

Message #5**Luke 1:26-38**

If you were to ask most academic counselors as to how you can become a great scientist, they would probably say something like this:

- 1) As a young person, take all science and math courses you can in school.
Love school and academics.
- 2) Don't miss a class and work hard and listen and learn and work long hours.
- 3) When through with High School, go to Harvard or Yale and pursue physics.
- 4) Spend time in the great laboratories with other great scientists and learn and experiment.
- 5) After years of doing this, you will become a great scientist and scientific mind.

But when we examine history, what we discover is the man who has been called the greatest scientific mind ever, did not follow that plan.

- 1) He was a guy who hated school and he was always in trouble with the teachers. In fact, he hated to study.
- 2) He did not go to any great world renowned school. For a while he went to some unknown Polytech Institute.
- 3) He did most of his experiments in his home alone.
- 4) His experiments were done in a primitive environment, not the great laboratories of the world.

His name was Albert Einstein. When it comes to producing the greatest scientific mind ever, you can throw away the mold on him. Because he doesn't fit the norm.

When God decides to make His selections to accomplish His greatest work, you can pretty much assume it won't be done the way we think it should. That certainly is true when we come to this monumental historical text.

Verse 26 begins with the conjunction “now” (δε). **What this means is this is a continuation and a contrast to the preceding story.**

The selection of Zacharias and Elizabeth to give birth to John was miraculous, but logical. Both were in the priestly line and Zacharias was actually working at the Temple when it happened. But the selection of Mary to give birth to Jesus, from a human perspective, is the most illogical choice that could be made.

If ever there were an unlikely candidate to produce the Son of God, it is Mary. Of all of the women God could have selected, this Mary of Nazareth would not have been high on anyone's list. But Mary is the right choice; Mary is God's choice. She will respond differently. Zacharias responded in doubting unbelief; Mary responded in trusting faith. What we see here is this:

GOD CHOSE AN ENGAGED VIRGIN NAMED MARY TO GIVE BIRTH TO HIS SON AND HE SENT GABRIEL TO HER TO TELL HER THAT.

God chooses unlikely people to accomplish His greatest work. Mary would never have been the choice of the religious leaders or political leaders, but she was the choice of God.

This must have been fascinating for Dr. Luke as he probably got this directly from Mary. Just imagine sitting there listening to her tell you what happened. Fortunately, Luke had his notebook and wrote it all down.

There are three narrative scenes that tell this incredible story:

NARRATIVE SCENE #1 – Gabriel appears to Mary. 1:26-27

Now the first thing we see here is that “the angel Gabriel was sent by God.” This time Gabriel is sent to an out of the way place some 90-100 miles away from Jerusalem. Angels are subject to the sovereign will of God and they carry out God’s sovereign plan. Gabriel did not identify himself to Mary as he did with Zacharias (1:19). There are six historical facts we may glean from this text:

Fact #1 - Mary was selected by God. 1:26a

The prepositional phrase “from God” indicates the motion to select Mary originated from God. This was God’s choice. This was not a choice of an angel or any human. Mary was not praying about this or looking for this.

This is the same preposition that Paul uses over and over again when referring to one’s salvation. Paul says that our salvation is “from God” and it is the same kind of selection that He made when He chose Mary (Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:2; II Thess. 1:2; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 3).

The beauty of Mary’s response was a humble acknowledgement of this reality but the tragedy of many believers’ response is an arrogant rejection of this same reality.

Fact #2 - Mary was from Nazareth. 1:26b

Nazareth was a city in southern Galilee, which was located about 65-70 miles north of Jerusalem. Nazareth had a terrible reputation in its morals and religion. It would be like a San Francisco or New Orleans. In fact, Nathaniel asked, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46).

The city of Nazareth developed a reputation as being a city of losers. Of all of the cities of the world God could have chosen—Athens, Rome, Jerusalem—He chose the least likely of places. Luke is a book that shows Theophilus that God does some of His greatest work in the lives of down and out people who live in down and out places. He delights in choosing and using people who come from the wrong side of the tracks. Mary was from Nazareth.

Perhaps you can relate. You don't have an impressive pedigree and you don't have an impressive background or resume. You are just the kind of person God loves to use.

Fact #3 - Mary was a virgin. **1:27a**

A little over 700 years before this happened, the prophet Isaiah predicted that it would be a virgin who would give birth to the Son of God (Is. 7:14).

One argument that liberals have used to attack Isaiah is the argument that the Hebrew word "virgin" (almah) may refer to a young woman who is about to be married. This word was used for Rebekah and is translated "maiden" in Genesis 24:43. But if you look carefully at Genesis 24:16, it is specifically stated that Rebekah was a virgin.

From this very text in Luke, we may clearly establish that Mary was a virgin:

(Proof #1) - The Greek word Luke uses for virgin (παρθενον) is a word that refers to one who has never had sexual intimacy with a man. It is used 15 times in the Greek New Testament and in each case this is the meaning (Matt. 1:23; 25:1, 7, 11; Luke 1:27, 27; Acts 21:9; I Cor. 7:25, 28, 34, 36, 37, 38; II Cor. 11:2; Rev. 14:4)

(Proof #2) - Mary's response to Gabriel proves she was a virgin (Luke 1:34). If she were lying, Gabriel would have pointed that out. Why would she even respond like this?

(Proof #3) - Joseph's reaction to the situation proves Mary was a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25). Joseph did originally think she had been with a man because he was going to privately put her away, but after communicating with the angel who appeared to him in a dream, he changed his mind because he was convinced she was a virgin.

(Proof #4) - Luke's own testimony as a doctor proves she was a virgin (Luke 1:3-4). Luke was a medical doctor and he knew the entire medical world would question this because there would never be another pregnancy like it. So when he uses the word "virgin" that is exactly what he meant.

Mary was a virgin. She was a young lady who was morally pure. God always uses clean, pure vessels and Mary was a virgin.

Fact #4 - Mary was engaged. **1:27b**

That word "engage" literally means Mary had promised to marry Joseph. Now the normal time period for this engagement was about a year and in the Jewish world it was taken very seriously. A pregnancy during this time period would put a woman in a very difficult situation because not only would she suffer some scandal, but she could be put to death.

From a human perspective, the ideal time for Mary to get pregnant would be after she married Joseph. But God is not interested in our ideal time. He is interested in His own time and plan regardless of how it looks to anyone.

Fact #5 - Mary was Jewish. 1:27c

There is a question among Biblical scholars whether or not “descendants of David” refers to Joseph or Mary or both. Just as both Zacharias and Elizabeth were in the Aaronic priesthood (Luke 1:5), it is possible that both Joseph and Mary were in the Davidic line. Certainly **verse 32** identifies the fact that the baby born would be in the Davidic line.

Fact #6 - Mary was named Mary. **1:27d**

Mary was a common Jewish name. In fact, there are at least six women named Mary found in the New Testament and some say seven.

According to Fred Wight, in his book of Manners and Customs of Bible Lands, Jewish girls were many times named after beautiful objects. It is not known for certain what the name “Mary” means. Many have guessed it means “exalted one.”

What we learn is that Mary was a plain, common, ordinary Jewish girl who would become the most honored woman in all of history. If you are a plain common person you are just the kind of person God loves to use. He used a woman named Mary.

NARRATIVE SCENE #2 – Gabriel speaks to Mary. **1:28-33**

God always reveals His will to His people through His revealed Word. In this case, Gabriel went to Mary to specifically reveal God’s Word and will to her. When he came to Mary, he gave her two commands:

Command #1 - Gabriel commands Mary to rejoice. **1:28**

The word “Greetings” is a word that means “rejoice” or “be glad.” The verb is an imperative, which means it is a command. Gabriel shows up to Mary and says Rejoice and he gives her two reasons:

(Reason #1) - Because you have the favor of God. **1:28a**

Now the word “favor” used here indicates that this is a pure act of God’s free grace. In other words, Mary had not earned this, nor did she deserve this. In fact, nothing is said about Mary like it was about Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were both “righteous” and “blameless” in all commandments of God, but that is not said of Mary. She is the recipient of pure grace. This point is stressed two times in this very context. Mary has been chosen to experience the undeserved, unmerited grace of God in a very special way.

(Reason #2) - Because you have the presence of God. **1:28b**

The Lord is specifically with you. That is how it reads “The Lord with you.” Here are two reasons every believer may rejoice—we have been chosen to experience the grace of God. We don’t deserve it, we can’t earn it and we don’t merit it. Furthermore, we have the presence of God in our life. What Grace.

Mary’s response is not an initial rejoicing, which was what the angel commanded her to do. Her mind is racing. **Now what troubles Mary does not seem to be the appearance of the angel but his statements and words.** Verse 29 says that this troubled Mary. The angel tells her to rejoice and that she is the recipient of the grace of God and she becomes greatly troubled.

Luke chooses a rare Greek word for “perplexed” (διαταρασσω). It is a word that emphasizes that Mary was very agitated by this and not in a real positive way. The word “ponder” (διαλογιζομαι) means she was trying to mentally reason this out and make a balanced sense of it (G. Abbott Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 111 & 109).

Command #2 - Gabriel commands Mary to not be afraid. **1:30-33**

The angel names Mary here. Mary had not told him her name; but of course God knew it. He knows the names of everyone, just read the book of Numbers. **The reason Mary does not need to be afraid is because she has found favor with God. Again the word “favor” is the word grace.**

There are different Greek words that are used for “finding” something. The one used here is the one that means you have just found something for which you are not even looking (*Ibid.*, p. 188). In other words, God, in His amazing grace, has chosen to give you something about which you are not thinking or looking.

If you are the recipient of the grace of God, you don’t need to be afraid of heaven or heavenly messengers. If you are out of favor with God, it is a reason for being greatly afraid. Now because of finding the favor of God, she would experience eight amazing blessings:

(Blessing #1) - Mary would conceive a child. **1:31a**

The word Dr. Luke uses for “conceive” (συλλαμβανω) is one that means to bring together in the “womb,” the stomach area the formation of a child (*Ibid.*, p. 422). This is the same word that is used in the Septuagint to refer to the normal conception of a baby (Gen. 4:1, 17). The reason this is important to see is that God is the One who forms the baby in a mother so if you abort a baby, you are destroying something specifically formed by God. That is the word Luke uses here.

(Blessing #2) - Mary would give birth to a son. **1:31b**

The noun “son” is gender specific. He will not be a girl, but a boy.

(Blessing #3) - Mary's son would be named Jesus. **1:31c**

Gabriel says the specific name of this son will be Jesus, which means your Son will be God's salvation and Savior. Matthew says the specific flare of this name means He will save sinners (Matt. 1:21).

(Blessing #4) - Mary's son would be great. **1:32a**

Mary's son would be at the ultimate "mega" level. Paul said this means He is our "great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13).

(Blessing #5) - Mary's son would be the Son of the Highest. **1:32b**

The adjective "highest" is a superlative that means your Son will be the Most High Person of the Heavens and Earth. He will literally be the Son of God.

(Blessing #6) - Mary's son would inherit the Davidic Throne. **1:32c**

The Lord God will specifically give Him the Davidic Throne. What this means is Israel will have a specific land and Kingdom and Mary's Son will be in charge of it.

(Blessing #7) - Mary's son would rule Israel forever. **1:33a**

This baby you will have, Mary, will be the Messianic ruler over Israel's Kingdom. He will be the King of Israel.

(Blessing #8) - Mary's son would rule over everything forever. **1:33b**

If that isn't enough, your Son will rule over everything forever in heaven and on earth. No other King has ever had such power. But your son will have it.

NARRATIVE SCENE #3 – Mary responds to Gabriel. **1:34-38**

You are talking to a teen girl and this is mind-boggling to her. She responded in **verse 34**—what she literally says is this: "how can this be because "a man I have not known" (ανδρα ου γνωσκω). She had never been physically intimate with any man, which is the way this normally works. She probably knew that God had miraculously opened barren wombs before for a man and woman, but there had never been nor will there ever be another virgin conception.

When you first read the response of Mary in **verse 34**, it seems similar to Zacharias' response in **verse 18**. But upon close examination we will discover they are totally different responses. **Zacharias' response questioned the angel's credibility (he wanted to see some sign), whereas Mary's response questioned her own ability (How can this be, since I am a virgin?).**

It is a sin to doubt God; but it is human to doubt self. It is wrong to question the credibility of God or His Word, but it is normal to question the ability of ones' self.

Gabriel gave Mary three answers to her question:

Answer #1 - The Holy Spirit will come upon you. **1:35a**

The Holy Spirit is going to work a miracle. Just as God created the world out of nothing, he will create His own child in your womb. The verb "come upon" is passive. Mary, you won't have anything to do with this action, except be the recipient of it.

Answer #2 - The Holy Spirit will overshadow you. **1:35b**

The result of this is that you will give birth to a "holy Child" who is the "Son of God." This is how you, a sinful woman, can give birth to a holy baby without a sin nature. The Holy Spirit will overshadow this entire process.

In fact, Gabriel said in **verse 36** even your cousin Elizabeth has conceived and is in her sixth month. This was probably the first Mary heard of Elizabeth. She had "sequestered herself" and would have had no way of knowing about it. But this would certainly become a confirmatory evidence of God's power.

Answer #3 - Nothing is impossible with God. **1:37**

This is one of the most powerful statements in the entire Bible concerning the power of God—"Nothing shall be impossible for God."

God is not bound by laws of nature, science, religion, Satan and man. God has the ability to do whatever He wants whenever He wants. This is one of the great motivators for prayer.

Now when Gabriel got done saying these things, Mary's response was not "Let's see some sign that proves this." Her response was in **verse 38**, "I am the servant of the Lord and let God's word and will be done in and through me."

Verse 38 says the angel departed from Mary.

Mary was simply asked to believe God was capable of the impossible. Now that is what you are asked to believe. You know you are a sinner. If you are honest you will admit that. What you are asked to believe is that all your sins will be washed away by believing on Mary's child, Jesus Christ. It is pure grace offered to you. Will you accept it or believe it.

One of the things our President said to people who were not doing so well, is vote for me, what do you have to lose? We would like to borrow that for a moment. Maybe you are a sinner who has done horrible things. Perhaps you have had an abortion. Perhaps you have been a drunk. Perhaps you have been immoral. Perhaps you have been a liar. Why not believe in Jesus Christ? I'll tell you what you have to lose if you do—HELL!