

## **Introduction**

It is Christmas Eve! Already! It is fitting today that we ascend to the peak in our series of studies this month on why Christ was born. We have seen that Christ was born to live. He was born as a human, the God-man, to live as a human among humans. We have also observed that he was born to die. The death of Jesus on the cross was not plan B. The death of Christ is unextractable from the purpose of God to save human beings from our sins. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. We have further witnessed that Christ was born to marry. He was born to take a bride to himself for all eternity. These are the people he saves. Now this morning I am directing your attention to one more of the reasons for Christ's birth. He was born to reign. From before he was conceived, it was the plan and purpose of God in bringing his son into this world that he would be exalted to the highest position of authority and power. Joyously we can say, Christ was born for this!! One of the sections of Scripture which clearly ties together Christ's reign with his birth is in the gospel according to Luke where Gabriel announces to Mary the conception and birth of Jesus.

[Read Text and Pray]

As we explore this text this morning and how it weaves together the birth of Christ with his destiny to reign, I first want you to notice . . .

### **I. The Announcement of a Profound Birth**

A. It is actually a profound announcement of a profound birth. It all starts with who is making the announcement and the place to which he comes.

Verse 26 is loaded with profound contrast. First, our eyes are set on an angel. Angels abide in heaven. Whenever angels make an appearance as such they come in brightness. They bring the glow of heavenly glory with them. Moreover, the angel to which we are introduced is specified. This is not just any angel but the one who bears the name Gabriel. Gabriel appears by name to three people in the Bible. He first appeared to Daniel to explain to him a vision he had seen. He next appeared to Zechariah to

announce the coming birth of John. Zachariah was is in disbelief. He asked, "How shall I know this?" Gabriel's answer is delivered with conviction, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." Now he comes to Mary. His appearance was such that each of the three had to be told not to fear. It can only be an experience of inner conviction and unworthiness when an angel who stands in the presence of the Lord comes to deliver to you a message and the weight of the holiness of God brings itself to bear upon you. Gabriel brings with him an undeniable aura of the presence of God. So on the one hand our minds are greeted with the majesty of the highest heaven.

But then the writer Luke takes our attention into the very opposite direction. This angel was sent from God . . . to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph. Galilee is described in Isaiah 9 as a place of gloom, anguish, and contempt. Nazareth as a city was not a nice place. It was backward and no good. And in terms of importance to the world, what could be of less significance than a young woman in that place?

What is truly profound about this announcement is that heaven visit one of the most despised and unappreciated places and people on the face of the earth.

And here is a message of encouragement to each of us. God who is mindful of every sparrow is mindful of you too. God comes to the lowly and despised. He cares about people and places to which the rest of the world does not give a second thought. Mary reflected this precious awareness when she greeted Elizabeth. She said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked upon the humble estate of his servant. . . . He has exalted those of humble estate."

The profound descent of the angel to Nazareth is a comforting and assuring reminder that God cares for the lowly, the despised, and rejected of the world.

B. The birth he announces is as profound as the fact that an angel comes from heaven to deliver it. It is delivered to a virgin. She has not known a

man. She is betrothed to Joseph and a faithful young lady who has not compromised herself. To this virgin Gabriel speaks. "You have found favor with God. And behold you will conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." You may be a virgin, but you are going to conceive. And you will not need to have an ultrasound to know that it is going to be a boy. You will bear a son.

An angel comes from heaven to a backward and lawless little village to tell a young virgin she will conceive and bear a son. This is profound. She is called "Favored One." She has found such favor with God that she will bear this child before even coming together with her husband. He must be special. And indeed he is. But what of this favor?

On the one hand what a great privilege to be the mother of the Lord. It is a position of high favor. Elizabeth recognized it. When Mary arrived to visit her, she asked, "Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" But on the other hand, this favor ultimately involved much earthly heartache. Her son was despised and rejected and ultimately crucified as a terrible criminal.

Some of the greatest blessings we experience in life also involve great pain. But we can and must hold on to God's great and precious promises. God's plans and purposes can be trusted. They may lead us through the valley of the shadow of death, but they will not lead us to stay in the valley of the shadow of death forever!

So here is a profound announcement of a profound birth, but here is also ...

## **II. The Indication of a Royal Identity**

Verses 32-33 are rich with royal flavor. There are five ways in which the son that would be born of Mary, who would be named Jesus, is identified with royalty as a reigning king.

A. Gabriel tells Mary, first, "he will be great." Zechariah was told that John the Baptist would be great before the Lord. But Mary is told that Jesus would be great period. Great men of the world are men that make a difference for good. They make an impact to benefit the world around them. Nobody ever made the difference that Jesus made.

The writer of Hebrews is concerned to show that Jesus is great. In chapter 1, he declares that Jesus is greater than the angels. In fact the angels of God are called to worship him. In chapter 2 the writer shows that Jesus is greater than Moses. Then he explains that Jesus is greater than the priests.

Think of the ways in which the greatness of Jesus was displayed as he walked this earth. At the age of 12 he was in the temple sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. He could ask questions in such a way as to astonish and amaze. And when he began his public ministry the multitudes were amazed because he taught them with authority. His greatness was evident in that he multiplied fish and loaves and stilled storms. He healed the sick and lame and raised the dead. True greatness however is seen in more than what he did. It is also who he proclaimed himself to be: "Before Abraham was I am." His true greatness is seen in his submission to the will of the Father despite all the wicked hostility and hate of the world. Jesus is truly great. He did not take advantage of the powerless but had compassion in them.

Jesus possessed the greatness of royalty.

B. Gabriel also says, he "will be called son of the Most High." It is another way of saying Jesus is the Son of God, but the title magnifies the majesty of God. There is no power or authority any higher. He is God most high. The fact that he is called son of the most high is a way of stressing the special relationship that exists here. It emphatically underscores the royalty of this son as well as the fulfillment of the word he spoke to David. 2 Samuel 7:12 is where we find the covenant to which God committed himself to David. Listen carefully. David had wanted to build the Lord a permanent house. Now this is what the Lord says to David. "The Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." He will be called "Son of the Most High." God himself called Jesus his son publicly at his baptism and then again at his transfiguration. This son would stand in relation to God as admired as being precious to him.

C. In addition, Gabriel says God will give him the throne of his father David. It is a declaration of the fulfillment of God's promise to David to raise up his offspring to be enthroned, to be king.

D. Gabriel states that Mary's boy-child will reign over the house of Jacob. Again it fulfills the word the Lord spoke to David. The Lord will make you a house. But think for just a minute what it means to reign. It means to hold office as supreme authority. But it is more than holding office. It is exercising rule. It is to wield the power of a kingdom. It is to establish the law of the kingdom and to enforce that law. And this is what Christ Jesus will do.

Isaiah gives us some insight into the reign of this one who will be king. In Isaiah 9 we read, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called wonderful, counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness." He will reign without rival. Philippians 2 indicates that to him every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Revelation 19 indicates that this king is a conqueror who bears on himself this name: King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

Many a king has reigned throughout this world's history. A few have been good. Many have been despicable ruling purely in their own interest. But this king will reign in justice and righteousness. Wonderful, Wise, Mighty, and Peaceable. That is this king. He will reward righteousness and punish iniquity. He will defend the weak and weaken the strong.

Mary gives us an idea of this. She speaks her praise of the Lord saying, "he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty."

E. Finally, Gabriel indicates that the reign of Jesus will extend endlessly into the future: "of his kingdom there will be no end." The Lord had said to

David that he would establish the throne of the offspring's kingdom forever. And he said to David "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." Again Isaiah says in chapter 9, "of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." He will establish David's throne in justice and righteousness "from this time forth and forevermore."

This same theme is expressed in joyful exclamation in Revelation 11:15. "Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.'"

F. So we have this summary presentation of the son who was to be born of Mary. He would be great, fully deserving of his royal throne. He would be the Son of the Most High in perfect harmony with the will and under the adoring and special love of God. He would possess by the gift of God the throne of David. It is the orchestrated plan and purpose of God to seat Jesus on David's throne in a position of power and authority as a king. And he would have a house over which to preside, the house of Jacob. His act of presiding is to reign. And he will reign forever. No term limits for this king, nor would we want them.

G. And the truly incredible and great thing about this king is that he was willing to come and live as lowly as any of his subjects ever lived. And he was willing to come and bear their sins and their iniquities and pay the price of their crime in order to redeem them and bring them into his glorious kingdom. He is not a ruling despot who squeezes the life and joy out of his subjects in order to become great. No, out of his greatness, he allowed the life to be squeezed out of him in order to breathe eternal life into his people. He is not a life-taker but a life-giver.

There we have then, a profound birth announcement of a baby who would reign in preeminent royalty. Now we turn to see

### **III. The Explanation of a Miraculous Conception**

A. Mary is no doubt amazed by all that the angel has said. But there is just one problem. Virgins do not give birth. So she asks, "How will this be since I am a virgin?"

When Gabriel appeared to Zachariah to announce the birth of John, Zachariah had asked Gabriel a question as well. "How can I know?" Mary did not ask "how can I know?" but "how will this be?" It is not a question of disbelief but one which reveals that something extraordinary must happen for this announcement to be fulfilled.

B. Mary's instinct was correct. Gabriel confirms this birth is going to be extraordinary. The Holy Spirit was going to bring about a miraculous conception in Mary. For this reason the child could be both human and divine and could be rightly called holy and the Son of God. The virgin birth is a crucial part of the Christmas story, but it is also a crucial part of the crucifixion story. Had Jesus not been the holy Son of God, His death would not have qualified to save us from our sins.

C. The virgin birth is a glorious reminder of the power of God. The angel's point to Mary is for us as well. "For nothing will be impossible with God."

A virgin giving birth is not impossible.

The salvation of sinners is not impossible.

The defeat of sin in the battle against the flesh is not impossible.

The coming of his kingdom to a world in rebellion is not impossible.

The working of good in every circumstance for those who love God is not impossible with God. God is able!

Finally, we turn to . . .

#### **IV. The Expression of a Humble Servant**

A. Mary replied to Gabriel in beautiful fashion. "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word." Humbly, she submits to the will of God.

B. Pottery begins as clay. It is molded by the potter to be what he wants it to be. It is totally subject to His will. That is Mary. Mary's response to Gabriel is almost as profound as his announcement. Whatever you say. Let God have His way with me. I am His bond slave. If this is what He wants then let it be.

C. Mary's response to Gabriel exemplifies the way each of us should respond to the kingship of the baby to whom she gave birth. I am his bond slave. I am his servant.

He is the king; I am his subject. He is the Sovereign; I am willing. I am favored to be part of his kingdom. He is the king of kings; I am his worshiper. To him be glory.

## **Conclusion**

Christ was born to reign. I was born into his kingdom to serve, to obey, and to worship.

Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne;  
Hark! How the heav'nly anthem drowns All music but its own!  
Awake, my soul and sing Of Him Who died for thee,  
And hail Him as thy matchless King Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of love! Behold His hands and side-  
Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified.  
No angel in the sky Can fully bear that sight,  
But downward bends His wond'ring eye At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of life! Who triumphed o'er the grave,  
Who rose victorious in the strife For those He came to save.  
His glories now we sing, Who died, and rose on high,  
Who died eternal life to bring, And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of heav'n! One with the Father known,  
One with the Spirit through Him giv'n From yonder glorious throne,  
To Thee be endless praise, For Thou for us hast died;  
Be Thou, O Lord, through endless days Adored and magnified.