

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Gospel of Luke, Session 4, Infancy Narrative, Part 2, The Birth Narratives, John and Jesus, Luke 1:57-80

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This is Dr. Dan Darko and his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 4, Infancy Narrative, Part 2, The Birth Narratives, John and Jesus, Luke 1:57-80.

Welcome back to our study in the Biblica e-learning series on the Gospel of Luke.

In the past three lectures, we looked at a few things about this book. The first two lectures actually look at the background material, the issue of authorship recipients in the first one, and the second part looks at the literary artistry. In the third lecture series, the one that just precedes this one, we began to look at the infancy narratives.

Luke's account on the announcing and the birth of Jesus Christ. I made some comparisons between what Luke is doing and what Matthew is doing because, in fact, they are the only two Gospels that are very interested in the infancy narrative. As I mentioned in that lecture, they both devote two first chapters of their Gospels to the infancy narrative.

We look at a few things, and towards the end of that particular lecture, we look at a very interesting scene, which I loved, where one woman who is pregnant, quite unbeknownst to the other, visits the other and the other who is pregnant for six months begin to have some experience and the experience is so dramatic in response with a lot of spiritual connotations that the exchange becomes such a detailed theological exchange between Mary and Elizabeth when she visited her relative in the hill countries of Judea. So that's where we end. Now, in this fourth lecture, we look at the birth of these two key figures, namely John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

We'll go on to look more at the circumstances surrounding their birth and how the world receives and responds to the birth of these two key figures. As you may recall, in the early part of this series, I mentioned the role of John the Baptist and the fact that in the Hebrew tradition, it was expected that the Messiah would not come until an Elijah-like prophet came, and this Elijah-like prophet would be the forerunner, if you like, preparing the way for the Messiah to come. John will be portrayed in Luke's account as that figure.

As we go on to look at his birth narratives before we look at Jesus's, please pay close attention to how Luke tells the story. The emphasis he places on these different

characters, the echoes he brings as it relates to the work of the Holy Spirit, as it relates to the prophetic tradition and even the prophetic role of John the Baptist himself. So, let's look at chapter 1, verses 57 to 80.

In this part of the text, we first come to observe that this birth experience that we are going to be looking at, namely the birth experience of John the Baptist, is actually something that is going to include so many people in the neighborhood. I have often shared with my friends who travel with me to my home country, Ghana, that one of the things that collectivist cultures we do is everybody is in everybody else's business. So, imagine a situation where Elizabeth is pregnant, but before she got pregnant, she and her husband, her husband being a priest, have been known to be important figures in the culture.

Imagine friends and relatives knowing these people as fairly noble people with one caveat, and that is Elizabeth was barren, which could either denote a sense of reproach, suggesting that perhaps she has done something wrong, or in their case, Luke qualifies clearly that they are righteous, they are blameless, there is nothing to be able to point to blame them as suffering ghost punishment. But nevertheless, the community is quite involved. They are very interested in what is going on here.

So, in verse 57, I read from Luke chapter 1. Now, the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son, and her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they would have called him Zechariah after his father. But his mother answered, No, he shall be called John.

And they said to her, None of your relatives is called by this name. And they made signs to his father inquiring what he wanted him to be called. And he asked for a written tablet and wrote, His name is John.

And they all wondered, apparently, because they had not been in a communication between the two. And immediately, his mouth was open, and his tongue loosed. And he spoke, Blessing God.

And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about throughout the hill country of Judea. And all who heard them lay them up in their hearts, saying, What then will this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him.

It's an interesting scenario, but let's get back to the whole idea of relatives being interested and being part of this. If you are not from a collectivist culture, you may wonder, I mean, if my neighbor's wife is pregnant, she's going to give birth, what is my business? I mean, she just has to be rushed to the hospital. And that is what it's supposed to be.

No, no, no, no, no. In collectivist cultures, men and women, everybody is involved. She's going to give birth, and she's going to give birth at home.

There are some women who may be able to help her deliver at home. And as I speak, in African countries, Latin American countries, and a lot of Asian countries, that is still the practice. So, imagine Elizabeth in this situation.

And worse, so when it came to naming the child, she was going to be subjected to social pressure. Before she could hear anything from her husband, and before she could even get her point across, society wants to determine what the child should be called.

This cultural involvement is significant if your culture is not that of a collectivist culture. Collectivist communities work together. They support each other.

John is going to be both a beneficiary, and John's parents are going to enjoy the fact that they will have the entire community celebrate their joy. When the naming came down, and Elizabeth asked that he be called John, we were told that the rest of society or the neighbors were very upset by that because they weren't sure that that was a good name. The reason they provided was there is nobody in their family who was called John.

So why would you give him the name John? In fact, John is a name that some scholars have gone on to explain that the rendering of the word suggests somebody who has the law's favor upon them. But nobody in the family had that name. If you are living in Europe or in the United States, I may have to pause and digress a little bit to give you some insight into how this works in the culture of the ancient world.

People are named after certain people in their families, especially people of noble standing. Where the father is a very notable person, it is ideal sometimes, especially for the first child to be named after the father. But it's not always so that the child will be named after the father.

The child will be given names that are very, very important, or the child will bear a name from the language of the people that suggests something important related to events surrounding the person's pregnancy and birth. In the case of John, the neighbors thought about the fact that they had waited so long to be able to have a child. The second reason for having a father who is a priest provides the natural course of action to choose Zechariah as a name.

But no, it was not. John was the name. And when Elizabeth brought that up, Zechariah asked for a tablet because he could not speak.

And he wrote exactly that name. And Luke tells us that the people around were surprised. The indication Luke was trying to give us was that there had not been any kind of corroboration between the two in the secret to discuss what the name would be.

Luke also tries to give us the impression that Elizabeth does not know what Zechariah knows. Yet the name that was suggested by Elizabeth was completely out of the norm, and it is the name that is also going to be brought up and written down by Zechariah himself. Now, for us readers, we also know something that others do not know.

We also knew that that is the name that the angel had given to Zechariah. So, it was not as though Zechariah had his wife made up a name and then said, oh, my wife made this name up. It must be a good name.

So, let me confirm what my wife is saying. No, Luke wants us to know that there are multiple witnesses up to what this child's name would be. Zechariah and Elizabeth confirm his name shall be called John.

And then we are left to ask was there had not been any kind of corroboration between the two in the secret to discuss what the name would be. Luke also tries to give us the impression that Elizabeth does not know what Zechariah knows. Yet the name that was suggested by Elizabeth was completely out of the norm, and it is the name that is also going to be brought up and written down by Zechariah himself.

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Zechariah and Elizabeth confirm his name shall be called John. And then we are told suddenly, Zechariah began to get the ability to be able to speak. He was no longer mute.

And as soon as the child was named and all these parts of the prophetic promises given to him were fulfilled, he began to speak. Imagine the joy he would burst out and begin to praise God for that. Luke, being Luke, tells us that Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy.

Now, we have to clarify for Luke that John will even be filled with the Spirit before he was born. The Spirit will be involved in everybody's life. But prior to that, the Spirit

appears, yes, in Jewish traditions and the Spirit was involved, but not in that level of frequency.

If you like, call Luke a charismatic Luke, only in the sense that he emphasizes the Holy Spirit, not in the sense that he insists on some particular denominational affiliation and emphasis. No. Luke said Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit.

And when he goes on to talk about this child, as I will point out when we get to verse 80, the last verse of chapter one, Luke will also tell us how this child will grow up. Promise and fulfillment are very important in the Lukan discourse. The Infant Narrative, in particular, follows the theme of promise and fulfillment.

So let me highlight a few things, five of them, in this particular account pertaining to the birth of John the Baptist for you to see what Luke is doing in his narrative account. First, we are told that the angel told him, your wife will conceive. That is the language of the angel.

And we are told later on that, in fact, his wife conceived. But this was the scenario. The wife became pregnant.

The angel had told him that she would bear a son. But we don't know how the child is going to turn out to be. We only know at that point before the child was born that the woman was pregnant.

Oh, in the world where you could not go on for ultrasound and all this scanning to be able to know the gender of the child before the child was born, imagine the long nine months waiting for poor old Zechariah. Is he going to be a son or not? Yes, the angel told me she would get pregnant, and she is pregnant. But what if this child turns out to be a girl? Well, I don't know what was going through his mind.

I'm just speculating here. But just bear with me a minute to see how the promise and fulfillment narrative is unfolding in the Lukan discourse. Luke said she said you will conceive, and she conceived.

You will bear a son. And Luke said she bore him a son. And then we have a situation where Luke said there will be joy in verse 14 of chapter one.

There will be joy. People will rejoice with him. And here in this text, we are told, yes, of course, the relatives, the neighbors came in and they rejoiced with them.

The angel also said his name would be John. And Luke tells us in this complex scenario that has multiple witnesses present that his name will turn out to be John. His name will not be turned out to be Zechariah.

Why? Because though John is not a family name that they are aware of, somehow God will reveal it to Elizabeth, and at the same time, Zechariah is going to confirm it. And the people who are around there are going to see what is playing out. And they are going to go, wow.

We will even be told by Luke that they will spread the news throughout the hill country of Judea because what was unfolding in their eyes was spectacular. They even began to posit on the fate of this child, wondering who this particular child was. And if I were to rephrase it, we would see what God will do with this child. The other thing about promise and fulfillment is Zechariah, who was mute, was told in verse 20 that he would not be able to speak until the child was born.

And then, in verse 64, as soon as he provided the name, he began to speak. So, the promise and fulfillment began to unfold here. This is an interesting account that once you pause and begin to think through, reading the text becomes refreshing.

So, let's do some of it. From verse 67, his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit after the naming of the son, John, and he began to prophesy. And in his prophecy, he began to use this language: praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Because he has come to his people and redeemed them, he has raised up a horn of salvation for us. And he has done so in the house of his servant, David.

As he said through the holy prophets of long ago, salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. He has come to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant. The oath he swore to our father Abraham was to rescue us from the hands of our enemies and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all days.

This is unfolding. He goes on to say, and you, my child, perhaps looking at his child in the face, he began to prophesy on the child, you, my child, will be a prophet of the Most High, for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him.

To give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins because of the tender mercy of our God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the path of peace. Let me quickly pick one of the early references, some of the early references that I made in the text, before I move on. The spirit was on Zachariah as the spirit was on John.

Zachariah announced the coming of the Redeemer, the one who redeemed God's people. He talks about the horn of salvation, which is an ancient Near Eastern parlance. The horn is a symbol or sometimes a metaphor for strength, power, and might.

The one who comes in days to save his people. And he will save his people from our enemies, whom he referred to as those who hate us. We are not sure what the references are directly, but this seems to have the Exodus motif here.

Like how God was redeeming his people from Egypt and Israel, God has shown mercy, and he refers to mercy for our ancestors, but he is also the God of mercy who is going to show his mercy in redemption. He will remember his holy covenant with people like Abraham, and it is on that basis that he will come to rescue his people.

When he rescues them, he will give them that enablement, the ability, the capacity to serve him in holiness and righteousness before him. When you think about the words that are coming out of Zachariah's mouth, two things should come to mind. One is that everything that unfolds in the coming of the Messiah into our world is rooted in Second Temple Judaism.

In fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. And two, the deliverance that God is bringing will be deliverance from a state and a condition that is not so good to a place where God will give. God's redemption and deliverance will be for all people.

But wait a minute, Zachariah is prophesying that John is not going to be the one who will do the deliverance. He will be a forerunner. He will be the one who will come before the one who will do the redemption.

And that person we will hear about soon. Luke ends that session on John by giving us a sense of physiognomy. Some, if you like, are a basic biography of John.

He says John grew, and he became strong in spirit. He became strong-willed, but not strong-willed to the sense of rebellion, strong-willed as we like to use strong-willed in the English language. But he became strong in spirit, in attitude, in character.

And he chose a solitary life in the wilderness for a while. Remember when we read through the message of the angel about the Nazarene vow and the Nazarene way of life that John would adopt? He spent some time in the wilderness.

Some scholars have suggested that the wilderness motif here is very important. The wilderness is a place where, in Jewish history, people will wait on the Lord, and people will seek the Lord. Even coming from Egypt, the wilderness is a place where people who were not quite ready to be where God wanted them to be had to go through circle after circle and wait and seek God and have God shape and mold them and make them ready for that which is calling them.

John spent a significant amount of his time in the wilderness. And then look, in telling us that he actually moved out of the wilderness, he wanted to tell us that he did not

just leave the wilderness and come home. He actually came from the wilderness into a public ministry.

And he made a public appearance in Israel. One of the things we will notice here in this infancy narrative is unlike Matthew, for Luke, the end of the ministry of John the Baptist will mark the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ. In the same way that his birth and all these events and prophetic utterances about them are unfolding, John's ministry will end where the ministry of Jesus would begin.

So, as we move on to chapter 2, remember that Luke has already told us something about this infant baby. The neighbors are aware of what is happening. He is going to spend his time in the wilderness and appear publicly.

And when he comes up again in Luke chapter 3, we are going to see him more in the ministry of baptizing people. But he had already spent time in the wilderness. He had done what he was supposed to do.

So, let's begin to look at what is happening when we get to Jesus. Now that the first folder is closed on John. To the city of David, which is called Bethlehem.

And laid him in a manger because there was no place for him in the inn. Let's begin to look at a few things more closely with this account here. But before I go on, let me just make this tangential point here.

If you have ever experienced accommodation problems or housing problems, just understand that Jesus understands you. His first problem in the world is the problem of housing. If you have ever, and if you are a student, if you have ever had a problem with your roommate, Jesus understands you.

Because his first roommates were sheep, his bed was a manger. Can you imagine as a child? The roommate comes around, stares you in the face, and goes... You see, the coming of Jesus into our world, as Luke is going to portray it, is the King, the King, the Lord, the one who comes to bring about the kingdom of God.

Luke, the elite, is writing to Theophilus, the elite, and is going to show him that this is something spectacular. He came in the most humble and ordinary way that he may reach out to us. I remember a song that we used to sing back home in Africa, which goes like this.

He came down that we may have peace. He came down that we may have love. He came down that we may have joy.

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. And when we, in the African context, are surrounded and immersed in poverty, reflecting that he came down.

He did not only come down in status. He came from heaven to our world. He came from prestige to the ordinary.

He came from the one who speaks all things to the one who did not even have a place to lay his head. He came from being the one who talks about mansions in the Father's house but having his first bed in a manger among sheep. As we go through the text, notice how Luke establishes this event in history.

He established events showing that it was the time of Caesar Augustus and a controversial figure up here, whom I will bring up later on, the reign of Quirinius as a governor of Syria. That is a contentious issue here. Also, you notice when we get further on, I'll remind you that in Luke, the city of David is not Jerusalem.

Unlike the Old Testament, where the city of David is Jerusalem. In Luke, the city of David is Bethlehem. It's Ephrata.

It's where David grew up as well, not where he reigned. But here is a quick recap on Roman politics and the time frame. I like borrowing this material from the website because it shows imagery that really shows the time frame when Julius Caesar was leading.

And then Caesar Augustus, who was adopted by Julius, takes over. If you look at the time frame, he will come between 27 BCE to 14 BCE. So, when Luke says the census was going to be issued when Caesar Augustus was the governor, yes, he is locating the event in the right history.

Because all this will be playing out between 4th and 3rd BCE, this fits the time frame that, indeed, Caesar Augustus will be emperor in Rome. But it's not that easy when we come to Quirinius.

So, let me give you a quick timeline, and then we will go on to look at some of the issues emerging from this text. The setting of the birth of Jesus. It was a census that was going to send Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

There in Bethlehem, we will be told the reason is that Joseph has this relation to that line going back to David. And remember, the Messiah will come as a descendant of David. Luke is quick to tell us that, in fact, Bethlehem is not just an ordinary city or town.

Bethlehem will be the city of David. And unlike the Old Testament reference to the city of David, as I mentioned earlier, to Jerusalem, here the city of David is Bethlehem. David will be raised in Bethlehem according to Micah 5, verse 2. There,

the one who will be referred to later in the early church as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords will be born.

He will be born in a manger. In Bethlehem, a town that is 4 to 4.5 miles from Jerusalem and about 80 to 90 miles from Nazareth, where Jesus Christ will be born. He will be born to a teenage girl I mentioned earlier, perhaps about 13 years old at the time.

And notice the man that will be in her life at the time. The man Joseph was not even in a situation where he had consummated the marriage yet. He was someone who was, if you like, engaged to be married too.

And now they have a baby boy. Matthew will tell us that Joseph will be an extraordinary man. Because when the baby's life is under threat while they are in Judea, the angel will speak to Joseph.

And Joseph will hear the angel clearly. And instead of him saying, you know what, this child is an obstacle. He stands in the way of our marriage anyway.

He's not my child. Let this child be killed. No, Joseph will say, I'll drop back in Nazareth on hold in Matthew's account.

And he will take the child and the mother and go to Egypt. Now, it's a whole different story when you get to Egypt as to where they went. As I make jokes with my Egyptian friends, I see traces of Mary and Joseph in too many places, which makes me wonder whether they actually were there or not.

They were in Egypt. But the point I'm trying to make is that the site where they stayed has become a very, very lucrative industry that is able to make tourists excited. Now, if you are in Cairo, you can find within 100 miles, I say 100 miles, 100 meters or 100 feet, you can find three or four places they would have stayed.

Just to say, you know, you can stand here and say, this is where baby Jesus and the mother were. But that's a whole different story. The point I'm trying to make is that while Luke will take us straight into the account to tell us more that we may not hear about in Joseph and Joseph, Matthew actually tells us that God could not have chosen a better couple.

That Joseph was a man of integrity. He was so devout that he could hear when God spoke. An angel will speak to him to take the child out of town, and an angel will speak to him while in Egypt to bring the child back.

Here in Luke, Luke does not go that much into that much detail because Luke's narrative focus is quite specific in the way he wants to convey. But he wants to tell us

that this is happening in real-time. For Luke, we should know that the time of history is very, very important because the kingdom of God comes out of nowhere.

The kingdom of God is not coming out of nowhere. The kingdom of God is coming into our world at a specific time. It was a time when Caesar Augustus was sitting on the throne in Rome.

It was a time when Palestine was under Rome. It was a time of religious traditions in the Jewish homeland; some were great, and some were not. It was a time when some people were resenting the foreign influence on the Jewish homeland and their religious customs.

Yes, it was this time that Jesus would be born, and yet it was also this time that we would be told that Joseph and Mary were going to be so religiously devout. They were so law abiding that they would obey even the Roman law to go to their homeland and register for the census.

We will see in the course of this discourse that this is also a couple who is prepared to be devoted to their religious laws and follow them carefully. We are told in this account something about their economic standing. Now, we are making this recording in North America, specifically in New England.

So, if you are following these lectures from other parts of the country, you may not understand. But where we are recording from and this area in general, some people may think that the weather is so bad they may have a nice vacation house somewhere in Florida where they can go and have a wonderful time. It's called good living.

In fact, the place where we are, even the taxes you pay, is what most people need to be able to live in all year very well for the rest of the year. But you see, Mary and Joseph, they came from a small town or village called Nazareth. Joseph's hometown is Bethlehem, as we are told, but he doesn't have a vacation home.

He doesn't have a particular property back there in Judea for them to go and settle. No, they don't. Perhaps they have a family home, and who knows how many family members show up around the time.

They were poor, as I will show you more pointers or indicators to show that effect in the Lucan narrative. Yes, they were poor.

That is why Jesus will have his first crib and his first roommates situated right there with sheep. Here in Luke, Luke will also tell us something about this humble Messiah coming into our world, unlike Matthew, who is going to give the birth announcement to prominent people from Iraq, the Magi.

Here in Luke, the message will not be delivered to David. An angel will appear to people in the neighborhood who are shepherds. Who is involved in the most menial career, you can think about in that world?

Now that I've given you these four broad spectrums let me just narrow down and focus and highlight a few key things out of this broad spectrum. The first is, as I mentioned earlier the time frame. Caesar Augustus was emperor.

Herod was the king of Judea who would die for BCE. Herod was the one we would be told because of his insecurity, and he would feel threatened by the life of this boy. But Luke tells us that Quirinius would be governor of Syria at the time.

Now, this time frame looks nice, but the problem we have in terms of world history is an issue of Quirinius and his reign. Where was Quirinius in the 4th century BCE? Is Luke guessing something that had already taken place? Or was he in this rare occasion that we find in Luke? Otherwise, he does very well by pinning history to specific characters. Is he misquoting here? On one hand, we don't have any evidence to suggest that Quirinius was governor of Syria in 4 BCE.

But we have evidence to suggest that he seemed to be a governor in Syria a few years prior or a few years after. What is going on? I wouldn't like to spend a lot of time and energy on these contentious issues that scholars go back and forth. But I'm just trying to draw your attention to the fact that Luke is interested in situating events in history.

In so doing, he throws one of the historical characters there, which gives modern scholars a lot of pause, concern, and room to investigate what is going on. Strauss writes that like the census itself, the reference to Quirinius represents historical difficulty. According to Josephus, the governorship of Quirinius over Syria began in 6-7 AD.

A census conducted for Judea is described as around 6 AD or 6 CE. Is it possible that Luke is transposing that census on that? That is one way of looking at it. Another way of looking at it could also be that a census began earlier.

But that census would finish in 6 AD. In fact, the views that are thrown up are specifically three, as I put out for you here. One says that it is possible that Quirinius served in two-time frames.

The two-time frames allow you to locate Jesus and this event in either. Therefore, Luke is getting his dating wrong according to that view. A second view holds that Quirinius probably held an administrative position somewhere in the area before he became a governor.

If that is so, then Quirinius was already known to be holding an administrative position in the area. By the time Luke was writing, maybe he was a governor. But he was not an unknown character.

The other view is the one I hinted at earlier. That says, perhaps, Quirinius was working or was a governor when the census was completed. But it was a census that had begun.

This minute issue here should not distract us from the broader narrative of what is going on in Luke. Luke is trying to tell us in a specific time in world history. What prompted Joseph and Mary to go to Nazareth was the census.

The census occurred when Caesar Augustus was the emperor. According to Luke, Quirinius was the governor of Syria. That is all Luke's point there that he is trying to establish.

Then, he will focus on the baby Jesus. Cradock is trying to resolve all these Quirinius things because he seems to be concerned about it. He writes that there was a census in Palestine when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

Perhaps that may be the one referred to in Acts 5:37. But that seems to have been later than the reference that we have in Luke 2:2. However, since Quirinius was a viceroy in the region earlier, and since some time elapsed between the enrollment and tax assessment, some scholars argue that Luke, in general, if not exactly correct in his historical references, Luke's primary aim is to establish Jesus in Bethlehem. And in continuity with the royal house of David. If you understand what Luke is trying to do, then you understand that all he is trying to do here is to say, according to world history, this is the time frame this happened.

But when it happens, you should also pay attention to whom the angels are going to bring into the story. These are going to be shepherds, not wise men—verse 8 of chapter 2. And in the same region, there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. Imagine the experience of these shepherds. This was not an ordinary reference because Luke is going to tell us that he is very interested in a gospel that also counts for the outcast, as well as for the elite, the marginalized, as well as for the noble.

For the men, as well as for the women. And it's narrative even for the adults as much as for the children. For Luke, it is important to realize that this king of kings and lord of lords will have his first visitors as shepherds.

Yes, the one who comes in the lineage of David will be visited. Guess who was a shepherd? David himself was a shepherd. The shepherd will come.

I don't know what to compare shepherding to in today's world. It was one of the works that people didn't want to do. It was dirty.

Who wants to take care of sheep? The sheep was not very nice. But you see, in this humble profession and career, Jesus, the baby, will receive important guests. But pause a minute and think about an irony.

He was born, if you like, by coincidence, among sheep. His first visitors of nobility will be shepherds. Luke does not want you to think that, oh, we are talking about shepherds, these quite insignificant folks who came from nowhere, and then things began to unfold.

No, Luke thinks if he gives you that impression, he will be misleading you. So, look at how he phrases it here. And in a region, verse 8, there were shepherds out in the field keeping watch over their flock by night.

And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. And they were filled with great fear, as we find again and again in Luke. Their encounter they have a supernatural encounter, and their response is fear and awe.

And the angel of the Lord said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord. And this will be a sign for you.

You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying to these shepherds, Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased.

When the angel went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go to Bethlehem and see these things that have happened, which the Lord has made known to us. And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. When they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told to them concerning this child.

And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. And Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard as they had been told.

And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus. And the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb was that which was given to him. The angel's visitation was a special encounter with the shepherds in the field.

It was not a coincidence. Can you imagine being in the field? A mystical figure appears, and a mystical figure appears in the middle of the night. Perhaps the sheep are sleeping or what is going on in the field of nowhere.

And then suddenly, they burst and began to sing to entertain you before they delivered the message. The birth of Jesus brought in spectacular and extraordinary things. Luke wants to make sure we are aware of the supernatural activity in the world of the time.

And how all these things are shaping up as the Messiah comes into our world. Now, before I end this part of the lecture, I would like to also draw your attention to what sometimes is not a big issue, but in some circles is a big issue. In these references or passages of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2, verse 7, we find a reference to Mary giving birth to a firstborn son.

The question that is often posed is, what does the firstborn son mean? Does it mean the one who is preeminent? Or does it mean Mary had so many children after that? Pardon me a little bit. I am here to give you a denominational scope on this. This is one of those passages that when Protestants interpret in the room with Catholics, you can have contention, and as one who once taught in a Catholic school where some are priests and some are developing themselves into the priesthood and there are some who were Protestants, you can imagine when you get into this particular conversation.

Does firstborn son refer to Mary having more sons and this one being a firstborn? Or is Luke trying to give us a hint of a point he will make later? Quick overview on that denominational subject. If you are interested in knowing more about the issue of Mary and whether he had perpetual virginity as it is held in Catholic tradition or Orthodox tradition and what the Protestants held about that, basically, the Epiphanian view states that Mary had sons as it is referred to in the Gospels but those sons are not Mary's biological sons. They are children from Joseph's previous marriage.

The Heromenean view, which is the one that Catholics lean towards, says that references to Mary's children or sons of Jesus' brothers in the Bible are references to his cousins. In other words, both the Epiphanian view and the Heromenean view suggest that in Luke 2 verse 7, when Luke talks about Mary's firstborn son, he is not suggesting that Mary,, in fact,, had some children afterward. The traditional Protestant view is the Heromenean view, which argues that whether you are

referring to James the son of Mary or the brothers of Jesus visiting at the time, we are talking about the children, the biological sons of Mary whom Mary had after Jesus.

The doctrinal dispute is for something else. In Luke, I want to suggest to you that Luke was not interested in whether Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox are going to be fighting about whether Mary had more children or not. That's not Luke's point.

Luke's point is basically trying to set the reader up to know that, in fact, there is going to be a time that Mary will have to go to the temple with Joseph to dedicate the child. The reason is that if a firstborn, a woman, or a child comes out of the womb first, whether there will be more children or afterward, it doesn't matter. But the child that comes out of the womb first has to be a child that will be dedicated in the temple.

Luke wants to make sure that he indicates that in the birth narrative, he provides a rationale for Joseph and Mary to be found later on in the temple, dedicating the child. In terms of the shepherd's encounter, though, the shepherd's encounter is so remarkable that I can't gloss over it. You can see that I'm a little bit excited about the shepherd's encounter.

So, I give you five things. You just make your hand like five things quickly about the shepherd's encounter with Gabriel. Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, stood by them while they were in the field at night.

The glory of the Lord shone around them. Imagine some halo effect just coming around them, and they feel terrified. And the angel tells them, fear not.

Then, the angel goes on to give them a sign. You will find an infant of all places in a very unusual fashion. He is wrapped in a swaddling cloth, lying in a manger.

When you see those signs, you know that is the child we are talking about. Fourth, the crowd of angels will join the one who is delivering the message, and they will begin singing for the shepherd. Can you imagine a concert in the night in the field and the angels were the choir? I thought these shepherds were having a great time.

Ordinary people have an extraordinary encounter with God and his angels. And then we are told the angel withdrew. They withdrew to heaven, away from the shepherds.

Soon after, now we find they began to plan out how they would visit this baby. As you follow these lectures so far and follow what Luke is doing, I want to close this particular session by drawing your attention to some key things. The birth of John the Baptist ushered in the coming of the forerunner.

Once we are told about the forerunner and how he grew up and spent time in the wilderness, we are told about the birth of Jesus Christ. Luke situates the event in concrete Roman history and regional history from when Quirinius was governor. Luke goes on to tell us the humble space in which he will be born and the circumstances that will lead the parents to Bethlehem and make that wonderful child be born in such a humble space.

Luke will tell us that when a child of nobility is born, normally, the guests who come speak to the kind of child that is born. In the case of Jesus Christ, God will see fit to send angels, even to the point of sending a large number of angels to sink four and two and deliver the message of the birth of the child for them to go back and visit in Bethlehem. There will be shepherds.

Luke is going to tell us that even if you are elite like him or elite like Theophilus, the God who made this world and has all things in his hand is coming to fulfill the messianic promises in Jewish tradition. He's coming through the person Jesus Christ, but he's coming in a very humble way. He's coming in a very ordinary way.

He's coming in a way that all of us could relate to him. But that doesn't mean he comes only for the poor. He comes for all.

And I hope that as you follow the lectures and as we go on in the next phase, we will look at what will happen when this child is brought to the temple. And we will see events unfolding as the baby Jesus is brought to the temple later on to be dedicated. Powerful things begin to take place in this infancy narrative.

I hope you are enjoying this study with us so far. And I hope that you are not only feeding your mind but you are also opening your heart. You are embracing the coming of Jesus Christ into our world in such a humble way.

He came that you may have joy, peace, and love. Thank you.

This is Dr. Dan Darko and his teaching on the Gospel of Luke. This is session 4, Infancy Narrative, Part 2, The Birth Narratives, John and Jesus, Luke 1:57-80.