The Third Day of Christmas: Luke’s Two Pentecosts

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[0:00] Welcome back. Today, for the third day of Christmas, I'm going to be continuing my series in echoes and symmetries within the Nativity stories and the stories leading up to the Epiphany.

As you look through the book of Luke, you can see connections with the Old Testament, and I connected it to the story of 1 Samuel yesterday, particularly the beginning of 1 Samuel, showing how there are symmetries between the characters of Elizabeth and Mary and the character of Hannah, that John the Baptist is in some senses like Samuel, as is Christ, and Christ is also the David, son David, who is anointed, who is established by the prophet, who is like Samuel, who goes ahead of him.
So there are those parallels. But we also see within Luke's Gospel lots of parallels and symmetries with his book of Acts. As you look through the book of Acts, it begins in a similar place, and then it also ends at a similar sort of point.
It has a similar pattern of the narrative. So key events parallel to each other. The beginning of the book is set in a temple setting. Women are more at the forefront at the beginning of the book. There's the women and Mary and the disciples, continuing women and Mary in the temple, praising God, and then the day of Pentecost happens. At the end of the book, it ends with Paul in Rome, after enjoying the shipwreck and being delivered through that and being delivered from the serpent.
[1:29] These sorts of things, which are all parts of the story that echo the story of Luke's Gospel, as Christ's death and resurrection are paralleled with the shipwreck event.

As you look through the book of Acts, you'll see a number of other symmetries. So, for instance, in Acts 12, the connection between Peter being rescued and delivered by the angel from death at Passover time, and then appearing to the disciples as being seen by a woman who is not believed by the disciples, and all these sorts of events, they're playing out the resurrection pattern again. But on the grander scale of the book of Acts, we see this being played out. There are deep connections between the two. But as you see those connections, one of the significant things to do is to create a sort of triad of these three texts.
1 Samuel, Luke, and Acts. And to recognise the way that these three texts are playing off against each other. So, the book of Acts has praying in the temple at the beginning.
They're continuing in prayer in the temple context. And that is the context, presumably, where the day of Pentecost occurs. And that occurrence of the day of Pentecost in the temple is something that's a turning of the tables.
[2:48] Now, as you go back to 1 Samuel and you go to Luke, you see the Magnificat and the prayer of Hannah, and all the parallels between these, as heralding a shift in the way things are going to be.

There's going to be a turning of the tables. Things are going to change. And we see a number of other events surrounding that. For instance, the priest who perceives Hannah to be drunk and mistakes what she is doing, praying to God for drunken speech.
Now, that should twig with us. We recognise that pattern as something that occurs in the case of the early church at Pentecost. They are mistaken to be speaking out of wine.
They've been drunk, and so their tongue speaking is really drunken speech. And that parallel helps us to see that there is a similar turning of the tables that's taking place.
There is a similar lack of perception in the religious leaders and the people as there was in the case of Eli. Eli's eyes are growing dim. The lamp is about to go out, and there's been no prophecy.

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[3:57] There's a threefold darkness falling upon the people. And in the same way, the mistaking of tongue speaking for drunken speech is a sign that there is a new Hannah here.

There's a new turning of the tables about to occur, and it's going to be a surprise to Israel. There are further parallels that we can notice between the beginning of Luke and the beginning of Acts. Another one is the connection between the birth of Christ and the Spirit overshadowing Mary and coming upon Mary, and the Spirit coming upon the church at Pentecost.
The fact that Mary only appears once within the book of Acts, and that's in the context of gathering with the disciples immediately before the events of Pentecost, is probably significant.
We see a similar sort of pattern with a character who comes to the forefront at two key junctures. In the case of Miriam, and Miriam's name, of course, is related to Mary's.
[4:58] Miriam occurs, her first appearance is in the context of Moses being drawn out of the water, and her second key appearance is in the context of the Red Sea crossing, as Israel is drawn out of the water.

So these two symmetrical events, the Spirit coming upon Mary, and a sort of Marian Pentecost, and then the Spirit coming upon the church.
Both of these events are parallel to each other. What else can we say? Well, when you read about the story of the church, and the church being blessed, and the church growing, it's described in a very similar way to the way that Christ is spoken of as growing.
And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. And the Lord added to the church daily, of praising God and having favour with all the people.
And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. So there's a story of the growth of the church, and there's a story of the growth of Christ. And these things are parallel to each other. There is a new birth type event in some sense here, and the growth of something.
[6:05] In the first case, it's Christ growing as an infant, and then here, it's the church growing in its infancy. The Jerusalem church and the Spirit coming upon it. And these parallels are significant.

We see other parallels within the early stories of Luke, two events that happen later, foreshadowings. So if you read the beginning of Luke, you'll see the story of Jesus going up to Jerusalem with his parents at Passover time, and then being lost for three days and found in the temple.
That is a familiar story. It is a story that should remind us very clearly of the story of his death and resurrection. At Passover time, three days, and then appearing later on.
And these are things that Mary treasured in her heart, knowing that there was something important that had occurred. But she didn't quite understand what it meant yet. So she pondered those things. And now, as we look back, we can see the meaning of it. We can see it was a sign pointing forward to something that was yet to come. Likewise, as you read the beginning of Luke's Gospel, particularly in dialogue with the book of 1 Samuel, and then read the beginning of Acts, you can see these texts playing off each other.
[7:19] That there is a temple setting. There are leaders of the people who lack spiritual perception. There are accusations of drunkenness. There's a Hannah-type figure praying in the temple, but here it's the church.

There's a turning of the tables about to occur. There's the growth of this new prophetic child in wisdom and stature and honour with God and man. And in each of these cases, what we are seeing is a deeper vision into what is occurring.
The deeper patterns that God expresses within his work and how these events are connected to each other, not just detached events within history, but deeper principles are at play here.
I hope this helps. There is a lot more that I want to say about the connection between the stories of the early chapters of Acts and the stories of Luke's Gospel and the Nativity, but I'll get into that tomorrow.
And I will encourage you to think about some of the things that I might be saying, see if you can anticipate any of them. Thank you very much for listening, and I hope that you are having a wonderful Christmas tide.
[8:29] God bless and be back again tomorrow.

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