

HE FIRST ADVENT OF THE SAVIOR

An Out of This World Birth Announcement

The birth announcement to Mary concerning her giving birth to the Messiah is commonly called the Annunciation. As we studied last week, God had promised that the Messiah was to be a descendant of David's family. It had been a thousand years since David walked the earth and he would have had numerous descendants. Jews for Jesus say, "The birth of a child is one of life's greatest dramas, presenting a window through which we may gaze at the wonder of creation. It was the hope of every Jewish mother that her child might be the key to Israel's future. With the pain of labor came the comforting thought, 'Maybe my child will fulfill God's promises to the nation. Maybe my boy will be Messiah.'" The LORD's promise throughout the Old Testament of a coming Messiah would be fulfilled through the birth of Mary's child who will establish an eternal kingdom which the prophet Daniel had predicted.

The Old Testament prophet Daniel predicted the coming of four world empires. They are generally believed to have been Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. From the days of Daniel until the coming of Christ, these four empires had ruled the world as Daniel predicted. Daniel also prophesied concerning the coming of God's eternal kingdom. **Daniel 2:44 (ESV)** ⁴⁴ *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.*

It is believed that Luke received his story of Jesus' birth directly from Mary. Since Luke was a physician, Mary likely felt comfortable with sharing details concerning the birth with him. Mary was young, poor, female—all characteristics that to the people of her day would make her seem unusable by God for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience He has ever demanded of anyone. You may feel that your ability, experience, or education makes you an unlikely candidate for God's service. Mary's story reminds us not to limit God's choices. He can use anyone who trusts Him!

The Life Application Bible Commentary points out that Mary was the only human present at Jesus' birth who also witnessed His death. She saw Him arrive as her baby son, and she watched Him die as her Savior.

Until Mary received an 'out of this world birth announcement', her life was quite ordinary. She was betrothed to a carpenter named Joseph and was undoubtedly anticipating married life and having children – yet her heart was open to God's will and that was what made Mary usable clay in the Master's hand.

Daniel had prophesied concerning the coming of the eternal kingdom. The child Mary would deliver was to be the fulfillment of that promise. An angel from the Presence of God confirmed it, when he said in **Luke 1:33 (ESV)** *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

Can you rejoice in God's favor?

Read Luke 1:26-28 (ESV) 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!"*

The angel Gabriel is one of two angels named in scripture. Michael is the other. Gabriel appears four times – twice to Daniel, once to Zacharias and once to Mary. Our information regarding Gabriel is limited. However, Luke did record one beautiful thing concerning Gabriel. **Luke 1:19 (ESV)** ¹⁹ *And the angel answered him [meaning Zacharias], "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.* Gabriel reveals that he stands in the presence of God! The significance of Gabriel's out of this world birth announcement to Mary is that because of God's greatest gift to the world that would come through Mary, those who put our faith and trust in Jesus will also have the privilege of standing in the presence of God like Gabriel does! Hallelujah for the Advent of our Promised Savior!

The phrase in the sixth month refers to the time after Zacharias' wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant with a son to be named John. Elizabeth who previously was unable to have children was now six months pregnant with a son who would be the fulfillment of Isaiah's Old Testament prophecy. **Isaiah 40:3 (ESV)** *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

At the time Gabriel appeared to Mary she was already 'betrothed'. A betrothal held more significance than modern-day engagements. In those days, an engagement period was a formal process that could not be broken except by divorce.

When Gabriel referred to Mary as 'O favored one' or highly favored, Gabriel meant that she was chosen by God to receive His favor or grace in a special way. God chose Mary because she desired to do the Lord's will. The Lord knew that Mary would be obedient no matter the cost to herself because she had enough faith to trust His promises. Some have come dangerously close to worshipping her and that should not be. On the other hand we should not take Mary's willingness to serve God lightly. Mary like the rest of the world needed a Savior and she did what God called her to do in order for that to happen.

Are you willing to submit to God's purpose?

Read Luke 1:29-33 (ESV) 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."*

It is important to note regarding the coming fearful events for Mary that Gabriel said the same thing to her that he said to Zacharias, "*Do not be afraid.*" When we are faced with the challenges of doing God's will, it is wise to remember the words of the angel Gabriel to Zacharias and Mary. "*Do not be afraid.*" Fear is often

what hinders us from accomplishing our spiritual destiny. **Romans 8:31** ... *If God is for us, who can be against us?*

Gabriel's announcement gives no thought of sexual relations between God and Mary, an idea which can be found in some pagan religions where the deities were thought of as engaging in such practices. Rather, God worked in a hidden, secret way through the power of the Holy Spirit which is beyond our ability to understand or explain. No man had anything to do with the birth of Jesus Christ. The Virgin Birth is a central doctrine of Christianity. Some might ask the question do you have to believe in the Virgin Birth to be a Christian? I would answer that question with a question. 'If you have truly accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior why wouldn't you believe in the Virgin Birth?' The Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest of miracles. Jesus had a supernatural entrance into the world just like He had a supernatural exit and He will have a supernatural return. Hallelujah for Jesus! The Father of Jesus is God! Jesus is God's Son!

Gabriel said *you shall call his name Jesus*. Jesus means the LORD is Salvation. Isaiah had prophesied in **Isaiah 7:14 (ESV)** 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*. Remember Immanuel means God with Us! That is exactly what Jesus conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary would be – GOD WITH US!

We are told in the Book of Leviticus that the birth of a child caused a woman to be unclean because she brought a sinner into the world. Mary is told that she is not bringing a sinner into the world; He is holy. The union of man and woman can only produce a child with a sin nature. The virgin birth is the only way God could bring the "holy one" into human flesh.

Read Luke 1:34-35 (ESV) ³⁴ *And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"* 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.*

Bible scholars debate what was in Mary's mind when she asked the question "How will this be?" Of course, Mary did not comprehend all that God's direction would mean. She even asked Gabriel about it. At first she might have thought Joseph was going to be involved – that the child would be a product of hers and Joseph's union and she wanted Gabriel to confirm it. Instead Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would play a part – in fact the Holy Spirit would overshadow her. The actual word Gabriel used is applied to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple. **Exodus 40:35 (ESV)** ³⁵ *And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

Today, we know that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that was what happened with Mary – in some miraculous way the Holy Spirit's presence came into the temple of Mary's body and caused a Holy Child to be conceived.

The Holy Spirit comes upon us not for an immaculate conception but to bring the LORD's salvation. **John 3:5-6 (ESV)** ⁵ *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he*

cannot enter the kingdom of God.⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Read Luke 1:36-38 (ESV) 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.*

Elizabeth was about 100 miles away as I understand it. We can only speculate how Mary was able to go to Elizabeth but in God’s wonderful care she was able to get there and they drew strength from one another.

Mary was young but she was not stupid. She knew what was about to happen to her was going to be a terrific life change – yet she was willing to submit to God’s purpose. Is it any wonder that God chose her from all the people He could have selected? Her answer to Gabriel says it all – *Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*

Mary’s response is the response that our Lord wants to hear from each of His children. Paul wrote in **Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)** ¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

No matter what our mountaintop experience in the past, we all at times need support from others. After Gabriel’s announcement, Mary longed to connect with Elizabeth. Shared experiences create great bonds between people and such is certainly the case with Mary and Elizabeth. More than likely at this point, Elizabeth would have been the only one who in anyway understood what was happening to Mary and she encouraged Mary to the point that Mary was able to glorify the Lord!

Read Luke 1:46-49 (ESV) ⁴⁶ *And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord,”* ⁴⁷ *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,* ⁴⁸ *for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;* ⁴⁹ *for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

Verses 46 through 55 are Mary’s song of praise. The word magnificat is a Latin word meaning to ‘magnify’. It is the traditional name given to this beautiful praise song. When Mary came to Elizabeth she could have wasted time worrying about what people would think. Mary could have spent her time fretting about the future. Instead Mary took the opportunity to magnify the Lord. What do we magnify when our lives takes a different unexpected direction? Let’s pray that we will spend our days magnifying the Lord just as Mary did!

As I consider the birth announcement given to Mary, I am reminded that because of God with Us, announcements of ‘second births’ ring through the halls of heaven each time someone accepts Jesus as Savior!