

A Messenger from Heaven

We live in a day of pervasive media coverage. We know what is going on in Egypt, Japan, and Iran in real time.

Consider some big news stories in the last seventy-five years: Pearl Harbor, the assassination of John F. Kennedy's assassination, and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Most of the news stories that we tend to remember is bad news. However the biggest and the best news story in the history of the world was announced by a messenger from Heaven. God was to visit mankind through the birth of Jesus fulfilling dozens of Old Testament prophecies.

Luke 1:26-33

I. The Angelic Messenger

1. **The silence is broken.** God's people, Israel, had not heard from Him through revelation or miracle in over 400 years. Now, amazingly, in the short span of less than a year angels would appear three times with glorious news – first to Zacharias about the birth of John the Baptist, then to Mary about the birth of Christ and then to the shepherds in the fields.
2. **The messenger is revealed.** **Luke 1:26** identifies this angelic messenger as Gabriel. As God's supreme messenger, he also brought news of redemption in Daniel 9.
3. **The people who benefited.** Gabriel comes directly from the throne of God (**Lk 1:19**) to an obscure town named Nazareth in the northern region of Israel known as Galilee. It was called Galilee of the Gentiles. It was as if God was saying, "My Son will be the Savior not only of the Jews but to all who will believe."

II. The Humble Recipient

1. **Mary's messenger.** The angelic messenger finds and speaks to a young teenage girl named Mary (**Lk 1:27**), whose name means "exalted one." Other than these few facts we know nothing about Mary's background.
2. **Mary's situation.** Luke underscores that she was a "virgin". The Greek word, *parthenos*, means "one who has had no sexual relations." Girls in that day in both the Jewish and Roman cultures were engaged at twelve or thirteen in a parental arrangement. Their husbands were usually several years older and established in a trade to show they could provide for their young bride.
3. **Mary's reaction.** Mary was humbled by this news. She knew she was a sinner and admits her need for a Savior (v. 47). "Highly favored" means "greatly graced." Out of all the women our sovereign God could have chosen – princesses, daughters of the wealthy or influential – He chose an unknown, unassuming girl from a forgotten village named Nazareth. God sees and uses the obscure!

III. The Wonderful Announcement

Finally, consider these four aspects of the message content.

1. **Jesus' saving work.** Verse 31 records the name Jesus, coming from the Hebrew *Yeshua*, which means "Jehovah saves." That describes the mission of Jesus. **Lk 2:11** *For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* Later Luke conveys clearly why the Savior came, *for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.* (**Lk 19:10**) Christmas is more than a cuddly scene of a baby in a manger; the cross is why Jesus came.
2. **Jesus' righteous life.** Moving on to verse 32, Gabriel's statement is, "He will be great". That seems like an understatement. Many commentators translate the word "great" as extraordinary, magnificent or splendid. Gabriel was telling Mary that Jesus would manifest the glory of God. That is, people would see the attributes of God displayed through him. Jesus would think, talk, act, teach, and live like God – because He is.
3. **Jesus' affirmed deity.** Also in verse 32, the phrase "Son of the Highest" is to declare him the same essence as the most high God. Jesus told his disciples, *He who has seen me has seen the Father* (**John 14:9**). He boldly asserted in **John 10:30** that *I and my Father are one.* Jesus is worthy of this divine title because of his amazing birth, his extraordinary life, his sacrificial death, and his glorious resurrection.
4. **Jesus' kingly authority.** Finally, in verses 32 and 33, the story of redemption will culminate climactically in the glorious reign of Jesus Christ on David's throne over the nation of Israel for a thousand years, followed by an eternal kingdom. Jesus had the lineage and credentials to rule. He offered his kingdom to His people, but they rejected it and executed Him. However, Christ is returning in glory and omnipotence to establish his kingdom (**Rev 19 -21:8**).

Jesus willingly condescended to take on the form of a baby - being born in Bethlehem so that he might purchase our redemption and rule in our hearts. Just as certainly, He will rule as King throughout eternity.