

Summary for Session 18: Messianic Fulfillment Part 1

Prep work: Luke

DVD: Jeff begins the period of Jesus' life and works by briefly explaining why Luke was the chosen Gospel narrative to follow. Jeff notes that since both books of Luke and Acts of the Apostles were written by the same person, there is a good continuity of the story flowing from the period of Jesus straight into the period of the Church. Also, Luke's gospel is where we get much of the Infancy Narratives, as well as the largest section on the Annunciation and Mary's role in the Story of Salvation. By way of preface, Jeff reminds us that Jesus was born into the Roman empire, an empire that declared its ruler, Caesar, a god, and whose culture oriented itself to Caesar-worship. Jesus' message that he is the Messiah, the one worthy of praise, will most certainly clash with this culture, especially when his followers, Christians, begin to spread the faith.

Jeff dives into the story by reviewing how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Story of Salvation, quoting Paul's words that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption" (Galatians 4:4). Again, Paul writes that Christ offers "redemption by his blood...he has made known to us the mystery of his will...as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth" (Ephesians 1:7, 9, 10). As part of this fulfillment, Jeff explains that Jesus will be living a "recapitulation"—a reliving of many of the events of the Old Testament, so that where the Israelites fell by disobeying God, Jesus might hit the mark by following God's Will. As part of this recapitulation, Jesus will also echo the theme of exile and return many times in his life and mission.

Going into the story, Jeff begins with John the Baptist. Out of barrenness (another theme, recalling Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Hannah), God will bring about His plan. John is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets, who announces the coming of the Messiah "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). Later, Jeff will remark on John's message to "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Luke 3:4). These are the words from Isaiah, specifically from the beginning of the book of Consolation, where Isaiah writes about the restoration of Israel and the coming of the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3). John is announcing that the time of restoration is at hand, the Messiah is coming! As further evidence of his role as the second Elijah, John dresses as Elijah did, in a garment of hair (Matthew 3:4, 2 Kings 1:8) and emulates the austerity of Elijah even in his diet of locusts and honey. Finally, Elijah is last seen at the Jordan river before being taken up to heaven and leaving Elisha with a double portion of his legacy (that is, Elisha will go on to do twice the amount of works that Elijah did 2 Kings 2:6-13). Beginning his ministry at the Jordan, John picks up where Elijah left off, and proclaims that the one after him is "mightier than I" (Luke 3:16)—a new Elisha who will go on to do greater and more numerous deeds.

This new Elisha is certainly announced most curiously. The angel Gabriel comes to a lowly maid, Mary and greets her as the favored one of God (giving us Catholics the beginning of the prayer "Hail Mary"). Gabriel goes on to describe how God is sending one who is to be called Jesus (literally translated as "salvation of God"), and hearkens back to the promise to David "he will rule over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1: 33). From the outset, Luke makes it clear from Gabriel's message that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Story of Salvation, the long-awaited Messiah. With Mary's simple *fiat*, "Let it be done to me according to your

word,” the world will be forever changed (Luke 1:38). Mary, too, will be forever changed, as she becomes the new Ark of the new Covenant. Just as in the Old Testament (OT) Ark, “the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling” (Exodus 40:34), so “the power of the Most High will overshadow [Mary]” (Luke 1:35). Just as the OT Ark carried symbols of God's Word, the food of Heaven, and God's holy priesthood, so Mary will carry God's Word incarnate (John 1:14), the Bread of Life (John 6:35), and the Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). The Visitation between Mary and Elizabeth also offers parallels to the OT Ark. Elizabeth remarks, “How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1: 43) recalling David's words, “How can the ark of the Lord come to me?” (2 Samuel 6:9). John's leaping in the womb for joy at the sound of Mary's voice (Luke 1:44) is reminiscent of David's “leaping and dancing” before the Ark in joy (2 Samuel 6:16). Finally, even the fact that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months echoes the Ark's staying in the house of Obededom for three months before going to its home in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:11).

Jeff notes that there is a reason the Bible mentions that Caesar Augustus has ordered the census which results in Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, not Nazareth. It is ironic that someone who declares himself a god orders around God the Son, but it is also part of God's plan—using a Gentile to fulfill the prophecy of Micah: “But you, Bethlehem...from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from old” (Micah 5:1). Jeff pauses to remark here on what is called the Hypostatic union—Jesus is fully God and fully man at the same time (Catechism 464). Throughout history, there have been several heresies against this belief. Jeff highlights the Nestorian heresy that denied Jesus' two natures were in unity. The Third Council of Constantinople declared Jesus to have two wills as well as two natures; however, these two wills were never in conflict with one another.

Jeff goes on to describe Jesus the man before moving into the events of his life and ministry. As the son of devout Jews, Jesus would have been brought up observing all the tenets of the Law in a family that revered God's Word, visited the Temple regularly, and recounted the Story of God's People often. Jeff recounts a legend that the 1st Century Jews were taught Leviticus first—the importance of knowing God's Law being paramount. The carpenter was also taught rabbinic methods and took on the role of rabbi, teaching not by other's authority (as was common then—being an disciple of the rabbi who taught you and falling on his authority to give credit to your teaching), but teaching “as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:29). In the Presentation, we see that Simeon is waiting at the Temple for the Consolation of Israel (again recalling Isaiah's prophecies in the book of Consolation), and immediately recognizes that Jesus is the one he has waited for.

From the Presentation, we move on to Jesus' baptism and God's words declaring Jesus to be the Son of God (Luke 3:22). Jesus then flees to the desert for 40 days. This is another recapitulation: just as the Israelites moved from slavery through the waters (of the Red Sea) to the desert to spend 40 years trying to become closer to God, Jesus also moves through the waters of baptism (which frees us from the slavery of sin) to the desert for 40 days of prayer and fasting to align himself with God's Will. In the end, the Israelites failed and their children were the ones allowed into the Promised Land. Moses points out that the

Israelites failed God three times in the desert: by not living according to God's Word, by testing His Providence in demanding water, and by making an idol of the golden calf. It is on these exact points that the devil will test Jesus, and he will answer the devil with the words of Deuteronomy, just as the Israelites *should* have done—where they failed, he will succeed.

Jesus will proceed up to Nazareth (gathering back the Northern Kingdom, since it was the first to leave the fold?), and will astonish his own home town by reading from Isaiah's book of Consolation and then announcing that *he* has come to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy. He has come to declare a jubilee, “liberty to the captives”, a release from the bonds of sin extending even to the Gentiles (Luke 4:17-27). His ministry is one of restoring, of healing, of gathering people around himself (as the new Temple). He calls the disciples, twelve men (for the twelve tribes of Israel), and tells these former catchers of fish that from now on they will be “catching men” (Luke 5:10).

When Jesus mentions that one cannot “pour new wine into old wineskins” (Luke 5:37), he is saying that he did not come to “patch up” the old Law, he came to fulfill it by revealing the fullness of God's Will in a Law of Love. This is further explained in the Sermon on the Mount (or Plain, depending on the gospel). Jesus, as the new Moses, is giving the Israelites the new Law, which involves looking interiorly rather than on physical manifestations. It is about mercy over justice, while the old Law was about justice over injustice. Jesus calls the Israelites to move beyond their preoccupation with exacting strict codes of justice and instead insists they offer mercy and love to all. He sends out his disciples with the same message of release through forgiveness and mercy. This Sermon focusing on God's Word might be called the prototype of the Liturgy of the Word of the Catholic Mass. It is appropriately followed by a prototype of the Liturgy of the Eucharist in the Feeding of the 5000. Jesus provides the food the people need, just as he will later do when giving himself in the Eucharist. The disciples, realizing they do not have the power to give what is needed, go to Jesus; he provides the food, and then the disciples distribute it. Jeff remarks that this is also a prototype of the life of the Church. The disciples pray to God for the needs of the people, God will provide, and the disciples will be God's “hands” on earth.

The head of this Church will be Peter, who is the first to realize that Jesus is “the Messiah of God” (Luke 9:20). He will be given the keys to the kingdom, symbolic of Peter being the steward of the Household, or the *al ha-bayit* (Matthew 16:19 referring to Isaiah 22:22). Following this confession, Jesus takes three of his disciples up a mountain to pray. Jesus is transformed before them, revealing his glory and appearing with Moses and Elijah, discussing his coming “exodus” in Jerusalem (Luke 9:28-31). This exodus, Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, is the ultimate recapitulation. From the bondage of sin (Egyptian slavery), Jesus (Moses) will give us a ritual of remembrance in the Mass (Passover), impossibly leading us through death (the Red Sea) to salvation (the Promised Land). All this will be covered in later sessions, however. For now, it is enough that from that point on, Jesus “set his face to go toward Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51).

Jeff closes this session by looking back on Jesus' works and message and reminding us that we are called to do what Jesus has done—are we making that the focus of our life?