

Luke 1:26-33
The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Over the past few years, it has been my tradition to take a break from our normal study and give a special Christmas message

My main focus has been from the Gospel of Luke

- The first two chapters have a wealth of material that deals with the events surrounding the birth of Christ

In years past, we have discussed

- Mary's Magnificat (1:46-56)
- Zacharias' prophecy (1:67-80)
- The angelic message to the shepherds (2:8-20)
- Simeon's song of praise (2:25-35)

This year, I want to focus our thoughts on Luke 1:26-33

- This is the account of Gabriel speaking to Mary

This is such a pivotal Text as it relates to the foretelling of Jesus Christ

- It is such a fitting Text for us to examine, this week before the celebration of Christmas

Dr. Luke begins his Gospel with some important information

- He states his purpose in writing this Gospel

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.” (Lk 1:1-4)

- As a physician, Luke paid meticulous attention to detail

Unlike the other Gospel accounts, Luke's was not from a personal eyewitness perspective

- Rather, his Gospel is built upon the witness of others
- He was just putting the pieces of the puzzle together

Luke 1:5-24 deals with the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist

- This man would play a unique, special role
- He would be the forerunner of Jesus Christ

Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist

- He and his wife, Elizabeth, were old
- We are also told in verse 7, “Elizabeth was barren”

That's two strikes against this family

- Old age
- Barrenness

But as Zacharias performs his priestly duties, a most unusual event takes place

- Verse 11 tells us, “an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense”

Can you imagine?

- He saw an angel!

How did Zacharias respond?

- Verse 12 says, “**he was troubled...and fear gripped him**”

The angel then proceeds to tell Zacharias several truths

- The prayers of Zacharias and Elizabeth for a child have been answered
- Elizabeth would bear a son, and they would name him John
- This son would be great
- John would be filled with the Holy Spirit, even while he was in his mother’s womb!
- The angel then quotes Malachi 4:6, stating that this Text would be fulfilled in John!

In the face of such wonderful truth, Zacharias doubts (1:18)

- “**How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.**”
- He offers the reasons why this can’t be true

Then the angel identifies himself (1:19)

- “**I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news**”

The angel tells Zacharias in verse 20, “**behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time**”

- Zacharias would be mute, unable to speak
- That is, until the day of John’s birth

Do you understand what the angel said?

- Zacharias would be mute – unable to speak – for nine months!
- That’s a long time!

When Zacharias came out of the temple, he couldn’t speak

- The people knew that something had happened to him

Zacharias finishes his priestly service

- Then he goes home (1:23)

Then we are told that Elizabeth became pregnant (1:24)

- In her old age
- Despite her previous barrenness

Then we are told that Elizabeth kept herself in seclusion for five months (1:24)

- That brings us to our Text this morning

Let’s read Luke 1:26-33

These eight (8) verses highlight three main characters

- Gabriel (1:26)
- Mary (1:27-30)
- Jesus (1:31-33)

I. Gabriel (1:26)

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth.

We have already been introduced to Gabriel back in verse 19

- There we read the words, “**I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God**”

What stunning words these are!

- We are reminded that the angels bask in the full presence of God continually

Gabriel is only mentioned four times in Scripture

- Twice in Daniel (8:16; 9:21)
- Twice in Luke (1:19, 26)

Gabriel and Michael are the only two angels mentioned in Scripture (unless you count Lucifer and Jesus as the Angel of the Lord)

- Thus, they occupy a special role and function

We are told specifically here in Luke 1:26 that Gabriel was “**sent from God**”

- He was a messenger, sent directly on a mission

Do you realize that the word “angel” means “messenger”?

- They exist to serve God

We are told here in verse 26 that Gabriel appeared to Mary “**in the sixth month**”

- Not the sixth month of the year
- But the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy

This helps to establish a link with the previous account of John the Baptist’s birth¹

- There is continuity between the passages

Both births were supernatural

- John the Baptist – born to older parents and Elizabeth was barren
- Jesus – born to a young virgin without a human father

With such a high-ranking angel as Gabriel, we would think that he would be sent to an important city, right?

- Not in this Text

“**Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth**”

- Galilee?
- Nazareth?

Not Jerusalem

- Not Rome

Nazareth is a small village

- It is located about 60 miles north of Jerusalem
- It is situated between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea

¹ Walter L. Liefeld, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Luke*, 829.

It was to this small city in Galilee that Gabriel was sent

- An otherwise inconspicuous dot on the map

Nazareth wasn't on any of the major trade routes²

- It was off the beaten path

Nazareth is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament

- Yet it would be significant in the NT for a few reasons

Yet it would be here that the angel would be sent

- It would be here that Jesus would grow up from infancy to manhood (Lk 4:16)
- It would be here that Jesus would begin His earthly ministry (Mt 13:54)

So the first important person we meet in this Text is Gabriel

- One of only two angels mentioned in the entire Bible

- **Gabriel (1:26)**

II. **Mary (1:27-30)**

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David;

The birth announcement of John came to an older priest in Jerusalem³

- The birth announcement of Jesus came to a young girl in a small, insignificant city

The manner in which Mary is introduced is rather unassuming

- She is simply called “**a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph**”

The fact that Mary was a “**virgin**” is exponentially important

- We dare not skip over this crucial word

To say that Mary was a “**virgin**” is to say that she had never had sexual relations with a man

- She was pure and chaste

The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a supremely important doctrine

- Without a virgin birth, Jesus would have an earthly father
- A father who passed on the sinful nature to his offspring

But not so with Jesus

- He had no earthly father
- Although he had an earthly mother

We don't discuss it this morning, but look down at verse 35, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God**”

- That's a miracle!

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Luke 1-5*, 44.

³ *Ibid.*, 44.

In bypassing the sinful nature passed on since Adam, Jesus was unique

- Although He was tempted by sin, He wasn't a slave to sin

As a matter of fact, Jesus was sinless

- He never sinned
 - o Not in thought
 - o Not in motive
 - o Not in word
 - o Not in action

The virgin birth is extremely important for another reason⁴

- Immediately after the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden, God told the serpent, **“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel”** (Gen 3:15)

Did you notice that phrase **“her seed”**?

- The seed is normally passed down from the man, not the woman

But in Jesus' case, He was **“the Seed of woman”**

- He was the fulfillment of this prophecy in Genesis 3:15

Let's focus our attention on Jesus

- Not Mary

The Roman Catholic Church has mistakenly placed too much emphasis on Mary

- They have even attempted to place Mary on equal ground as Jesus
- This is blasphemous

Mary was **“engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David”**

- Engagement in this time was far different from engagements in our day and age

In the day and age in which Mary lived, girls were normally engaged at the age of 12 or 13

- This engagement was arranged by the parents

With Joseph and Mary, the engagement was legally binding⁵

- Only divorce or death could break the betrothal

It is significant that Joseph is **“of the descendants of David”**

- He is connected to the royal lineage of David

Through adoption into Joseph's family, Jesus would be a legitimate member of the royal family

- It wasn't a natural right, since Joseph wasn't Jesus' earthly father

and the virgin's name was Mary.

We are finally told the virgin's name, **“Mary”**

- She isn't the only Mary in Scripture

⁴ MacArthur, 42.

⁵ Liefeld, 830.

There was nothing inherently special about Mary

- God chose her to be the mother of the God-Man, Jesus Christ

While this is a special privilege, it should not be interpreted as Mary being worthy of worship

- That is blasphemy

Look with me at Luke 1:47

- These are Mary's own words
- **"my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior"**

Let me ask you a question, "Who needs a Savior?"

- Sinners

Jesus said this in Matthew 9:12, **"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick"**

- Likewise, only those who recognize their spiritual sickness seek out a spiritual Doctor

What's the bottom-line about this?

- Mary recognized herself as a sinner, in need of God's grace
- Mary never viewed herself as worthy of worship

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Gabriel then speaks to Mary, **"Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you."**

- This isn't your typical, "Howdy!" is it?

This salutation has the root word of "rejoice" or "grace"

- It was a theologically rich introduction

To say that Mary was **"favored"** did not imply that she was worthy or meritorious

- She was simply God's choice for the task of being Jesus' earthly mother

What a reassurance to hear the words, **"The Lord is with you"**

- Very soon, the Lord would be within Mary!

29 But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.

Mary, however, was quite puzzled at what Gabriel said

- It must have taken her off guard

The phrase **"greatly troubled"** is a rare Greek word, occurring only once in the entire NT

- It refers to an emotional confusion or perplexity
- It refers to a deep troubling of the spirit

In other words, Mary didn't say, "Oh shucks...you shouldn't say that!"

- No, Mary was absolutely struck by Gabriel's comments
- They were very confusing to her

If we look back at verse 12, we note that Zacharias **"was troubled when he saw (the angel), and fear gripped him"**

- We read here in verse 29 that Mary **"was greatly troubled"**

It is the same Greek word used in both verses

- But with Mary, there is an extra word attached, giving it added emphasis
- Mary was “super troubled” or “greatly troubled”

Notice that it was the appearance of the angel that troubled Zacharias

- But it was the words of the angel that troubled Mary⁶

As if this wasn't enough, verse 29 tells us that Mary “**kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be**”

- The tense of the verb “**pondering**” is imperfect, which means a repeated action

In other words, she kept thinking about what Gabriel had said

- She kept mulling it over in her head, trying to make sense of it

30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

Then Gabriel tells Mary, “**Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God**”

If I have to tell my kids, “Don't be afraid,” then there is a high probability that we are dealing with a situation wherein they may be tempted to fear

Frequently in Scripture, when angels speak to humans, fear is a natural response

- In Matthew 28:5, an angel of the Lord approaches Mary and Mary Magdalene and he tells them, “**Do not be afraid**”
- In Luke 1:13, Gabriel tells Zacharias, “**Do not be afraid**”
- In Luke 2:10, the angel tells the shepherds, “**Do not be afraid**”

Why are humans tempted to be fearful of angels?

- I think some of it has to do with their appearance

In Matthew 28, we are told that the angels' appearance was “**was like lightning, and his garment as white as snow**”

- Don't you think you would have been fearful?

Mary was to rest assured that the angel meant her no harm

- As a matter of fact, the angel had great news for her!

In Genesis 6:8, we are told, “**Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD**”

- So did Mary

But this isn't grounds to worship Mary

- That is wrong

We are to worship Jesus

- He is the third and final Person we will study this morning

- **Gabriel (1:26)**

- **Mary (1:27-30)**

⁶ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Luke*, 85.

III. Jesus (1:31-33)

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son.

Gabriel's words to Mary begin with the word, "Behold"

- Pay attention!
- Don't miss this!
- This is important!

If the angel's greeting bothered Mary, then what she would hear next must have left her dumbfounded

What Gabriel is about to tell Mary is a broad, sweeping statement of the ministry of Jesus Christ

- His work as Savior
- His Deity
- His humanity
- His kingdom rule

What is it that is so important for Mary to hear?

- "you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son"

This wouldn't sound that odd, IF Mary wasn't a virgin

- This is the very thing on Mary's mind, according to verse 34, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

In Mary's mind, having a child while a virgin is a paradox

- It's a contradiction
- It's an impossibility!

But we remind ourselves that what is impossible with man is possible with God

- He is the God of miracles
- And He was about to defy the laws of human reproduction

Mary's firstborn wouldn't be a daughter

- He would be a son

and you shall name Him Jesus.

Gabriel even tells Mary what to name this first-born Son, "and you shall name Him Jesus"

- This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* which means "Yahweh saves"

Of course, this is one of the purposes for which Jesus came to the world

- "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45)

In Matthew 1:21, an angel of the Lord tells Joseph, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (1:20-21)

There in Matthew 1, the angel told Joseph to name the Child

- Here in Luke 1, the angel told Mary to name the Child

This same thing happened at the birth of John the Baptist

- Both Zacharias (1:13) and Elizabeth (1:60) were in agreement on the name

This is the most significant birth announcement ever given!⁷

- Because this is the most significant Baby ever given to mankind!

32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High;

Speaking of Jesus, “He will be great”

- The Greek word for “great” is mega
 - o Exceeding
 - o Superior
 - o Unusual

Strangely, this same word is used of John the Baptist in Luke 1:15, “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord”

The difference is that John the Baptist’s greatness is qualified

- Jesus’ greatness is unqualified
- It is limitless
- It is beyond comparison

When we attempt to describe Jesus, human language fails us

- Adjectives and superlatives don’t do justice to the greatness and majesty of Jesus

Not only is Jesus “great”

- He “will be called the Son of the Most High”

This is a crystal clear affirmation of Jesus’ Deity

- He is the Divine Son of God

God the Father is viewed as “the Most High”

- He is Supreme
- He is the highest in status

Jesus, being God Himself, is “the Son of the Most High”

- Jesus, then, is Supreme
- Jesus, then, is the highest in status

Even the demons confessed this of Jesus

- “What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.” (Lk 8:28)
- *The demons knew who Jesus was!*

But the amazing thing about Jesus’ greatness is that He was also the most humble Person⁸

- Yes, He was sovereign
- Yes, He was “the Son of the Most High”
- But He said, “I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mt 11:29)

⁷ MacArthur, 43.

⁸ Hendriksen, 87.

and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;

This Child was destined to rule

- Specifically, to rule as the rightful heir to the house of David

Jesus' kingdom wasn't a political kingdom

- The people of the day looked for the Messiah to be a political leader, to overthrow the mighty Roman empire

Jesus' kingdom was a spiritual kingdom

- He reigns in the hearts of His people

But after the seven year Tribulation, Jesus will come back to rule and reign on the Earth for 1000 years

- After that, God will create a new heaven and a new earth
- Then we will be ushered into eternity

33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Notice the references to "forever" and "have no end"

- Jesus Christ is eternal!

His reign will be eternal

- His kingdom is eternal

What you believe about Jesus will have eternal consequences!

- Eternity in heaven
- Eternity in hell

These verses sound very similar to the words of the prophet Isaiah

- Isaiah 7:14, "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel"
- 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. 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."

Dear friend, you have a choice to make this morning

- Who or what will you worship this Christmas season?

Some worship angels (cf. Col 2:18)

- But that is wrong

Others worship Mary

- But that is wrong too

Only Jesus is worthy of praise

- Only He is worthy of worship

No angel died for your sins

- Mary didn't die for your sins
- Jesus did die for your sins

Simeon told Mary in Luke 2:34, “Behold, this *Child* is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel”

Jesus Himself said, “unless you believe that I am *He*, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24)

Listen to the words of Acts 4:12, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved”

There’s nothing wrong with celebrating Christmas

- But don’t attempt to celebrate it without Jesus!

Jesus is the Reason for the season

- He is the Savior
- He is the Son of a virgin
- He is the Son of the Most High
- He is the Son of David