

Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

Part 2

Luke 1:26-45

“The child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.” He alone is able to bring you salvation.

LTS: Luke 1:46-51

Introduction:

Once again, this morning we find ourselves standing, as it were, in the presence of one of the angels of God who has suddenly stepped out of eternity, into time to deliver a message to an otherwise unknown teenage girl – a message that would literally and radically change the course of history.

In verses 26-27 The Messenger Arrives. Here we discover that Gabriel had been sent by God to deliver a message to a girl who was a descendent of the great king, David; a girl who was still a virgin, having not yet been married to Joseph.

Then in verse 23-35 The Message is Delivered. We learned that Mary, while still a virgin, would conceive and bear a son and was to give Him the name Jesus because He would save His people from their sin. Gabriel said to Mary, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His Father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

I tell you, it strains the imagination to try to conceive what Mary must have been experiencing as she listened to this incredible message. Certainly, like all the young women of Israel, she hoped to get married and have children. In fact, children were a badge of honor for women in those days, and to NOT have any children was considered a curse of the Lord! Witness the fact that when Elizabeth finds herself pregnant in her old age she declares (1:25) “Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me to take away my reproach among the people.” Children were not considered an inconvenience. They were thought of as the fulfillment of covenant blessing upon women whom God found faithful. But how could Mary possibly have a child now since she wasn’t even married? The only answer is, miracle of God.

As we saw last week, the virgin birth is an absolute essential to the Christian faith. If Jesus’ father was human rather than Divine, then he was not God. And if He was

not God, His promises were a hoax, and if His promises were a hoax, we are all doomed. But Luke goes out of His way to make sure we understand that Jesus' father was NOT Joseph or any other man. It was, in fact, the Holy Spirit – God Himself – who caused Mary to become pregnant apart from a man. And Matthew's account is even more explicit on the issue than Luke's!

Read Mat. 1:18-25

1. One of the evidences that this narrative is authentic is the fact that, initially, Joseph didn't believe Mary when she told him how she became pregnant. And why should He believe her? Nothing like this had ever happened before! Oh, sure, God had been known to open the womb miraculously before, but never by completely bypassing natural means. Obviously, Joseph concluded, Mary has concocted this ridiculous story to try and cover up her immorality!

2. And so Joseph goes so far and to make plans to divorce her. The law called for the death of an immoral woman! But in His mercy, God allowed the concession of divorce if the husband should choose to be gracious. And so, Joseph (v. 19) being a righteous man planned to send her away (i.e. divorce her) secretly, thus at the same time ending the relationship and sparing her life.

3. But the Lord would not have it! And so off He sends His messenger again to appear to Joseph in a dream to confirm Mary's story. (v. 20) "The child who has been conceived in Her is of the Holy Spirit."

4. Then Matthew inserts his own commentary in verse 22 by telling us that the virgin birth should come as no surprise! After all, did not God give us a "head's up" on this centuries ago when through the prophet Isaiah he said, "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call His name 'Immanuel,' which translated means, "God with us"?" (Isa. 7:14)

5. So Joseph put away his plans to divorce Mary, and obeyed the messenger of the Lord, and took her to be his wife. But then, just to make sure there is absolutely no ambiguity here, Matthew tells us (v. 25) "but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son."

6. Let there be no mistake, my friends. The word of God clearly and unambiguously sets forth that Jesus was born of a young woman named Mary who conceived quite apart from natural means. That is to say, He came into the world by means of a miraculous, virgin birth. And as such He is indeed God in flesh, the only human being worthy to bear the sins of man and sit on the throne of God. As Paul wrote, "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col. 2:9).

7. Now, let's go back to Luke 1, and see how young Mary is taking all of this. It's

obvious Gabriel was sensitive to the fact that Mary would find this message a little startling – to say the least. **Mary:** “I mean, come on, angel or no angel, the scenario you’re laying out for me here, Gabriel... I means, is impossible!” He knew that would be the natural response. After all, that’s exactly the response he got from old Zacharias when he appeared to announce that he would have a son in his old age. So, before Mary can even venture the question, he offers evidence that will authenticate that his message is true. And this is where we pick up from last week. We Saw the Messenger Arrive; the Message delivered, and now

III. The Message Authenticated (36-37)

1. Read 36

2. Now, put yourself in Mary’s sandals once again. An angel from God appears and tells you that you are about to become pregnant before you get married. You’re beginning to understand that the baby is going to be unlike any baby who has ever been born. What a privilege! What an awesome honor! But wait! **MARY:** How am I going to explain all of this? Who in the world will ever be the least bit inclined to believe this story? How can I bear the shame of it all by myself?

3. O beloved! Behold the compassion and kindness of the Lord! He could have insisted that she just buck up and take it on the chin alone. But no. By His sovereign lovingkindness, He establishes a support system 6 months before Gabriel arrives. How? By miraculously opening the womb of Mary’s dear, elderly relative – Elizabeth.

4. No one on earth would be better able to empathize with Mary than this sixty (perhaps seventy) year old saint of God. How can it be possible that Gabriel’s message to Mary is true? Gabriel tell us (v. 37) “For nothing is impossible with God. Creating a baby without the help of a man is just as easy for Him as opening the womb of an elderly woman. God can do anything He pleases.

5. And so when Gabriel departs, what’s the first thing Mary does? She runs to the home of Elizabeth just as fast as she can.

6. Read 39-45

7. Mary was hoping to hear some affirming, empathetic words from her relative after explaining the reason for her unexpected visit. But imagine her utter surprise and relief when Elizabeth started affirming Gabriel’s message before she even responded to Mary’s greeting!

8. Two amazing things happened when Mary enters the home of Elizabeth and made her presence known.

A. First, Elizabeth’s baby leaped in the womb.

1. Now remember, Elizabeth's unborn baby is not just any ordinary child. He is John the Baptist.
2. He would be a prophet and the promised forerunner of Christ. This special leap was like a prenatal, prophetic proclamation. Mary may have been unsure, but John the Baptist wasn't! And he wasn't even born yet!
3. But this shouldn't come as much of a surprise. After all, Gabriel had told John's father, Zacharia, "He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb" (1:15).
4. The prenatal leap of John in his mother's womb is nothing less than an expression of spirit-filled joy when he sensed the arrival of Mary, the mother of His Savior.

B. The second amazing thing here is that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

1. Throughout the Scriptures, being filled with the Holy Spirit is often connected to speaking a special message from God.
 - a. Deut. 34, Joshua is filled with the Spirit to speak to the people of Israel on behalf of the lord.
 - b. Luke 1:67 Zacharia was filled with the Spirit and prophesied at the naming of his Son, John the Baptist.
 - c. Acts 2, the disciples were filled with the Spirit and spoke in unlearned languages (tongues)
 - d. Acts 4, Peter is filled with the Spirit before preaching to the people in Jerusalem after the resurrection.
2. And such is the case here. As soon as Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the Holy Spirit took control of Elizabeth like a concert pianist takes control of a Steinway and she starts speaking forth the word of the Lord.
3. Notice Elizabeth's tone. Luke tells us (v. 42) she "cried out with a loud voice." This was no subtle or restrained affirmation of Mary and her child. The Holy Spirit filled her with an unrestrainable enthusiasm over the fact that the woman who carried the very Son of God in her womb had just entered her home.
4. Let that last phrase sink in for a moment. This young woman was carrying the Son of God in her womb.
 - a. Now consider this. In the days of O.T. Israel, everyone understood that the tabernacle or Temple was the place where God manifest His presence with his people. The

garden of Eden was the temple of the Lord in the sense that it was the place where God was present among His people. Later on, God had Moses build the “tent of meeting” also called the Tabernacle - the place where God was present among His people.

- b. Still later, Solomon built the great Temple of the Lord. And 2 Chron 5 reveals that on the day Solomon inaugurated the temple, the glory of the Lord descended into the Temple and it became the place where God lived among his people.
 - c. But consider this! When Mary visited the home of Elizabeth the womb of Mary was the very tabernacle of God! It was the place where God lived among His people for a period of nine months until his birth. No Wonder baby John the Baptist leaped for joy! He was in the womb of Elizabeth, and yet when Mary arrived in the home he was also in the presence of his God!
 - d. And by the way, it’s also remarkable that Elizabeth herself knew that Mary was carrying God made human in the warmth of her womb, for she says to Mary (43) “Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”
5. You see, God had sent Mary to Elizabeth’s home for encouragement. Now, listen again to the inspired message He had waiting for her. Mary steps into the house and probably said something like, “Elizabeth, are you home?” And suddenly, this old woman (filled with the H.S.) begins crying out saying “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how is it granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”
 6. Oh, what overwhelming encouragement this must have been to Mary. Regardless of the rejection and ridicule she would soon experience from those who would not believe her story, she now knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that God Himself was behind it all; that he was IN her and would sustain her until the end.
 7. This, indeed, is an amazing story. But I left out a key verse that we must address before we close. We have seen the Messenger Arrives, The Message is Announced, the Message is Authenticated. Finally, notice with me...

IV The Message Accepted (38)

1. Read 38

2. Mary stands before us today NOT at the Mother of God, or the Mediatrix through whom we approach the Father as some would assert. But she does stand before us as a woman who was blessed by God because she believed His word.

3. Mary is a wonderful example of a true woman of faith. Isn't it true that anyone who believes God's word and acts on its truth is profoundly blessed? Even before she witnessed the overwhelming evidence in the home of Elizabeth, Mary accepted the Angel's message as true and submitted to it in humble obedience, "may it be done to me according to your word."

4. That's why Elizabeth could say, (v. 45) "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord."

5. I can't help thinking that there are some today who are listening to this message and the Lord is working on your heart. Perhaps this is the first time you have seriously wrestled with the biblical claim that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh come to earth to save a world of sinners.

6. The apostle Paul tells us that the Son of God did not consider the privileges of heaven something to cling to when a world of sinners were in danger of suffering the eternal consequences of their sin. So, what did he do? Paul explains that He took on the form of a servant and came to the world as a real human being. He lived more than 30 years in this world to fulfill God's standard of righteousness by His perfect life, and then He died to bear our punishment through death so that we could be saved.

7. Remember what the angel said to Joseph (Matt 1:21)? "Call him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Jesus didn't come merely to be an example. He didn't come merely to teach us things about God. He came to live in our place and die in our place.

8. Here's how Paul said it in his second letter to the Corinthians. He wrote, "God made him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

9. What does that mean? It means that on the cross God treated Jesus as if he had lived your sinful, rebellious life. And he did it so that he could treat you as if you had lived his perfectly righteous life. Do you believe that? Will you receive that?

10. My friends, this is the gift of Christmas. And it is the gift of God to you if you will

admit that you need it and humbly received it by faith.