HOMEWORK: Read Luke chapters 1 & 2

**Main Point**

Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s saving promises and His presence prompts joyful praise from God’s people.

Read Luke 1:1-56.

* **What parallels do you see between the verses promising Jesus’ birth and the previous set of verses promising John the Baptist’s birth?**
* **What do Mary’s question (v. 34), statement (v. 38), and song (46-55) reveal about her attitude?**

Luke's description of the responses to the two promises Gabriel delivered show us an important distinction between questioning God and asking questions of Him.  Zechariah didn’t believe God’s ability to give he and his wife a son, and he asked for a sign to prove God’s words were true. Mary voiced confusion over the logistics of how she’d have a child, but she never acknowledged skepticism or doubt. Instead, she recognized her position as the Lord's servant and welcomed God's promise to be fulfilled in her life (38). Neither did she focus on herself, but praised God for His power, holiness, mercy, and the “great things” He had done for her—specifically, the virginal conception of Jesus, who would bring about the events described in the second half of Mary’s song (vv. 51-55).

* **What attributes of God compel you to praise Him?**
* **What do you learn about the Messiah, the promised child, from the angel’s comments to Mary in verses 31-33?**
* **Read some of the messianic prophecies from 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Isaiah 9:7; Isaiah 11:1-5; and Psalm 89:3-4. Consider what these prophecies reveal about the Messiah’s identity and function, and the importance of Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilling these prophecies.**

Mary’s conception would be miraculous because she was still a virgin (v. 34). The name Jesus is equivalent to the Hebrew Yeshua (Joshua), meaning “the Lord is salvation.” In Genesis 14:18, God is referred to as “God Most High.” Humanly speaking, Jesus’ lineage would be traced legitimately through the royal family of David because Joseph, Jesus’ adoptive father, was a descendant of David. This made Jesus heir to David’s throne according to God’s eternal covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:13,16).

Read Luke 1:57-80.

* **God silenced Zechariah after he questioned God. How did Zechariah respond when he got his voice back (v. 64)? How did people respond to Zechariah's sudden outburst of praise to God?**
* **What similarities do you see between Zechariah’s song of praise and Mary’s? What are the key differences?**

Zechariah’s ability to speak returned with his obedient naming of John (vv. 63-64). What had been frozen through unbelief was now healed through faithful obedience, and it happened immediately. Months of pent-up silence brought forth a burst of praise stimulated by the Holy Spirit. Zechariah praised God for providing redemption in Jesus. He also prophesied that his son John would play a pivotal role in God’s plan of redemption.

* **What are the similarities between John’s mission and your mission?**

Read Luke 2:1-7.

* **Why do you think Luke selected these facts in particular to set the context for Jesus’ birth? What does this indicate about God's purposes in the seemingly ordinary things in our lives?**
* **What do Joseph and Mary’s experiences teach you about God? What do they teach you about when you face hopeless-looking situations?**

Luke took care to set the world’s most significant event within its proper context. God had promised to Israelite kings and prophets centuries earlier that one day He would send His Son as Messiah and Savior (see 2 Sam. 7:13-16; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 33:14-16).

Both Joseph and Mary could trace their family lineage back through King David. David’s hometown was Bethlehem, a village located just a few miles south of Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth—some ninety miles north of Bethlehem—at the time of the registration. They would have to travel over difficult and, at times, mountainous terrain to complete their duty as citizens.

Through the Messiah, God promised that He would personally enter into human history. Jesus Christ is Immanuel, “God with us.” The doctrine of the virgin birth assures us that Christ was a unique person: fully divine (the eternal Son of God), yet also fully human (born to a Jewish virgin on a specific day in human history, in a particular place on earth). In His unique presence, Jesus alone is qualified to be our Savior.

Read Luke 2:8-20.

* **What three titles are given to Jesus in verse 11? What is significant about them?**

People usually thought of “saviors” as those who claimed to heal or to rescue from danger. Jesus would infuse the title with a much deeper meaning. He had come to save people from their sins (see Matt. 1:21). Luke further identified Jesus as Messiah the Lord. The term “Messiah” means “anointed one.” God chose (anointed) Jesus and set Him aside for a special purpose. Moreover, Jesus Himself is Divine (the Lord).

* **How did the shepherds react to the angel’s news (vv. 15-16)? What can you learn from their response?**
* **Does it surprise you that God announced Jesus’ birth to shepherds, some of the lowliest members of society? Why or why not? What is the significance of the fact that God revealed the arrival of Jesus to shepherds? What does this indicate about who the good news of the gospel is for?**

Read Luke 2:21-52

* **What relationship do you think there was between Simeon's anticipation of Christ and his response to Him when he finally experienced His presence?**

What we learn from Simeon is that an intimate, personal relationship with God enables us to recognize God’s work and respond to His leading. Simeon was walking in a right relationship with God. He was anticipating the Messiah’s coming, which indicates he took God’s promises seriously. In addition, he was “moved by the Holy Spirit” (v. 27). Finally, Simeon was worshiping God in the temple. God used Simeon’s worship time to communicate Jesus’ identity and mission.

* **In what ways should you anticipate Jesus' presence in your life daily?**
* **What does your enthusiasm to tell others about Jesus and what He’s done in your life say about your relationship with Him?**