



Luke 1

Luke 1
Tape #8045
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to Luke's gospel chapter one as we begin now the gospel according to Luke and once again, let me exhort you to start reading through the whole Bible. Great opportunity to start in the gospel of Luke. And join with us as we study through the entire Bible. So at least go through Luke. See if you don't just sort of get the habit and begin to really enjoy it as you go through the whole Bible.

Luke is called by Paul the beloved physician. It is interesting that in the book of Acts which Luke also wrote, that when Paul was in Troas and received the call to go to Macedonia is the time when Luke joined Paul's company. And in writing the book of Acts, he begins in that chapter to use the personal pronoun, "We" then went over to Macedonia. It is also interesting that while Paul was in Troas, he was very sick. He mentions how that he was quite ill and it is possible that Luke was the physician that was called to minister to Paul. In those days, interestingly enough, most physicians were slaves and they served rich patrons. And it is thought that perhaps Theophilus was Luke's former master who released Luke then to travel with Paul and journey with Paul so that Paul had his personal physician travelling with him in the work of the gospel.

Luke addresses both the gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts to this man, Theophilus, a Greek name which means lover of God. And thus, Theophilus being a Greek, the gospel is sort of sent to the Gentiles. It gives you a Gentile view as the author was a Gentile and the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew. So he gives us a great insight and he gives us special stories that are not found in the other gospels. He gives us the story of the rich man and Lazarus. He gives us the story of the prodigal son. And beautiful stories that we don't find in the other gospel are incorporated here in the gospel according to Luke. So great presentation of Jesus Christ after very careful research on the part of Luke. It's interesting that he uses medical terms for some of the illnesses, that's just a part of his profession as a physician.

So he begins his gospel as he is writing to this man Theophilus and he said,

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, [setting things out in an orderly way] *most excellent Theophilus, That you might know the certainty of those things, wherein you have been instructed (1:1-4).*

So Theophilus was instructed in the gospel. But this is now to confirm it and to let him know for certainty these things that happened. Luke actually interviewed the eyewitnesses. He questioned them concerning the things. And it's interesting that he begins his gospel with the announcement to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, which we do not have in the other gospels. He tells us of the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, which we do not have in the other gospels. So the first chapter of Luke is really an insight to the background of the birth of Christ not given to us in the other gospels and in that sense it becomes very interesting to us.

It is thought and no doubt true that Luke actually interviewed Mary and got the story directly from Mary of her visit to Elisabeth because of the details of what was said and the reactions between them and all that he probably interviewed Mary herself to get her account of the announcement of the angel to her and of the events prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. So he is now wanting to assure Theophilus of the truth of these things that he had been taught by giving him eyewitness accounts.

Others had set forth the story of the life of Christ. Mark, Matthew and of course, no doubt many others. John wrote later on. But there were many partial accounts of the story of Jesus Christ so Luke wants to set it out for Theophilus in an orderly fashion.

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea (1:5),

And Luke is very careful to give us the timing of the events. In chapter three, he gives several different, "It was the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judaea, Herod

was the tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip the tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias and the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests, when the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness” (Luke 3:1,2). So he gives you all of these reference points historically that give you the exact timing and sets historically the timing of the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist. So we are able then to give with great exactness the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar so we know with exactness when John the Baptist began his ministry. So “There was in the days of Herod, king of Judaea,”

a certain priest named Zacharias, he was of the course [or the family] of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron (1:5),

It was thought specially beneficial if the priest would marry into the family of Levi. In other words, that his wife was also a Levite or from the tribe of Levi.

and her name was Elisabeth (1:5).

She was one of the daughters of Aaron, that is, she could trace her genealogy back to Aaron, the brother of Moses.

They were both righteous before God, [Godly couple. They were] walking in the commandments and the ordinances of the Lord, they were blameless (1:6).

Just a good godly couple but they had a great problem in that culture, considered a cultural curse.

They had no child, because Elisabeth was barren, and they were both now well stricken with years (1:7).

The word “well stricken” literally is “bent over.” That is, as in the case of osteoporosis, when a person becomes old, sometimes they get bent over. And so they were bent over with the years.

And it came to pass, while he was executing the priest's office before God in the order of his course (1:8),

In those days, there were 20,000 priests, Levites. Naturally they could not all serve in the temple at the same time. So they set them out in courses and each priest would serve a one-week stint every two years to divide up the duties of the priesthood. So pretty nice, just once every two years you would serve for one week. The rest of the time you'd be occupied in your regular type of making a living. But you would come to the temple one week. And they always looked forward, just a glorious time every other year when they had that week of service in the temple.

According to the custom of the priest's office (1:9),

When you would come, they would then cast lots to determine what function that you would fulfill in the priestly duties. Whether or not you would offer the sacrifices or you'd offer the incense or the many different functions of the priestly office, they would cast lots for it. And so it was,

his lot was to burn the incense when he went into the temple of the Lord (1:9).

There was the morning and evening sacrifice and with the sacrifices there was the going in and the burning of the incense. So that was his lot. It was really one that was highly prized and it happened to fall to his lot to burn the incense before the altar of incense in the holy place, not the holy of holies but the holy place within the temple where only the priests were allowed to go.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the time of incense (1:10).

He would go in representing the people before the Lord. The incense represented the prayers of the people. And go in and offer them up to the Lord, a sweet smelling savor unto God, and then he would come out and pronounce God's blessings upon the people. “The Lord bless thee and keep thee and cause His face to shine upon thee and give thee peace” (Numbers 6:24,25). So while he was in there, the people would be waiting outside for the priestly blessing. And so, the multitude of people having come to worship God were waiting outside for this priestly blessing.

But there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias (1:11-13):

For 400 years since the prophet Malachi, the voice of God had been silent. God had not spoken to the people for 400 years. And now God's silence is broken. And the first word of God to man after the 400 years of silence is, Fear not.

Going back to Malachi chapter four, it is interesting that the last word of God was a word of judgment. The fourth chapter, "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." But then the glorious promise of God of the coming Messiah, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:1,2,5,6). This is the last word that God spoke.

The first word that God speaks after the 400 years of silence is to Zacharias and it picks up where God left off. The time of the fulfillment of this prophecy of Malachi has come and Zacharias is to have an important part of it. So, "Fear not, Zacharias,"

for thy prayer is heard (1:13);

Interesting, thy prayer is heard. He and his wife were both well stricken with years. They had never been able to have a child. And so their prayer was God, give us a child. Can you imagine how many years they must have been praying that? Now they are well stricken with years and no child. And yet the Lord now says, Thy prayers. It's amazing that he continued to pray that long, isn't it, for a child. Just how he continued in prayer even though he was now an old man, his wife was elderly, stricken with years, he's still praying that God would give them a child. Talk about persistence in prayer.

Someone asked me this week about patience. Been praying for something for a long time and how long do we pray? Well, you pray until you get an answer. So here they are, "thy prayer is heard."

and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John (1:13).

John is the Greek for the Hebrew Yohannan, which means "God is gracious" or "God is giving." So God's going to give you a son, your prayer is heard, God is gracious. You're to call his name "God is gracious." Beautiful name.

So often names were given according to the circumstances and surely this is a manifestation of God's grace in the birth of John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth (1:14).

It's going to be an exciting event for you. Joy and gladness. Whenever a woman was ready to be delivered, they'd call the musicians and the people would gather for a party. The birth of a boy was just a party time, exciting event. Musicians, dances and the whole thing. And so they would wait and when the child was delivered, the midwife would come out and say, It's a boy, and the musicians would break out, the people would dance, be great rejoicing. Unfortunately, if it was a girl, the musicians would pack up their instruments and go home. That's not fair, is it? but that's just the culture and baby, you've come a long way. Concerning the child,

He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink (1:15);

That is, he would be as a Nazarite, a Nazarite vow, consecrated unto God. It was a sign of consecration to God.

and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb (1:15).

Anointed with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, consecrated unto God, a Nazarite, and great in the sight of the Lord. Jesus said, "Of all of the prophets there has not risen one who is greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11). Jesus' testimony of him. And "he shall be great in the sight of the Lord."

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God (1:16).

He'll be an evangelist. Turning the people of Israel back unto God.

And he shall go before him [that is, the Messiah] in the spirit and in the power of Elijah,

So in a sense, he will be a fulfillment of the prophecy that God would send Elijah to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, he will come "in the spirit and the power of Elijah." Jesus later said of him after his death that he was, if you're able to take it, Elijah. However, that prophecy has a dual fulfillment and before the coming again of Jesus Christ, Elijah shall come and exercise a ministry for three-and-a-half years as is told in Revelation chapter eleven. So "he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah,"

to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (1:17).

Preparing the people for the coming of the Lord.

So Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is bent over or well stricken in years (1:18).

Thy prayer is heard. It wasn't really a prayer of faith, was it? When the Lord said, the Lord has heard your prayer, you'll have a son. How can I know this? I'm an old man and lack of faith. I wonder how many of our prayers are just perfunctory after a while. We just pray them but we don't really believe God's going to do it anymore but we just continue to pray, not in faith any longer.

And so the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God (1:19);

One of the chief angels of heaven, Gabriel, whom it would seem God made the angel in charge of the preparing of the events for the birth of the Messiah into the world. It was Gabriel who came to Daniel some 500 years earlier and announced to Daniel the day that the Messiah would come. Now 500 years later, he appears to Zacharias and tells him, You're going to be the father of the forerunner of the Messiah. Then Gabriel came to Mary in Nazareth and told her that she was to be the mother of the Messiah. So Gabriel, an interesting angel, and he announces "I'm Gabriel, I stand in the presence of God." Imagine that! To meet Gabriel who stands there in the presence of God.

and I am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. And, behold, you will be mute, not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season (1:19,20).

God's purposes are going to be accomplished, they won't be hindered by you. Don't be put under a guilt trip, it's your fault that God isn't working. God is going to work His purposes whether you believe it or not. And here is Zacharias and he did not believe so he'll pay the penalty, he'll not be able to speak. You want a sign? Okay, you'll be quiet, you'll not be able to speak until the day the child is born, until these things are performed because you didn't believe the word which will be fulfilled. It will happen.

And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple (1:21).

A few years ago when Kay was sending out the Christmas cards which we used to be able to do—but so busy in the last few years that we really have not had time to get out Christmas cards though we would love to do it, it's just a matter of not having time anymore—but she used to always love to put a little personal note and a scripture. And this one year the scripture in Matthew 1:21 struck her so she wanted to put it at the bottom of the card, "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shall call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." Great little verse for Christmas, bringing forth a son, call his name Jesus. But somehow she got mixed up in her mind and she put Luke 1:21 instead of Matthew 1:21. So those who looked up the verse, "The people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple," and they thought that she was sending a cryptic message that I was spending too much time at church and not enough time with her.

And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless (1:22).

He came out and could not pronounce the blessing. So they perceived that he must have seen a vision.

And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished [that is, the week was over], he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth did conceive, and she hid herself for five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked upon me, to take away my reproach among men (1:23-25).

It was a reproach, it was a shame, it was considered a curse for a woman not to be able to bear a child.

So in the sixth month (1:26)

That is, the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy,

the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth [the city of bad reputation], To a virgin who was espoused to a man whose name was Joseph (1:26,27),

Espousal was something that was in their culture engagement. You see, marriage was by arrangement. And so you could be engaged when you were five years old. Your parents got together with their friends and

they had a cute little girl, you're a nice little boy and they say, Why don't we arrange for our children to get married? And so they would make the arrangements and you would be considered engaged because your parents have made the arrangements for you to be married to their friends' little girl. So you go to kindergarten and say I'm engaged to her. It was marriage by arrangement. But one year before the actual wedding, you entered into a contract that was called the espousal in which you were totally committed to each other for this one year period of espousal. If the groom-to-be should die in that year's time, the wife-to-be would be considered a widow. And so you had the phrase, "a virgin who is a widow." That is, during this one-year espousal period, the groom-to-be had died. So it was a time of commitment of your lives to each other before the wedding.

Actually, to break this commitment took a writing of divorcement. You had to actually be divorced from this commitment during this year of espousal. So they were in this year of espousal when the angel came unto her. She was espoused to Joseph.

And the angel said unto her, Hail, thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women (1:28).

There is a protestant backlash to the worship of Mary that has been instituted by the Catholic church, sort of elevating her, calling her the mother of God, a term that is never used in the Bible, and then declaring that she was conceived without sin, declaring that she ascended into heaven, the divine assumption of Mary, and that she is an intermediary between you and Jesus. That you can pray to Mary and she in turn will go to her Son who would surely not deny His mother favors. And so she has become an intermediary between you and Jesus. And so there is a protestant backlash to Maryology and this elevating Mary to a higher position than what she had in the Bible.

Jesus actually rebuked Mary in the first part of John at the wedding feast of Cana in Galilee and later He put all of His followers on the same level. "Who is my brother? who is my mother? The same that do the will of God, are my mother and my brethren" (Matthew 12:48,50). So that we protestants have sort of been guilty of this backlash against Mary.

It should be noted that of all of the women who have ever lived, God chose her and granted her the highest honor of any woman ever born. And that is the honor of being the human instrument through which He would bring His Son into the world. A very spiritual godly young girl. It is thought that she was probably around fifteen or sixteen years old at the time because marriage in those days was at a very young age. And thus, to this beautiful young girl there in Nazareth, spiritually, deeply spiritual, the angel declared that she was blessed among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and she wondered what kind of a greeting this was. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS (1:29-31).

You are to conceive in your womb, that is, without the benefit of a relationship with a man. Referring to the virgin birth, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. You're to call his name Jesus, Greek for the Hebrew word Joshua which is Jehovah is salvation, one of the compound names of Jehovah. Jehovah Shewa or Joshua for Jesus. Jehovah Shewa (???) is Jehovah is salvation and Jesus came to save the world from sin. So call his name Jesus and,

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest (1:32):

Or is in verse thirty-five the Son of God.

and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David (1:32):

Mary was a descendant of David as in the genealogy in the third chapter of Luke which we will get in a couple of weeks.

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (1:33).

And so the promise of God to David will be fulfilled that there shall be one of his seed who will sit upon the throne forever. And it will be fulfilled in Jesus who will be sitting upon the throne of David forever. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, to order it, and to establish it in judgment and in righteousness" (Isaiah 9:7). So He shall be great, called the Son of the Highest, the Lord will give Him the throne of His father David, all of these things are spoken of the child

reigning over the house of Jacob forever, and of this kingdom there will be no end.

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be (1:34),

Zacharias spoke with doubt when he asked the question, How shall I know this? Mary's question was one of procedure, How is this going to happen? She believed it but she wondered concerning the process by which it will take place. "How shall this be,"

seeing I know not a man (1:34)?

Seeing that I have not had physical intercourse with a man.

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy one which shall be born of you will be called the Son of God (1:35).

Divine operation of God, planting the seed so that you will have a perfect God-man. Jesus is God manifested in the flesh. Jesus is man born of the virgin Mary. He is God, the Son of God, the seed of God planted in the womb of Mary.

In Genesis chapter three, verse fifteen, God said that He would put enmity between the woman and Satan and between her seed and his seed. He, the seed of the woman, would bruise the head of the serpent and the serpent would bruise his heel. So Jesus would destroy the power of Satan. John tells us, "For this cause was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the power of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

So here we find the woman's seed, the virgin birth conceived by the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be born. So the angel tells her the process by which it will come to pass.

And, behold, your cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren (1:36).

She's six months pregnant.

For with God nothing shall be impossible (1:37).

People have a problem with the virgin birth. Their problem really isn't with the virgin birth. Their problem is with the concept of God. "For with God nothing shall be impossible." You shouldn't have any problem. If you can believe the first verse of Genesis, you should have no problem with the rest of the Bible. If your God is great enough to create the heaven and the earth, then He's big enough to do anything. Thus, you really shouldn't have any problems with God. So "with God nothing shall be impossible."

And Mary said, Behold (1:38)

Here again, character of Mary. Here the angel announces this. It's going to create a lot of difficulties specially between Joseph and her. She comes up pregnant. How do you explain that to the fellow you're espoused to? But Mary, in surrender and submission said, "Behold,

the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to your word. And the angel departed from her (1:38).

Notice that beautiful submission. Here I am, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be as you have said. Surrender and submission.

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda [which is near Jerusalem]; And she entered into the house of Zacharias, and greeted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit: And she spoke with a loud voice [sort of a prophecy], Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord (1:39-45).

Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy to Mary and declared that it's going to be just as God has declared to you. So here we have what is called the Magnificat. Mary's rejoicing and praise of the Lord and this whole praise of Mary, the Magnificat, is just filled with the thoughts and concepts of God from the Old Testament. Just every verse breathes of the Old Testament concepts of God which means that she was very devout, very well-versed in the scriptures.

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord (1:46),

Imagine now, here's a young girl just in her teens and this glorious praise that comes forth pouring out to God from her spirit. "My soul doth magnify the Lord,"

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed (1:47,48).

The blessed Mary, the blessed mother of our Lord.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. And Mary stayed there for three months, and then returned to her own house (1:49-56).

So she stayed there probably until the birth of John the Baptist for she stayed there for three months and probably waited for the birth of John the Baptist before she returned because remember she was six months pregnant when the angel visited Mary. So this beautiful expression of praise to the Lord, the Magnificat, it is something that is worthy of meditation. Each verse, each thought about God, there is great meditative value. I would encourage you to read over again the Magnificat in your own leisure and just think about the things that she is declaring of God that, of course, reveal her depth of understanding and commitment and devotion unto God.

Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her (1:57,58).

Remember the angel said to Zacharias that there would be joy and rejoicing. So they came and they rejoiced with her.

And it came to pass, that on the eighth day, the day when they circumcise the children; that they called him Zacharias (1:59),

That is, all the family came in and said, little Zacharias, little Zach, great.

after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; he shall be called John. But they argued with her and they said, There is none of your family that is called by this name [John]. And they made signs to the father, Zacharias, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and he wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all of them. And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue was loosed, and he spake, and praised God. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What kind of a child is this going to be! And the hand of the Lord was with him (1:59-66).

You wonder about a birth like this and the child. What kind of a child is this going to be!

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he prophesied, saying (1:67),

Both Elisabeth filled with the Holy Spirit, John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit in the womb, and now the father Zacharias filled with the Holy Spirit and the manifestation was prophesying with both Elisabeth and with Zacharias. And in his prophecy he said,

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And he hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began (1:68-70):

So God from the beginning was promising the Saviour, the Messiah. And he is prophesying that the time has come for the fulfillment of this promise of God.

That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us (1:71);

From the powers of Satan and the powers of darkness that are out to destroy us.

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember God's holy covenant; His oath which he swore to our father Abraham (1:72,73),

Where God said to Abraham that "As the stars of the sky are innumerable, so shall thy seed be" (Genesis 15:5). And "As you can't count the sands of the sea, neither will you be able to count thy seed" (Genesis

32:12). Referring, Paul said, in Galatians 3:16, "It was seed, singular; rather than plural, and that seed is Christ, the Messiah." So "the oath that he swore to our father Abraham,"

That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, [addressing now the little child that was there] shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins (1:74-77),

John the Baptist went forth preaching, declaring to the people that they should repent, the kingdom of God was at hand. You will go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways. Give knowledge of salvation declaring the salvation of God and the remission of their sins.

Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us (1:78),

The dayspring from on high. Now go back again to Malachi chapter four and that prophecy of Malachi there in chapter four, in verse two, "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." This word "dayspring," think of it, break it up now, day-spring. It is actually literally the sun rising or the day rising, the day springing forth. The new day springing forth. So it is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Malachi, the Sun of righteousness shall arise. The rising Sun is the dayspring.

Also, it is the same word that in the Greek Septuagint was used to translate the word, "branch" in the prophecies of the Old Testament that God would raise from Jesse a righteous branch and so forth. The same word branch that is used prophetically of the Messiah is translated into the same Greek word, the rising sun or the sun rising. Here is the fulfillment, "the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings."

John was "to give knowledge of salvation to the people by the remission of their sins through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the dayspring, the rising sun, from on high hath visited us."

To give light [the Sun rising to give light] to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. And the child grew [that is, John], and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel (1:79,80).

The beautiful prophecy of Zacharias concerning John the Baptist, his ministry going before the Lord, preparing the hearts of the people, declaring the remission of sins that God was bringing to man and this rising Sun that would give light to those who were in darkness and those who were living in the shadow of death because of sin. God's great plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. The scene is set, exciting days, God is moving, the plan of God that has been in a holding pattern for several thousand years is now ready to be enacted. And so, what exciting days with the birth of John the Baptist and these prophecies that are about to be fulfilled.

Much like the days in which we are living. Exciting days where again, these promises of God and these predictions that have been made through the years. There's about to come the fulfillment of many of these things for which our hearts have longed and yearned for as the Sun of righteousness shall again arise with healing in His wings. And these prophecies of His eternal reign will be fulfilled as Jesus shall come and establish God's kingdom over the earth. We're living in exciting times as we see God's word about again to come to pass before our eyes. Living in this anticipation and excitement of God fulfilling His promises.

Father, thank You for Your word and truly it is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our path. And thank You Lord for sending Your Son. Thank You that He is come to us, the light of the world, as we sat in darkness, groping in our darkness and sin; but He brought to us the glorious light, the understanding of Your love and of Your grace and of Your mercy, the remitting of our sins through the shedding of His blood. Lord may we walk now in the light, even as He is in the light, that we might have fellowship with You as His blood cleanses us from all of our sins. Exciting times, exciting days. Lord may we be caught up in the glory of Your promises. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.