

God Comes to a Lowly People

Advent 2013

Luke 1:26-38 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" ²⁹ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 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." ³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ 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. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸ Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (NKJ)

INTRODUCTION

Luke is the only Gospel writer to relate Mary's story. She is a polarizing figure among Christians, worshipped by the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox and often neglected by Protestants.



MARY AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF LOWLY HUMANITY

God came to humanity in the Person of Jesus in order to rescue a lowly and helpless people. Mary herself was unworthy of the honor bestowed upon her and was in as great a need of her child's salvation as any other.

- *While all of humanity has been in desperate need of salvation since the Fall, certain moments in history underscore that need in a way difficult to ignore.*
 - *When Jesus was born, Israel was in a state of bitter oppression and tyranny.*
 - *The Jews were under the reign of the monstrous Herod and impoverished by extreme taxes.*

The theme of God coming to a lowly people is woven throughout Luke's account in various ways such as the contrast between the first and second scenes.

- *Gabriel's appearance to Zechariah is set over against his appearance to Mary.*
 - *Zechariah is a priest in Jerusalem, the city of God. He is respected by the people and serves in close proximity to God's presence.*
 - *Mary is someone of no reputation from the village of Nazareth, a place not only despised by Judeans but fellow Galileans.*
 - *While Zechariah is skeptical and doubts, Mary is receptive and embraces God's purpose.*
- *God's choosing of Mary establishes a pattern in which Christ's coming is couched in terms of lowliness and humility.*
- *God in Christ, condescended to lowly humanity to rescue those who would come to realize their true condition is a world of sin.*