

The Greatest Life Ever Lived

A Study in the Incarnate Life of Jesus Christ and An Exposition of the Four Gospels

LESSON X: THE ANNUNCIATION OF JESUS' BIRTH TO MARY

Matthew	Mark	Luke 1:26-38	John	related passages
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v26 And in the sixth month : a reference to Elisabeth's condition; note v36

the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, : from this we can assume Nazareth was the original home of Joseph and Mary and not their adopted home upon their return from Egypt (Mt 2:23).

Nazareth was a little town on one of the southernmost slopes of the Lebanon mountain range, on the northern edge of the Plain of Esdraelon. Located on the same latitude as Augusta, GA. Located about 22 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea, and about 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee's southern tip. In the territory of Galilee (Isa 9:1,2; Mt 4:15,16). Esteemed lightly by many at that time (cp Jn 1:46).

sent = apostala, sent with a commission; from which we get our word "apostle"

v27 to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. : virgin = parthenos; never used of a married woman

espoused = betrothed, the Jewish form of engagement, the marriage having not yet been fully consummated. It was common for the parents to keep the daughter at home for some time after the betrothal and prior to the wedding. Note that during the betrothal period the virgin would have been considered the man's wife, although the wedding was yet future (Dt 22:23-29, esp. v24). Any breach of the betrothal was considered adultery, and the union was so binding that it could not be dissolved except by divorce (cp Mt 1:19).

v28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: : highly favoured = endued with grace. The Latin Vulgate says "full of grace" which is not a bad rendering unless it is wrongly interpreted to mean "Mary, you are filled with grace which is at your disposal to bestow on others." The real sense is "you are full of grace which you have received... you are in a unique sense a divinely favoured person." Note the angel immediately adds "because the Lord is with you." *Mary does not dispense grace, she is a recipient of grace as we are.* The same word is used of believers in Eph 1:6 "wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved," which could literally be translated "wherein He made us *objects of grace* in the Beloved." Wuest: "And having come to her, he said, Be rejoicing because you have been encompassed with favor." Calvin: "Hail, thou who hast obtained favour."

blessed art thou among women. : blessed = eulogamena, the word from which we get our modern "eulogy." This is a different word than used in the beatitudes, "blessed are the poor in spirit..." The word is a combination of two Greek words "well + a word" to give the sense of "to speak well of, to praise." The same word is used in v68 of the Lord.

Herein lies more practical considerations in our study of the Bible:

- **we must let the word of God speak for itself, even when it favors an interpretation of those we know to be in error.** If we are to be honest with the Word of God, we must not twist the scriptures to mean what we want them to mean (as much as is humanly possible). Calvin, who lived and preached when the Catholic church was militantly forcing its errors upon others, writes this concerning the phrase: "The word *blessed* does not, in my opinion, mean, Worthy of praise; but rather means, Happy." That may be his opinion, but my opinion is that he is in error and his explanation as to why he believes that is weak at best. If that is the meaning here, why was the same word not used as in the beatitudes? The basic meaning of "blessed" in the Sermon on the Mount is "happiness." I believe Calvin at this point is interpreting as a reaction to his times rather than following true Bible exegesis.
- **scripture must be compared with scripture if a proper balance is to be found.** To "let the verse speak for itself" does not mean we cannot balance it with what we know to be taught elsewhere. Taken by itself, this phrase could be twisted to the interpretation of Catholicism. But when compared with other verses, the balance is found that (a) Mary is to be praised, not for herself but for why she was used by the Lord. And this passage does portray her as a faithful, submissive, willing servant of the Lord. That in itself is praise-worthy. (b) while to be honored and praised for her "participation" in the incarnation, scripture also makes it clear that she was also just another sinner saved by grace. That is the imbalance of Catholicism, and what allows them to elevate Mary to a position even greater than Christ Himself. The ultimate praise here belongs to the Lord, not Mary.
- **God's word is without error and does not contradict itself.** Why is that something to be considered in this context? Because most bible students (Baptists included) have "blindness" which are put on as soon as we approach God's word, as I believe Calvin is doing with this particular passage. These blinders will not allow us to accept what is written

without first filtering what we read through our own pet doctrines. But if we truly believed the word of God is without error, and what we believe to be true really is true, then we could approach a passage without the fear of “what if it contradicts what I’ve been taught?” By approaching passages with these blinders, we often miss the emphasis that the Lord intended for the passage.

● **we must be aware that we are like this as much as others.** I wish I could say *we* (or even *I*) don’t have this problem. As stated above, maybe this is part of being human and we will never be 100% free from this “blinder mentality.” But perhaps this is a step in the right direction to acknowledge that *the problem exists within us* and to *fight the temptation to force interpretations within our pre-determined structure.*

v29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, : although probably startled by the presence of the angel, as any would be, note she was mainly troubled by his message more than anything.

and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. : i.e. she was wondering what kind of greeting this might be.

v30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: : “fear not” or “stop fearing, stop being afraid” is the same command Gabriel had given Zacharias (1:13).

for thou hast found favour with God. : favour = grace; essentially the same statement as before, phrased slightly differently: “you are highly favored, because the Lord is with you... you have found favor with God.”

v31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus. : the angel proceeds to give striking proofs of Mary’s divine favor:

- she was to have a son
- His name was to be Jesus, a sign of blessing
- His personal superiority
- His divine title
- His future and eternal sovereignty

These next three verses build upon each other, the next adding to the meaning of the one previously, until the climax in v33: “you will have a Son, Jesus... He will be great, the Son of the most High, and will have the throne of David... His rule will never end.”

note here it says it is she who will name Him Jesus, but in Mt 1:21 it is Joseph who will do so. This is in harmony with events, as it was with Zacharias and Elisabeth (Lk 1:60,63).

the name Jesus was a common Jewish name, and not one necessarily implying Messianic functions (cp Heb 4:8, a reference to Joshua not Jesus). The Greek form of the word is *Iāsous*, from the Hebrew form *Jeschovah* (or the fuller form *Jehoschovah*), meaning “Jehovah saves” (Mt 1:21).

v32 He shall be great, : great first of all in holiness, true greatness in the judgement of heaven. Then also in power and influence. Among the many passages which bring out His greatness are the following: Ps 110:1,2; 118:22,23; Isa 6:3 (in the light of Jn 12:41); 9:6,7; 61:1-3 (cp with Lk 4:16-21); Mt 7:28,29; 9:26,33; 14:33; Lk 4:32,36; 8:25,49-56; Jn 20:30; Acts 4:12; Rom 9:5; Eph 1:20-23; Phil 2:9-11; Col 2:9; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 8:1,2; Rev 1:5-7; 17:14; 19:16.

and shall be called the Son of the Highest: : used elsewhere by Luke in 1:35,76; 6:35; Acts 7:48. First used in scripture in Gen 14:18 as translation of El Elyon “God Most High” (Heb 7:1). The title for the Lord occurs frequently in the OT (e.g. Dt 32:8; 2 Sam 22:14; Ps 7:17; 9:2; 21:7; 46:4; Lam 3:35,38; Dan 4:17,24; 5:18,21; 7:18).

We must be careful not to read into this the Trinitarian sense which we would apply to this statement. Gabriel was speaking to a Jewish maiden and would have spoken in terms she would have understood. He would not be directly speaking of Jesus in the sense of Him being the Second Person of the Godhead, the eternal Son of God. Mary would have never comprehended that statement, especially without explanation. At best to Mary, this would have meant a personal and mysterious relationship between this child and the Lord. After the explanation by the angel (v35), Mary would have understood this to be a human baby whose existence God Himself is the immediate author.

and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: : 2 Sam 7:12-17; Ps 132:11; Jer 23:5,6; Isa 9:5-7; Mk 12:35; Lk 1:69; 18:38; Rom 1:3; Rev 5:5 all teach Jesus was to be of the physical lineage of David, adding support to the belief that Mary was of Davidic heritage.

v33 and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; : considering the statement in the light of the entire NT, we know this is to be a spiritual kingdom, at least initially (Lk 17:21; Jn 6:15; 18:36,37; Acts 1:6-8). To Mary however, she would again have taken this as any Jew would have in those circumstances: the kingdom is a literal theocratic royalty involving the Israelitish people. Due to the Jews rejecting their Messiah, this physical literal kingdom is yet future.

and of His kingdom there shall be no end. : this is to be taken at face value; cp Newton “when we’ve been there ten thousand years... we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.”

v34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? : compare this with Zacharias' response of unbelief, "No way! Both my wife and I are past child bearing, and she's sterile as well." While Zacharias doubted, Mary responded in faith (1:45) but is bewildered, mystified. Her very asking for an explanation implies that she believed. She understands that she is about to conceive a child without the assistance of a husband, but how is something of that nature to happen?

"know" used to denote the most intimate knowledge possible physically, to know sexually, "to have sexual relations with" (Gen 4:1,17)

v35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: : these two phrases are paralleled, the "Holy Spirit" paired with "the power of the Most High," and "will come upon you" with "will overshadow you." Although this does not answer all questions (nor will we fully understand this), the meaning is that by exerting His power, the Holy Spirit will bring about this miracle in Mary's womb. Some commentators compare this with the Shekinah glory which overshadowed the ark in the Holy of Holies (Ex 25:22; 40:34-38). Along with this should be mentioned the work of the Spirit as hovering over the waters during creation (Gen 1:2; Ps 104:30). His power is creative, productive. Note also how this compares with pagan myths of gods cohabiting with human females.

come upon = to overshadow, cover, envelop. Used on the mount of transfiguration (Lk 9:34) and of Peter's shadow being used in healing the infirmed (Acts 5:15).

therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. : not of Joseph but of God. Note neither the Lord nor Gabriel demands of Mary that she understands everything; what is required of her is to *believe* and *submit willingly*.

I have always understood the virgin birth to be a necessity to allow the incarnation of the Son of God without the taint of sin, Jesus not having a human father (if for no other reason, to prevent the transmission of the Adamic curse as presented by Paul in Rom 5: 12-21). New to my thinking (and not accepted as of yet) is the teaching that the Holy Spirit had to do something miraculous to keep Mary's sin nature from being transmitted as well. Gromacki says this, "Karl Barth ... claimed that the 'sin-inheritance' came through the male parent only. Some evangelicals have also accepted this position, but it doesn't really solve the problem of Mary's relationship to Jesus.... At the critical moment of conception, when God the Son entered into the unfertilized egg of Mary, she was prevented by the Spirit of God from passing to the living fetus her sin nature." [Gromacki, *Virgin Birth*]

v36 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. : to strengthen Mary's faith, the angel immediately brings Mary's cousin Elisabeth to mind in which the Lord had worked a miracle on her behalf as well. Since Elisabeth was in her sixth month, she would have easily been recognizable as being pregnant, and perhaps the angel is even suggesting a visit of Mary with her cousin. Having been concealed for five months (v24), Elisabeth would just now be going public.

Elisabeth her cousin: since Elisabeth was the cousin of Mary but a descendent of Aaron (a Levite), some state Mary could not have been of the tribe of Judah. On this, refer to our thoughts on v32 of this lesson. Tribal intermarriage was undoubtedly common, and it is not improbable that Mary and Elisabeth could be blood cousins yet Mary being from Judah, Elisabeth from Levi. The only Jewish law concerning this is that a woman must marry within her own tribe if land was possessed and she desired to retain that land (Nub 36:6-8). Hendriksen gives an example in his commentary of a pastor he is aware of that is Caucasian on both his father and mother's side, yet has cousins who are part Caucasian, part Chinese, part Malayan, and part Ethiopian.

v37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. : He is able to do whatever He pleases to do, as is taught uniformly throughout scripture (e.g. Gen 18:14; Ps 115:3; Jer 32:17; Dan 4:35; Mt 19:26; Mk 10:27; Lk 18:27; Eph 1:19; 3:20).

"impossible" is the Greek word *adunatāsei*, "to be powerless;" the negative "a" + the word which we commonly know as "explosive power," *dunamis* (Rom 1:16). Common among the Greeks as we understand the word, "impossible."

v38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. : handmaid carries with it the connotation of "slave" balanced with the fact that her reaction was entirely voluntary and surrendered. She understood the consequences: what would Joseph think? What would be his reaction? Would she be executed as a adulteress under the Mosaic economy? We must place ourselves in her situation if we are to realize the depth of her submissive faith. This is why she is "blessed among women" and a young girl that should be honored by us as one who found favor from the Lord.