

Mary The Maidservant Who Believed Luke 1:26-27

Introduction

At the Christmas Eve service, we examined the angel Gabriel's encounter with a priest named Zacharias, who told him that he would be the father of John the Baptist. Zacharias was hesitant about embracing Gabriel's announcement and was silenced by the angel until his son, John the Baptist, was born.

In Luke 1:26, the angel Gabriel is sent to Mary in Nazareth to announce the birth of Jesus. "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary." (Luke 1:26-27 NKJV)

Gabriel's work was not finished with his announcement to Zacharias in the temple. In the sixth month of Zacharias' wife, Elizabeth's pregnancy, Gabriel came to a village in Galilee. Nazareth is perhaps most remarkable for its unremarkable nature; it was not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or the writings of Josephus. Nazareth is in the general region of Galilee. It is 15 miles away from the Sea of Galilee. It is six miles from the closest major road; it didn't have a good water supply, only one weak well in the center of the village. Jesus would forever be identified with this place, repeatedly called *Jesus of Nazareth*. His followers were also called "Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5).

Mary was betrothed to Joseph. There were three stages to a Jewish wedding in that day.

- *Engagement* (a formal agreement made by the fathers)
- *Betrothal* (the ceremony where mutual promises are made)
- *Marriage* (approximately one year later, when the bridegroom came for his bride at an unexpected time)

When a couple was betrothed, they were obligated to remain faithful to each other. A divorce was required to break the betrothal.

The name 'Mary' is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Miriam*. It means "exalted one," a fitting description of the one who would be the mother of the Messiah." In verse 28, Gabriel greets Mary. "And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was." (Luke 1:28-29 NKJV)

Gabriel highlights three things to Mary. She is highly favored, The Lord is with her, and She is blessed. Like Zacharias, the priest, when Mary hears Gabriel, she is troubled by his saying. She is surprised to hear such extravagant words said to her. Do you ever find it hard to receive a compliment?

Then Gabriel announces the birth of the Messiah.

I. The Message

Verse 30 says, "Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 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. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:30-33)

Gabriel's focus was not on Mary but on the Son, to be named Jesus (a common name). This Son is unmistakably identified as the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament. No one has influenced history more than Jesus Christ. Spurgeon says,

- Jesus is great in the perfection of His nature
- Jesus is great in the grandeur of His offices
- Jesus is great in the splendor of his achievements
- Jesus is great in the numbers of those He rescues
- Jesus is great in the estimation of His people

Jesus would be the son of Mary, but He would also be, and be known as, the Son of God. He would be the Messiah prophesied to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16). He would have the rightful authority to rule over Israel and of His kingdom; there will be no end. When Gabriel said this, Mary probably realized he quoted from Isaiah 7:14, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."

In verse 34, Mary questions Gabriel about his words. "Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And 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. 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." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:34-38)

It's a logical question. Mary asked the same question Zacharias asked in verse 18, but his question was asked in skeptical unbelief, and her question was asked in wonder-filled faith.

II. The Miracle

Gabriel says that the power of the Highest, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, would overshadow Mary. The word overshadow means "to cover with a cloud," as in the cloud of Shekinah glory that overshadowed Israel during the Exodus; or the cloud that overshadowed Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration mentioned in the gospels. (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:34).

The cloud was a visible manifestation of the glory and presence of God. The same power of God that was with Moses and Israel in the Old Testament was now going to do a unique work in the life of Mary.

It was not a 'mating' of the Holy Spirit with Mary. "Technically speaking, the angel predicted a conception by a virgin, not a virgin birth. As far as anyone can tell, the actual birth of Jesus was normal. Gabriel says that because of the manner of His conception, He would be the Holy One (different from all others), and He will be called the Son of God. Gabriel's words wouldn't have the same impact on us today. But Mary (and all other Jewish people from her culture) knew what this meant; this child, named Jesus, would be equal to God (John 5:18).

Jesus did not *become* the Son of God; He is called the Son of God, but He has existed as God from all eternity. Gabriel also tells Mary that her Aunt Elizabeth (technically, he says relative) has also conceived a son in her old age: the point being, if God could do that, He could do what He promised for Mary. The point is clear; with God, nothing is impossible. No word of God shall be powerless. God will absolutely perform what He has said.

In verse 38, we see Mary's response of faith. "Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." ([Luke 1:38](#))

Mary first responds by agreeing with what Gabriel said about her. She *was* the maidservant of the Lord, and it was not her position to debate with her Master but to accept what He said. Mary then responded with an affirmation of faith. "Let it be to me according to Your word."

In reality, all of this took more trust in the Lord than we might think. Mary agreed to receive a pregnancy that would be seen as suspicious in a culture with a potential death penalty for adultery. Mary was willing to be identified with sinners so that the purpose of God would be fulfilled.

Spiritually, there are similarities between God's work in Mary and His work in every believer.

- Jesus lives within the believer spiritually, as He did in Mary physically
- Jesus lives within us spiritually by His word, as He did in Mary physically
- Jesus is made visible to the world through us, as He was through Mary physically

One writer says, ' We bear as close a relationship to Christ as did the Virgin mother, and we in some sense take the same position spiritually which she took up corporeally in reference to him.' (Spurgeon)

We don't know the exact moment Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary. It may have been when Gabriel spoke to her or as soon as he departed. But, whenever it was, the cloud of God's glory *overshadowed* Mary (Luke 1:35), and Jesus was miraculously conceived in Mary's womb.

Jesus' birth from this miraculous conception is what we call the *Virgin Birth*. What we call Virgin Birth, in Paul's analysis, is a *great mystery of godliness* (1 Timothy 3:16). But the message of the Scriptures is clear about the Virgin Birth. There is no question about Jesus and His Virgin Birth. There can only be questions about the authority of Scripture. In other words, you believe in God, or you don't believe in Him! The Virgin Birth is unique. Many mythologies have legends about a god who had sexual relations with a woman and produced offspring, but the idea of a *virgin birth* is unique to Christianity.

Whenever you put your complete trust in God, He puts a song in your heart.

III. The Music

In verse 39, Mary makes a visit to Elizabeth. "Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." (Luke 1:39-41)

Mary heard from Gabriel that her relative Elizabeth was pregnant (Luke 1:36). So she went the considerable distance (somewhere between 80 and 100 miles) from the region of Galilee to the hill country of Judea for a visit. Mary's parents probably understood that not many people could accept her story about the miraculous conception. So they sent her off to see Elizabeth some distance away. If anyone could understand, it might be Elizabeth.

When Mary arrived, the baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb. Elizabeth's unborn child was John the Baptist, who leaped with joy. Even in the womb, John the Baptist had a spiritual awareness and responded to the work of the Holy Spirit. "Then she (Elizabeth) spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed *is* she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." (Luke 1:42-45)

John the Baptist had not yet been born, and Zacharias was still mute. Yet Elizabeth *believed* the word of the Lord given to her husband Zacharias when he was in the temple. In the temple, Gabriel told Zacharias that their son would prepare the people for the coming of the Lord (Luke 1:17). Elizabeth realized in faith that the baby in Mary's womb was the Messiah and her son would prepare the way for Jesus (the mother of my Lord). Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and encouraged Mary's faith by declaring, "there would be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

In verse 46, Mary's heart is filled with a song of praise to the Lord. "And Mary said: "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 mighty 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." And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house."

(Luke 1:46-56)

This song is often called *the Magnificent*, after the Latin translation of the first few words. It resembles Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, but it also alludes to at least 12 other Old Testament scriptures. Mary was a woman who studied and knew God's Word.

The Scriptures radiating in her heart burst out through her song.

Conclusion

Mary was greatly gifted, highly favored, and did exactly what a greatly blessed person should do: *Mary magnified the Lord*. Magnifying the Lord remedies your pride and all self-congratulation and is something every blessed believer should do. Mary needed a Savior, and she *knew* that she needed a Savior.

Mary acknowledges that it is God who is mighty and has done great things for her. Our song of praise should always celebrate God's goodness, faithfulness, and power. Mary's song shows the futility of trusting in yourself, political power, or your riches.

Mary's trust was in God, and when we trust in the Lord with all our heart, it is always rewarded. Mary rejoiced and glorified God, even though the child was not yet born. That's definitely faith in action! Spurgeon said, "There are some of you who cannot even sing over a gift when it is born, but here is a woman who sings over an unborn child."

So many people are distracted by their circumstances and situations that they wouldn't recognize a miracle from God if he showed up to announce it by an angel. But a person of faith knows God and trusts in Him with all their heart. A person of faith is blessed and highly favored and knows the Lord is with them.

They are not deterred at all from a miracle despite the circumstances. When they hear God's word, they sense God's miracle presence and rejoice with a heart-filled song of praise. So, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones." (Proverbs 3:5-8)