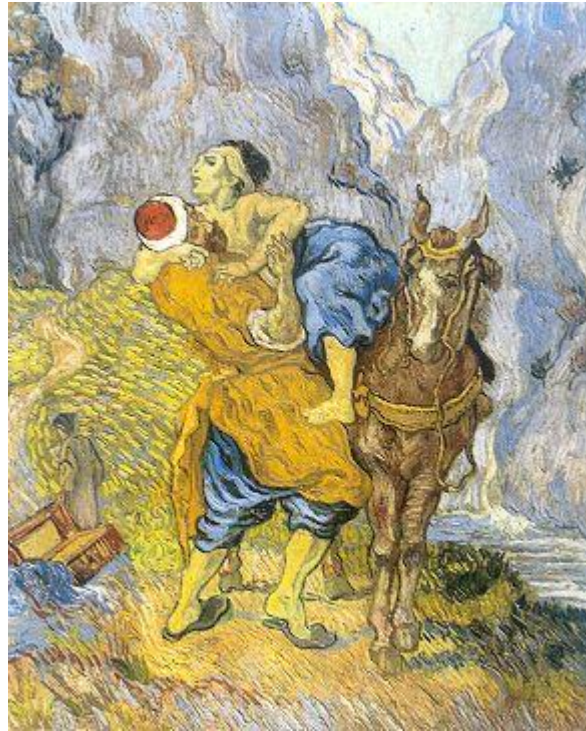


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The Holy Gospel
after the report of the apostle

Luke

1



The Book of the NEW MAN in Christ

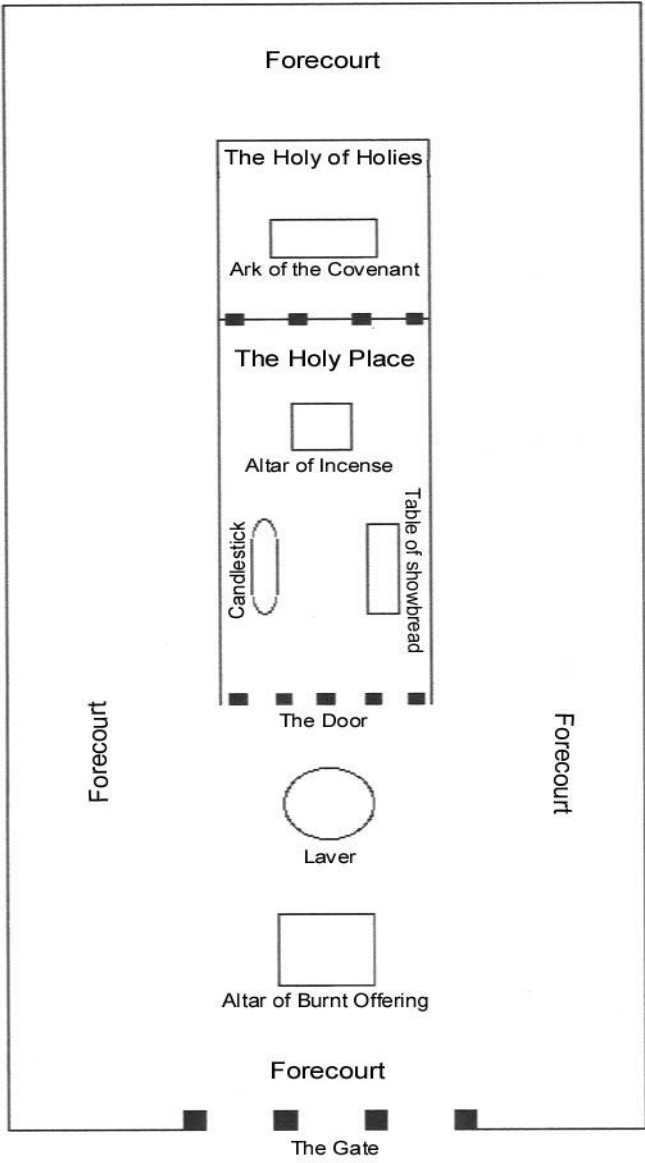
*About Jesus, the High Priest, and how we,
as priests of the most high God,
must serve Him.*

"Verse by verse"
the deeper meaning of this Bible-book,
explained in the light of the Israeli Tabernacle

By E. van den Worm
2nd revised edition, January 2000

Plan of the Israeli Tabernacle

2



General note:

1. In principle the Bible texts have been taken from the Authorized Version. One could, of course, when so desired, use any other Bible translation.
2. We have **frequently** added text between brackets in the Bible verses **to clarify the meaning of the Bible verses.**
3. In most cases where **he** or **him** is mentioned to point to **males** it also counts for **females.**
4. It is allowed to copy the study, on which way, **when the source is mentioned.**
5. If this study is a blessing for you, it's our wish that the message shall be passed on to others. We ask you in the first place to attend other people on our website. But you could also, as far as we are concerned, copy it (many times), and hand it out. A margin for profit is **not** allowed hereby. See note 4, above.

New make-over for our Blog: December 2022

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Part I

The court-life of the believer

Chapter 1

3 The gate of repentance unto the NEW LIFE in Christ.



Introductory words:

In the Gospel after the evangelist Luke we see the Lord Jesus portrayed as **the Son of man** (after the flesh: from the seed of David – Romans 1:3), as the **NEW MAN** in God, as the New Creature. And, of course, each new creature is a priest of God, because he enters into, and is in, a relationship with God. It is exactly this relationship which issues the new creation. And **by** and **in** that relationship with God the new creature is a priest, who stands between God and fallen man. Therefore the Gospel after Luke is, in the first place, a revelation of Jesus Christ as the wonderful High Priest of God, because He is revealed here as the Son of man, the First among the new creations of God. Spiritually, what applies to the Head (i.e. Jesus), also applies to the Body (the Christians). It is therefore also a book of the Christian as a royal priest, who can be a priest, because He, Jesus Christ, is the High Priest. It is the book of the **NEW MAN**, because he lives in unity with that wonderful High Priest and Savior, whereby the **NEW MAN** can also be a channel of God's streams of mercy on behalf of God's people.

This first chapter shows us in particular the gate of repentance opening unto the **NEW LIFE**. We will look at this Bible-book in the light of the Tabernacle. Would it have been possible for us to approach that holy place of that time, we would first have had to enter a gate in order to come unto holy ground. This is also the case if we begin to read this Gospel prayerfully and with proper respect.

The colors of Jesus' Being are displayed by this gate: scarlet, blue, purple, and white. Especially the white typifies purity, characteristic for the **NEW MAN**. The purple signifies the Kingship of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is expressed in the Gospel after Matthew. The scarlet signifies God's Son as a servant, His willingness to die for fallen humanity, as the Father asked it of Him, already before the foundation of the world. This is told unto us in the Gospel of Mark. The blue tells us of Jesus as the Son of God, which is described

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in the Gospel of John. The color of Jesus, as described by Luke in his Gospel, is therefore **white**. He is that **pure NEW MAN** and High Priest.

Luke 1 verse 1-4: *"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in (good) 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, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."*

Luke, the doctor and later evangelist, wrote to a certain Theophilus. This last name may be a fictitious name, as "Theophilus" in Greek means "son of God". Therefore he directed this Gospel to each son of God, to each perfect (read: sincere) child of God. And the purpose of the evangelist is to bring religious security in the heart of each child of God.

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The birth announcement of John the Baptist.

We will now have a close look at the birth announcement of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a preacher of repentance. He called to repentance the people of Israel, that is to say the Jews (namely the tribe of Judah, wherein is also included the tribe of Benjamin).¹ He came in the spirit of Elijah, the prophet that called Israel to repentance, after it had strayed (spiritually), and had served Baal through the doing of queen Jezebel, the wife of king Ahab of Israel. The Baal religion in fact is a nature worship. On closer consideration the Baal religion wants to let itself go in worldly lusts, the worldly ways are indulged. The Baal cult (i.e. the worship of Baal, an idol) had a licentious character, whereby the fertility was idolized.

Elijah called Israel away from Baal – away from the loose worldly lifestyle that Israel had fallen into – back to YaHWeH. He called them to the living God and Lord, the God of purity, modesty and justice. This was Elijah's manner, and so was this John the Baptist also.

We read, that God announced the birth of this John the Baptist. Everything right and good comes from God. It is God, Who calls us unto repentance. We can't come unto God without this call to repentance; and He uses the mouth of the preacher of repentance for this. The preacher of repentance is a gift of a loving God, to people who are lost in sin. God in His compassion filled him with the Spirit, Who calls unto repentance. He is a sounding board of the call which comes from the heart of God.

The birth of God's instrument, which would sound forth this call, was announced here. Again: the call to repentance must come from God into the heart and being of the sinner. Without this voice of the Spirit, Who also was in Elijah, no sinner will repent. This we read in John 6:44 "No one comes to Me (i.e. Jesus) unless the Father, Who sent Me, draw him..."

Luke 1 verse 5: *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zechariah, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth."*

Zechariah was a priest, and his name means "God remembers" or "God is mindful (of)". From him this preacher, who preached repentance, was born. Zechariah had prayed for this son, who was given to him and his wife in their old age. Let us understand the spiritual meaning of this. As Zechariah prayed for a son and prayed for his people, so also must we pray God to let His call unto repentance be heard on behalf of sinners, whom we love, and whom we would love to see "in Christ". If we pray in this way God will hear, and will send that call unto repentance through the mouth of one of His serving children. So also was this John the one asked by God, who had to sound forth the call unto repentance to the faithless people of Judah.

This priest (Zechariah) was of the course of Abia. In his time David had established 24 divisions (see 1 Chronicles 24:1-19). Such division consists of a chief priest with his helping co-priests. As one would understand, with the growth of the generations the number of priests had increased greatly, but the number of divisions remained 24. Twice a year a certain division had a chance to serve in Jerusalem in the temple. Zechariah

¹ There is a difference between Israel and Jews, which we like to explain in short. First the people of Israel contains twelve tribes, named after the 12 sons of Jacob (who received the name Israel from God). Later there was a split, and the Bible mentions then the "House of Israel" and the "House of Judah" (the Jews). **The "House of Israel"** (also named Israel) is the empire of 10 tribes which in history was taken in exile from Canaan by Assyria. After this they mingled with the heathens (originally to Europe etc.) where they now live as an "hidden nation". Specially the "Christian nations" in the North West of Europe and the countries to which many immigrated, like America, Canada and Australia. **The "House of Judah"** contains two tribes namely Judah and Benjamin, which lived in the promised land in the days that Jesus walked on earth. The house of Judah (the Jews) is the part of Israel that was hardened (Rom. 11:25).

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was of the eighth division, namely the division Abia had when he was chief priest. God chose for this John the Baptist to be born, a man of the eighth division. We see how wonderfully God worked, because the symbolic worth of the number 8 is that of the new beginning, of the **resurrection**. He also chose Zechariah, because he and his wife were righteous in His eyes. We read this in the following verses:

Luke 1 verse 6: *"And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."*

Luke 1 verse 7-9: *"And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord."*

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We know that such a division counts many priests. The task to burn incense among all religious acts the priests are to perform, is a holy task. Incense was to be laid on the altar of incense, after it had been cleansed of the ashes, and whereon new coals had been laid, after which the assembled people were to be blessed. It was a wonderful, holy task in their eyes: it was the most holy task the priests of such a division had during that week. Because it was such an extraordinary task lots were drawn. During such a week only seven priests of an entire division were appointed by lot for this work. It was customary that the one on whom the lot had fallen, withdrew from further lot drawing for the rest of his life; the reason being that such a division was especially large in number. It so happened that the lot fell on the priest Zechariah... After the altar of incense was cleansed of the ashes of the offering of the previous day, and new coals had been laid on it, he entered. Quietly he came near, knowing what holy task was awaiting him; namely to offer incense unto that great God, to bring Him honor, and praise and worship.

Luke 1 verse 10: *"And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."* They waited outside for this priest's blessing.

Luke 1 verse 11-12: *"And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zechariah saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him."*

When he was thus occupied with the offering of incense, to then worship God, and afterwards to exit backwards, keeping his face towards the altar of incense, he suddenly noticed the angel! Fear came over him!

Luke 1 verse 13: *"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."*

John means: "God is merciful", "God gives grace".

Luke 1 verse 14-15: *"And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."*

And see now what task was awaiting him:

Luke 1 verse 16-17: *"And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, 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."*

I already pointed out to you: Elijah was a preacher of **repentance**, his task was: to call to repentance. He must sound forth the merciful call, which came straight from the heart of God, to the people of Israel. He was a sounding board for God's grace. **It is God, Who always calls to repentance!** The repentance unto God, a deed which goes out from **us**, after God called us thereto, is not only the basis and the beginning of a healthy religious life, but also a **new beginning each day**. This must be a distinguishing mark of our religious life **each day: absolute, wholehearted repentance** unto God. Not a single Christian can go on in sincerity for God without this daily mark!

John had to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children"; he had to move the hearts of the elders to a childlike acceptance of God's will, and a similar approach to God. He had to "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just". For disobedience to God's will characterized Israel, and characterizes today's spiritual Israel (the Church)! Repentance shows **obedience** to God; yes, being willing to obey with all one's heart His **entire** Word. If, in any way, we are disobedient (or want to be disobedient) to God's will, then there is no repentance in us! If there is a bondage of sin, which keeps us captive, there is a pain in a **repentant** heart, a wrestling in prayer to God for deliverance and mercy to **be able to** obey Him! And this wrestling in prayer continues until God pours out His redeeming grace! When we receive God's strength unto deliverance, then again

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it is up to the Christian himself to show his good will, and break the bondage of sin, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, himself, in the power of grace he received. God calls us out of the darkness of sin, and we must ourselves be willing to get out of the darkness, in God's strength. So Abram had to leave the people of Ur of the Chaldees, his original dwelling place. God called him hereto in order to bless him; but Abram had to do it himself, he had to leave those people in the strength given him by God. The will to act and to obey must come from deep **within ourselves**, as a positive answer to God's call, then the strength to obey will issue from Him. **God must be able to see in the depth of our heart a sincere repentance life, an sincere longing for that life in His justice. Then He will satisfy such a heart with His justice.**

John had to "turn the disobedient to the **wisdom** of the just". **Wisdom** is the distinguishing mark of the just. A righteous person will, at each deed he wants to do, ask himself prayerfully: "is this after God's will?"

Luke 1 verse 18-19: *"And Zechariah said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings."*

When still young, Zechariah had prayed for a son, but he now did not believe the angel's announcement for he and his wife were already old, and, humanly spoken, the fertile period was over; he therefore asked the angel for a miraculous sign. He could not accept God's Word... but God requires of His people that they believe His Word! Then the announcer made himself known: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God!" Do you know who Gabriel is? He is the messenger of God's revelations and will; he is the teacher of God's children. So, also Mary received from him the announcement regarding Jesus' birth (see Luke 1:26-35), and, earlier, also Daniel received a revelation from him (see Daniel 8:16-26; 9:21-27). There is but One with God, Who teaches the children of God, and He is the Holy Spirit. Therefore Gabriel is an Old-Testament appearance (revelation form) of Him. He is the third revelation form of the Godhead Himself, and had to condemn Zechariah' unbelief! Zechariah received the sign he asked for; but that sign was at the same time God's judgment over his unbelief:

Luke 1 verse 20-22: *"And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. And the people waited for Zechariah, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. 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."*

When Zechariah came out, his hands were stretched out to bless, as is customary with all the priests, who perform such a deed, but his mouth remained silent... he could not utter the blessing...

Beloved, let us **continue to repent** from the heart, and **obey Him** from the heart, but let us also be willing to believe His Word. These are the pillars on which a blessed, religious life rests!

Luke 1 verse 23-25: *"And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach (contempt) among men."*

The miracle of Elisabeth's conception (at a very old age) then happened. She kept her joy over this miracle of God to herself for five months. After all, the people would not have believed her, and would have laughed at her... Only when it became visible that she was pregnant, she showed herself to the outside world. God had removed her "reproach among men" by this conception, and that in her old age. A barren woman was someone God did not want to bless. In people's opinion her righteousness must have some hidden sins or shortcomings. But now they could not say or think any such thing of her. God had splendidly made good all defamation she suffered by working this miracle in her!

God's Spirit announced the birth of the NEW LIFE.

In the light of the Israeli Tabernacle we are still looking at the gate, the entrance to the Holy Place of Jesus. This spiritual Holy Place is a life in communion with God. It is holy life ground; it is a life that seeks to live in absolute union with God. It is also growing towards the fullness thereof; namely to the perfect union with our God and Lord, Who seeks this in us and demands it from us. Therefore we must know a life which progresses in ever increasing purity and holiness, because He is pure and holy. If we wish to come to the heart of God, **we must be willing to be purified in all our thoughts and our desires**; we must be willing to be sanctified by Him in our thinking and in our heart.

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This purity and holiness of the NEW LIFE in us, yes the NEW LIFE itself, is no power, but a second revelation of the Godhead, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the NEW LIFE, That has come into this dark world. Now the birth of this NEW LIFE was announced. It often happens, when God does something in your and my life, that we notice the foreshadow (lit. adumbration) thereof beforehand; we then dream dreams or receive revelations which tell us that God is planning something with us. Here too God's announcement of a very important, coming event is seen: the birth of the NEW LIFE of men.

Luke 1 verse 26: *"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,..."*

With the "sixth month" is meant the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy. Elisabeth hid from the outside world for five months. When she showed herself again to that outside world in the sixth month and they discovered her pregnancy, Gabriel came to the virgin Mary with His announcement.

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Luke 1 verse 27-30: *"...To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house (line) of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God."*

We know that the angel Messenger of God, Gabriel, was a revelation of the Holy Spirit. Mary was favored by God, she had "found grace with God". Verse 28 says "...the Lord is with thee". How wonderful that God is with us. This is only possible when our conscience is pure, and we live a life that is subjected unto Him; when **nothing** and **nobody** stands between God and us anymore; when **all** has been confessed to God, and our conscience cannot accuse us anymore about any disobedience towards God. Then there is no division, no stumbling block between us and God anymore; then **the Lord is with us!** He could be this way with Mary. This woman had seen to it that there was nothing in her life that could stand between her and God. Our religious life is to strive for this too: that **nothing** and **nobody** stand between us and God. Such a life knows no self-righteousness or self-delusion (to think much of oneself); not a single "yes, but..." to God's will. Such a life is pleasing to God, and will manifest itself in spiritual fertility. Such a person has a heart which is like fertile soil, like ploughed ground ready to receive the seed of God's will. This seed will sprout here, will grow, and flower and bear fruit, the one 30, the other 60 and next 100-fold!

We see that even in these "ploughed" hearts there still is a gradation of 30, 60 and 100-fold. If 100-fold is perfect, then we could also speak of 100%, 60% and 30%. We can then speak of 100% when such a life is completely under the management and the power of the Holy Spirit; of 60% when 40% of such a life is still self-willed, even if that self-will seeks to please God as well; of 30% when 70% of the "labor for the Lord" still is done in obstinacy and in one's own power.

All other lives, where there is found even a semblance of disobedience to God's will, is bound to (spiritually) come to grief and fail completely. One reads this in the parable of the seed (Matthew 13). There only in one of the four cases the seed becomes fertile; in two other cases a period of life and growth may be seen, but these irrevocably end. In the fourth case the seed did not sprout at all, as it fell on rocky ground. Only those who are willing to unconditionally open up to God's Word, without any "yes, but..." will receive NEW LIFE and fertility, for this NEW LIFE only knows one foundation, namely: Jesus Christ, His holiness and purity (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Let us therefore wholeheartedly obey His Word and the Holy Spirit; let us put Him above all things and all people in this world! Let us not continue to entertain stumbling blocks in our life; not allow nor maintain in our heart and life things and relationships with other people, when God points an admonishing finger at them. In case of a bondage in sin, let us not rest until we have received the strength from God to break that bondage in His Name, that we may continue to live a resurrection life. Then the divine testimony about us will be: "The Lord is with us!" He will witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

"Thou are blessed among the women". Mary indeed was an especially blessed woman: she was to bear the Savior of this world in her womb. She received the wondrous calling to bear as a human child in her womb, and to give birth to, the Son of God, Who has been alive from the "eternity of the past" already. When God's miracle had taken place, God's glory lay there, hidden in Mary's womb, as a tiny seed of life. God had called her thereto, because she was, and remained, an open channel for God's provisions; because she had seen to it that nothing came between her and God.

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If God wants to call you and me to a certain ministry, then **nothing** should be, nor remain, between us and God. There should always be an openness; then this (God's) call will sound; then it will be heard by us. It is solely in this way that God could use us, in His time and in His way. Let us seek such a condition and stimulate its growth, keeping our conscience, and also our life, clear of any offence before God.

Luke 1 verse 31-33: *"And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his (fore)father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob (or Israel) for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."*

The Name "Jesus" means "YaHWeH saves", "YaHWeH came to save". He is the Revelation of YaHWeH, Who is **full of grace**; Who with a smile of reconciliation, although full of justice, says to the sinner: "Come now, and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Jesus is YaHWeH, Who, full of grace, says to the sinner: "Come, **all** is finished on Calvary's cross!" "Jesus" is the Name above all names; it is only by that Name that we could be saved. It is the Name we could bring before God's throne pleadingly, because that Name bears in It the grace of Calvary (or Golgotha) that we might be mindful of this all reconciling sacrifice to God; namely when we pray to God in that Name. The Name Jesus for us is a pleading in itself with God. When we call to God with the Name of "Jesus", we remind Him of that great sacrifice of Calvary, which Jesus brought for us. Hence it is written: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32). For calling in faith upon that Name is a pleading on "Calvary".

"He shall be called the Son of the Most High", and He is! For the One that came into Mary's womb was God, the Lord, Himself! The second Revelation in the Godhead – incomprehensible for the un-anointed, human mind – detached Himself from the Godhead in the heavens; God's heart left the heavens and came into the womb of Mary in that unconscious state. Beloved, was not this a wonderful gift of God? Voluntarily God's Son left His glory He had in those "ivory palaces", where the streets of gold are; where He enjoyed the worship of the highest angel hosts; all this He left and came in that unconscious, fetal state into Mary's womb, where He made Himself vulnerable by clothing Himself with **humanity** (Romans 1:3; 8:3). O, what a miracle of divine self-abnegation, as was also all of His earthly ministry, which would end as "sinner" on a cursed tree (see Deuteronomy 21:22-23; Galatians 3:13), although Himself without sin... This was the only way to save you and me; to snatch the whole Church out of satan's ² claws, and from (spiritual) death! Then He would rise to NEW LIFE: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (given Thee life) (Acts 13:33). This pronouncement of God Paul did not associate with the birth of the Child of Bethlehem, but with His resurrection from the dead, where God's Son, as it were, tasted a new birth, but then as the Head of the Church, of the whole of the NEW CREATION.

"He shall be King over the house of Jacob for ever". When He says this, it is not only the "handful" of Israelites that God refers to, not the handful of sons of Jacob after the flesh. No, the "house of Jacob" represents here the whole Church of all time; it the worldwide Church, drawn from all of humanity, from all generations. For Jacob is the type of the Holy Spirit; the "house of Jacob" is the house of the Holy Spirit, the Temple wherein He lives. He is the King over this Church for all eternity; of His Kingdom there would be no end!

Luke 1 verse 34: *"Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man (have no [sexual] relationship with a man)?"*

Mary had had no intercourse yet with a man, she was still a virgin.

Luke 1 verse 35: *"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."*

Jesus came forth from God Himself, by a new creation of God. Mary would be overshadowed by God's Spirit. He stood before her to overshadow her, and only waited for her agreement, her willingness, to receive.

Luke 1 verse 36-37: *"And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."*

Luke 1 verse 38a: *"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word..."*

² We write the word "satan" not with a capital, as it is not a name, but a word meaning opponent or adversary, accuser.

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Once Mary had voiced her willingness to receive this NEW LIFE – despite the sacrifice that was asked of her – God's Spirit, Who first had been standing before her, overshadowed her... Then the miracle happened! God's wonderful Son in an instant was hidden in that unconscious state, in that impregnated womb... O, that sweet trembling of holy joy Mary must have felt...

Luke 1 verse 38b: "...And the angel departed from her."

When the work was done Gabriel parted from her. Here was a miracle of divine mercy and grace, revealed in the life of a willing soul. Beloved, are we as willing? Are we willing to receive God's Word in our heart and being – whichever sacrifice is required? Are we willing to receive the Word in our being, **despite of any cross-working process?** Mary did; she despised the shame of unwed motherhood; in those days this was an **insuperable** disgrace! She subjected herself completely to that faithful God, without worrying about the (to be expected) contempt of the people, that it would happen to her according to His will...

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Mary's visit to Elisabeth.

We know that Elisabeth conceived her only son in her old age, namely John the Baptist. This John was a prophet of repentance; he was the bearer of God's call unto repentance; he was the incarnation of God's call: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!" He was as it were filled with the call: "Leave your sin, surrender and obey the mighty and loving God and Lord!"

Mary, being pregnant with the NEW LIFE Itself, visits her older cousin Elisabeth, who was pregnant with the caller unto repentance. It was not Elisabeth (who was pregnant with the son, that would be the caller unto repentance) visiting Mary (who would give birth to the Son of man and the Son of God); no, it was the other way around! Which spiritual lesson do we learn from this? It is this: that redemption and salvation always comes from God Himself; it is **God's action** coming to the person who is willing to repent. When the NEW LIFE, the gift of grace (namely Jesus, the Son) of God, and human willingness to repent come together in one house, then there is fullness of joy! I still remember as clearly as when it happened, what torrent of joy it gave me personally! We also see here how a spiritual joy came over these two women.

Luke 1 verse 39-45: "*And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; And entered into the house of Zechariah, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, 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 thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe 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.*"

Note here that wonderful joy that filled Elisabeth, on account of the Holy Ghost. It is the same joy which fills us when NEW LIFE has indeed come to us. "Blessed are you among women". Indeed, Mary was the chosen one to give birth to the Son of God as the Son of man.

"Whence is this to me, that **the mother of my Lord** should come to me?" This pronouncement of Elisabeth refers to that blessed state wherein Mary was. Not, that she was the mother of God! No, far from it! She herself states in verse 38: "Behold, the handmaiden of the Lord". She was prepared to serve God by bringing into the world God's Son in His incarnation (becoming flesh, man). It is true that she was the mother of this Son of man, of the Man Jesus. Mary herself was to be delivered by this Redeemer from the bonds of spiritual death. She knew no preference whatsoever above all other sinners; although she was enormously favored by God; which is why the angel greeted her with: "Thou, favored one", "for thou hast found favor with God". She, too, had to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. From God's Word we know what a "baptism" means scripturally. The **water baptism** as well as the **baptism in the Spirit** (Romans 6:3). This is why she was also found among the 120 who had withdrawn in that upper room to pray, and who waited for God (see Acts 1:13-14). Making her the mother of God would be blasphemy, and a dishonor to God!

We will see that not only joy will fill a soul if it receives the NEW LIFE, but also that praise unto God will fill the heart and lips of him.

Mary's song of praise.

We have seen that joy went out of Elisabeth, but the song of praise comes from Mary. This is, because the song of praise unto God finds its source in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of worship unto God. **He** is the cause, when praise wells up into our heart.

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Luke 1 verse 46-55: *"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. 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 shewed 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 holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our (fore)fathers, (namely) to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."*

Let us have a closer look at this song of praise of Mary. It is said here, that God grants His grace to the **lowly**; to them in whose heart is found meekness to surrender to God in admission of their own sins.

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Mary, through the Holy Spirit, further says that He shows mercy to those who fear Him; who walk in the fear of God; who, because of this fear dare not continue to walk in conscious sins before God's face; who, because of this fear, do not continue to tempt God with "yes, buts...". Let us obey God, on account of this fear, for this Word is like a sword which will slash away the sin out of our being or which will slay us in the day of judgment.

He further shows His mercy to the **hungry** (verse 53); to them who sincerely long for this NEW LIFE; for this pure communion with God's Son and the Father. This is confirmed in the Beatitudes of Jesus: "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6).

Here the state of mind/walk of life is described, a convert must have. He must be: **humble**, admitting he being a sinner; he must be: **God-fearing**, hearing and doing the Word in fear and trembling; and he must be: **full of desire** for this NEW LIFE in the righteousness of God. To those God will grant His **grace**; He will do great things for them (verse 49); He shows them His mercy, yes, from generation unto generation (verse 50). The Bible tells us, that He is merciful unto the fourth generation of His servant. Verse 51 tells us that God will "show strength with His arm" unto those; a wonderful work, a divine work. He will exalt the lowly (verse 52); He gives them greatness, godliness and an in-filling of His Spirit; He gives them gifts and powers; He gives them His nature in ever increasing measure. God sees the **heart** of the convert and does not judge according to their esteem. He also fulfils and finishes the promise He has given to such persons provided they continue in this state of mind/walk of life (verses 54-55).

Luke 1 verse 56: *"And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house."*

Mary stayed with Elisabeth until the ninth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy, i.e. until the birth of John the Baptist. Then she returned to Nazareth, to Joseph and her house.

The birth of the "caller unto repentance".

Luke 1 verse 57-58: *"Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her."*

Here a son was born, his name was John. We know, that this name means: God is gracious. We also know he was filled with God's call to repentance, which is why he called himself later "one calling in the desert". With the desert is meant: the wilderness of this world on account of sin. He calls unto a life of **repentance**. Repentance unto God is the foundation of each day of our life of faith. We **must** lead a converted life. Being converted means: having turned to God to obey Him henceforth with all our heart. Should there be any disobedience in our heart, then something must be wrong with our conversion. For we must live a **completely** repentant life, each day of the rest of our life; whereby we ask the Lord from the bottom of our heart: "Lord, what is it that You want me to do?" It is only such a repentant life that will bring divine joy and peace in the heart.

Now the birth of John is the fulfillment of God's call thereto in this dark world. God has called, and is still calling today. And we are to answer positively with a heartfelt and resolute: "Yes, Lord, I will!"

Luke 1 verse 59-63: *"And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zechariah, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all."*

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After ritual descriptions of the Law the child must be circumcised on the eighth day, at which occasion his name is determined. People wanted to call him after his father Zechariah (i.e. YaHWeH is mindful [of]), but God already had given him a name: he was to be called John (i.e. God is gracious), because he was to make known God's abundant grace through his call to repentance. This new name was added by God unto the line of Zechariah. We, too, will be given a new name by God, a new beginning, if we really wish to live this repentant life. "Repentance" for many, also for those who have called themselves a "Christian" for a long time, is a concept which is difficult to digest, which they soon forget to practice. However, they do remember the concept of grace well, the forgiveness and the grace they wish to receive from God daily. But let us hold on to this, beloved: **without repentance grace from God will not come to us!** Without our obedience to His Word grace from God will not come. This is why so many Christians live a life without joy, without peace in their hearts, without grace; without worship.

11 On the eighth day, at the circumcision, an Israeli child is officially taken into the Israeli community, into Abraham's covenant with God (i.e. the covenant God made with Abraham – see Genesis 17:9-27). This was the reason that on that day God lifted the judgment on Zechariah' unbelief. The priest, who was dumb, spoke again.

Luke 1 verse 64-66: *"And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue 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 Judea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him."*

The moment Abraham's covenant was concluded with the little John, at the shedding of his blood, God's grace was poured out, also over his father Zechariah. All judgment on his unbelief was lifted from him. Eight is the number of the resurrection; and this resurrection takes place when grace is given by God, after all judgments over sin in our being are taken away. It is clear, that this blood of the circumcision points to the blood of the New Covenant, the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, the blood of the Lamb of God. Therefore, after the circumcision of John, the bondage which jammed Zechariah' tongue, was broken, and he could magnify God in praise.

Zechariah' song of praise.

Luke 1 verse 67-69: *"And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;..."*

This "horn of salvation" refers to the power of the coming Messiah (i.e. the Anointed [by God]; also: Redeemer, Savior, Sanctifier).

Luke 1 verse 70-71: *"...As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;..."*

We should consider these enemies of Israel then, and of the spiritual Israel today, in a spiritual sense. They are the demonic and anti-Christian powers, that spiritually or through human channels work their destructive work, and that in fact are hostile to Him and His kingdom. Thereto also belongs our own "flesh", namely the sinful forces and powers which rage in this "flesh", and try to draw us back to the world.

Luke 1 verse 72-75: *"...To perform the mercy promised to our (fore)fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our (fore)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."*

God wants to save all people of good will, all who have accepted the Savior; not only deliverance from **all** enemies, but also a life to serve in love, without fear before God; whereby we could stand in God's throne room, before His face as if we had never sinned. It is a life in the sweetest union with God Almighty, whereby we share His holiness and justice; and this all the days of the rest of our life.

Did Zechariah until now sung about the Messiah's mighty work of redemption, Which was to come, now the prophecy turns to the born preparer of the way for this Messiah.

Luke 1 verse 76: *"And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;..."*

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The caller unto repentance will always go before the Messiah; a life prepared to repent before a life in and with Jesus. Without sincere repentance no NEW LIFE is possible, and hence also no anointed ministry in the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1 verse 77: *"...To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,..."*

God reveals to a truly repentant heart, also by means of His servants, the knowledge to be saved, but also a personal introduction to that salvation in forgiveness of sins.

Luke 1 verse 78a: *"...Through the tender mercy of our God;..."*

God knows a deep compassion for our lost state, which is why He meets us with His grace.

Luke 1 verse 78b: *"...whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us,..."*

The "Dayspring from on High" is a new name for the Messiah, which was to come.

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Luke 1 verse 79: *"...To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

He would come unto the sinners to save them.

Luke 1 verse 80: *"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel."*

John grew up in the grace and strength of the Spirit, and waited patiently for God's call unto active service in Him, isolated and continuing in prayer.

The end of Chapter 1

