantial length of time. Mary knew of this arrival in secret. Something very different was at work within her and realized the best way to decipher it was to remain silent which she did willingly. However, her silence was different from that of Zechariah.

³ This is the second scriptural references in Luke's Gospel.

Vs. 39 signals a new phase in Mary's life. While she's betrothed to Joseph (cf. vs. 27)—and that doesn't mean being married—we have no record of her sharing this meeting with Gabriel with him nor anyone else. Obviously she was afraid and wisely stayed firm in her self-imposed promise, if you will, to remain silent. It was clear no other option was available. So when we heard this verse beginning with “in those days” we can imagine them being fraught with anxiety. Mary's relatives and friends picked up on this but said nothing. Everyone saw that she was beginning to swell with child which must have caused quite a stir. It's to Joseph's credit that he stood by her though details in this regard are completely lacking. The only hint we have here is that the text jumps ahead to 2.5 where Joseph is again mentioned as betrothed, not married, yet still carrying for his pregnant wife.

Mary is personally relieved to hear about her cousin's pregnancy and makes a bee-line to her, *spoude* often rendered as haste but also implying earnestness. At last she had an excuse to leave her confining environment, especially any rumors flying around about her budding pregnancy. So this *spoude* is just as much self-centered as it is due to concern for Elizabeth's welfare. Joseph too must have been relieved to have Mary removed from his life so he could reassess his relationship with her. A manifestation of this *spoude* is that vs. 40 begins with the conjunctive *kai* or “and” followed by the next three verses as the same. In other words, one successive event after the next but all intimately connected. Although vs. 44 begins with *gar* or “for,” it too functions in accord with *kai* and is followed by two more verses with that conjunctive.

En route to an unidentified town in Judah Mary was trying to figure out how her pregnancy and Gabriel's words fit in with Elizabeth's having conceived in old age along with her husband who had been struck dumb. It seemed that Elizabeth was the only one who could shed light on this. As for Zechariah, it would be awkward running into him not being able to speak though he could listen in on any conversation between these two strangely pregnant woman.

The *kai* of vs. 41 as following on the heels of the *kai* of vs. 40 or when Mary entered the house shows the immediate connection between Elizabeth inside, Mary about to step over the threshold and John. As for John, he leaped in his mother's womb, *skirtao* also as to bound as a lamb and *koilia* as womb, also seat of feelings and desires. As for Zechariah, he isn't mentioned except that it's his house where all this takes place. We can assume he was present inside and made gestures toward Mary, he being doubly glad since this signaled that his condition of being struck dumb was about to come to

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and end. We have to add a fifth person to the mix, that is, the Holy Spirit. Being *Pneuma*, the entire household will be filled and centered more specifically upon Elizabeth who was so filled, *pleroo* which intimates coming to a completion or fulfillment.

This *pleroo* is expressed in vs. 42...another *kai*, of course...when Elizabeth lets out a loud cry. The verb is *anaphoneo*, the preposition *ana-* as upon, above indicative of this along with the adjective *meegas* or great. On the surface Elizabeth is doing this but in reality it's the *Pneuma* who's operative similar as to what Gabriel promised Mary in vs. 35 or "The Holy Spirit will come upon you." As for the contents of this powerful cry, it consists of two exclamations of the participle blessed, *eulogeo* literally to say or to speak well, *eu-* being the adverbial form of *agathos*, good. The first *eulogeo* deals with Mary as singled out among all women, that is, she alone as virgin is pregnant with Jesus whom was known already to be special but far more than anyone at the time realized. The second *eulogeo* deals with the fruit (*karpos*) of Mary's womb which means that as soon as Elizabeth saw her cousin, her focus was upon the babe inside her.

In vs. 43 Elizabeth asks a question which is more an exclamation as to why she is privileged to have Mary visit her as the mother of her Lord. It's hard to convey properly, but there's a definite poignancy in this question that tends to stick with anyone who reads it. We can assume that Zechariah was present or if not, listening in unbeknown to the two women. Obviously Elizabeth knew Mary was pregnant but wasn't informed it was with Jesus as Lord. That must have come through the intercession of the angel Gabriel who first appeared to her husband. Both she and Zechariah couldn't help but put two and two together, it was so self-evident. Then without explaining, she reveals her state of mind in vs. 44 beginning with *idou* or behold. This happens as soon as Mary's greeting reached her ears when the babe within her leaped for joy, *skirtao*. This is pretty much a repeat of vs. 41 only here Mary's *aspasmos* goes literally into (*eis*) the ears of Elizabeth. It is precisely this *aspasmos* when having made its way down into Elizabeth's womb that it triggers recognition of Jesus by John.

Elizabeth doesn't stop there. In vs. 45 which begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as "and" she continues not mentioning Mary's name but put this way so as to prolong her joy which she was barely able to contain. She calls her cousin blessed or *makarios* (also as happy, fortunate) for believing there would be a fulfillment not so much what the Lord had spoken to her but what was spoken from him. *Teleiosis* leads more towards perfection than fulfillment though certainly it can include the latter. This makes more

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special sense since it is *para* the Lord or from right beside or accompanying him.

And so with vs. 46 begins the Magnificat or more properly, with the conjunctive *kai*, the latest in a series which shows the close connection between the action and those who are involved. When going through the Magnificat, the series of *kai* serve to wrap up all these verses, bringing them to a level of celebration that will echo down the centuries. While the Magnificat is something most likely Mary did not say, to be sure it expresses her inmost self. The two immediate recipients of this, of course, are Elizabeth and Zechariah. We can assume it meant more for Zechariah since he was the one who had dealt with the angel Gabriel. Also it signaled that his not being able to speak was coming to an end.

The first two verses of the Magnificat echo Hannah's song of praise in Second Samuel and are comprised of two parts, the first beginning the song and the last which comes towards the beginning of the book. As for the first which begins Chapter Two ⁴, it runs as follows. Mary begins with "and said" whereas Hannah begins with "and prayed" or *halal* which fundamentally means to make bright. Because of its importance the two verses are presented as follows: "My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies because I rejoice in your salvation." As for the connection, the following is excerpted from **Expansions on Second Samuel** also posted on this homepage:

Hannah's prayer (the verb *palal*, essentially as the making of a petition) begins here and continues through vs. 10. Throughout this section Hannah draws a number of contrasts through the presentation of opposites, especially from vs. 4 through vs. 9.

Palal is used with 'amar or said indicating that Hannah is to make her petition out loud for all to hear: Elkanah, Peninnah and her children, Eli, Hophni, Phinehas and anyone else in the temple area. She has no hesitation to utter it and does so boldly for everyone. Certainly any bystanders must have known that Hannah was about to hand over her only-begotten son because of Eli and his two sons at the ready, so they gathered around her to listen intently.

⁴ This is the third scriptural reference in Luke's Gospel.

Hannah speaks of two parts of herself, if you will, her heart and strength (*lev* and *qeren*). The former is used with the verb *halats* meaning to be joyful. The latter more specifically means a horn which is an image of a bull's raw power. And like a bull running free, Hannah lifts up her *qeren*, the verb being *rum*. The preposition *b-* (in) is prefaced to *YHWH* meaning that Hannah has flung up her *qeren* right "in" the Lord's presence. So with these two verbs (*halats* and *rum*) in mind as indicative of Hannah's exultation, at last she has achieved all that she ever could desire.

Rachav as derides means to be enlarged and here suggests that Hannah is opening her mouth as widely as possible to give full voice to her praise. In the verse at hand, Hannah's *rachav* is done by her mouth which is put objectively, as though Hannah were apart from it and employing it to make this broad gesture. Her object is her enemies or *'ayav*. The first person to come to mind, of course, is Peninnah who isn't present. Since *'ayav* is plural, perhaps Hannah is intimating Hophni and Phinehas although they were too hardened in their hearts to realize it. Use of this term must have shocked everyone around Hannah, especially her husband, Elkanah. Eli must have been surprised as well, not having a clue as to what happened between now and her last visit when he accused her as being drunk.

Given Hannah's gracious and sensitive nature, she is quick to add the fact that she is rejoicing, *samach*. Like the preposition *b-* prefaced to *YHWH*, *samach* is used with the same preposition regard salvation or *yeshuah* (the verbal root for the proper name Jesus). Thus the sentiment of Hannah's *samach* is right up there (literally) with *halats* and *rum*.

All in all, this exultant opening verse of Chapter Two is because of Hannah's child, Samuel. Although she has him for a very short period of time, she is delighted to hand him over to service in the Shiloh temple. Any bystander who knew the story...and given the tight-knit society of the time...plenty of people did which is why they must have been impressed greatly.

As for the text from Luke's Gospel, we have two parts as belonging to Mary. First is her soul or *psuche* which does the exalting of the Lord, *megaluno* along the lines of making

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large space-wise. Second is her spirit or *pneuma*, the same *pneuma* that had been informed by the *Pneuma* which is holy. It rejoices, *agalliao* also not just to be full of joy but to be overjoyed. Here it is literally “upon (*epi*) God” who is identified as savior, *soter*. In a way this doesn’t exactly apply to Mary who, putting it somewhat awkwardly, had no need of a savior because she is free from sin. Thus we could say she uses *soter* as applicable to those for whom Jesus is coming.

As for the second part of the Magnificat which comes from 1Sam 1.11⁵, consider the following also excerpted from **Expansions on Second Samuel** which comes after the verse at hand:

“And she vowed a vow and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant but will give to your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.’”

Here as with the previous verse when making a point or an exaggeration, the verb is used twice, the first being *nadar* which refers to a voluntary promise. In the verse at hand, “and said” serves to spell out this vow which is directed to the Lord of hosts or *tsava’*. By invoking not just the Lord but his angels as *tsava’*, Hannah knew her prayer would get results.

The common verb *ra’ah* (to look) comprises the second pair of verbs used twice with respect to Hannah’s affliction or *hony* which is prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as “look in the affliction.” The second use of *ra’ah* corresponds to the English “Indeed.” In the verse at hand, Hannah speaks of herself as a kind of object for the Lord to consider, *’amah* or maidservant which primarily refers to a female slave. While this reveals Hannah’s littleness and submission to the Lord, it is based somewhat on personal experience accumulated over so many years and intensified during the yearly visits to Shiloh, namely her abuse at the hands of Peninnah.

Next Hannah asks the Lord to remember her, *zakar* suggestive of more than remembering but of being mindful and therefore holding in

⁵ This is the fourth scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel.

continuous regard. Interestingly, *zakar* is the verbal root for the noun *zakar* or a male. Later such *zakar* will result in a *zakar* or the birth of Samuel.

Zakar is the opposite of *shakach* (to forget) and even more opposite, if you will, by reason of the inferred possibility of a male child (*zakar*) being born to Hannah. Hannah refers to herself a second time as *'amah* or maidservant to drive home the point to the Lord. It also shows her determination to have her desperate situation resolved as quickly as possible.

Next comes the essence of Hannah's request, a son or *zerah* which also means a seed or the produce of the field. Hannah's request for a son is remarkable because she makes the strict condition that if the birth comes to pass, she will hand him over to the Lord which means she will leave him in the custody of the Shiloh temple. Indeed, she is courageous because although Eli is almost a hundred years old and can pass away any minute, his two corrupt sons, Hophni and Phinehas were priests in charge and showed no signs of mending their ways. Obviously Hannah was aware of their behavior for quite some time, and to hand over any future child in their custody would be irresponsible. Also she may have had some personal if not selfish motive, to get back at the taunts from Peninnah.

Morah means razor and refers to a specific sign of the future child's dedication to the Lord, that his hair never will be cut. Two other biblical references to *morah* exist, both with respect to Samson, one being 13.5: "No razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth." These words are addressed to a woman whose name is anonymous and who was barren just like Hannah. Surely Hannah had in mind this example and perhaps thought her son-to-be-born would turn out like Samson which was true in that both were judges in Israel.

As for the text of St. Luke's Gospel, that is, vs. 48 which continues as part of an extended sentence running through the next verse, it begins with "he" which involves the Lord and God as savior in the previous verse. Note the two uses of the preposition *epi* or "upon:" the verb *epiblepo* or to look upon and as free standing. In other words, a twofold *epi* with regard not so much to Mary but to something in her possession, her

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lowliness which also is twofold. The first is *tapeinosis* or lowliness which also can refer to a reversal of fortune, and the second is *Mary-as-doule*, basically a female slave. However, as such she belong to the Lord.

The *idou* or “behold” of this verse functions almost as “however” along with *apo tou nun* or “from now” to contrast the *tapeinosis/doule* with how future generations will regard her, blessed or the verbal form of *makarios, makarzo*. More precisely, this dual character is equivalent to being blessed generation after generation or ad infinitum. Mary speaks this way with authority, that she has knowledge of the future which others do not.

Vs. 49 is a continuation as well as conclusion of an extended verse beginning in vs. 47. The adjectives *mezas* and *dunatos* (great as in size and powerful as in the capacity to do something) are similar. The former is applicable to Mary with an active verb (*poieo*, to make or to do) and the latter is applicable to the Lord with the verb to be implied. I.e., both have a certain interchangeability. Thrown in but not as an addition but as a kind of summary is Mary’s recognition of the Lord’s name as holy, *hagios*. Also vs. 49 is in reference, like so many of the following verses of the Magnificat, to a verse from the Psalter. The one at hand is Ps 111.9: “He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and terrible is his name!”

Although vs. 50 is a new sentence, by reason of *kai* being translated as “and,” we could tag it onto the extended one just noted which begins the Magnificat. *Eleos* is the noun for mercy which is relatively weak compared with the inferred Hebrew *chesed* which connotes zeal as well as ardor and equivalent to *agape*. Note the preposition *eis*, “into generation and generation.” However, such *eleos* is limited to those who fear the Lord, *phobeo*. Here this verb is equivalent to another Hebrew verb, *yare’* also as fear but with the sense of having respect. The Psalm reference to vs. 50 is Ps 103.13 and 17: “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.” “But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him and his righteousness to children’s children.”

Vs. 51 continues as an extended sentence through vs. 53. It focuses upon the Lord’s strength manifested by means of his arm, *kratos* also as might along with the verb *poieo* or to make but translated here as “shown” and followed by the preposition *en*, “in his arm.” This arm scatters the proud, *diaskorpizo* being the verb with the preposition *dia-* as through which infers a thorough dispersal. This is with regard not so much to those

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who are proud in and by themselves (*huperephanos*, *huper-* as above in the sense of beyond) but their arrogance as situated in the heart or *kardia*. More specifically, it has a definite place there, *dianoia* generally meaning the faculty of thinking or where we make decisions. The Psalm verse associated with the sentiment expressed here is Ps 89.10: “You did crush Rahab like a carcass, you scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.”

Vs. 52 continues the extended sentence where Mary celebrates the Lord’s twofold gesture taken as one: having put down the mighty from their thrones and having exalted the lowly. The two verbs are *kathaireo* and *hupsoo*. The adjective *tapeinos* brings to mind the *tapeinosis* of Mary-as-doule in vs. 48. There’s no immediate Psalm verse associated with the one at hand.

Vs. 53 brings to a close the extended sentence beginning with vs. 51. Note another contrast between *empimplemi* and *exapostello*, to fill and to send away. The contrast at hand is shown by the two prepositions prefaced to the verbs, *em-* and *ex-* or in and from. Also the contrast is amplified by the two adjectives, *agathos* and *kenos* or good and empty. The Psalm verse associated with this one is Ps 107.9: “For he satisfies him who is thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.”

Vs. 54 and the next verse form an extended sentence. It starts off with the Lord having come to the aide of Israel which is called a *pais*, fundamentally as a child. The verb is *antilambano* or to lay hold off. Synonymous with this is having remembered his mercy, *eleos* as in vs. 50, that is, *chesed*. The Psalm verse associated with the one at hand is Ps 98.3: “He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.”

Vs. 55 sums up the Magnificat with the Lord having spoken to our fathers, the preposition *pros* indicative of directness. Abraham, of course, is singled out as the greatest from who is derived his posterity. There comes to mind Gn 17.7: “And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to e God to you and to your descendants after you.”

The Magnificat closes with the conjunctive *de* translated as “and.” It serves to show that what had been so eloquently expressed there continues in a real-life situation, Mary remaining with Elizabeth for a period of three months. After this she returns home,

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literally “into her house.” During this extended time Mary must have had her hands full caring for a aged woman getting ready to give birth to a child for the first time in her life. If that wasn’t bad enough, she had to cope with Zechariah. We can assume at this point he didn’t make the trek to Jerusalem to function as a priest but stayed at home to care for...pester is more like it...his wife, he not being able to speak. We can be pretty certain that when Mary and Elizabeth were left alone they were both glad and made fun of poor Zechariah. Imagine, they said among each other, what it would be like if he could speak. He’d never shut up.

Vs. 57 signals a shift from Mary to Elizabeth, more precisely the fulfilment of the time for her to give birth. As expected, *chronos* is the noun for time in the conventional sense though the birth of John is by no means normal, given Elizabeth’s advanced age. Similarly the verb *pleroo* or to reach fulfilment applies to her term of pregnancy coming to an end. Word got out about this and spread like wildfire. How could it not be as such? On top of it, Elizabeth is wife of the well respected priest Zechariah. Note the context of the rejoicing-with or *sugchairo*: that the Lord had shown great mercy, *megaluno* and *eleos*. If this pertains to neighbors and relatives, it was more true with Zechariah. We can assume that in accord with vs. 56 Mary had returned home before this. While at first remaining with Elizabeth during this time of *pleroo* seems the right thing to do, it was better for her to leave. John had leaped as a lamb in his mother’s womb, so this leaping would be more pronounced upon his birth. It might cause Jesus to do the same in Mary which could be detrimental to her well-being. Thus the two had to part. The same held true with Zechariah who made signs of affection to Mary.

After eight days of what essentially was prolonged rejoicing, Elizabeth and Zechariah had the child circumcised which means he was to be given his proper name. Everyone expected it would be after his father. You’d think the father would be the one to have say in the matter, but it was the wife. Although it was name the angel Gabriel had communicated to him in vs. 13, Elizabeth made the decision. Perhaps she had to step in by reason of Zechariah still not being able to speak. Apparently this didn’t go down too well with those involved, for they asked him about the name. Zechariah concurred by writing the name John on a tablet. No small wonder that vs. 63 concludes with a sentence by itself, namely, that everyone marvelled, *thaumazo* which also can mean to admire.

At last. At long last in vs. 64 Zechariah was able to speak and immediately began by blessing God, *eulogeo* or literally to speak well, *eu-*. *Parachrema* is the adverb, literally

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beside (*para-*) the thing or matter at hand (*chrema*). Since society at the time was closely-knit, vs. 65 says that two things happened just as immediately, were beside (*para-*) the matter which just occurred. First, fear (*phobos*) came upon all the neighbors and second, such matters were spoken throughout the hill country. *Dialaleo* is the verb prefaced with the preposition *dia-*, literally speech went through that area, *rhema* fundamentally as word being what was spread through. Not only this, but as a result everyone who heard the *rhema* put them in their hearts, the verb being *tithemi* or to place and singular *kardia* or heart as applicable to all. Although they would love to have known what the child would turn out to be, that would have to wait to much later. All that was clear at this time was that the Lord's hand was with John. This common sentiment is a kind of foreshadowing of what will happen to Mary. "But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" [2.19].

Vs. 64 says that Zechariah started blessing the Lord as soon as his tongue was loosened. Vss. 67-79 consist of a more formal expression of this spontaneous *eulogeo*. Rightly it begins with him being full of the Holy Spirit, *pleroo* and *Pneuma*. Actually here *eulogeo* = *propheteuo* or to prophesy.

Vs. 68 begins this blessing/prophecy known as the Benedictus with regard to John later known as The Baptist and consists of an extended sentence running through vs. 75 or about half way through the entire record on hand. From then until the end or vs. 79 we have the second and concluding half. *Eulogetos* or blessed with reference to the Lord begins this prayer, obviously from *eulogeo* as of vs. 64. The **RSV** has three Psalm references relative to this short statement, the first being included here, the other two being Ps 72.17 and Ps 106.48: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and amen" [Ps 41.13].

The direct out flow of *eulogetos* rests upon *hoti* or "for" in vs. 68 which leads to the following three verbs, the third of which is in vs. 69:

- 1) *Episkeptomai* to make a careful examination with emphasis upon *epi-*, upon.
- 2) *Poieo*: to do or to make *lutrosis* or release from ransom, the verb suggestive of continuous action. Both verbs pertain to Israel designated as "his people."
- 3) *Egeiro* or to raise not just salvation (*soteria*) but a horn of salvation, *keras* suggestive of something exceptional. Here this is "for us" compared with "his people" of the previous verse. This horn and "for us" have a particular place-where, the house of

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David, the Lord's servant thus inferring him as a model for all kings in Israel, Jesus obviously inferred.

Vs. 70 continues the extended sentence beginning with *kathos* or "as" which counters the *hoti* or "for" in vs. 68. *Kathos* sets the stage, if you will, for God speaking through Israel's prophets with a mouth, the singular used to represent unity and sameness of prophecy. This unity of prophetic speech is intended for the future which is not present and has the following three overflows:

- "That" begins vs. 71 in the **RSV** but not in the Greek. It is in reference to "us" or the nation of Israel being saved from those who show hatred, *miseo*. Note that the noun *soteria* or salvation is used (cf. vs. 69), not the verb.

-To perform mercy: another use of the verb *poieo* suggesting action in the present with regard to *eleos*. Such mercy is specified as having been promised to our fathers which also can include the prophets of vs. 70.

-To remember: *mimneskomai*, more as to keep in mind the holy covenant, *diatheke* or literally a setting or placing through.

-In addition to the covenant as well as including it is the oath or *horkos* the Lord swore to Abraham which is more specific and referring to Gn 17.7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant to be God to you and to your descendants after you." Note the directness, highly unusual, that is, "to be God to you." This is conveyed by three instances of the preposition */-* or "to:" *to* be, *to* you and *to* God.

Vs. 74 spills over, as it were, where both covenant and oath have as their aim that Israel serve the Lord without fear, *latreuo* usually associated with a religious function in mind. Here the verb *rhuomai* is associated with preservation compared with *soteria* as in vs. 71.

The *latreuo* of the previous verse has a specific place which vs. 75 names as holiness and righteousness, *hosiotetes* and *dikaiosisune*, the preposition *en* with regard to the first but obviously carried over to the second. Both are to be in the presence of God, *enopion* more as right in front of him and thus inferring that which is continuous. This is mirrored in the adjective *pas* as applied to "all" the days, "of our life" not in the Greek text.

Vs. 76 signals the beginning of the second extended sentence of the so-called Benedictus beginning with vs. 68 and runs through vs. 79. The conjunctive *kai* or "and"

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signals a shift to the child Jesus whom Zechariah says will be called prophet of the Most High: future tense as a result of what Jesus will say and do. Another use of *enopion* as in vs. 75 will apply to him which is a quote from Mal 3.1⁶ which runs in full as “Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts.”

Vs. 77 begins (or concludes) with three things which Zechariah sees the child John doing upon having grown up:

-Not to give salvation or *soteria* but knowledge of it, *gnosis* meaning that people will be able to comprehend it as associated with the person of Jesus. *Gnosis* gets more specified as a result of this association, that is to say, it has a “place,” in forgiveness of sins, *aphesis* meaning the act of freeing. Such *aphesis* comes about by means of divine tender mercy, *eleos* modified by the noun (*dia* or through) *splagchnon* which applies to the inner parts of a body. This has a specific time, *anatole* the rising of the sun or dawn. This *anatole* doesn’t come from the eastern horizon but “from on high” or from God and thus is from above to below.

-To give light in vs. 79, the verb being *epiphaino*, literally as to shine upon, this tying in with *anatole* and “from on high” of the previous verse. Such shining upon is for both those sitting in darkness and death’s shadow, *skotos* and *skia* being similar with the verb *kathemi* or to sit (down, *kata-*) suggestive of a permanent state or condition. As for the latter, it suggests always being in the company of death, hugging it as a shadow hugs that giving it unsubstantial form. This is part of a quote from Is 9.2⁷ which runs in full as “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.”

-To guide or *kateuthuno* where the preposition *kata-* prefaced to the verb implies a more direct guidance. Feet represent the continuous act of advancing literally into the way of peace, *hodos* suggestive not so much of arrival but the journey.

The conclusion of lengthy Chapter One or with vs. 80 begins with the conjunctive *de* translated as “and.” It can be taken in two ways. First, it gathers up all that Luke has put

⁶ This is the fifth scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel.

⁷ This is the sixth scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel. The other two references note in the **RSV** are also from Isaiah: 58.8 and 60.1-2.

forth with regard to introducing his readers to an account of the birth first of John the Baptist followed by Jesus Christ. Secondly and more specifically *de* refers to John from this point on until he reaches adulthood. *Auxano* and *krataioo* or growing and becoming strong in spirit, *pneuma* here as in the human sense, not *Pneuma*. Such a twofold increase results in John heading off to the wilderness, *eremos* being an adjective meaning that which is desolate and here is in the plural. This period lasted until the day of his manifestation or *anadeixis* which also can mean proclamation or appointment. Note the preposition *pros* with regard to this noun, that such a manifestation is directly aimed at Israel.

And so a time gap is implied between John heading off to the wilderness and him beginning his ministry at the Jordan River. Actually there's no specific mention as to what drew him there. An exception to this, if you will. John leaped like a lamb in the womb of his mother when Mary came to visit her. Here is the precise point even before birth when John knew he had to withdraw himself. In a way, the desert became a womb where John awaited Jesus. Recognition of him is thus not unlike the prenatal leaping. Once all this has been established, Luke can move on to the birth of Jesus. Even as a child John is true to his words and fades into the background in accord with Jn 3.30: "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Chapter Two

"In those days." A great way to start off a new chapter since such words (similar to 1.39) set the tone for telling a story, for everyone enjoys listening to one. The phrase also has a way of leaving off the birth of John the Baptist, allowing him to recede into the background in order—according to the last verse of the previous chapter—to grow and become strong in spirit.

What we have now is the birth of Jesus situated within the much broader context of the Roman Empire when Caesar Augustus decreed a census to account for all the inhabitants of the world. *Oikoumene* is the noun referring to the inhabited world or basically the Mediterranean region. The nice thing about *oikoumene* is that the root is *oikos* or house enabling one to envision the empire as one large house or estate encompassing many rooms or countries. Obviously many belonging to such a household as Israel chafed under Roman rule, but still the idea has lasting appeal. Vs. two is more

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or less an extension in localized form, Quirinius as governor of Syria. Within this “house” every inhabitant is to be counted for, *apographo* or written (*grapho*) in a register.

As head of the household, Joseph was responsible for enrolling his family. Vs. 4 makes it a point to say that he does this in Bethlehem called the city of David because he was of the house of David, *oikos* being located with the larger *oikoumene*. Despite this, the association with David as king is important implying that although it doesn’t exist politically, it does so on a hidden, mysterious level that will become more evident with the passage of time. Joseph goes ahead with enrolling with Mary called his betrothed who was pregnant. Should he fail to do this, the consequences would be dire. Essentially the *apographo* is for the purpose of taxation, and failure to do this is not an option if you’re living under the Roman yoke.

Going to Bethlehem was tricky business because Mary was on the verge of giving birth which she had done there. When you think of it, she was fortunate not to have had a miscarriage or the like given the journey. Joseph was fully aware of the perils involved but went ahead with the journey. Enroll or else. As for the birth of Jesus, it’s put in context of literally the days being fulfilled, *pimplemi* reaching back to Mary’s consent to the angel Gabriel. Surely Elizabeth got word of this but unlike Mary, she did not make the journey to Bethlehem. If John had leaped in her womb, what would happen if the two infants came in contact? The outcome might just be too much to handle. In this case Zechariah stood in for her.

Vs. 7 has Mary giving birth to her first-born son, *prototokos* suggestive of being dedicated to God as found in Ex 13.2: “Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” The verb to consecrate is *qadash* which implies a setting apart and here is very direct, “to me,” not just out there with an unspecified point of reference. Because there was no place available for Joseph and Mary to stay in Bethlehem, they were forced to place the new-born in a manger or *phatne* also as crib which contrasts with *kataluma*, inn or more specifically, a room for rent. Perhaps this was because of some local celebration. Chances are those in charge of places which Joseph had checked out took one look at Mary and said no way are we going to be responsible. They could always find a room but should something go wrong with the birth of her child, it would reflect badly upon them.

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Mention of *phatne* suggests that Joseph had to rush out of town and found a barn or the like on the outskirts. Mary was on the verge of giving birth, so any place would suffice. Although *phatne* is commonly a symbol of poverty, in many ways it offered a comfortable, warm place for a new born child. Obviously after having given birth Mary didn't keep Jesus in it all the time, for she had to tend to his immediate needs along with Joseph to help out. As for the time when this occurred, the text doesn't mention day or night. However, the likely time seems late in the day or evening, given the fact that they were looking for a place to stay.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunction *kai* translated as "and" which is the case for the next several verses showing a unity between all those involved, shepherds, sheep and of course, angels. The phrase "In that region" beginning this verse or *chora* which can imply neighborhood is not unlike "in those days" of vs. 1 with regard to sustaining the story-like character of the narrative. It implies shepherds doing their thing near where Mary and Joseph were tending to their new-born child. As for the shepherds, their activity is described as both *agrauleo* and *phulasso*. The former is quite vivid, living outdoors whereas the latter is keeping guard not unlike a watchman. Both take on a more vivid meaning by reason of happening at night. This, of course, is in line with the two phrases just mentioned and set the stage for what is to follow.

The first word of vs. 10 is *kai* and shows the immediate transition from shepherds to an angel of the Lord whose first word to them was not to be afraid or *phobeo*. This was the third appearance of an angel in the Gospel thus far; first to Zechariah in 1.13 and later to Mary in 1.30. The first two are identified clearly as Gabriel whereas here the angel has no name though designated "of the Lord." Compare the verb *ephistemi* in vs. 9 as to appear concerning this angel with *horoao* and *apostello* as pertaining to Gabriel: the first verb as to be seen in 1.11 with regard to Zechariah and the second as sent but not to be seen with regard to Mary. As for *ephistemi*, it infers not so much becoming visible or being sent but to take position in a specific place. Before visiting the shepherds, surely this angel must have consulted with Gabriel, of how he had interacted with Zechariah and Mary. They are two specific persons whom the Lord had singled out, so he had been get it right. The same applies to the shepherds, but in a way they are grouped together in an anonymous fashion.

Taking up a specific position signified by *ephistemi* makes greater sense when considered along with the *doxa* or glory of the Lord which infers an outer manifestation. While the angel was standing in place, the divine glory shone around the shepherds,

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*perilampo*, the preposition *peri-* inferring an encirclement of light from on high. Thus the shepherds' attention was directed to two places at once: at first to the angel and then to the light or looking outward at the angel from this light, if you will. Naturally this caused them to be fearful which is expressed by the verb *phobeo* and the noun *phobos*. It reads literally as "they were afraid fear" with the adjective *megas* or great, that almost being unnecessary but as something Luke adds on.

Right after the angel had been instructed by Gabriel to tell the shepherds not to be afraid, it adds *idou* or behold which cushions the shock of this sudden appearance of divine glory. Once out of the way, the angel proceeds to announce or do his essential thing as messenger, he as *aggelos* does his *euaggelizo*. That is to say, the only difference—and it is a major one—is that *aggelizo* is prefaced with *eu-*, the adverbial form of *agathos*, good. In fact, in anticipation of the mission involved, the angel was thrilled with being delegated to convey such *euaggelizo*. It consists in a joy or *chara* described as great or *megas* which ties in with *eu-* and is slated for all the people, that is, Israel. As soon as the shepherds heard that they felt way out of their league. How could they of such low status tie in with all this? It was no matter from the divine point of view which would be the long term lesson of this incident.

Vs. 11 is an extension of the previous verse where the angel continues to speak using the phrase "to you" in reference to the shepherds and the people just mentioned. "This day" or *semeron* also as today takes up "in those days" of vs. 1 and "in that region" of vs. 8 and brings the presentation of these events as a story right to life. In other words, "this day" is when Christ the Lord is born in David's city, right nearby. As for "Christ the Lord," we can assume the shepherds had just the vaguest idea of what that meant, associating it with the common Jewish teaching of a coming Messiah.

Vs. 12 throws in another *kai* as "and" where the anonymous angel continues to speak by offering a sign or *semeion*, essentially a distinguishing mark by which something is made known. Actually it's a pretty easy *semeion* insofar as the shepherds don't have to go from house to house in Bethlehem. That would arouse considerable suspicion. Just imagine having a bunch of men accustomed to living outdoors knock on your door asking if Christ the Lord were in your house. Indeed, a genuine cause for alarm. And so the shepherds being shepherds naturally would look in the surrounding barns, on the watch for the cries of a baby easily heard in the middle of the night. In fact, it wouldn't come as a surprise that this was the first time they've encountered such a situation.

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With vs. 13 we have the final *kai* in this series or right after the anonymous angel ceases to address the shepherds. It can be assumed that they continued to be surrounded by that divine glory of vs. 9, *perilampo* as they saw a multitude of the heavenly host with him, *exaiphnes* also as unexpectedly. As for the word “hosts,” *stratia* means a band of soldiers or those prepared for combat. However, contrary to the warrior nature conveyed by *stratia* they are praising God, *aineo* also as to commend. As for *stratia*, Acts 7.42 mentions it in a negative sense of having been objects of worship by the Israelites in former times. This is in line with their first mention in the Bible, Dt 4.19. No small wonder people were tempted to worship such heavenly beings, for their warrior status would serve well as protection. All these warrior-angels could do, however, was stand in the background while not permitted to take action. It’d be left to the Lord to rebuke his people. Thus it seems they are a distinct class of angels different from those whose primary function is to deliver messages as noted earlier. Obviously the angel joins in with them though this isn’t his specific task. How could he refuse?

As for the *aineo*, in vs. 14 it consists in giving glory or *doxa* to God, “in the highest” which is distinct from “on earth” and literally “in men” but as forming a unity. As for the latter two, this is the location of the divine *eudokia* or good will which infers a state of mind kindly disposed.

Although one angel came to the shepherds and was followed by the heavenly host, after their song of praise all departed, “host” in vs. 15 now defined as *aggelos*. This is true with regard to that *aineo* or praising God which is a kind of message intended for the shepherds. Apparently they trusted these humble men of the field to spread the word as what they are about to behold. Without missing a beat the shepherds decided to head over to Bethlehem and see if this thing or this *rhema* was true. *Rhema* fundamentally means that which expressed or in the context at hand, that which had been praised. At this point that divine light surrounding them lifted to allow them to go though there’s no mention of it.

The shepherds departed in haste (*speudo*) and found Joseph, Mary and the child. Another instance of the conjunctive *kai* beginning vs. 18 bears this out as well. As for the verb *aneurisko*, the preposition *ana-* or upon suggests an earnest looking. As noted above, this was relatively easy because there were limited places to examine. Also, as mentioned above, easily they could pick out the baby’s cries. Apparently no words were exchanged. All the shepherds did was to look which was sufficient. They knew this baby was special...called Christ the Lord...but really couldn’t fathom what that meant.

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Vs. 17 begins with a conjunctive, this time *de* instead of *kai* also rendered as “and” which usually suggests something that as on the other hand where here is the result of what they had seen. With the same haste as in going to Bethlehem the shepherds made known the *rhema* of vs. 15 or that “thing” which had happened. In other words, there’s a direct correspondence between the two: first seeing and then making known, *gnorizo* more as to point out or to cause information to be made known. Thus *gnorizo* leads to *laleo* or to speak, the latter from the anonymous angel with regard to the child.

Vs. 18 begins with *kai* and is part of an extended sentence beginning with the previous verse. So without asking permission, as it were, at once the shepherds started to inform everyone within reach about their silent encounter with Joseph, Mary and the baby. As for Jesus, his proper name isn’t given yet. That will have to wait for eight days later though the angel Gabriel had informed Mary it would be Jesus. Thus this name was kept to her alone; we can assume that she didn’t inform even Joseph. Though the encounter between the shepherds and the family apparently took place at night, we can assume that given what had transpired, spreading their account must have started early the next day. How could they restrain themselves? The common response is expressed by the verb *thaumazo* or to wonder. Here it seems to be somewhat neutral, most people like the shepherds themselves not knowing what to make of these events. At least for there doesn’t seem to be any negative backlash.

Vs. 19 begins with the conjunctive *de* translated as “but,” similar to *kai* insofar as continuous action is inferred, and refers to Mary. Here *rhema* or word which had been uttered is in its third iteration, if you will, the first being with her in 1.38 in response to it coming from the angel Gabriel and the second in 2.15 as “thing” concerning the shepherds. There are two verbs associated with this *rhema*, both prefaced with the preposition *sun-* or *sum-* which translates as with. The first is *suntereo* where the preposition serves to intensify the meaning, and the second is *sumballo*, literally to cast with, the idea being this *rhema* rummaging around within Mary’s heart. So to have both going on simultaneously indeed is no small matter.

Vs. 20 is yet another verse in a sequence of conjunctives, that is, *kai*. For the last time we hear of the shepherds who returned, the preposition *hupo-* prefaced to *hupostrepho* literally as from under. That is to say, they returned presumably to their sheep, the time being shortly after daybreak. There was no need to worry about the sheep being lost or having fallen prey as to wolves. The divine light of vs. 9...*perilampo*...continued to shine around them as protection even during the day. Now the shepherds suddenly found

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themselves with two jobs. Working in the fields at night and as vs. 20 continues to say, glorifying and praising God...*doxazo* and *aineo* for that *rhema* or “thing” of vs. 15. That noun isn’t mentioned but inferred in terms of having heard and having seen what they did. The big question is, did they continue this for an extended period of time? Surely they must have kept tabs on Mary and Joseph in nearby Bethlehem and perhaps even visited them from time to time. However, one wonders if their witness had continued for another thirty years or until Jesus became an adult actively engaged in ministry. We can assume too that John the Baptist got word of these shepherds and must have had fond memories of them. So in conclusion they were pre-evangelists. If they had seen Jesus as a baby plain and simple they would have had no idea of who he was; intervention by an angel was the agent that had enlightened them. We can imagine them out in the field during the dead of night talking about this among themselves as they continued keeping watch over their sheep. Privately they hoped that something like what had befallen them so long ago would happen once again.

Now fast forward (*kai* again) in vs. 21 to a mere eight days later, the traditional period of time when a male child is circumcised and thus becomes a full-fledged member of Israel. Nevertheless, it merits to be fulfilled, *pleroo*. During that time the baby was nameless, the name Jesus being known only between the angel Gabriel and Mary. As for Gabriel, he took special delight in all this, knowing that the *rhema* imparted to Mary had come to completion. Despite not being mentioned, we can assume that the shepherds kept close tabs on this as well. The same with Jesus’ presentation in the Jerusalem temple to follow shortly.

The conjunctive *kai* beginning vs. 22 is significant since it introduces the purification of Jesus forty days after his birth, the preceded by his circumcision which was describe in just one verse, the previous one. Yet again the passage of time is marked by the verb *pleroo*, to fulfill which the **RSV** renders as “the time (actually days) came.” Reference is to the purification or *katharismos* specified as in accord with the law of Moses, *nomos* = *Torah*. This Joseph and Mary didn’t do locally but literally “into Jerusalem,” the verb *paristemi* being a setting-beside (*para-*) the Lord. Actually this *paristemi* comes close to a way of describing Jesus’ relationship with his Father, but that insight will come later.

Several verses tie in with the purification, the first being Lv 12.3<sup>8</sup> which isn’t quoted but certainly inferred as tying in this ceremony with the mother who had given birth: “And

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<sup>8</sup> This is the seventh scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel.

on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying; she shall not touch any hallowed thing nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed.” Three words stand out, *tahorah*, *qodesh* and *miqdash*: purifying or cleansing, hallowed or set apart and sanctuary which derives from the same verbal root as *qodesh*, a place that’s set apart.

The second verse which is a direct quote comes from Ex 13.2<sup>9</sup> which reads in full as “Consecrate to me all the first-born; whatever is the first to open the womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” The is preceded by words which come directly to Moses to the Lord, so they hold special value. As with the Leviticus verse, we have reference to *qadash*, this being the verbal root meaning to set apart. The sense of such apart-ness is heightened by *ly* or “to me,” that is, no one else.

The third verse in vs. 24 which follows as a continued sentence is a direct quote from Lv 12.8: “And if she (the mother) cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” *Kiper* or atonement fundamentally means a covering, that the mother who had just given birth will be clean from the flow of her blood. It ties in with the verb *tahar* or to be clean as connected with Lv 12.3 in vs. 22.

Vs. 25 shifts gears a bit beginning with the conjunctive *kai*. Along with *idou* or behold the **RSV** renders it simply as “now.” The literally rendition would come off as “and behold” which serves to introduce Simeon. The text doesn’t say explicitly that he was a priest, rather he was righteous and devout or *dikaios* and *eulabes*. It seems that Joseph and Mary were naturally attracted to him. As for the former, it’s used in 1.6 to describe two other elderly persons, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth with the added “before God,” *enopion* meaning in his sight constantly. As for the latter, it derives from the verbal root *lambano*, to take or to receive and is prefaced with *eu-*, the adverbial form of *agathos* or good. Commonly it means discreet, cautious and ties in well with an elderly person.

Both *dikaios* and *eulabes* in vs. 25 are directed to what most likely was a lifetime goal for Simeon which consists in *prosdechomai* or looking forward, the preposition *pros-* as

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<sup>9</sup> This is the eighth scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel.

direction towards-which lending urgency to this expectation. It consists in the consolation of Israel, literally the summing beside or *kaleo* prefaced with *para-*. Somehow without the text giving a reason this elderly man sensed that such *paraklesis* was on the horizon and shortly to appear. When the shepherds were surrounded by light out in the field, Simeon too was surrounded by a divine presence, that experience confirming his long held expectation. He knew it wouldn't be in the form of some dramatic divine intervention or political upheaval. How? The Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* was upon him as vs. 25 says in conclusion.

Vs. 26 which begins with the conjunctive *kai* as "and" puts the way the Holy Spirit relates to Simeon in the passive, "had been revealed." The verb is *chrematizo* which also means to give warning. As for the passive sense, it seems to be a way the divine *Pneuma* indirectly points out to Simeon the significance of those events relative to Jesus' birth as well as John. He had heard of them and knew something special was involved but couldn't quite put his finger on it. Keep in mind that the way the *Pneuma* had been revealed by it being upon (*epi*) Simeon as noted in vs. 25.

Vs. 26 spells out how the verb *chrematizo* relates to Simeon. Apparently his impending sense of death had taken some time in the indefinite past, let's say when the angel Gabriel had appeared to Gabriel and then to Mary along with the birth of John the Baptist. He knew those events were signaling a new order of things and that he was about to fade away. However, *chrematizo* played a critical role in setting up Simeon for the greatest event in his life, the one for which he had come into the world.

Vs. 27 similarly begins with *kai*, yet another occurrence of the conjunctive which serves to bring Simeon to what he had prepared himself for so long and which would be the crowning achievement of his life. That is to say, he came first literally in the *Pneuma* followed by into the temple. In other words *en* followed by *eis*. This is the first part of the double use of the prepositions followed by a second use of the same prepositions which pertains to Joseph, Mary and Jesus. That is to say, *en* precedes *eis-* as prefaced to the verb *ago* or *eisago*. The literal reading is "in the to lead into."

Joseph and Mary were present in accord with the *Torah* or *nomos*, *ethizo* being the verb which ties in with *ethos*, custom or habit. Vs. 28 follows immediately as part of the previous verse and begins with the conjunctive *kai* which is not translated. As far as the prepositions *en* and *eis* go as just delineated, there's one more use of *eis* or into, that is, when Simeon takes Jesus *eis* his arms. He gives a blessing or *eulogeo*, literally to say or

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to speak well which in vs. 29 begins what has become known as the *Nunc Dimittis* or the canticle lasting through vs. 32. All four verses form one extended sentence.

Vs. 29 begins with *nun* or now, Simeon's realization that he has seen the consolation...the calling-beside or *para-klesis*...in the person of Jesus as a newborn baby. Note the two contrasting nouns, *doulos* and *despotes* or Lord. The former also means a slave and the latter as someone who has control over persons and/or things. At first you'd think Simeon would have used *Kurios*, more as a master or someone in a position of authority. As for *despotes*, he applies it to the Lord, graciously giving permission, if you will, for him to allow *apoluo*, more a release in the sense of a loosening-from (*apo-*) which here is in peace, *eirene*. Such loosening has a specific format which Simeon proposes and is in accord with the divine *rhema* or word. When reading *rhema* here it's helpful to keep in mind the three previous uses of that term, the one at hand summing them up: Gabriel to Mary in 1.38, all these things of 1.65 and 2.15 as thing and the shepherds. Surely Simeon knew of these instance though he was not present to them.

Vs. 30 begins with *hoti* translated here as "for" where Simeon gives his reason for *apoluo* or dissolving as noted in the previous verse. He doesn't simply say that he has seen but his eyes have seen, a fuller way of expressing that he has encountered divine salvation or *soterion*. More precisely, he is actually holding this *soterion* right now in his arms. When Simeon continued in the next verse that the Lord has prepared this *soterion*, *hetoimazo* also as to keep in readiness, he seems to be referring to the Lord having intervened on Israel's behalf from the beginning. The critical Greek text gives a reference to this, Is 52.10: "The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." *Yeshuhath* is the noun for salvation which, of course, is tied in with the proper name Jesus.

Vs. 32 brings the *Nunc Dimittis* to a close where Simeon sees this *soterion/yeshuhath* in his arms as both light and glory, *phos* and *doxa*. To the first, it is literally "into (*eis*) revelation" or *apokalupsis* and to the second, *eis* implied with regard Israel designated as "your people."

Vs. 33 begins with the conjunctive *kai* or "and" to show the close connection between Simeon's words and Joseph and Mary. *Thaumazo* or to wonder is their response which intimates that Simeon knew something about their new born they didn't. Most likely Mary was trying to make a connection here with what the angel Gabriel had

communicated to her. Though her keeping and pondering of vs. 19 aren't mentioned, to be sure they apply here just as they did at that time. Vs. 34 continues as an extended sentence with another *kai* where Simeon blesses the parents, *eulogeo*.

Immediately after Simeon's *eulogeo* he comes off with some harsh, unexpected words directed to Mary. You'd think Joseph as father would be the one he'd say these things but such is not the case. He wanted to show the close connection between mother and son. And so Simeon continues through vs. 35 beginning with *idou*, a way to get Mary's attention. Vs. 34 may be divided into two sections, each designated by the preposition *eis* or "into." The first is with respect to *ptosis* and *anastasis*, rise and fall, and is confined to many in Israel compared with, for example, the Gentiles of vs. 32. Simeon doesn't elaborate on this; perhaps that's all he knows with regard to "this child" as the salvation he now in his arms. Presumably at this time he had returned the child after having blessed God in vs. 28 and Joseph and Mary in vs. 34. The second *eis* is with respect to *semeion* noted earlier as essentially a distinguishing mark by which a person, event or thing is made known. This sign will be something that will be spoken against, *antilego* such as when the scribes and Pharisees will be against Jesus' teaching.

Vs. 35 bring to a close this lengthy, troublesome sentence essentially directed to (*pros*, vs. 34) Mary with even more disturbing words. That is to say, a sword will pierce her her soul. *Rhomphaia* is the noun for a large broad weapon which one lexicon says favored by Thracians. It's a contrast of overwhelming proportions with the young mother who had just given birth. This sword will go not through (*dierchomai*) her body but through her soul, *pseuche* which can be taken as her very self. Note *de autes* which literally reads "yet same" which seems to imply that Simeon's words put Mary in a kind of second place, that the *rhomphaia* will first pierce Jesus. We can tie in with this Jn 19.34 when a soldier pierces Christ's side which in turn refers to vs. 37: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced," this being from Zech 12.10. It runs in full as "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication so that when they look on him who they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a first-born."

This going-through of such a large weapon with regard to Mary's soul is not intended to kill her. Rather, it is for the revelation of the thoughts of many hearts. The verb is *apokalupto* or to uncover what is already present, of making known *dialogismos* essentially as reasoning but here as conniving and such things you'd normally wish to

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have remain concealed. They are located in the heart, *kardia* being one's inmost self. Simeon doesn't elaborate once this uncovering takes place. It seems that is sufficient and can make a person either stand firm through such embarrassment or try to undo the *apokalupto* that had just taken place, an impossible task. To such unexpected words Mary gave no response but as noted with regard to vs. 33, we can assume she did plenty more keeping and pondering of these words. Actually she as well as Joseph had to live with them through the coming years as they watched Jesus grow and mature into manhood.

The way vs. 36 presents Anna the prophetess<sup>10</sup> coming on the scene is unexpected yet is no surprise by reason of it beginning with the conjunctive *kai* or "and." In other words, this is simply a continuation of the Presentation begun in vs. 22. Anna is identified as belonging to the tribe of Asher and advanced in age, this rendered by "advanced (*probaino*) in many days." Her father's name is given but not her husband, now deceased. In addition to this, Anna is among the few New Testament persons with a tribal association being made.

What's so appealing to Anna is not so much her praying and fasting but her presence in the Jerusalem temple, that is, not having departed from there. Sometime earlier Anna must have gain a reputation as being a prophetess though we lack the details. This earned her to have living quarters associated with the temple meaning that she was present at most if not all religious ceremonies that took place there. Thus in a relatively short time people became acquainted with her and must have sought out her advice and consolation.

As for Anna's gift of prophecy, it's intimated in vs. 38 starting with the conjunctive *kai* as "and" when she arrived on the scenes with the ritual of presenting the child Jesus. The verb for praising God—and it's a mouthful—is *anthomologeomai* which also means to make a mutual agreement as well as to confess openly. Not only this, Anna spoke of the baby Jesus to a limited audience, if you will, those who were looking forward to Israel's redemption, the *pro-* prefaced to *prodechomai* indicative of expectation concerning *lutrosis* which fundamentally means a ransom. That could be taken politically by some, as being set free from Roman domination, but is not the case at hand. That's why Anna

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<sup>10</sup> Anna is among only a handful of women in the Bible bearing the title prophetess. The others are Miriam, sister of Moses (Ex 15.20), Deborah the judge (Jdg 4.4), Huldah, wife of Shallum (2Chron 34.22), Isaiah's wife (Is 8.3) and Philip's four unmarried daughters (Acts 21.9).

was very selective. Though she's described as "coming up at that very hour," nothing explicit is said of her actually meeting Joseph, Mary and Jesus as well as Simeon. Surely Simeon was familiar with Anna, and given that the two had a short time left to live, they must have spent considerable time afterwards discussing what had transpired. Thus both stood at the threshold of another type of *lutrosis*, of being redeemed from a valid but soon to be outdated religious outlook.

Vs. 39 is yet another verse beginning with the conjunctive *kai* or "and." It may seem over-kill to constantly mention this but is important insofar as it gives background structure to the narrative at hand as we move from one incident to another. This time *kai* sets up the scene for a transitus from one religious tradition to the birth of a new which jumping ahead, boils down to going from Judaism to Christianity. This may be outlined as follows in both vs. 39 and vs. 40:

-The verb *teleo* or to complete.

-*Nomos/Torah* or law being the object of *teleo* where *kata* or "according to" is transcended.

-*Epistrepho* or return home to Nazareth, literally as to turn upon. Joseph and Mary along with Jesus have left behind Simeon and Anna though certainly not forgotten.

-Vs. 40 beginning with *kai* where Jesus grows, becomes strong and is filled with wisdom: *auxaino* also to become greater by way of extent or size, *krataioo* also as to become strong and *pleroo* or to fill with *sophia* or wisdom. All take place over an extended period of time hidden from view where Mary and Joseph are attentive to all three happening.

-Divine favor or *charis* (also as grace) is upon Jesus.

Compare this to 1.80 with regard to John: "And the child grew and became strong in spirit." The same two verbs are found here, *auxaino* and *krataioo* which serve to make the transitus between what will become two different religions.

Vs. 41 begins with *kai* translated as "now" signaling a shift to later in the life of Jesus. It deals with him as a boy of twelve years old in the Jerusalem temple and continues for the rest of Chapter Two. The verses which follow continue with this conjunctive as they convey a certain anxiety by the parents. As for the context, each year Joseph and Mary made the trek literally "into Jerusalem" to celebrate the Passover, no small feat. Vs. 42 specifies that Jesus tagged along as well when he had turned twelve, presumably not having gone there when younger. Note the phrase "according to custom" or *ethos* which

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also means habit. Also it can refer to the original command in Ex 23.15: “You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread; as I commanded you, you shall eat unleavened bread for seven days at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt. None shall appear before me empty-handed.” The key word here is *shamar* or to keep, this not unlike being a watchman.

It so happened that when the Passover celebration was finished, Jesus remained behind without his parents knowing it. Note the two verbs prefaced with the preposition *hupo*- basically as from under: *hupostrepho* (Joseph and Mary returning home) and *hupomeno* (Jesus remaining in Jerusalem). One *hupo*- yet two different uses. Joseph and Mary headed home, thinking their son was tagging along with some acquaintances or children his age from the neighborhood, a very natural thing to do. Also we can assume that virtually the entire village sent out together, so there was no real need to worry about Jesus being left behind, for everyone knew each other. After having gone on a while, either Joseph or Mary decided to call their son. However, no response. That set off a frantic effort to find him, going uphill to Jerusalem against the thronging crowds going down from the city. In other words, it was no easy manner of asking those accompanying them who presumably continued on their way.

Vs. 46 says that Joseph and Mary sought their son for three days, a long period of time during which their anxiety must have increased. One advantage is that Jerusalem was pretty much empty of pilgrims who had come for Passover, so things had returned to normal. At long last they discovered Jesus in the temple, the three days implying that Joseph and Mary had sought every where but there, their first stop most likely the place where they had stayed. After no success they decided to spread out within Jerusalem all the while fearing that their son may have been kidnaped and sold off into slavery or even worse.

It seems they didn't first search the temple area, figuring that a child would not head to that place. Then later realized it was otherwise with their son when Jesus said that he had to be about his Father's business. Joseph and Mary perhaps thought that one of the priests there might be responsible for looking after lost children and the like. If that were so, that priest was immediately struck by the boy's precociousness and decided to bring him to his colleagues. It was worth a shot. Normally a twelve year old never would start engaging such distinguished representatives in a conversation. If he did on his own, he'd be laughed right out of the temple area. To their utter surprise, Joseph and Mary found Jesus was sitting right in the middle of the teachers, *didaskalos* being those

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responsible for educating the people, actually the best and the brightest Judaism had to offer. As for Jesus sitting, *kathizo* is suggestive of a position taken by these teachers. This plus the phrase “in the midst” of them shows that Jesus was the one doing the teaching and those surrounding him listened willingly. Given this situation, how could his parent not be taken aback?

We don't know the subject matter of this gathering but most likely it had to do with *Torah* or perhaps even the recent celebration of Passover. The response by the teachers and others who must have gathered around this unusual sight? They were amazed, *existemi* literally as to stand-from and is more forceful than *thaumazo*. More specifically, such standing-from is with regard to Jesus' understanding and answers, the former being *sunesis* or a bringing-together or thorough comprehension. Thus the teachers' *existemi* derives from Jesus' *sun-* of *sunesis* or their from to his with. Another way to look at this is a foreshadowing from their own teaching to his teaching.

You can't help but equate this example with Jesus as an adult teaching in the temple. Surely he thought of it as well. Perhaps there were some present during the incident at hand who later recalled it when they came across him some twenty years later. Were they among those who now turned against him or did they become associated with him and his disciples? Most likely a mixed bag. Some did while others did not.

Vs. 48 has those who saw Jesus engaged with the teachers as being astonished, *ekplesso* or literally to strike-from, this being an even stronger verb than *existemi* of vs. 47. The way this is presented is that Joseph and Mary saw a group of people silently focused upon an individual in the vast temple plaza. Though they couldn't see who it was, the group was all the more obvious because of the relative emptiness compared with the recent throngs of Passover. Why not go over and check it out? Vs. 48 has Mary...not Joseph, the father...come up and reproach him. Her words read “what have you done to us thus?” She follows with *idou* or behold with regard to her and Joseph having been struck with fear and anxiety at not finding him. Naturally they sought low and high everywhere in Jerusalem, perhaps along with friends and relatives who had accompanied them to the Passover. The verb reflecting this anxiety is perfect, *odunao* or to cause pain and torment.

Jesus' response was something you wouldn't expect from a twelve year old. He pretty much snapped back at his mother as to why she was searching for him. It'd come as no surprise that right away Mary recalled Simeon's words some years back that sword

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would pierce her own heart. Indeed it did. Furthermore, the thoughts of many were being laid bare right there amid the teachers in the Jerusalem temple, the best and brightest Israel had to offer.

Jesus second question was another twist of that sword prophesied of his mother. She failed to realize that he had to be in the house of his Father or more to the point, “the things of my Father.” Though this takes place when Jesus was twelve, he must have had premonitions of the temple being as proper to things of his Father. However, it was possible that he hadn’t gone to Jerusalem earlier yet his association with the temple grew as he listened to his parents talk about their experiences there. No small wonder that both Joseph and Mary failed to grasp this unexpected retort, the negative of *suniami* or negative of being-with their son’s word or singular *rhema* which he had spoken to them. End of story. There’s no word as to what others thought of this, for Joseph and Mary confronted their son in a very public forum. While the teachers wished their interaction with this boy could continue, naturally they relented, not knowing that he had disappeared from their view for three days. Vs. 51 says that Jesus returned with them to Nazareth. Chances are the mood was sullen. Barely a word was spoken. What in reality could Jesus’ parents say?

Nevertheless, once back home vs. 51 shows that Jesus is obedient to his parents, *hupotasso* literally to be situated under. While this is expected of a child, things certainly were different than before the recent pilgrimage to Jerusalem. From this point on we have a long silence until Jesus makes his appearance at the Jordan River with his cousin John. Mary’s *diatereo* or keeping-through the *rhema* or all things with regard to Jesus in the temple parallels the *rhema* of 2.19. However, there the verb there is *suntereo* or to keep-with. Thus *rhema* has runs its course, if you will, with regard to Mary. There will be no more instances of it. We’ll have to wait until the crucifixion of Jesus with Mary present there where she recalls all the *rhema* uttered to her early on though that word isn’t mentioned then. Despite *rhema* being associated with Mary, she must have shared some of it with Joseph. However, what the *rhema* contains is so intimate that only she is capable of grasping it. Is this one reason for Joseph’s famed silence?

Vs. 52 brings Chapter Two to a close with Jesus increasing or *prokopto*, a strong verb where the preposition *pro-* or before is prefaced to the verbal root *kopto*, to strike. He did this in three ways: *sophia*, *helikia* and *charis* or wisdom, maturity and grace. Note that all three have two reference points, as it were: *para* or beside God and men.

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Compare with 1.80 concerning John: “And the child grew and became strong in spirit.” The two verbs are *auxano* and *krataioo* which compare with Jesus’ *prokopto*.

The critical Greek text contains one biblical reference here which is split into two parts, the first being *prokopto* and the second, *charis* or grace: “Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the Lord and with men” [1Sam 2.26]¹¹. What’s important here is the word “with” (*gan* in Hebrew and *para* in Greek). That shows advancement not just on the personal level by Jesus but publically, if you will. As for that public, it was quite limited to Nazareth and surrounding areas. Perhaps some of the teachers from Jerusalem made their way to Nazareth to continue hearing from him. If not that, it was more likely that they looked forward to subsequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem though we have no record of this. Also some of the teachers passed on with the passage of time. We could ask too whether these teachers shared in Jesus’ *prokopto* or increase. The same might apply to the shepherds at his birth, some of whom surely must have kept tabs on his development. When you think of it, how could it be otherwise? You don’t lose sight of someone who has had such a profound impression both as a baby and as a twelve year old boy.

Chapter Three

The rather formal air the way this chapter gets under way can give the impression that it’s the beginning of Luke’s Gospel account. Also situating the events to unfold within a broader historical context tempers any formality by capturing our attention. If it started plain and simple with what the author had in mind, we’d lose something. At first glance it wouldn’t strike you as that important until you stop and consider how the events at hand unfold under the historical persons involved. Obviously hadn’t a clue as to what was going on, that it would turn out to be far more important than anything they contributed or failed to contribute. Still, their names have an important though subordinate role to play.

At first you might think that it was an introduction to the person of Jesus Christ but turns out to be in reference to John the Baptist. Perhaps it’s because of all the evangelists Luke recognized the importance of his position in between two covenants, a point that has been emerging throughout the previous two chapters. As for the

¹¹ This is the ninth scriptural reference in Luke’s Gospel.

“secular” division or way of telling time, it’s outlined as follows, from top to bottom or from the most general to the most particular, if you will. This situates John...and therefore Jesus...squarely within the broad-to-narrow gamut of world history:

Tiberius Caesar
Herod
Philip
Lysanias
Annanas and Caiaphas

Finally in vs. 2 which is a continuation of the opening verse of Chapter Three we have not the *logos* of God but the *rhema* of God or his utterance. This fits in well when in vs. 4 John identifies himself with a voice or *phone* crying in the wilderness. More specifically, this *rhema* comes upon (*epi*) John. It does so not when he was young but when he was in the desert. As for those younger years, they’re just as obscure as in the case of Jesus. This implies that without John fully knowing it the same *rhema* drove him there and then came. It did so pretty much like a person would visit him, not speaking as in the case of the prophets.

Note too that as expected John is presented as the son of Zechariah whose mouth was sealed by the angel Gabriel at his son’s birth. So between that time and now...let’s say when John must have been in his mid-twenties or around thirty...someone must have been responsible for raising him. After all, both his parents were elderly from his birth. Given Elizabeth’s connection with Mary who was much younger, would it be too farfetched to say that she had raised John along with Jesus at least in the early years?

As for the area where John lived, vs. 3 situates him in the region of the Jordan, *perichoros* literally as around (*peri-*) the area or neighborhood of the Jordan River. Thus the territory was not pure desert but dotted with plenty of lush green places along the river. Without fully realizing it John was drawn to water and hence to baptism as his primary mission. Baptism or dipping isn’t mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures and differs from *miqveh* or immersion in water for ritual purpose. John preaches this, *kerusso* meaning he’s engaged in making a public declaration.

How John hit upon this ministry is simply given, not spelled out why so. Because of its unfamiliarity, he had to do a lot of explaining. The first step? John puts baptism or dipping (more like full immersion) in the context of repentance. The well-known

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metanoia is the word at hand which as described earlier but worth repeating is a putting of the mind or *noos* after, *meta-*. That is to say, one no longer is focused in terms of the past but almost physically places one's mind after the one with which he or she had been accustomed to employ for so long. Despite this momentous step, *metanoia* doesn't stop here. Part and parcel of the *meta-* is tied up with the forgiveness of sins, the preposition *eis* or into with regard to *aphesis*, the letting go or dismissal of sins.

Vs. 4 begins with *hos* or "as" which links the remarks about John being in the desert and his ministry with an extended quote from the prophet Isaiah, 40.3-5 11. Two versions follow, first the one from the prophet Isaiah himself and the second from Luke's Gospel. As for the latter, the usual notations will follow:

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

There is no specific identity as to this voice (*qol* or why it's in the desert as opposed to, say, Jerusalem. The voice could be Isaiah himself and is used with *qara'* noted in the previous verse. One could say that the acoustics in the desert are better...not just with regard to the stillness associated with it but to draw people to that place of quiet. Actually the two words sound the same, *qol qore'*.

Within the desert or *midbar* the voice bids to prepare or *panah* which fundamentally means to turn and thus intimates repentance. In addition to the *midbar* is the *haravah* or desert, clearly a sterile, arid region. That is to be made or *yashar* with respect to a

¹¹ This is the tenth scriptural reference in Luke's Gospel. As for the notations relative to the three verses from Isaiah, they are moderated in part from **Expansions on the Book of Isaiah** also on this homepage.

highway or *derek* which also means a journey. Note that *derek* and *YHWH* are put side by side, “word Lord” as though the two were the same.

A contrast between two extremes, if you will, exists between valley and mountain (and hill). In between lay the “uneven ground and rough places.” The first word is *haqov*, an adjective which means crooked as well as deceitful. The second is *rekasym*, the only use of this term in the Bible. The first will become level or *myshor*, a noun referring to a plain. The second will become a plain or *biqhah*.

The *nasa'* and *shaphel* or lifting up and making low are two necessary steps before the Lord reveals his glory, *galah* and *kavod*. In other words, a certain flatness, if you will, is a prerequisite for the two to have any effect or better, not to have any intervening obstacles. It comes about by the Lord speaking which causes all flesh to see the salvation of God, this word pertaining not just to people but to all animate beings.

As for verses from Isaiah in the Gospel²², *phone* is the noun for voice in the present tense, *boao* in the present tense and implying a loud voice. Although it's in the desert or *eremos*, it reaches well beyond it or out to inhabited areas. I.e., there seems no limit as to its extent. Much, it seems, depends on the receptivity of the person listening. Two verbs are essentially part and parcel of this crying aloud, *etoimazo* and *poieo*. The former as to prepare or to get ready and the latter as to make along with the adjective *euthus*, straight or direct. The former is with respect to *hodos* and the latter with respect to *tribos*, a well-worn path or track. Presumably both are being made available to come to the desert, the location of the *phone*.

Lengthy vs. 5 presents four obstacles standing in the way of *etoimazo* and *poieo euthus* just noted:

-Be filled or *pleroo* with respect to not just a particular valley or several but all valleys.

-Brought low: *tapeinao* or to be humiliated as with valleys, that is, all mountains and hills.

-Made straight: *eimi* or the verb to be with *euthus* as in vs. 4 but there it's with the verb *poieo* or to make, to do. It's with respect to that which is crooked, the preposition *eis* or into being the agent of transition.

²² Although the Greek text is of interest here, much of what is said can apply to the Hebrew text. The former is favored for fleshing out simply because it's the one directly at hand.

-Made smooth or *leios*, also level, with *eimi* as just above. Note too the preposition *eis* or into being the agent of transition concerning *hodos* or way, that is, from being rough.

Vs. 6 is a continuation of the previous verse where the conjunctive *kai* or “and” shows what happens once the four obstacles are either removed or filled in (i.e., heights and depths). All flesh or all persons shall see the salvation of God, *soterion* being the object of sight or *horaos*. While the term flesh or *sarx* commonly applies to living beings, the way it’s used intimates a kind of secondary or dependent existence. There will be a direct line of sight between wherever a person is and the *phone* which is coming from the desert as it cries out to prepare and to make straight as in vs. 4. Thus the audible character of *phone* will match the visible character of *soterion*. And so a person doesn’t have to physically go into the desert, that being the milieu from which all this takes place. It’s essential insofar as it provides the necessary silence enabling the line-up of *phone* with *soterion* or the hearing with the seeing (of salvation).

The verses from Isaiah indeed are inviting. However, vs. 7 has John tearing into not just the people who came to him for baptism but the multitudes, *ochlos* suggestive of a throng, even a mob. Apparently they did conform to the above mentioned line-up between *phone* and *soterion* but failed to grasp what he meant. Note that *soterion* is the object of John’s preaching and baptism. That, of course, intimates the person of Jesus whose Hebrew name means just that. A kind of premonition that people would rush to Jesus but almost as soon as they encountered him, reject him?

No small wonder that in vs. 7 John saw right through this and equated the *ochlos*...the entire *ochlos*...with *gennema* or brood or offspring of vipers. If taken literally, this is quite a depressing prospect. Should word get out that John meant everyone, no doubt he’d have a rebellion on his hands. However, as a footnote in one Bible translation says, reference is to the Pharisees and Sadducees, not necessarily the common people.

Right after this unsettling remark John poses a question just as unsettling, again taking into consideration that *ochlos* = Pharisees and Sadducees. As for the verb to warn, *hupodeiknumi* the verbal root suggests a pointing out and with the preposition prefaced to it, such pointing out comes from under, *hupo-*. The object of such warning is *orge* or wrath also as indignation which is strong, not in the present but to come. The reference isn’t given though the **NIV** suggests it could be that John had a premonition of Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem in the next generation as well as the final judgment which was

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part of Jewish tradition. By fleeing into the desert upon hearing the phone relative to preparing the Lord's way, they will meet and even nastier end.

In vs. 8 John mitigates his harsh words somewhat by advising that those he's addressing should bear fruit leading to repentance, *axios* being the adjective for worthy and applied to *metanoia* which as defined earlier means a placing of one's mind after, after the way one customarily comports him or herself. Tied in with this is a caution not to lean upon tradition. That is to say, not to go around saying that reliance upon Abraham as our father will do the trick. Then John shocks those he has in his sites with the fact that God has the ability to raise children to Abraham from stones. Inferred is that these stones would be more suitable for heeding the voice in the wilderness.

Vs. 9 brings to a conclusion the Baptist's strong words with the image of a tree. Any one which fails to bring forth good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. To this the multitudes (*ochlos* again in the plural as in vs. 7) respond out of desperation their desire to pitch in and help. In other words, no mention of the Pharisees and Sadducees. So there seems to be an overlapping of sorts, for surely not everyone in the *ochloi* or crowds are the same as these religious leaders. We can assume they didn't ask as one voice or as one grouping but as spread out over a period of time.

As for the question posed in vs. 10 ('What shall we do?'), it's divided three groupings, the first being the just mentioned *ochloi*. John responds by sharing one coat with one who lacks one; the same with regard to food. The second group is comprised of tax collectors, the only group of the three addressing John as teacher or *didaskalos*. They're the ones who recognize the Baptist's role and to them he simply said not to overburden those from who they collect taxes. Implied, of course, is that these people are employed by the hated Roman government. Finally the third group is comprised of soldiers. They are not to rob and are to be content with their wages. Like the tax collectors, these men are associated with the Romans, actually the very arm which enforces the law and are hated the most. Still, in John's eyes they're not as bad as the Pharisees and Sadducees because they're simply conscripts doing their duty more or less against their will.

In a way, vs. 15 echoes 1.29 by use of the very *dialogizomai*, that is, where Mary "considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be." There it is defined as to think carefully about all the implications involved. However, in the verse at hand *dialogizomai* is preceded by *prosdokao* or to give thought as to something laying in the future, this intensified by the preposition *pros-* indication of direction toward-which. As

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for the questioning at hand, it's located in the heart or *kardia* with regard to John. Most likely his harsh words mitigated somewhat by his response to the three groups mentioned in vss. 10-14. *Kardia* implies that this *dialogizomai* is private, not public, and colored somewhat by fear. At heart of all this was whether or not John was the Christ or the Messiah. Apparently everyone was looking forward to such a person though they were afraid to make known their expectations public.

John could tell by the look on the faces of those coming to him that something was troubling them. Although fully aware of being a harbinger of the Messiah and not unlike an angel or messenger, in vs. 16 he states his role in clear, simple words. While he baptizes with water, he's quick to say that someone mightier than he is coming, *ischuros* applicable to body, mind and spirit. John uses two images with regard to himself and the one mightier than he: unworthy to untie his sandals and a winnowing fork in his hand. As for the latter, the threshing floor can be taken as the house of Israel which just about everyone understood as such. The major difference? John baptizes right now (present tense) whereas the mightier one will baptize (future tense) with the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* and fire. I.e., a baptism of water versus one which is of breath and of fire. As for the fire, it will burn chaff—an allusion to the unmentioned Pharisees and Sadducees?—with a fire that cannot be quenched, *asbestos* also as inextinguishable. So if John comes across as pretty much over-the-top, what will it be when the Christ comes on the scene?

Vs. 18 starts off with the *oun* usually as “therefore” plus the conjunctive *kai* or “and” where John shifts tone not just with exhortations, the participle *parakaleo* or literally to summon beside but prefaced with *hetera* or other. *Hetera* is important in light of the overwhelmingly harsh words he had used earlier, that while these got the most attention, for sure John had been doing *parakaleo* all along. Intimately tied in with *parakaleo* is *euaggelizo* which has come to be associated with preaching the Gospel.

While this had been going on, somewhere along the line John got into deep trouble with Herod the tetrarch for Herodias as well as all the evil Herod had done, *poneros* connoting a sense of degeneracy and worthlessness. Perhaps word got back from the Pharisees and Sadducees who had gone out to see John and who were condemned for doing so. They figured by squealing on John, Herod could dispose of him without much fuss. And so for now the Baptist saga comes to an end with Herod imprisoning him. However, before this happens vss. 21-22 speak of Jesus' baptism by John.

Actually this seems a bit odd, almost an after-thought, for vs. 21 says that all the people as well as Jesus had been baptized. Luke omits any contact between Jesus and John which you'd think would have been worthy of recording. Perhaps he wishes to stress that John's baptism was shared equally with the people and Jesus. As for Jesus being baptized, vs. 21 has him praying, *proseuchomai* mostly to making petition. What's notable is that the heavens opened up, *anoigo* with the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* having descended upon Jesus in a bodily form, that is *somatikos* as pertaining to a dove. Taken literally, the opening of the heavens means that the blue sky was rent in two just above allowing space for the *Pneuma*-as-dove to descend.

As vs. 22 continues, a voice or *phone* issues forth from that same opening, the two coming at once. The voice calls Jesus a son who is beloved, *agapetos* or worthy of *agape*. It does so by using the first person singular though the source of the voice is not identified. More precisely, the second person singular is used which is direct, that is, "you." The voice then adds as first person singular that Jesus is the one with whom it is well pleased, *eudokeo* also as to be worthy of choice. However, the voice calling Jesus as son infers that a father is its source. So the *Pneuma*-as-dove remained with Jesus while the *phone* did not. Use of *phone* means that this event was intended for all present to witness.

Vs. 23 continues through the rest of Chapter Three with the ancestry of Jesus. John is left doubly behind, if you will. Luke has him arrested by Herod and followed by Jesus being baptized. Note that there's no mention of John with regard to this baptism. With the presence of the Holy Spirit or *Pneuma* and *phone* or voice, perhaps these two were responsible instead of John. Although this genealogy is important, Luke feels it's more important to begin with John's birth. While important to show his lineage, Jesus's ancestors are secondary to his baptism and association with the just mentioned *Pneuma* and *phone*.

Archo or to begin is used with regard to Jesus' ministry when he was about thirty years of age. Note the insertion of *nomizo* rendered as "was supposed" which the **RSV** has in parentheses. It applies to conventional human birth with Joseph being the father. Perhaps this is so in order to direct the reader to Mary conceiving Jesus as a virgin: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you...therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" [1.35].

As for the genealogy, it works backwards in time and ends with Adam who as with all the other descendants are “son of” so-and-so. However, what we end up with is that Adam is “the son of God.” That pretty much puts him and Jesus not so much as being on the same level or as identical first in one guise and then in another, but as two poles between which all human beings exist, including future generations. By going back in time to Adam, all intervening generations are sharing in Jesus’ baptism. Now all those from Jesus forward will share in the same baptism but one enhanced, if you will, by the presence of the Holy Spirit and *phone*.