

## MARY AND THE HEAVENLY MESSENGER

Luke 1:26-35

**Intro:** Last week we considered the mission of the Angel, Gabriel, to a priest in the temple in Jerusalem. He broke the silence of about 400 years during which time there had been no additional revelation from God. But at that time things began to move again in the most important way. Gabriel announced to Zacharias that he and Elisabeth, both too old to have children, that after many years of praying and waiting, they were going to have a child, a son, and that his name would be John, which means, *God is a gracious Giver*.

Our text for today in Luke 1:26 begins with the words, “And in the sixth month.” This means six months since Elisabeth had conceived. But now the scene has changed from Jerusalem to Nazareth. One was one of the most prominent cities on earth (and it still is); the other, Nazareth, was not even mentioned in the OT. This may mean that it was a city at that time of fairly recent origin. Although our Lord was born in Bethlehem, He was raised in Nazareth, and the city was highly honored by the fact that our Lord became known as “Jesus of Nazareth.” That Name and Title of our Lord is used once in the Gospel of Matthew (26:71); four times in Mark (1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6), three times in the Gospel of Luke (4:34; 18:37; 24:19); three times in the Gospel of John (1:45; 18:5, 7); five times in the book of Acts (2:22; 6:14; 10:38; 22:8; 26:9). The name Jesus was a fairly common name, and, even though there may have been other boys and men by that name, none could lay claim to that title, “Jesus of Nazareth,” but our Lord Himself. Even when the Lord spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, He called Himself, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

This is not one of the Names of our Lord which we will be considering in this series, but I mention it because Nazareth is mentioned here, and because it appears to have been a part of the humiliation of our Lord. It was the Lord Who gave prominence to Nazareth; Nazareth did not add a single thing to Him. You probably remember the incident recorded by the Apostle John in which Philip went to tell Nathanael that they had found the Messiah. Cf. John 1:45-46:

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

There have been accounts written of this city in the past that showed that it was not only insignificant, but that it was a morally degenerate place. So it was no credit for the Lord that He was raised there, but it was to their

credit that it was His home on earth, the place where He was raised.

The reason that Gabriel went there was because a young woman by the name of Mary lived there. Her name is the equivalent of “Miriam,” who was Moses’ sister. Mary was unmarried, a virgin. But she was, as our text says, “espoused to a man whose name was Joseph.” This meant that they were engaged, but not married. They were, however, married before the Lord Jesus was born, but Matthew has recorded for us that after they were married, Joseph “knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn Son: and he called His Name Jesus” (Matt. 1:25).

And so from the account about Zacharias to the message given to Mary, we have moved from Jerusalem to Nazareth, from all of the splendor and glory of the Temple, to the humble home of a very godly woman, whose name was Mary.

And so J. C. Ryle commented, “The Heir of all things not only took our nature upon him, but took it in the most humbling form in which it could have been assumed” (*Luke*, Vol. I, p. 22).

Now it seems that the appearance of angels was as rare in those days as it is today. Zacharias had apparently never experienced anything like that. And it is certain that the virgin Mary had never had an angel appear to her before. But we have to agree with Alfred Edersheim in his writings in his two-volume work called, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, that it was not so much the appearance of the angel that startled her, but it was what the angel had to say to her. Let me re-read for you verses 28 and 29. **(Read vv. 28, 29.)**

Mary not only lived in humble surroundings, but she was humble of heart. Although she would not have had any way of knowing what God’s will would be for her, yet it is apparent that in God’s hands she had been made a fit vessel to become the mother of our Lord. It is ridiculous to say that she was divine, and she herself would have been astounded at such teaching. But she truly was a most wonderful person, made so by God Himself, and as such she was “highly favoured” and blessed above all other women in that she was ordained to become the mother, according to the flesh, of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Gabriel honored Mary, but He did not worship her. God had truly honored her in choosing her to be the human instrument through whom the Lord would come into the world. “The Lord is with thee” are words found often in the OT. They do not just mean that the Lord’s presence is with you, but that the Lord’s blessing is upon you. The Lord was on her side to

qualify her for such a sacred task. We would feel that no honor could be higher. And yet let us remember the conversation that the Lord had with a woman. The incident is recorded for us in Luke 11:27-28. The Lord had just completed some of His teaching, and this woman seems to have been especially blessed. And so this is what we read:

27 And it came to pass, as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked [or, *the breasts that nursed you*, as in the NASB].

28 But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it (Luke 11:27-28).

Without doing any disservice to His mother, the Lord placed an even higher honor upon those who hear the Word of God, and obey it. We have almost the same emphasis in Matt. 12:46-50 which also followed a time when the Lord had been teaching the people. Listen to what we have in that passage:

46 While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.

47 Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.

48 But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?

49 And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt. 12:46-50).

The Lord was not showing disrespect for His mother, but while we are inclined to look upon human matters as those which are chiefly important, the Lord is always directing us to the spiritual truths. Being the mother of the Lord Jesus will not get you to heaven, just as being a prophet or a priest or a pastor will not get you to heaven. Mary was obviously saved and walking with God long before the angel Gabriel appeared to her. And she was honored first of all because she was a child of God, and secondly because she was ordained of God to be the mother of our Lord according to the flesh.

Brown in the JFB commentary pointed out that the Greek word translated “highly favored” appears on one other time in the NT, and that is in Eph. 1:6 where it is translated “accepted.” So this means that all believers are “highly favored” because they have been chosen for salvation, as the Apostle Paul was showing in his Doxology in Ephesians 1.

Verse 29 tells us that Mary was not so much troubled by the appearance of

Gabriel as she was by what he said. She was not only “troubled,” but *greatly troubled!* Zacharias’ initial reaction had been the same. But the Lord knew that Zacharias was not believing the message of the angel. Mary, instead, was wondering how the Lord could honor her any more than He already had honored her by saving her. To a child of God, salvation is always the greatest blessing. For her to “cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be,” means that she was thinking first of one reason, and then of another, and then of another. She couldn’t imagine what the angel would address her in those words.

And so, in a sense, in verse 30 we see that Gabriel repeated his greeting. Both “highly favored” in verse 28 and “favor” in verse 30 are words that have to do with *grace*. In fact, “favor” in verse 30 is the word *grace*.

It is important that we notice these words because they do away with any idea that Mary had earned this privilege. It does not mean that she was chosen to be the mother of our Lord because she was such a good and godly person – although she was all of that. Instead, those two words mean that God’s choice of Mary to be the mother of our Lord was an act of sovereign grace of God’s part. It was like Mary’s salvation. She had not been chosen because the Lord knew that she would believe. Nor was she chosen because He knew that she deserved to be saved. Mary, like all of the rest of us, was chosen in pure grace, sovereign grace, and that is the same basis upon which she was ordained by God to be the mother of our Lord. And the angel Gabriel inserted those words so that would all know that God’s choice of Mary was a gracious choice.

But now we come to the names used by the angel in speaking to her about the son which she would bear. There are four:

- 1) Jesus (v. 31).
- 2) The Son of the Highest (v. 32).
- 3) King (although the word itself is not used) -- (v. 32).
- 4) The Son of God (v. 35).

Let us spend the rest of our time today considering these names and titles. This will be good preparation for us as we come to the Lord’s Table.

## **I. “JESUS” (Luke 1:31).**

Jesus is the same name as Joshua in the OT. Next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will consider Gabriel’s appearance to Joseph. And it is in that passage in Matthew 1 that we are told why the Lord was named “Jesus.” It was, “for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). The Lord’s mission to earth was a mission of salvation. He came to save His people from the penalty of their sins. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom.

6:23). But He also came to deliver us from sin's power. Salvation means deliverance from the bondage of sin. Salvation means that we are free not to sin. But salvation will ultimately mean that we are delivered from sin itself, and we will no longer even be capable of sinning.

If you were here last Sunday night, you will remember that I spent a considerable amount of time on the three tenses of salvation, past, present, and future. Or justification, sanctification, and glorification. And Jesus indicates that He came to guarantee all three for "His people."

Jesus, or Joshua, means *Jehovah is salvation*, or *Jehovah is Savior*. It indicates that salvation is not a work which is partly done by God, and partly done by man, and that if we do our part then God will do His part, but if we don't do our part, then He won't do His! That is not what the Name Jesus indicates. It indicates that the work of salvation is all of God, from start to finish. He is the Savior; we are the saved. And notice that it is a work on behalf of a particular group of people, called "His people." They are a special, chosen people. And when the Lord died He did not die just to provide salvation for them if they wanted it; He died to guarantee the salvation of all of His people. Perhaps some of the other Names and Titles given to our Lord will help us understand the grandeur and glory of Jesus, our Savior.

Next the angel, Gabriel, called our Lord:

## II. "THE SON OF THE HIGHEST" (LUKE 1:32).

In this expression, "the Highest," is a reference to God. This speaks of God's "majesty and sovereignty" (Hendriksen, p. 86). There is no angel nor man whose glory is greater than that of our God. He is supreme. He rules over all. He is the Lord of life, and He is the Lord of death. He works all things out according to the counsel of His own will. His promises never fail. His purposes will all be fulfilled. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. He is greater than all. And our God is just as sovereign in salvation as He is in everything else. We do a great injustice to God when we say that He has provided salvation, but now is waiting to find out who is going to accept His offer of salvation. He knows who is going to be saved because He has chosen those who will be saved. In the early days of the church when the Jewish believers were disturbed over the salvation of the Gentiles, the Apostle James made a statement which ought to be written on all of our hearts. These were his words:

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).

It is ridiculous to say that God is sovereign in all things *except in salva-*

*tion*. If He were not sovereign in salvation, you and I would not be here today. And I say that because, being sinners by nature, and in bondage to our sins, we would not, and we could not, have trusted Christ if we had been so inclined. No He chose us. And He sent Christ to die for us. And He sought us. And He brought us to the fold of salvation. All we have done is to resist Him, but we have learned that we are not greater than He is, and so when He called us to Himself, we came. He saved us. He keeps us. And He is going to present everyone one of us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy. Hallelujah, what a God we have!

But you say, we are supposed to be talking about Jesus Christ. And the angel said that He would be “the Son of the Highest,” but that is not like being “the Highest.” Oh, isn’t it? What did it mean to the Jews when the Lord claimed that God was His Father? The Apostle John tells us in John 5:18. Listen to what he said there:

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

You see, if God is the Highest, or the most high God, and Jesus Christ is His Son, then Jesus Christ is the highest One also. The sovereignty of the Lord may have been veiled during much of His life here on earth, but didn’t He raise the dead, and still the storms, and heal all kinds of sinners. And isn’t His sovereignty seen in your salvation and mine when in spite of all of our resistance and objections, He works in our hearts so that we willingly and joyfully come to Him, and by the gift of faith we believe in Him for our salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ was showing Himself to be “the Son of the Highest” when He said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18).

But let us move on to the fourth expression in our text:

### **III. KING (Luke 1:32).**

This word *King* is not used here, but instead we read, “And the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.” You see, according to the flesh, our Lord was born “of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). This means that He is the Heir to the Throne of David, but it also means that He is the Messiah. The angel Gabriel spoke of our Lord’s reign in a limited way here, saying that it would be “over the house of Jacob for ever.” Caesar was reigning over the house of Jacob in our

Lord's day, but Caesar is gone; the Lord Jesus remains. And He is not only going to reign over the house of Jacob, but Rev. 11:15 tells us that the day is coming when

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And we add to that one of the charges which the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy:

13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession;

14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;

16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:13-16).

The Lord came the first time to save; when He comes to the earth again it will be to reign forever and ever. But in His first coming, although He was the Son of Mary, He was also “the Son of the Highest.”

At this point Mary was clearly overwhelmed. And so she asked a very reasonable question in verse 34, and yet it revealed that she did not really understand the full meaning of what the angel had been saying. Her union with a human husband could never have brought about the birth of the Person the angel Gabriel had been speaking about. And so he added what is verse 35 in our Bibles. And here Mary was told that her Child will be called,

#### **IV. “THE SON OF GOD” (Luke 1:35).**

Here is the statement of the virgin birth of Christ. Jesus Christ would be the only one to be born without a human father. The Child that the angel was talking about would be conceived by the Holy Spirit. He would come upon her and “overshadow” her like the presence of God came down upon the Tabernacle in the desert – that awesome presence of God!

The result of this would be that the human baby she would give birth to would nevertheless be “called the Son of God.” That is, He would be “the Son of God.” He would become Man without ceasing in any way to be God! He would be both God and Man, perfect God and perfect Man, the only One Who could possibly provide salvation for sinners.

What Mary may have experienced as a result of this, we do not know. The shades are drawn to keep out all intruders. Mary never spoke about it, and it is not for us to know. But we know that it did happen. The virgin Mary had a Child. He was named “Jesus,” but He continued to be what He had been before He was born as a baby. He was and always will be, “the Son of God.

**Concl:** If God has given you the grace and the faith to believe all of this, as He has to me, then our hearts, and probably our knees, should bow before Him in adoration and praise, that such grace should be granted to us. We believe this with all of our hearts. We can’t understand how it could all be, but, thank God, it is not for us to understand. What we are to do is to believe this record which God has given us concerning His Son, and to realize that all that our Lord experienced in becoming a Man was absolutely necessary for our salvation. How great is our need for such a Savior to be provided for us!.

If you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, I trust that you have been given an ear to hear what the Lord has said to us in His Word, and that today you will turn to Christ to save you from your sins.