

Zechariah & Luke: The Returning King

Lesson 2: The Omnipotent King

Key Verse: *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God".~Luke 1.35*

"Miracle Berry Tablets"¹ transform the taste of a sour and tart lemon into a sweet treat. By confusing our tongues' sweet and sour receptors, tart lemons taste sweet, vinegar tastes like candy! The essence and purpose of the tongue does not change, but the way we experience flavors changes. Likewise, the **incarnation** of Jesus did not change His divine essence. With the addition of human flesh, Jesus remained God. Only an **omnipotent** God has the power and authority to retain His divine nature and eternal divine glory even in the humiliation of an impoverished birth to average parents and spending of most of His life in blue collar employment. He remained the same divine God even as He obediently and voluntarily submitted Himself to a gruesome death on the Cross for the purpose of our redemption (final defeat of sin's power and rule).

Lord, I acknowledge that my finite mind cannot grasp all this lesson teaches me about You. I beg You to help me understand what You have done for me, and for Your Church. Draw me into understanding at least one new teaching and move that out of my mind, and into my heart so that I may serve You and love You more and more.

Luke 1.5-2.52 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah [this is a completely different Zechariah from the prophet Zechariah we are studying in the book of Zechariah], of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. **7** But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years.

8 Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, **9** according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. **11** And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. **12** And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. **13** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. **14** And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, **15** for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. **16** And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, **17** and 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 for the Lord a people prepared."

18 And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." **19** And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. **20** And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time." **21** And the people were waiting for Zechariah, and they were wondering at his delay in the temple. **22** And when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. **23** And when his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

24 After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, **25** "Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people."

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, **27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" **29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. **30** And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. **36** And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. **37** For nothing will be impossible with God." **38** And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

39 In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, **40** and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. **41** And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, **42** and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! **43** And why is

¹mberry Miracle Berry Tablets can be found on Amazon. Years ago, we had an mberry party. Our sons were young, and one of them refused to take this tablet because he thought we were encouraging everyone to use drugs! This is NOT a mood/mind-altering drug. He has since joined us in the mberry experience!

this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44** For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. **45** And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

46 And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, **47** and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, **48** for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; **49** for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. **50** And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. **51** He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; **52** he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; **53** he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. **54** He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, **55** as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."

56 And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. **58** And her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. **59** And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, **60** but his mother answered, "No; he shall be called John." **61** And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." **62** And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. **63** And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. **64** And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

65 And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, **66** and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him. **67** And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

68 "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people **69** and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, **70** as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, **71** that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; **72** to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, **73** the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us **74** that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, **75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. **76** And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, **77** to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, **78** because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high **79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

CH 2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. **2** This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. **3** And all went to be registered, each to his own town. **4** And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, **5** to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. **6** And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. **7** And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. **8** And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** 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. **10** And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. **11** For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. **12** And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." **13** And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **14** "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." **16** And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. **17** And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. **18** And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. **19** But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. **20** And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. **22** And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord **23** (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") **24** and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." **25** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26** And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. **27** And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, **28** he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

29 "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; **30** for my eyes have seen your salvation **31** that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, **32** a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

33 And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. **34** And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed **35** (and a sword will pierce through

your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

36 And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, **37** and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. **38** And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.

40 And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. **41** Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. **42** And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. **43** And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, **44** but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, **45** and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. **47** And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. **48** And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress.” **49** And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?” **50** And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. **51** And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Diamonds: We know that we are going to cover a huge amount of text about Jesus in a short amount of time this year. Rather than considering that a limitation of the study, we hope that you will embrace the challenge of keeping “a bird's eye view” while expecting God's intimate, personal revelation for you. So often crowds surrounded Jesus, yet He was able to touch the lives of individual people. As you join the crowds, know that He will likewise single you out; nothing prevents Him from His personal touch!

1. Compare the similarities of John's purpose and message as a prophet (Luke 1.16-17; 76-79) to Zechariah's prophetic purpose and message (Zechariah 1.1-6). How are they the same, and what does this teach us about God?

Zechariah experienced a remarkable once-in-a-lifetime priestly privilege. God chose him through lots or a type of God-ordained lottery (Leviticus 16.8; Joshua 18.8; 1 Chronicles 24.31), to offer up incense upon the altar of incense (Exodus 30.34-38). Conducted in the chamber right outside the Most Holy Place, the placement of incense upon the altar of incense symbolized the fragrance of the people's prayer to God (Psalm 141.2; Revelation 5.8, 8.3-4). While Zechariah was offering incense, he too was offering the prayers of God's people. It was expected that after he completed this extraordinary duty, he would come out and pronounce a blessing on God's people. They filled the temple courts, praying and waiting for God's blessing. The saddest consequence of Zechariah's unbelief (Luke 1.18-19), is that after he emerged, smelling of the sweet incense used to offer the people's prayers to God, he could not pronounce God's blessing to His people (Luke 1.21-22). His inability to speak meant he couldn't scream out, “Messiah is coming! For real this time!”

Elizabeth was of the priestly line. Now an old woman, she was married to Zechariah, a just-as-old priest (Luke 1.5-7). Rather than years reveling in a position of great honor among her peers, she was ostracized from her community of women for her barrenness, or inability to have children (Luke 1.24-25). Suffering under that judgment along with an assumption as having a secret sin that only God knew, was a strain on her and her husband, as well as on her marriage (Luke 1.13-14).

2. What did God have in store for her? (Luke 1.13-16, 24-25)
3. How does this challenge our tendency to judge our circumstances in light of God's favor or love for us? What about when we judge the circumstances of another in the same regard, as an indication of God's love and favor upon them?

Mary, an uneducated peasant of about 13 years of age, was from a small, one-blinking-yellow-light town (Luke 1.26-27; John 1.46) far from the cosmopolitan and power-filled city² of Jerusalem (Luke 1.26). Unmarried but pledged to be married to Joseph, a common man of equal status of the prophetically consequential house, or lineage, of David (Luke 1.27).

4. What did God have in store for her? (Luke 1.26-38)

5. How does this challenge our tendency to believe that God chooses perfect people living in perfect circumstances to serve Him?

Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the angels, Simeon, and Anna display their theology in their unique “songs” of worship and prophecy. No matter their age, gender, life-circumstance, or place of residence, they worship God using much the same understanding and knowledge of God. This is a marvel when you consider their differences!

6. Write down their theology, or knowledge, of God:
 - a. Elizabeth (1.41-45)

 - b. Mary (1.46-55)

 - c. Zechariah (1.68-79)

 - d. The angels (2.13-14)

 - e. Simeon (2.28-32, 34-35)

 - f. Anna (2.38)

7. Of the five, whose theology best fits your knowledge of God today, and why? Or, if you could have coffee with one of these five, who would it be, and why? What would you have in common, or what would you want to know more about?

² Ryken, p.29-30

8. After two very dramatic and overwhelming events, Mary ponders and treasures these events in her heart (Luke 2.19, 51). What do you suppose Mary was learning about her son, Jesus? These overwhelming moments led her to a deeply intimate response. How do you think her faith in God, and in Jesus was impacted by her experiences?

Deity: Omnipotent~ (Luke 1.37) All-powerful. Almighty (Genesis 17.1). God is omnipotent. He possesses infinite, limitless power (Psalm 115.3). His power created all things and sustains all things (Romans 11.36; Hebrews 1.3).

Unbound by time and location, God is able to exercise His power to do His holy will at all times and in all places (Genesis 18.11-14; Jeremiah 32.17). This is beyond the idea that God can do anything (Job 26.14).

“The Bible indicates several things that God cannot do. He cannot lie (Hebrews 6.18). He cannot die. He cannot be eternal and created. He cannot act against His nature. He cannot be God and not be God at the same time and in the same respect...Nothing or ‘no thing’ can restrict His power (Job 42.2)...We know that no part of creation can frustrate His plans for the future (Ephesians 1.11)...Though powers and forces of this world threaten to undo, we have no fear. We can rest in the knowledge that nothing can withstand the power of God (Psalm 147.5; Revelation 19.6).”³

His omnipotence is not only at work FOR us, it works IN us (Ephesians 3.16-21; 2 Corinthians 12.7-10).

9. In what portion of Jesus’s birth story, or childhood, do you see God as omnipotent (Luke 1.5-2.52)? While there are many possible answers, focus on the portion that God is using to teach you more about Him and increase your faith. If you are struggling to see His omnipotence, use the verse we identified when developing this study (Luke 1.37).

Doctrine: Incarnation~ (Luke 1.31-35) The Merriam-Webster definition of incarnation is “a particular physical form or state; the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form”. In Christianity, this means that through Jesus, “the God of the universe entered into our situation, taking on all the limitations of our physical existence. He did not save us from a distance, but came as close to us as He possibly could, sympathizing with us in our sufferings”.⁴

Philippians 2.5-7 provides a Biblical definition of Jesus’s incarnation: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

This verse is often misunderstood to mean that Jesus “emptied himself” of His deity or His divine attributes while in human form. This incorrect understanding reduces God’s Godness—His eternal and immutable realities. In fact, scripture reveals that the Jewish leadership understood that Jesus had not reduced God of His Godness. In fact, their accusations confirm that Jesus was never without all of God’s attributes. Jesus was consistently and boldly clear that God had taken human form in Him. (John 2.25; 10.33; 14.9; 17.2; 20.28; Matthew 9.4; Luke 5.3-10).

³ Sproul, R.C., *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale Momentum, 1992t) pgs.41-43

⁴ Ryken, p.73

The correct understanding of Jesus's incarnation is that His emptying of Himself was a nullification, not a pouring out, or reduction, of His essence as God. Philippians 2.7 defines the concept of "emptied Himself" through nullification, or veiling. "Christ made Himself of no reputation precisely by taking on a human nature. He emptied Himself not by pouring out portions of His deity but by adding to Himself full and true humanity. His emptying was by addition, not by subtraction".⁵

10. From Luke 2.39-52, identify the ways you see Jesus fully possessing His divine nature and attributes while they are veiled by His humanity.

11. Select a few verses from this list noting how they help you more fully discover and understand the truth of Jesus's incarnation:
 - a. Matthew 9.4

 - b. Luke 5.3-10

 - c. John 1.47; 2.25

 - d. Matthew 24.36

 - e. Hebrews 2.14-17

12. What new insights have you discovered about Jesus's incarnation? How does Jesus's incarnation build "certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1.4)?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: As you studied Jesus this week, what verse or verses lit up like a neon sign as you read them? What passage or thought remains in the forefront of your mind? Write it out here, using it to pray. Even if it seems like the verse cannot be used as a prayer, try it. After all, God is an omnipotent King!

Dmel Tatum's prayer offered as an example (and a bit of a sacrifice of praise), using Luke 1.35, 37-38:
Overshadow me, Lord. Please, overshadow me so that Your presence consumes me. Overshadow me so that Your power consumes my sinful nature and desires. Overshadow me so that I am Your obedient servant who says like Mary, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to Your word". Lord, overshadow me to increase my belief that NOTHING, and no thing, is impossible for You. Forgive me for wrestling with Your will for my family's future. You are an omnipotent provider no matter our circumstances. Again, give me the courage to say and believe that I am your servant, who trusts in Your will for me, and my family. Thank you for hearing me, and listening to me with love, grace, and mercy. I love your Son. It is in His precious, omnipotent name that I come before you. Amen.

⁵ MacArthur & Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Biblical Truth*, pg. 260

Lecture Outline:

Aim: God uses those who regularly stand before Him.

- I. The Prophecies (Luke 1.1-38) **T1:** God uses those who respond to Him with belief and obedience.
 - a. How are you responding to God? Have you ever responded to God by saying “*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to Your Word*”?
 - b. Are you prepared to say “YES!” to God’s call to be His servant? Or are you sidelined by what you think you can and cannot do?
 - c. How might you, like Zechariah, be refusing to believe in God’s omnipotence to accomplish whatever He desires through whomever He desires?
- II. The Praise! (Luke 1.39-79) **T2:** God uses those who respond to His great faithfulness with unfettered praise!
 - a. How often do you burst out in exuberant praise for the great things God has done for you?
 - b. What informs your praise? What hinders your praise?
- III. The Promised One (Luke 1.80-2.52) **T3:** God uses those who respond in faith to His Savior’s saving work.
 - a. How has this lesson prepared you to respond in faith to Jesus’s saving work?
 - b. In what new and specific way will you respond to Him?

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