

The Promised Messiah

Luke 1:26-38 (11/18/18)

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Americans spend about 465 billion dollars for the Christmas holiday. Yet, how many people really understand what it means. Even for those of us who know the story of the incarnation of God in human flesh as the God-Man, do we really know it so that it grips our hearts and amazes our minds? J. I. Packer in *Knowing God* wrote, "The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as is this truth of the incarnation."

J. C. Ryle wrote, "We have, in these verses, the announcement of the most marvelous event that ever happened in this world, the incarnation and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a passage which we should always read with mingled wonder, love, and praise." For the infinite, eternal, and unchanging second Person of the Godhead to unite with a woman's ovum, be conceived, and then born as the God-Man, 100% God and 100% man, is the miracle of miracles.

This should be written over the door of every church, synagogue, hospital, university, and seminary as the greatest event in world history. This amazing story of the birth of Jesus Christ breaks the bounds of all human credibility outside the Bible. This miracle of miracles is the first one liberal theologians pitch after denying the inerrancy of Scripture. But every true believer in Christ believes in the virgin birth of Christ. We're going to take a look at how this all unfolds this morning.

THE HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THIS STORY – vss. 26-27

Luke 1:26-27 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

This is the second time Gabriel has appeared in Palestine in the last six months. Gabriel, which means "strength of God", only appears four times in the Bible: twice in Daniel and twice in Luke 1. He is the angel who brings Israel the assurance that God will keep His promises to His ancient people. In Daniel 8-9 Gabriel reveals Israel's future among the nations and those 483 years when the Messiah would come the first time. He came to Zacharias about the promised forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist. Now, six months later, he comes to this young girl, perhaps 15 years old, and gives her a message from God she would never have dreamt of in a thousand years; a dazzling revelation from God Almighty that changed world history.

Earlier in Luke 1 Gabriel was sent to the center of the Jewish religious and political world, Jerusalem. Now God sends him to Galilee, which was the northern part of Palestine, where many Gentiles lived. And on the lower part of the hills of Galilee was this little village called Nazareth, about 100 miles north of Jerusalem. There may have been 200-400 people living there, many were family. They all shared the one well in the village. This little unknown village was pretty much despised even by other villages of Galilee. Nathanael was from Cana of Galilee and he asked, "Can any good thing come from Nazareth?"

God is never impressed by size, wealth, human power, prestige. God humbles Himself when He gets ready to reveal Himself. He comes down to a humble little village in the foothills of Galilee to reveal Himself!

God sent His messenger Gabriel. It was time. Daniel's 483 years are coming to fulfillment. God is very aware of what time it is and where everyone is. He sends this angelic secretary of state and says, "Go down to Nazareth to a young girl with my message." Zoom! He immediately flies right through the galaxies into the Milky Way past the planets to this small slowly rolling blue-green sphere into the region of Galilee and appears in Nazareth. No angel ever carried a message like this.

Who is the recipient of God's message? Verse 27 tells us this young girl is a virgin named Mary who is engaged to Joseph, a man in the line of David. Humanly speaking, this girl was quite ordinary. But her response to the angel reveals her love for God and His Word. She had memorized parts of it at least. God could have chosen a wealthy Jewish scribe's daughter, but no, He chose this unknown young girl. We don't even know who her parents were. She was going about her daily routine when suddenly her life changed forever. God in His wisdom chose to come in humiliation – that's the way God is. It was important that her fiancé was of David's line, and her father probably was too.

THE GRACIOUS GREETING GABRIEL GIVES THIS YOUNG GIRL – vss. 28-30

Luke 1:28-30 *And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.*

He came in. Did he knock or just, poof, appear? He did everything he could to relieve Mary of any alarm. His first word was *cheirein*, rejoice, greetings. Then "favored one" one who has been especially blessed by God. And he added to this, "The Lord is with you." How beautiful this is. God is such a good and gracious God.

But put yourself in Mary's sandals. What would you be feeling and thinking? Verse 29 tells us she was perplexed. She's feeling all tossed around and totally confused in her mind. She has probably never seen an angel before, let alone be addressed by one. The Bible's accounts of God's messages delivered through angels caused drastic changes in those who received them. Life for them was never the same. Remember Paul on that Damascus Road? Here is Mary, astonished, wondering. So she needs more assurance and comfort and Gabriel gives it. "Don't be afraid, Mary." He works hard to calm her fears and anxiety. Do you know how often God says "Don't be afraid" in the Bible to His people? He knows our weakness and tendency to be fearful when we don't have control of what's going to happen next. We fear and sometimes even panic, but God through His messengers calms our hearts with this encouragement: "Don't be afraid."

Then before informing her of the message, he assures her, "You have found favor with God. God is looking on you with special grace. God has chosen you above all to bring His Son, Israel's Messiah, into the human race." What a calling! But anything God wants us to do is a high calling, isn't it? There was Mary, an unknown engaged teenage girl living in a village the world never heard of, hearing the words, "God has chosen you." This is God's way. He chooses the nothings and the nobodies to be great in grace (see 1 Corinthians 1).

Before we go on, I want to clarify a few things about Mary, who she was and who she wasn't. First, Mary was a sinner. She was not born without a sin nature, which is what the teaching called the immaculate conception says. No, she was a sinner and sinned. She was not a perpetual virgin. Roman Catholicism teaches Mary was as a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Christ. The Bible tells us Jesus had brothers, so it's clear that she and Joseph had other children after Jesus. Mary does not have an excess of grace or merit that others can pray for. She does not pray for us sinners or intercede for us. We don't pray to Mary; the Bible never tells us to. She is not the Mother of God. And she did die. The teaching of the assumption of Mary's body was declared dogma by the Catholic Church in 1950. But it is pure myth. She died just like all sinners die.

So who was she? A precious young Jewish girl engaged to a descendant of David, a man named Joseph with whom she had been pure. And now we see that God had specially chosen her to be the vessel to bring the Messiah into the world. She is one blessed young lady, unknown on earth but well known in heaven!

THE AMAZING DESCRIPTION OF THIS PROMISED CHILD – vss. 31-33

Luke 1:31-33 *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."*

Now we're going to chew our way through this description one bite at a time. Are there any verses this full of meaty substance in all of the Bible? This is the foundation of the Christian faith, this unique, one of a kind person.

Gabriel begins with an attention getter – “Behold!” Look, listen, pay close attention because what Gabriel's about to reveal will blow your socks off! “I've got something amazing to tell you!” He told Mary to listen carefully, and so should we. As J. I. Packer says, “The more you think about it, the more staggering it gets.”

So let's take a look at seven amazing descriptions about this child who Mary will bear.

He'll be a son – a true man but untainted by original sin. “You're going to conceive and bear a son.” We'll talk about the details in a moment, but for right now Mary is told this is going to happen. You are going to be with child, a male child. He will be a real human being in every way, conceived, gestated, born, and grow through all stages of a human being. We'll see that He's going to be without sin – perfectly holy (vs. 35). He will be free of original and actual sin, yet a true human being, a male child.

His name will be Jesus – Jehovah saves. “You're going to name your son Jesus,” because He is going to become the Savior of all God's people. This part will be hard for Mary later on. She'll weep when she finds out how this is going to happen, but for now she's told to call him Jesus, which means Jehovah saves.

He'll be great. Think on that word “great.” Gabriel told Zacharias his son would be great, but Mary's son will be great in a unique way. Unique means one of a kind. He is in His own class of greatness. No human being will come close to His greatness. He is great in every way. He will be a great teacher, a great healer, a great sufferer, a great Savior, a great conqueror of death, a great high priest, a great King and Lord, and a great judge of all human beings. He will be great.

He'll be God as well as man – the Theanthropic Person in hypostatic union. He'll be the son of the Most High – equal in essence with the Father. This means He will be deity as well as Mary's human child. He will be the God-Man. Here's where this story gets super-fascinating. He will be 100% man and 100% God. He will have two natures but be one person. They got this all mixed up in the early centuries of the church and required council meetings to clarify. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 set the record straight in their explanation of the incarnation. He is not two persons. His two natures were not mixed together like scrambled eggs so as to produce a third nature. Some denied His humanity and others His deity. Some said He was the highest created being, like the Arians and JW's today. Others said He really wasn't there physically, He just appeared to be there.

So He has two natures, sinless humanity and undiminished deity, in One Person, called the hypostatic union of the Theanthropic Person (theos + anthropos, God + man). Know and use these terms and you'll probably impress your friends and astonish your enemies. Do you understand this? No, you don't. This is why Paul described the incarnation as a great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). Is it scientifically provable? No. Has it ever happened before or since? No. The incarnation is a truly unique event. The eternal deity or God united with sinless humanity, Christ. This is what Gabriel is describing to Mary. Her real human son, who will gestate in her womb for nine months and then be born, is also the son of the Most High God, undiminished deity.

He'll be the promised Davidic King. He'll be the fulfillment of God's promise to David that one of David's descendants will sit on his throne forever. He will be the eternal king, the Son of David promised in 2 Samuel 7:16, “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

He'll rule over the house of Jacob. As the description unfolds, it just gets better and better. This is a lot to take in. Perhaps Mary is taking notes like ladies do, writing feverishly while the men just sit there thinking “Uh huh. Wow.” This promise that he'll rule over the house of Jacob brings the Old Testament

promises about the Messiah together. The Bible books of the prophets are peppered with promises of this King, their land restored, their nation brought to repentance. As Israel's King sitting on David's throne, this child of Mary is going to rule over the house of Jacob, the people of Israel, forever! It will happen just as Daniel prophesied in Daniel 7:13-14. All the kingdoms of the world will be crushed and ended, and this King will establish a worldwide kingdom.

This is the child and the son of Isaiah 9:6-7, "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this."

What good news this is to us who live in a time of hate and murder and terror and corruption and gross immorality and abuse around the world. We can look forward to this mighty event. Before Christ's glorious kingdom all earthly kingdoms will crumble and come to nothing, like the Third Reich crumbled before the Allied forces. All their pride and arrogance and braggadocio will end in a whimper and Christ will become ruler of this entire world.

Daniel 7:27, 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

When will this be? He does rule as king over God's people today. When you are saved you are transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love. But that doesn't exhaust this message by a long shot. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. The house of Jacob is the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...the people of Israel, God's chosen people. One commentator says this can't be literally, but I ask what right do we have to arbitrarily change the meanings of words, especially important key words like "the house of Jacob?" The prophets said Jesus would be a descendant of the house of David, and God fulfilled that prophecy literally. And so when they prophesied He would rule over the house of Jacob forever, He will literally rule over the house of Jacob – the nation of Israel. He is born as Israel's Messiah and will fulfill all God's promises to Israel.

The prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and especially Zechariah are filled with promises that God will restore Israel to Himself. This great King, Son of David, will one day bring a vast number of Jews to believe in Him. Zechariah 12:10, "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn."

J. C. Ryle, who took God's promises to Israel seriously, wrote, "The literal fulfillment of this part of the promise is yet to come. Israel is yet to be gathered. The Jews are yet to be restored to their own land, and to look to Him whom they once pierced, as their King and their God."

Jeremiah 23:5 promised, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land."

Ezekiel 37:25 speaks of the Messiah, or Christ, as David himself and promises, ""They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever."

Don't you just love that? Mary is going to give birth to this great King and rightful heir to the throne of David promised hundreds of years before. Zechariah 14:9 puts the cherry on top with this prophecy about Christ's Kingship, "And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one."

His kingdom will endure forever. This great King of Kings and Lord of Lords will return from heaven – when that will be, we don't know. He will destroy all God's enemies according to Revelation 19, and set up the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule out of Jerusalem over a restored nation of Israel and over the entire globe for a thousand years based on Revelation 20.

At the end of those 1000 years He will set up the Great White Throne Judgment and every single human being who is not saved will be brought before Him to give an account of their lives and He will judge them from the books and they will be sent into the lake of fire forever to join Satan and the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet. Think about that. This child who Mary will bear will be great and become your Judge; you will stand before His great white throne and give an account to Him! Every morning when you wake up leads you one day closer to standing before Christ. If you are not a genuine believer in Christ, you should carefully read Revelation 20:11-15. Tremble at these words and submit to Him now. On the cross we see a great Redeemer of all believers, all those who repent and put their trust in Him. The empty tomb proves He is the great Conqueror of sin and death. Then at the Great White Throne He will take His place as the great Judge of all unbelieving human beings. After judgment is give, He will roll up the old heavens and earth and produce a new heaven and earth where He will rule with all His people, both Jews and Gentiles, forever and ever! If He is your Savior, this is your glorious future with Mary's amazing Child, the God-Man, the promised Messiah!