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COMMISSION**

Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders



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“Therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.” Luke 1:35b

Luke 1:5-38 - One Angel, Two Miraculous Births Foretold, and Two Different Responses

We looked at the author of this gospel, Dr Luke, in last month’s handout, please see that for background. Now we kick off our session studies getting into the text of Luke. I hope you are as excited to do so as I am!

Turning to Luke chapter 1 and reading verses 5 through 25 we have the account of John the Baptist’s birth. Notice that Luke begins with a historical time reference to remind the reader this is a historical account. Herod (the Great) is sitting on the Jewish throne as a Roman puppet. He holds the title King of the Jews, but he was actually Idumean, which means his family history went back to Esau, not Jacob (aka, Israel).

We find a Levite priest named Zechariah takes his turn entering the Holy Place in the temple at Jerusalem (known as Herod’s temple as he rebuilt it) when the angel Gabriel appears. This is the only angelic appearance in this temple recorded in Scripture. See the message from Gabriel: In answer to his prayer (v 13), this old and childless couple will conceive a son, who will be a Nazarite, filled with the Holy Spirit, and “go before the Lord their God in the spirit and power of Elijah.” (v 17) This refers to a prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6 around 400 years earlier. Zechariah’s response is naturally one of great fear, but then disbelief. The fear comes from the surprise visit by an angel directly from the presence of God (v 19) in a holy setting which is a dangerous one for a mere mortal; but the disbelief is met with a harsh response—he is unable to speak again until verse 64. Why would this happen to this holy man of God?

We will return to that question, but first there is another visit by Gabriel, this time in verses 26-38 a young maiden of Nazareth learns she will be giving birth to the Son of God. This is huge and culturally significant to a people yearning for their Messiah, a king from David’s line, to return to power and throw off the Roman aggressors. Mary is her name and she is also greatly troubled (fearful) at the appearance of Gabriel. At the news of her impending divine pregnancy she asks a good question, basically how could this happen since she is

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastor-missionaries who in session teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for all those working in state capitols. The Bible studies are hand distributed to each legislative office and available by email and shared across the Capitol Commission community. This ministry is an extension of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message and help believers mature through Biblical expositional instruction. Prayer is foundational to this ministry, consistent with proper submission to governmental authority (Romans 13:1-7) and obedient to the command to pray for our appointed leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Our desire is to witness God’s work in transforming hearts.

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still a virgin? This point is an important one for the Gospel: The payment of sin can only be made by a human who is not corrupted by Adam's original sin so the conception is accomplished by the Holy Spirit's power "overshadowing" her (verse 35) and somehow the divine takes on flesh.

Gabriel tells both Zechariah and Mary "Do not be afraid" in vs 13 and 30. From all accounts, the sudden appearance of an angel must be a frightening event but the news being brought is good news. John the Baptist will be born as a herald to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. And Jesus is that Lord, God in humanity to bring about a neverending kingdom (vs 33). He is the long awaited Messiah.

So why was Gabriel so harsh with the priest Zechariah but so gentle with Mary? Besides the age difference, Zechariah should know that God opening the womb of a barren woman, even an elderly one, happened to Abraham and Sarah (Gen 21). But never before had a virgin instantaneously conceived a baby, this was a new sign, as foretold in Isaiah 7:14. Thus, the priest showed faithlessness, while the maiden simply asked a reasonable question about the circumstance. For this Zechariah is mute until his son is born and christened John. But Mary has the harder, and more dangerous task: to explain to her family, her fiance Joseph, and the people of Nazareth how she got pregnant. By the letter of the law, she could have been stoned to death! Matthew informs us an angelic dream ensures Joseph will take Mary as his wife and believe her.

Gabriel's message to Mary yields a host of invaluable information. One is that Mary was selected as one who found favor with God, indicating she was devout, pure, and good. That she will have a son and name Him "Jesus" (which means Jehovah Saves, see ref at Matt 1:21). The salvation of the LORD is the good news which Gabriel mentions (v 19) and a major theme of the gospel. This son will also be the Son of the Most High, clearly referring to His deity as no one exists higher than God the Father. Jesus will sit on David's throne and reign forever, a fulfillment of the promise to King David in 2 Samuel 7:13-16. To this incredible news notice Mary's reaction: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

I hope that we, too, when called to be of service to the Lord, see ourselves as servants, yielded to Him.

Applications

1. Have you ever faced an "impossible task", but one which you knew God would approve or support? Even if the prevailing wisdom says something cannot happen, perhaps it is a case where God shows His sovereignty, "For nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37)
2. Do you have Biblical insights from maybe many years of church attendance? Be assured that those lessons are not wasted; there was a purpose in every Bible class or sermon you have heard. But when God moves, recognize His patterns and do not be like Zechariah!

My desire is to highlight Jesus Christ to you. Toward that end, I am available to discuss any biblical topic or question you may have. I especially want to ensure all who read the studies understand how Jesus Christ is distinctively important to the entire world and to each of us individually. Lastly, all Bible studies are available at Capitol Commission's Alabama page: <https://capitolcom.org/state/alabama>.

NOTE: Plan to attend our in-house Bible Study during session: Tuesdays at 11:00 am in Room 123. Bring a beverage, food will be provided.

A key facet empowering our ministry is prayer, especially prayer for our elected leaders. 1 Timothy 2:1-4 commands Christians to obediently pray for all in authority. A tool for America's churches to help consistently pray for you, our elected leaders, is available to all via:

www.Pray1Tim2.org - You can select Alabama and sign up for daily email reminders, courtesy of Capitol Commission