

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

400 years of anticipation:

Awaiting the fulfillment of God's promises

- The "First Promise": Eve's descendant (seed) would defeat Satan (Genesis 3:15).
- The Davidic Covenant: God promised that an eternal royal descendant would reign forever on the throne of Israel. (2 Samuel 7:16)
- The New Covenant: Replacing the Law of Moses, a promise of internal transformation through the Spirit. (Jeremiah 31:31–34)
- A righteous “suffering servant” would arise to voluntarily suffer, be rejected, and die for the sins of others, ultimately being exalted. (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)
- Nations to the ends of the earth would submit themselves to the Messiah’s righteous rule. (Daniel 7:14; Psalm 2:8; Psalm 22:27-28)
- The Ultimate "Rest": Entering Canaan only foreshadowed a greater spiritual rest; the patriarchs, like Abraham, anticipated a heavenly city. (Exodus 33:14, Hebrews 11:10)
- A “new heavens and a new earth” renewed by the removal of the curse. (Isaiah 65:17)
- The graves of Israel and the nations would be emptied for a return. (Ezekiel 37:12-14)
- All the nations would be blessed through Abraham. (Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4)

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Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

- A new heart and an indwelling Spirit for believers (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

An atmosphere of expectation

- **The Message of John the Baptist:** John's call to repentance heightened messianic expectations regarding the coming King's appearance and the signs accompanying him.
- **Intertwined origins:** The Gospel writers (Luke and Matthew) deliberately link the births of John and Jesus to show a unified divine plan involving miraculous conceptions and exceptional childhoods.
 - **Miracle births:**
 - One child was born to an older, barren woman
 - **Elizabeth** (Mother of John the Baptist): Elizabeth was described as old and barren, "well stricken in years," when the angel Gabriel announced she would conceive the forerunner to the Messiah.
 - **Sarah** (Mother of Isaac): Sarah, wife of Abraham, was long-barren and well past childbearing age (90 years old) when she gave birth to Isaac.
 - **Hannah** (Mother of Samuel): Hannah was barren for years and deeply distressed, often mocked by her husband's other wife. She prayed for a child and dedicated her son, Samuel, to the Lord's service, later having five more children.
 - **The Wife of Manoah** (Mother of Samson): The unnamed wife of Manoah was barren until an angel appeared to her, announcing she would bear a son who would be a Nazirite from birth and would begin to deliver Israel from the Philistines.

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

■ **Rebekah** (Mother of Jacob and Esau): Wife of Isaac, she was barren for 20 years before God answered Isaac's prayer and she conceived twins.

■ **Rachel** (Mother of Joseph and Benjamin): The beloved but barren wife of Jacob, she struggled with infertility while her sister bore many children, until God "remembered" her and she gave birth to Joseph.

○ One child was born to a virgin.

Isaiah 7:1-14

¹ In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ² When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

³ And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. ⁴ And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷ thus says the Lord GOD:

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

*“It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.*

*⁸ For the head of Syria is Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.
And within sixty-five years
Ephraim will be shattered from being
a people.*

*⁹ And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of
Remaliah.*

*If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.”*

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹

*“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it
be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²*

*But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I
will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³*

*And he said, “Hear then, O house of
David! Is it too little for you to weary
men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴*

*Therefore the Lord himself will give
you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall
conceive and bear a son, and shall call
his name Immanuel.*

Lakeview Christian Center

Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

"The virgin birth has been an essential part of the Christian story since the earliest days of the church. And for good reason. The virgin birth demonstrates that Jesus is truly human and truly divine. The virgin birth also testifies that Jesus did not inherit the curse of depravity that clings to Adam's race.

"Jesus was made like us in every way except for sin (Hebrews 4:15; 7:26–27). Sinners beget sinners (Psalm 51:5), which is why the Spirit's miraculous role in Jesus's birth is so important. The virgin birth is part of what Christians have believed in all times and in all places, and it is a key element in what it means for the incarnation to be 'for us and for salvation.'"

Theological importance

In his *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief*, **John Frame** says the virginal conception of Jesus holds significant theological importance:

1. It serves as a sign of monumental redemptive events. While previous miraculous births in Israel's history involved God opening barren wombs, a virgin birth is a far greater indicator of divine action. In announcing Jesus' birth, the angel quotes Isaiah 7:14, identifying Him as "Immanuel"—God with us.
2. It protects both the deity and humanity of Christ. The miracle affirms His divinity, while the process of conception and birth ensures He shared our human nature and experiences, including temptation (Heb. 4:15).

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

3. It demonstrates that salvation is purely by God's grace. By taking the initiative while Mary remained passive (Luke 1:38), God shows that redemption is a divine work independent of human effort.

Luke 1:38

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.

The Annunciation

Luke 1:26-38

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?"*

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

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.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife,

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Just as an angel announced John's birth, so an angel announces Jesus' birth—first to Mary, then to Joseph—in circumstances that are unusual, yet related to other special births recorded in Scripture.

As the Spirit filled John while he was still in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:15), so Mary will conceive because "the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God" (1:35). The Spirit's "com[ing] upon" Mary echoes Old Testament incidents of the Spirit's special activity, such as the Spirit's "resting upon" the seventy elders (Numbers 11:25) or "coming upon" Othniel (Judges 3:10).

The Holy Spirit as the Agent of Conception

- **The Primary Agent:** The Spirit is the "primary agent" through whom the Father implements his purposes, mentioned nine times in the birth narratives of Luke and Matthew.
- **The Virgin Birth vs. Old Testament Birth Miracles:** While similar to the special births of Isaac or Samuel, Jesus' birth is unique.
 - The Spirit "overshadowing" Mary (Luke 1:35) draws parallels to the Spirit hovering over the waters at Creation and the Glory of God (Shekinah) hovering over the Tabernacle.
- **The Announcement to Joseph:** Matthew emphasizes that the child was "of the Holy Spirit," confirming Joseph was not the physical father and fulfilling the "Immanuel" (God with us) prophecy.

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

“In Jesus’ supernatural coming into the world, God is providing a fresh start for Israel in particular and humanity in general. The Holy Spirit is instrumental in the fashioning of the Messiah’s humanity, as is Mary. As Gerald F. Hawthorne notes, ‘He is Adam’s Son and God’s.’ Importantly, there is no dissonance between the Matthean and the Lukan accounts on the one hand, and, on the other, the one-person-in-two-natures (fully divine and fully human, respectively) Christology, which was to triumph much later at Chalcedon in A.D. 451. It took time and intense debate in the early church period, though, for the implications of revelation to be faithfully articulated.”

Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life:
The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*

The Spirit’s Witness at the Temple Presentation

Luke 2:22-38

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.*

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

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.

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

- **Adherence to the Law:** Jesus' presentation followed Old Testament regulations for circumcision (on the 8th day) and the redemption of the firstborn (at 1 month).

- **Empowered Witnesses:**

- **Simeon:** Explicitly guided and moved by the Spirit to recognize "God's salvation."

- **Anna:** A prophetess (implicitly Spirit-empowered) who spoke of Jesus to those seeking the redemption of Jerusalem.

- **The Lesson:** Spirit empowerment transcends age and gender; both the elderly Simeon and Anna were chosen to testify to the Messiah's identity.

- The Theology of the Incarnation and Development

- **Fully Human, Fully Divine:** Jesus did not forfeit his divinity but chose a "voluntary limitation" of his attributes (omniscience/omnipotence), relying instead on the Holy Spirit for empowerment.

- **The Growth of the Child** (Luke 2:40, 52):

- **Filled with Wisdom:** Just as John the Baptist and his parents were "filled," Jesus' development was characterized by a continual filling of the Spirit.

- **The Grace of God:** The "favor" upon him reflects the Spirit's enabling for future ministry, echoing the "Servant" imagery in Isaiah 42:1.

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Anointed With The Spirit And Power

Week 5: The Spirit And Jesus' Early Years

Tim Morris

Luke 2:39-40

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.

Luke 2:52

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

Isaiah 42:1

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my Spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the
nations.*

Preparation vs. Ministry: Jesus had 30 years of preparation for 3 years of public ministry. This highlights the importance of seeking the Spirit's enabling in the "hidden" years of character development and scriptural study.

The Goal of Empowerment: True Spirit empowerment is not for personal popularity but for sanctification and to point others to Jesus.

Key Principle: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John the Baptist).

Inclusivity of the Spirit: The narratives of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna prove that one is never too old, and Jesus' childhood proves one is never too young, to be empowered by the Spirit.

Next: *The Spirit and Jesus' Ministry*