

**A Christmas Message:
The Birth of Jesus Foretold**
(Luke 1:26-38)

Today we observe Christmas Sunday, the Lord's Day immediately preceding Christmas Day. We do commemorate in a special way the birthday of our Savior and King--Jesus, the promised Son of David. The passage that we have chosen to consider reflects an event 9 months prior to our Savior's birth—that occasion when the angel Gabriel came to Mary and announced to her that she would be the mother of the promised Savior, the King of Israel. It was actually about this time that the incarnation occurred: the eternal, Second Person of the Holy Trinity joined Himself to the human nature derived from this humble and grace-filled Virgin Mary. The incarnation occurred at the conception of Mary in Nazareth, not at the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Jesus of Nazareth, who is eternal God, had also become a man. He is "Immanuel", meaning, "God with us." Here is the account of **Luke 1:26-38** in which we read of the angel's announcement to Mary:

²⁶Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

²⁹But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

³⁵And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷For with God nothing will be impossible."

³⁸Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Luke cast this announcement to Mary in a pattern common to Old Testament birth announcements. It contains five elements that follow this pattern.

- 1) The entrance of the angel (1:28)
- 2) Mary's perplexity (1:29)
- 3) The heavenly message (1:30-33)
- 4) Mary's objection (1:34b, c)
- 5) The reassurance and sign given to Mary (1:35-7)

This common pattern accentuates the significant intervention of God in history of this most important event. Of course it far surpasses those similarly structured announcements that are recorded regarding the births of Ishmael, Isaac, Samuel, Samson, and Samuel.¹

¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, **The Gospel According to Luke** (I-IX) (Doubleday, 1981), p. 335.

Earlier in the first chapter of Luke we read of the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Savior. The angel Gabriel had appeared to Zechariah while he was serving as a priest in the temple at Jerusalem. Gabriel told Zechariah of the impending event, that he would become the father of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah. That announcement came with great fanfare and caused great wonder and excitement. It had come in a dramatic fashion in the temple at Jerusalem, the center of Jewish attention. The event was accentuated in Zechariah being made mute throughout the pregnancy of his wife, as well as the unusual manner in which they named the child. The eyes and ears of all in Judea were fixed on what God would do through the life of that child who would be born to elderly Zechariah and Elizabeth.

But the annunciation of the birth of the Messiah Himself would not come in a similar fashion. Far off from Jerusalem, in obscure Nazareth of backward Galilee, Gabriel, the same angel who had appeared to Zechariah several months before, now appears to a betrothed virgin, and in solitude Gabriel declares to her the news of his miraculous birth. Through the public announcement of John's birth, the expectation all Judea would be raised in anticipation of the soon coming of the Messiah. Through the private announcement of Jesus' birth, God kept His Son in concealment until the time of His full manifestation to the world. And so,

It was not in the solemn grandeur of the Temple, between the golden altar of incense and the seven-branched candlesticks that the Angel Gabriel now appeared, but in the privacy of a humble home at Nazareth. The greatest honor bestowed on man was to come amidst circumstances of deepest human lowliness, as if the more clearly to mark the exclusively Divine character of what was to happen.²

We see in **verse 27** that Mary was "betrothed", or espoused, or engaged to a man named Joseph. The marriage procedure was different in that time from what we are accustomed. The engagement or betrothal period of the Jews in the ancient world was much more formal. The young man and woman would meet together in the company of witnesses, both families and close friends. The couple openly and formally pledged themselves to one another. The dowry of the bride would be declared and pledged by the girl's father and family. The pronouncement of blessing would be given and then the ceremony concluded with a cup of wine shared by the couple. From that moment Mary would be the betrothed wife of Joseph, "their relationship regarded as sacred, as if already married."³ "Their betrothal must have been of the simplest, and the dowry settled the smallest possible."⁴ But the betrothal relationship was firmly fixed, which could only be severed through formal divorce proceedings. And so, being engaged, Mary and Joseph would live apart from one another until that time when Joseph would come in the night to Mary's father's house, and escort his bride to his own house. Jesus would be virgin born, but the world would see the child as the son of Joseph.

The marriage of Joseph and Mary was a veil held out before the eyes of the world, that he who was commonly "supposed to be the son of Joseph" (Luke 3:23) might at length be believed and acknowledged by the godly to be the Son of God. (John Calvin)

I. The initial words of Gabriel to Mary (1:28)

We read, "*And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'*" Let us consider these words.

A. "Rejoice, highly favored one"

² Alfred Edersheim, **The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah**, 3rd edition, vol. 1 (E. R. Herrick & Company, 1886), p. 150.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, p. 149.

It was to Mary, a young virgin espoused to Joseph, to whom the angel was sent bearing news that she would bear a child. From his very greeting, the angel intimates that God had chosen her to be unusually blessed; God's grace would be shown her in a marvelous fashion. She was the *recipient* of God's grace. God chose her, of all women, to be the mother of the Savior. The word used by the angel shows that she had been the recipient of God's favor or grace, not the cause for receiving anything from Him. God favored her because God in His good pleasure chose her, not because she was one in whom the favor of God was earned or deserved. As God has favored us, though we are sinners, God favored her, though she, too, was a sinner.

Many believe that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the **Immaculate Conception** is the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ. It is not. The assertion in this doctrine is not that Jesus was born without sin, but that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born without sin, which is a teaching nowhere found in God's Word. The teaching that Mary was sinless dates back to about the fourth century, but it has only been acknowledged officially as Roman Catholic dogma since 1854. And we would say that despite the claim of a so-called apparition to Bernadette in 1858 at which time the "Lady" supposedly declared, "I am the Immaculate Conception," affirming to the papal doctrine, we would say the teaching is not found in the Scriptures and therefore is not of God.

In the birth narratives of the Gospels Mary is set forth as a lowly, but pure young woman, who lived in an obscure village of Galilee. William Hendriksen wrote of the nature of our Savior's birth:

This conception, moreover, will be unique, such as had never before occurred and will never again take place. It is to happen within the womb of *a virgin!* The mother-to-be, to whom the promise of the incarnation of the world's Savior (Matt. 1:21; John 4:42; 1 John 4:14), the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16; cf. 17:14), must be delivered, is living in... Rome certainly? No! In Jerusalem then? No! In Nazareth, a little Galilean town, by some lightly esteemed (John 1:46), never even mentioned in the Old Testament! And the womb that will carry this greatest of all treasures is that of...a princess? No! It is that of a virgin pledged to be married to the village carpenter!⁵

Then Gabriel said to Mary:

B. "The Lord is with you."

What a tremendous declaration this is: "the Lord is with you." This was an expression commonly used in Old Testament times. It was often declared when God was about to use someone to accomplish some great feat for which divine assistance was needed. It was designed to provide comfort and encouragement, as in the expression, "Fear not! I am with thee." Mary would need this assurance in coming months and perhaps years. All in her community would regard her pregnancy to be scandalous sin, for it occurred before her formal marriage. Perhaps some scandal was averted when Joseph immediately took her to be his wife, cutting short the betrothal period. But years later we read of some who said of Jesus, "We were not born of fornication!" (John 8:41). Her reputation would not be rescued for many decades. In all of her undeserved shame, she could rely on this promise stemming from God's kindness toward her from which the angel could say, "The Lord is with you."

So it is with us as believers. In all of our trials and tribulations, may we rest upon our Lord's promise to each of His own, "I am with you" (Matt. 28:20). And we have the Lord's promise in Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you or forsake you." The great privilege of Mary would bring great trial to her, but the Lord would be with you. And if you are a believer as Mary was a believer, and perhaps you are going through great trial; nevertheless, we may pronounce to you the same word as Gabriel to her, "the Lord is with you."

Gabriel then said to her,

C. "Blessed are you among women."

⁵ William Hendriksen, **John**, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1953), p. 83.

The blessing spoken of here is the result of God's kindness toward her, not the cause of it. Mary was a pure and holy young lady, but she was a sinner who needed her Savior like all others of the human race. God had chosen to "bless" her. The word, "blessed", therefore, should not be understood as "Worthy of praise"; rather, it means something akin to "happy", because God had been favorable to her. She may be filled with joy knowing that God was sending the Savior to save her from her sins. She could rejoice all the more, in that she was the chosen mother through whom the Savior would come. This happiness that stemmed from God's undeserved kindness to her was felt by her deeply and later expressed by her openly, in her *Magnificat*, or song of praise, found in **Luke 1:46-55**. She sang this song:

My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced *in God my Savior*.
For He has regarded *the lowly state* of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.
For *He who is might has done great things for me*,
And holy is his name.
And *His mercy is on those who fear Him*
From generation to generation.
He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.
He has helped His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy,
As He spoke to our fathers,
To Abraham and to his seed forever.

There is no suggestion in her words that she was deserving of God's favor. That idea is so anti-Christian, one wonders how so many embrace her and regard her so highly. No, we will not diminish her role or think little of her character, but we will not take from the glory that belongs to her Son and give glory to her. We will glorify Him, even while we acknowledge her, as do the Scriptures. But at the same time we are aware that the Lord has greater regard for His disciples than He had even for His mother (and his step brothers). There was an occasion when His mother sought Him. We read of this in Luke 8:19-21.

¹⁹Then His mother and brothers came to Him, and could not approach Him because of the crowd.

²⁰And it was told Him by some, who said, "Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see You."

²¹But He answered and said to them, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

Do not venerate Mary. If you are a Christian, you are more blessed than she as His mother. Yes, she was blessed to be His mother, but she was more blessed to be a believer in Him as her Lord and Savior, just as we are blessed for believing also.

II. The response of Mary and the answer of Gabriel (1:29-30)

We read in **verse 29** that this pronouncement unsettled her. "*But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.*"

Now I am sure the angel's very appearance startled her, and his presence unsettled her. Even the sudden appearance of a person sometimes startles us if we are not expecting it, or if it comes in some strange fashion.

Why was she troubled? Well, I think there was a measure of *humility* with her. "***Me? Gabriel, are you sure you have the right address?***" There was a depreciation of herself in her own sight as to her worthiness to be so blessed. I think she responded in a way that anyone would in her situation, with surprise, wonderment, certainly puzzlement. Mary was "troubled"; that is, she was frightened by Gabriel's appearance to her. But it is interesting here that Luke declared that it was the "words" of Gabriel that actually troubled her.

One would be surprised if she were not by this sudden visitation of a holy angel.

In spite of the angel's cordial entrance, Mary was startled. She experienced momentary fright. Why? In all probability because she, though being a young woman of excellent moral and spiritual character, was still a sinner, who was now unexpectedly face to face with a strong, brilliant, sinless being. It is true that the passage does not mention the cause of her alarm, but that is not a good reason to deny it. It surely was not necessary for Luke to state the obvious.⁶

For the Jewish people, it was commonly thought that to stand in the presence of an holy angel was like standing in the presence of the holy God Himself. No one could do so and live. This is suggested in the account of the angel showing himself to the mother and father of Samson. We read in Judges 13:22 of Manoah's words after the angel departed from them. "And Manoah said to his wife, 'We shall surely die, because we have seen God!'" It was no wonder that Mary was "troubled" when Gabriel appeared to her.

But then a word of assurance comes to her in **verse 30**: "***Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.***" Although she was a fallen, sinful human being, like Adam's entire race; nevertheless, she had been chosen to be the instrument of God's work. ***The stress here is on God's choice, not her worthiness.***

Now it is unfortunate what some (Roman Catholicism) do with this expression. They translated the expression, "have found favor" with the words, "full of grace." They say that "grace" is as a "substance" and that Mary was filled with grace so as to enable her to become a giver of grace to others according to her own will. No such interpretation may be taken from this text. It is clear this declaration signifies that she is a chosen object of divine favor, not the dispenser of grace to others. She was favored of God. God had shown grace to her. God was going to use her to bring the Messiah into the world. All veneration of Mary is a degradation of the glory of Her Son, Jesus Christ.

III. The declaration of the nature of her blessing (vs. 31)

Luke records Gabriel's words. "***And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.***" And so...

A. She would have a son, although she was a virgin.

This virgin birth of the Messiah was quoted in the Old Testament over 700 years beforehand. **Isaiah 7:14** reads, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel." And although Isaiah 7:14 is not referenced directly by Luke, it is clear from the words of the prophet would find fulfillment in the birth of this child. Of course the name, "Immanuel" means, "God (is) with us." This name is the shortest expression of the nature and the glory of the incarnation. It is the union of God's transcendence with His immanence; ***God is with us.***

⁶ William Hendriksen, **Luke**, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1978), p. 85.

B. The name of the child is announced. He would be the named, “Jesus.”

Although Luke records that Gabriel told Mary to name her child Jesus, Luke did not explain the meaning of the name. This is found in Matthew’s account. There we read that Joseph had a dream in which he was told to name Mary’s child Jesus. Here is **Matthew 1:20f**,

But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹And she will bring forth a Son, *and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.*”

And so, in Luke’s Gospel Mary is told to name her child Jesus. In Matthew’s Gospel Joseph is told to name the child Jesus.

The name, Jesus, corresponds to the Hebrew “Yeshua” or Joshua, meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” It was a common Jewish name up to the second century A.D. at which time both Jews and Christians ceased to call their sons by that name. Gabriel was announcing to Mary that it would be through her son that God was going to effect the salvation of His people.

IV. The character of this Son (1:32-35).

³²*He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.* ³³*And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*

What will become of this Son born to this lowly woman? We read first...

A. “He will be great.”

Now Gabriel said to Mary of her Son, “**He will be great.**” How could she have known? This one who would be born into her poverty, apparently with little resources or property, certainly with no reputation drawn from her family (other than having the long distant past relative, King David). **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892) set this wonder forth in these words:

The man Christ Jesus stooped very low. In his first estate he was not great; he was very little when he hung upon his mother’s breast. In his after estate he was not great; but despised, rejected, and crucified. Indeed, he was so poor that he had not where to lay his head; and he was so cast out by the tongues of men that they called him a “fellow,” mentioned him among drunken men and wine-bibbers, and even accused him of having a devil, and being mad. In the esteem of the great ones of the earth he was an ignorant Galilean of whom they said, “We know not whence he is.” His life binds up more fitly with the lowly annals of the poor than with the court circular or whatever stood for that in Caesar’s day. In his own time his enemies could not find a word base enough to express their contempt of him. He was brought very low in his trial, condemnation, and suffering. Who thought him great when he was covered with bloody sweat, or when he was sold at the price of a slave, or when a guard came out against him with swords, and with lanterns, and with torches, as if he had been a thief? Who thought him great when they bound him and led him to the judgment seat as a malefactor? Or when the objects smote him, blindfolded him, and spat in his face? Or when he was scourged, led through the streets bearing his cross, and afterwards hung up between two thieves to die? Truly he was brought very low, and a sword pierced through his mother’s heart as she saw the sufferings of her holy Son. When she knew that he was dead, and buried in a borrowed tomb, she must have painfully pondered in her heart the words from heaven concerning him, and thought within herself, “The angel said he should be great, but who is made

so vile as he? He said that he should be called the ‘Son of the Highest,’ but, lo! He is brought into the dust of death; and men seal his sepulcher, and cast out his name as evil.”

But He shall be great! Spurgeon went on to write:

The very man who was despised and spat upon sits glorious on his Father’s throne. As man he is anointed “King of kings, and Lord of lords.” As man he has been lifted up from the lowest depths, and set in the greatest heights to reign for ever and ever. Peter and the apostles testified, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, he being by the right hand of God exalted.” Stephen also said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”⁷

Now, again, Gabriel said that this son of Mary would be “great.” Wherein specifically lies his greatness? Gabriel told us.

B. “He shall be called the Son of the Most High” (v. 32a)

The “Most High” is a synonym for God. The Hebrews avoided saying the word “God,” using other words to express His person. For example, Matthew uses the expression, “Kingdom of heaven”, where others use the expression “Kingdom of God” not because he was referring to a different kingdom, but because he was avoiding the use of the name of God before his Jewish readers.

Now when we look at the expression, “*the Son of the Most High*”, we might immediately think of the **deity** of our Lord Jesus as being in focus. And although that is the focus in **verses 34 and 35**, here the emphasis is not to underscore the fact of his deity, as it is used to emphasize the *relationship* that He has with the Father. He is the “Son of the Most High” thereby suggesting several things.

- 1) They would have a unique and close relationship.
- 2) As God’s Son, He would possess the character of his Father.
- 3) This Son would be shown favor by the Father.
- 4) This Son would be fulfilling the will of His Father.

C. “The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David.”

And so, here we have a reference to a second father of Jesus. He will be the Son of the Most High, but he is also referred to as having David as His father. He was destined as David’s Son to reign over Israel, the kingdom of God, forever. For an understanding of the emphasis of these words, we need to turn to the Old Testament.

David, the ancient king of Israel, was a man after God’s own heart, that is, when David ruled as king, he saw himself as reigning on behalf of God. God was the true King of Israel. David sought to exercise not his own will, but he purposed to be the instrument through which God Himself would govern His people. David rightly saw his role as king to rule Israel on behalf of God, whom he would regard as his Father. As such, King David “sat” at the right hand of His Father, ruling over Israel on His behalf.

Early on, God had ruled His own people Israel through judges. But the time came when the people demanded a king. They had rejected God as King over them. They chose Saul who ruled the people according to his own will. Then God raised up David who ruled His people according to God’s own will. God was once again ruling His people through David.

2 Samuel 7 reflects a time in David’s life after he had been fully established in his kingdom and dwelling in Jerusalem. Although David had a large palace built which served to show forth the power and strength of himself as king, he desired to exalt further His Lord so he purposed to build a large, elaborate temple in Jerusalem where God would be more highly regarded as the center of Israel’s existence. At first, Nathan the prophet told him to proceed with the work, but then God sent Nathan back to David, saying, “No,

⁷ Charles Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 30 (Pilgrim Publications, 1973), pp. 25f.

you will not build for me a temple but rather, your son will be the one to build it.” Let us read **2 Samuel 7:8-16** in which we read of God’s instructions to His prophet Nathan to inform King David of His plans.

⁸Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel. ⁹And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. ¹⁰Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, ¹¹since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.

¹²“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Notice **verse 11**, “*the Lord will make a house for you.*” **Verse 14** reads, “*I will be a Father to him.*” And **verse 16** reads, “*your throne will be established forever.*” In Jesus, the promise to David is fulfilled (Luke 1:33). In Jesus, the earthly throne of David over Israel, the people of God, and the heavenly throne of God, who was always the true king of Israel, are united and brought into perfect harmony. And the two are to be equated—the throne of God and the throne of David are the same throne.

Some disagree with this position. They say that the promised kingdom of David should not be understood as the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. These folks have a tendency to see two of everything in Scripture. They believe that God has promised two everlasting *thrones*--the throne of David and the throne of the Lord Jesus. They say that there are two everlasting *kingdoms*: the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of God. That there are two everlasting *kings*: David himself and then Jesus on his throne. But it is quite clear that the Scriptures speak of one everlasting kingdom, with one eternal King, it was that promised to David and fulfilled in David’s Son, our Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is presently reigning over “Israel” seated on the throne of David in heaven.

This is the truth that Peter declared in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had been raised from the dead and enthroned on David’s throne in heaven and there He reigns on behalf of God over the Kingdom of God, the kingdom that God had promised to David. Here are Peter’s words,

²²“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. ²⁵***For David says concerning Him:***

‘I foresaw the LORD always before my face,
For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.
²⁶Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad;
Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.
²⁷For You will not leave my soul in Hades,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life;
You will make me full of joy in Your presence.’

²⁹“Men and brethren, *let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David*, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Therefore, *being a prophet*, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, *He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne*, ³¹*he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ*, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³²This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. ³³Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

³⁴“For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself:

‘The LORD said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

³⁵Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”’

³⁶Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

³⁸Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:22-38)

Now let us look at **verse 33** more closely. It reads, “*And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.*” Some see this as totally future. They teach that because of the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leaders, that the reign of Jesus over Jacob was postponed and will not be realized until the arrival of a future 1000-year millennium. But it is clear that the Scriptures teach it was in spite of the rejection of Israel’s leaders, our Lord Jesus was highly exalted and given the rule over God’s people Israel and He is reigning now over the people of God.

Now some might object to what we are saying because prediction speaks of reigning over Jacob, and clearly, “He is not reigning over Israel”, they would say. They see “Jacob” as a reference to national or ethnic Israel. But I would respond that this is not a reference to national Israel, but “Jacob” is a term used to describe the true people of God—spiritual Israel. Christ is now reigning over Jacob, His people. We are in the kingdom of God and Christ is our Lord. He is our King, who reigns over us, protecting us, providing for us, and preserving us for that day when we shall stand before Him face to face. Here are the words of **Richard Lenski** (1864-1936):

The royal side of Jesus’ office is described here. He Himself spoke of his kingdom as not being of this world, John 18:36, 37. Thus “He shall reign over the House of Jacob to the eons,” which means that “of His kingdom there shall be no end.” The manner of His rule will be like the kingdom he rules, a rule with truth in the power of grace. “The house of Jacob” denotes all his descendants, not merely the Jewish nation as such, but the spiritual descendants on the throne of ages (Rom. 9:6-8). We need not be reluctant about accepting the angel’s word in its full reality that Jesus should rule forever over the spiritual House of Israel, believing Jews and Gentiles alike. He does so rule now, and this the angel actually foretold. Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16.⁸

And so, we would assert that the prophecy of Luke 1:33 began with Christ’s exaltation. The kingdom of Jesus Christ was not postponed; it is not on hold. Our Lord Jesus came forth victoriously from the grave, ascended into the heavens, came to the Ancient of Days, and then and there was given a kingdom (cf. Rev. 5), over which He now reigns. And the subjects of this kingdom are those who enter by the grace of God through faith in Him as Lord. They “see” this kingdom. They have “entered” this kingdom upon having been born again by the grace of God. His people live within His realm in a state of salvation from sin’s power and penalty.

⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing, 1946), p. 67.

“Well pastor, you seem to be spiritualizing the meaning. ‘He as a king has been rejected, and as a reign over them as a people delayed... To spiritualize this at the sacrifice of its literal meaning is to wrest the Scriptures.’” But we would say on the other hand, “to literalize this at the sacrifice of its spiritual meaning is to wrest the Scriptures.” And besides, we do take the Scriptures literally, and they do declare that Christ is now reigning over a literal, spiritual kingdom comprised of the people of God whom Paul refers to as the “true circumcision”, that is, those who “worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3). And we, who belong to Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are Abraham’s offspring, “heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). The rejection of Jesus by the majority of Jews *did not postpone His kingdom*, but *it did postpone their entrance* into the kingdom (except for the present remnant of believing Jewish people). But there will be a day when they, too, will say, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”

V. Mary’s question and Gabriel’s explanation of how conception would occur (vs. 34-37)

Mary asks, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” “How can I have this child?” she asks.⁹

A. Gabriel’s answer to Mary’s question (v.35)

1. *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you.”* The Holy Spirit, the agent of the creative power of God, will accomplish this. There is no suggestion here of intermingling in a manner that is often found in ancient pagan beliefs. The Holy Spirit caused the Virgin Mary to conceive, and in this manner eternal God came into union with the human nature of this child. Mary was the mother of Jesus, was the mother of His human nature. But Mary is never called in Scripture “the mother of God.”

2. *“The power of the Most High shall overshadow you.”* As the presence and power of God, the Shekenah glory of God, hovered over the tabernacle in Old Testament times where the presence of God was manifested, so Mary would have the glory of God covering her, for within her womb is the Son of God Himself, “for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”

Here clearly, the deity of our Lord Jesus is expressed in very clear terms. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of His Father. The Father and His Son are of one essence. No clear description exists of the way in which his human nature and divine nature co-exist, but it must be surmised. The Messiah would indeed be human, born of a young woman, but He would be divine as well, born of a virgin due to the power of God.

B. The proof that this would come to pass (v. 36f). A sign is given to Mary. If God could enable Elizabeth, an old, barren woman unable to conceive, He can cause a young virgin to conceive though humanly impossible. We read in **verses 36 and 37** the words of Gabriel to Mary: “Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.”

VI. Mary’s submission and confession of faith (v. 38)

⁹ Rome changes the verb of this verse to make Mary claim that she remained a perpetual virgin, even after the birth of Jesus. There is no ground for this assertion. Lenski wrote, “If that were the sense of Mary’s words, since no other than the natural way for her to have a son has been intimated, she would be denying the angel’s word in flat unbelief—her vow of perpetual virginity would make the angel’s word impossible. Again, Mary was betrothed to Joseph; if she had made her vow prior to the betrothal she had already broken it by the betrothal, the first vital step of entering marriage; but if she had made the alleged vow after her betrothal she would by such a vow have broken her marriage tie with Joseph. But the Scriptures no nothing of such a vow as they know nothing of the Mariolatry of Romanism.” R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel* (Augsburg Publishing, 1946), p. 70.

In humility and wonderment, she received the message, ***“Behold, the maidservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.”***

May God grant us the same submissive spirit Mary exhibited regarding ***Who He would be*** and ***what He would do***, when we hear of ***who He is*** and ***what He has done***.

Now in conclusion, let me say that the things of which we have considered today are not merely words wrangling over doctrine that has no real bearing on reality. All of what is truly real is involved with this One Jesus who was born to Mary. God accomplished what He sent Him to do. And as a condition of salvation, that being the receiving of forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, and most importantly, the privilege of having a relationship with the Most High Himself is tied up in this person of Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come unto the Father except through Him. This message, therefore, demands great consideration by us and a definite response from us. Jesus is the Son of God, and He is reigning over the affairs of mankind. And the Father has appointed a day when this same Jesus will judge the world, removing any and all who stand in defiance to Him or lives discarding Him. On the other hand he will receive into His eternal kingdom all those who come humbly, repenting of sin, believing on Him. May God grant each of us grace to respond to Him in humble faith, trusting and believing in Him.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness,
The power and the glory,
The victory and the majesty;
For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours;
Yours is the kingdom, O LORD,
And You are exalted as head over all. (1 Chr. 29:11)
