

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 1- Luke 1:26-31**

9 The Angelic Announcement to Mary- Part 1

December 14, 2008

Luke 1:26-31

What a Joy to return to the **Gospel of Luke** this morning. And we need to remember that there is so much in Chapters 1 and 2- that you really can't hurry through it. So I am grateful for a deliberate verse by verse, line by line, and precept by precept journey through this magnificent Story of Salvation.

Keep in mind that when we get past this initial introduction of Luke and get into the Life and Teachings of Christ- we will deal with things that are probably a little more familiar to you- although I believe that you will see them in a new light.

But I want to be faithful to the Text of Scripture that we are in now, and I want to do what Jonathan Edwards said and "Treat the Scriptures fairly" so that we will get all that God has packed into this first Chapter.

And this morning we're going to find ourselves in Luke 1- beginning with verse 26. But before we actually read the text before us- I think a little bit of background is warranted.

Throughout the nations of the world there are what are called "holidays". There is Independence Day. There's Presidents Day. And other nations have specific days, and, generally, they are used to commemorate certain people or events that are historic or important to that nation.

And probably the most widely shared commemoration across the world, involving more people and more nations than any other holiday celebration is Christmas. It transcends national history and it goes everywhere Christianity has ever been. But even though the celebration of Christmas is the most widely celebrated holiday around

the world- in many ways it is the least understood and the most obscured. All of the other holidays and all of the other celebrations and all of the other commemorations of people and events across the globe take note of human events made by human beings. But Christmas commemorates a Divine Person and a Divine Event.

In Christmas- we're not remembering what a man has done or what men have done- but we are remembering what God has done. So this is not a celebration of human history, this is not a recognition of human achievement- no, Christmas is a recognition of a marvelous, miraculous, Divine Accomplishment. Christmas celebrates the most monumental Event and the most monumental Person in the history of the world.

Christmas is all about the supernatural and miraculous Event of the Eternal, Sovereign Creator God of the universe taking on human flesh and becoming Man. It is about the Incarnation- God becoming Man which never happened before Jesus was born of a virgin and will never happen again. And as I have already told you- this glorious Event was so miraculous, so earth shaking- it changed everything- that the Church had to invent a word to describe it- Incarnation- that Word never existed before this time as Man struggled to capture in words the moment when God became a Man. And this wonderful Event begins right here in verse 26:

Luke 1:26-38

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

29 But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

30 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 bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; 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 His kingdom will have no end.”

34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”

38 And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

And with those very simple and straightforward and unmistakably clear Words is the beginning of the startling and glorious and beautiful and true Account of the greatest miracle that has ever been manifested on earth- God becoming flesh- The Incarnation. And throughout this account we sit and read and listen to these Words and we are shaken and our breath is taken away and we realize that there is absolutely nothing Manmade about this. There is nothing human about this. There is no more wonderful, no more marvelous, no more compelling, no more miraculous Story in all of human history than this one as God Himself manifests the Drama of Salvation in the birth of the God/Man.

And although what we just read is the actual Announcement of The Incarnation- this is not the first mention of the coming Savior- the Divine Child Who would be born. In fact- you can go all the way back to **Genesis 3**- where the Fall of Man is recorded- and in verse 15 there is the Promise made of this particular God Man being born and He is described in a very unique way- let's turn and read **Genesis 3:15** together:

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Here, right after Adam and Eve sinned and all of mankind has been cursed by God- God makes a very startling Promise:

... I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.

Now notice that God didn't say this would just happen as a natural result of the Fall- no, please note that God said, **"I will put"**. God said that He will Sovereignly impose Himself on both the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. But what will God's intervention onto both seeds actually do? God will inject "enmity" onto the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent, and God will inject or impose or place or put "enmity" onto the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

Now the word "enmity" is a fascinating word. It is only found three times in the Old Testament and only five times in the New. The Hebrew word that was translated into English in your Bible here in **Genesis 3:15** as "enmity" is a feminine noun that means: *hostility; animosity; ill will; great malice that leads to violent acts; and a lingering hatred between mortal enemies.*

So it is not a natural occurrence that the seed of the woman has enmity against the seed of the serpent, but that God put that animosity, and that lingering hatred, and that malice that leads to violent acts in the nature of both the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

But notice something else in Genesis 3:15 that tells us that this Divine Promise has nothing to do with the average human being having enmity against snakes, but that it is, in fact, God prophesying of the coming Christ because God talks in this verse about **"the seed of the woman"**.

And what is interesting about this is that a woman has no seed- the seed of life is in the man- not the woman, and yet here God said that there will be a woman who will have a seed. And this woman will bear a Child Who will successfully bruise the serpent's head. So we can see that this is the very first prophecy in the Bible that the Messiah would come- and that this God/Man will utterly destroy the one who had destroyed the human race; He will bruise his head. A human offspring

of Eve would be born of a "seed" that will be in a particular woman and that Seed will deliver the fatal blow to the Deceiver.

Now later on in the book of Genesis another prophecy of the coming child when in **Genesis 49:10** when Jacob prophesied:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.

Shiloh means in Hebrew, *"the one to whom it belongs...the rightful one...the rightful ruler...the true King...the true monarch...the true lion of Judah,"* as Jesus is called in **The Revelation 5:5**- the true King of Judah will come to establish His great and glorious Kingdom and reign. Later on in the Pentateuch- the Books of Moses- Deuteronomy 18- Moses prophesied that God would raise up a capital "P" Prophet like no other prophet- the great Prophet- the final Prophet will come- the ultimate Prophet. That prophecy also looked forward to the birth of Christ.

In **Psalms 2:7**- the psalmist says,

... You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

And then **Psalm 2:8** says:

... I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession.

So God is going to give His begotten Son the nations as His inheritance. So we can see that the Son will come to rule the world.

And, of course, there is Isaiah 9 where Isaiah prophesied that a child would be born, a Son would be given, and the government of the world would be upon His shoulders and His Name would be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Father of eternity, the Prince of peace, and the increase of this Child's Government as King there would be no end, and upon His Scepter would come all Authority and He would rule the world forever.

Daniel 2:45- Daniel 9:26 looked at the coming Messiah, the coming King, the coming Anointed One, the coming Monarch who would establish His glorious Kingdom.

And Isaiah the prophet also saw in Chapter 53- the coming Child as One Who would be a suffering servant. Isaiah said,

“But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”

So this Child would bear the sins of all of us. He would be bruised for our iniquities and would be chastised for our peace and with the stripes that are laid on this Child's back- our reconciliation to God would be mended or healed.

The entire Old Testament is filled with Prophecy and Promises and the New Testament is filled with the *fulfillment* of those Prophecies and Promises in the Person of Jesus Christ. And this is illustrated in what happened with the Disciples at the end of **Luke**- in chapter **24:44**- when Jesus after His Resurrection said

Luke 24:44-45

44 ...These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

Jesus showed them Himself in the Old Testament- all throughout the Law- all throughout the Prophets and all throughout the entire Old Testament.

You see, dear friends, the Old Testament is all about Jesus. Every Book of the Old Testament anticipates the coming of the Savior- every single Book. All throughout the **Psalms**, all throughout the Prophets, all throughout the Law- Jesus is seen as the Ultimate and Final Sacrifice. The general prophecies of His great Kingdom, the specific prophecies such as Micah's statement that He would be born in the town of Bethlehem, and over 350 predictions concerning this Child Who would be born are given in the Old Testament.

And the first thing that I want you to see is the Divine Messenger in **Luke 1:26-27**:

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,

27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Now this is the second time in this same Chapter that the same holy angel appears to bring the announcement of a miraculous birth. The first was the miraculous birth of John the Baptist to a very old couple who physically could not have a child, and the second is the miraculous birth of Jesus to this young woman who is a virgin.

And remember that as this is the second time in about 6 months that Gabriel has appeared- no angel had spoken to a man for over 400 years. Nobody had heard a Word from God in over 400 years, and there hadn't been a miracle in over 400 years, and there hadn't been a season of miracles in over 500 years.

Look how Luke words this in verse 26:

Now in the sixth month

What does Luke mean by saying this? Is he talking about the sixth month of the year? No, this is the sixth month of Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy. Go back to verse 24. The Promise of God to Zacharias came true. And after his duty in the Temple was completed- he went home. And it says in verse 23,

Luke 1:23&24a

23 When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

24 After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months...

Elizabeth- Zacharias' wife became pregnant. And she kept herself in seclusion for five months. And then in the sixth month- Gabriel came to Mary. Do you see that?

Now back in verse 19- Gabriel is identified as the angel who spoke to Zacharias. And Gabriel is a special angel- one of only two holy angels who are named in the entire Bible. Michael- who is associated with power and strength- sort of super-angel, and Gabriel- who brings special messages from God to man. It was Gabriel who brought the announcement to Daniel in Daniel 9 of the rest of redemptive history as

he unfolded the incredible vision of Daniel's seventy weeks. And it is Gabriel who comes to bring it again.

And Luke tells us in verse 26 that Gabriel was

... sent from God ...

So we can see that Luke always focuses on the Divine aspect of things. So the original Source of this Announcement was God. And this is really the key to the whole story. Luke is recording the Truth here about Divine Intervention in the lives of ordinary people so that God's Word and Will will come to pass in the earth.

And this is the beginning of the greatest moment in human history, a moment all generations in Israel and the world have awaited. Gabriel comes with the most astounding and significant birth announcement ever made. And, amazingly, Gabriel comes right from God. Back in verse 19 it says, "*I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God.*" That's where Gabriel stands, to be dispatched by God Himself to this duty. He comes down out of heaven to a city in Galilee called Nazareth.

And to call Nazareth a "city" is quite a stretch. Actually the Greeks didn't have a word for town and that's why Nazareth got called a "city". The Greek is "*polis*", from which we get things like political, metropolitan. And this word has to do with a city, but Nazareth was by no stretch of the imagination an actual city. It only had a couple of thousand people at the most. So we would call this place a "town".

And Luke tells us that Nazareth is located in Galilee. You know why Luke goes out of his way to tell his readers where Nazareth is located? Because Nazareth is so insignificant to even the Jews of that time that if Luke would not have told us where Nazareth was- nobody- especially all the Gentile readers of this Book who lived as far away as Rome wouldn't have any idea where Nazareth was.

And so Luke gives all the world the actual location of this tiny little hamlet- so they will know exactly where the angel came.

Now Nazareth was very insignificant. It wasn't the seat of anything. It wasn't an important place at all. There were east and west trade routes that ran from Europe across the Middle East into Asia. And there were north and south trade routes that ran from Africa

through that narrow band of land called Palestine to the land to the north, but all those trade routes completely missed Nazareth. And so outside of the few people who actually lived there- nobody would have ever known where Gabriel came to announce the Incarnation to Mary except Luke wrote this down.

Nazareth is located about 60 to 70 miles north of Jerusalem depending on what point in Jerusalem you begin- which was quite a ways if you're going by foot. It was fifteen miles west of the north tip of the Sea of Galilee and about twenty-two miles from the Mediterranean. So somewhere in the middle between the tip of the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean sits this little town- located at the very tip of the Jezreel Valley on the southern slope of the foothills of the Lebanon Mountains to the north. And it's right at the north of the plain of Esdraelon, also called Megiddo where the battle of Armageddon will be fought.

And there are three mountains that are famous in that area- Mount Tabor, Mount Hermon, and Mount Carmel where Elijah met the priests of Baal. You see, this is important because you would think that Almighty God would have only dealt with important people in the major cities like Jerusalem. But here God sends Gabriel to what was probably the most insignificant town in all of Israel. And that is because God is the God of small things and God deals with insignificant people.

You see, Galilee was not the seat of Jewish culture, nor was it the seat of Jewish religion. Galilee wasn't the seat of anything. And in actuality Galilee tended to be more Gentile in its orientation. When you get in to Judah in the south and you get in Jerusalem and that area, to the north, of course, was more of the land of Israel. To the south was a vast barren almost uninhabitable desert- except by nomads. To the east was another desert and to the west, of course, was the sea. And so the southern part of Israel was somewhat isolated. But in the north there was Gentile population surrounding that area, that's why it's called Galilee of the Gentiles, and it's wonderful to think of the fact that when God sent the Jewish Messiah, the promised Jewish King, when Salvation came first to Israel it came in a place that was intersected by Gentiles almost as if to say, *"This one will be the Savior of the whole world."* So Nazareth was a very obscure little town.

So in verse 26 we see the Divine Messenger, and now in verse 27- we see the Divine Choice- the Divine Choice. Looking at this from God's Perspective- the Divine Choice. Read verse 27 again with me:

To a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

So the angel comes down from the Presence of God- and comes down to the region of Galilee to this little town of Nazareth to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph of the descendants of King David. And the virgin's name was Mary. The angel comes down and goes to one house- one house. God has chosen one person.

And this is a most astonishing thing. Out of all the Purposes and Plans of God that could have been- this is the One Plan that He chose. Verse 27 says that the angle came down to this particular virgin who lived in this particular town.

Now over in verse 34- when Mary was told all of this- she said, *"How can this be since I'm a virgin?"* So she confirmed her own virginity. And in contrast to Gabriel's first trip earlier in the chapter, when he went to bring God's message of a miracle birth to an old man, this time he comes to bring God's message of a miracle birth to a young virgin girl.

Now the English word "virgin" comes from the Greek word, *"parthenos"*, and it means: *one who has had no sexual relation*. That's exactly what it means. One who has had no sexual relation. This word is never used anywhere in the entire Bible to speak of a married woman. And according to Roman Law of that day- the *minimum* age for girls to be engaged and married was twelve. And for boys, whom we all know develop slower than girls- the minimum age was fourteen.

Now Augustus- the Roman emperor, had set the minimum age for girls to be married at ten- that would be the age for engagement. And Jewish practice basically followed Roman Law at that time. The average girl of that day was usually engaged to be married around the age of twelve or thirteen, and they would actually be married after the engagement or the betrothal time was over. And the reason they did that was because they, therefore, would guarantee their virginity. As soon as they had reached puberty they would be engaged and then soon

after- they would be married. And in that way they didn't have to live five, ten, who knows how many years, trying to restrain their normal adult passions.

So, here was a girl- and I mean a girl of twelve or thirteen who was engaged to a man. Now literally the word "engaged" or "espoused" is "betrothed", and it actually means much more than what we know as engagement today. It's not the same as our engagement.

Betrothal in the Middle East during that time frame was a legally binding relationship and it was arranged by the parents. It was a legal document that the parents had agreed that their children would marry and it occurred soon after puberty. Probably was planned for in the community. When they were younger they were saying, *"You know, I would like him for her, or her for him,"* and the parents kind of worked that through until the time was right to make the official betrothal. There was no sexual relationship during the period of betrothal which usually lasted a year. The couple did not live together- but only death or divorce could sever the contract. And if the man died before the marriage could actually take place- the betrothed girl would be considered a widow even though she was still a virgin and had never actually married.

Betrothal lasted about a year. And during that year the girl would prove her faithfulness by not giving herself to anyone else. She would prove her faithfulness and she would prove her purity. And during that same year the boy would prepare a home for her, a place for her, usually with an addition to his father's house.

And at the end of that year when they were 13 or 14, there would be a wedding feast that usually lasted seven days when everybody came together and celebrated for seven days...the kind of thing that Jesus attended in **John 2**. And at the end of the seven days- the friend of the bridegroom handed him his bride and everybody left and the marriage was then consummated.

So Mary was betrothed. Her husband had paid a dowry- a price to her father- and the actual wedding was still to happen sometime in the future. Now the young man to whom she was betrothed is named Joseph. And Joseph was of the descendants of King David. He had Davidic blood in his veins. He was in the royal line. His blood line had come right through King David. So Joseph was in the kingly line- the

royal line of that great king of Israel from whose loins the Messiah- the Savior would come.

Now there are many who say that Joseph was much older than Mary- maybe about 40 or so years old. And the reason that people say that is because there is nothing more said about Joseph after Jesus was twelve years old - which would have made Joseph at about his mid fifties and a candidate for an early grave. And that may be true- but I cannot find anything anywhere in the Bible to suggest that. But what I can say to you with authority is that this man named Joseph had royal blood in his veins. And remember- there was no Jewish king at this time. There was an Edomite king by the name of Herod- who was reigning at this particular time- and who called himself "The King of the Jews", but the Jews of that day hated him because he really wasn't a Jew. This all took place at or around 4 B.C.

Now Joseph's genealogy is given in **Matthew 1** to prove that he came from David- and Matthew opens his Gospel account with these words:

Matthew 1:1

The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

And if Jesus was a Son of David bearing the line of David- His legal father had to be as well. And even though Joseph was not His real father by blood- Joseph passed that lineage on to Jesus because Jesus was his Son by adoption- which was legally binding.

So Jesus was born to a man who was royalty. And Joseph was a humble Galilean carpenter- in an obscure town called Nazareth with royal blood.

And the virgin's name was Mary. This is interesting, that's the Greek word for Miriam, the Hebrew is Miriam, the Greek is Mary. And her name means: "exalted one." Nothing describes her better. The virgin's name was Mary period. And I find that fascinating. You see, dear friends, I find what the Bible does not say to be as interesting as what it does say.

Here it doesn't say anything at all about her other than she was a virgin and her name. It doesn't say she was a devout believer. I mean,

even Zacharias and Elizabeth got a verse that spoke of their faithfulness- verse 6 says "They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blameless in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord." They got a commendation from Luke but Mary got nothing. So we will just call her "Mary"- period. That's all.

Now it is very likely that she also was from David's line. And that if we traced her ancestry- it would get back to David. Now why do I say that? Because there's a genealogy in **Luke 3**- that we'll get to later- that if you match the genealogy in **Luke 3** with the genealogy in **Matthew 1**- you'll see that they are different.

Now we know that the genealogy in **Matthew 1** is Joseph's family and, therefore, the genealogy in **Luke 3** must be Mary that Luke got from Mary as he interviewed her for this writing.

And even though she's not named in that genealogy- that would be the line that led to Mary so that Jesus would have been a son of David by his mother and not just by Joseph- who really wasn't Jesus' father because Jesus' Father was God- not Joseph.

So both Joseph and Mary were David's descendant. Both of them gave to Jesus' royal heritage. Mary gave it to Him through blood by birth and Joseph gave it through the right to rule by adoption.

So, the Divine Messenger comes to this girl of Divine Choice. Now comes the third point- The Divine Blessing. We looked at the Divine Messenger and the Divine Choice- now let's look at the Divine Blessing. Turn and read with me **Luke 1:28**:

And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Luke said, "And coming in, he said to her", and I don't want to beg the obvious- but obviously she was in the house doing what a twelve- or thirteen-year-old girl would do- domestic duties- probably dominated by preparing food.

And apparently no one was there with her. And the angel Gabriel entered the house- and somehow he comes into the house- either he just appeared to her like he did with Zacharias, or he walked in and he said, "Greetings," it's the Greek word "*chaïro*", which means: *hail*, or *to give one greeting*.

Now if the angel Gabriel- right out of the very Presence of God showed up in your house and just said, "Greetings" to you- it would seem like somewhat of an understatement, wouldn't it? Where is all the fanfare? I just love the simplicity of this. Gabriel says, "Greetings." And I think maybe the simplicity of that introduction was designed to prevent Mary from panicking. *"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."*

Now I'm sure that Mary knew this wasn't a human being. He's certainly not like any other human being she ever saw. This young girl who had no adult experiences to galvanize her- who in the tenderness of her youth could be very frightened by perhaps a lot of things- hears from this supernatural Being whom she can see and who speaks in a human voice- in her own Hebrew tongue- "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Now the Roman Catholic statement, *"Hail, Mary, full of grace"*, that comes from the Latin Vulgate translation of this verse. And you hear it sung in that familiar song *Ave Maria*, and it means "full of Grace."

And I need to address this issue to some degree because the misunderstanding of the meaning of this verse by the Roman Catholic Church has spawned an incredibly blasphemous religious system. The whole system of Maryolatry comes back to the mistranslation of this verse. And the mistranslation here has created the false notion that Mary- in herself- possess certain Graces that we need, and that she has the ability and the authority to pass on to us- and that is simply not true. The Bible does not teach that at all.

In fact, the Bible teaches just the opposite and teaches that Mary- along with every other human being on earth- was born in sin and shapened in iniquity, and Mary was a sinner who needed Salvation just like we do, and Mary was not righteous herself but she needed the sinless spotless Righteousness of Jesus in order to go to Heaven- just like we do, and Mary died just like every human dies – because of Original Sin, and Mary was in the Upper Room with the other 119 souls who were filled with the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost.

The official catechism of the Roman Catholic Church about Mary is blasphemous and unbiblical and they are moving ever closer to making Mary to be the fourth part of the Godhead- which I believe they

will do in the near future. I am not simply railing out against Catholics- but somebody must speak the Truth about the false teaching of this religious cult. Mary is being taught today as being a "Co-Redemptrix" with Christ for Salvation, and that we must go to Jesus before we can go to God, and we must go to Mary before we can go to Jesus.

And all this heretical teaching about Mary comes from the incorrect translation of this one single verse. And the result of this wrong translation is that Mary is said to be full of grace which she bestows on others. So Mary becomes the source of Grace. And Mary possesses Grace to give. And this is not some side issue but is the dominant theme of all Roman Catholic theology- that Mary is the bestower of Grace. So I ask you- does it matter that we translate the Bible correctly?

The angel never said that Mary was the source of Grace- but that Mary was the recipient of Grace. *"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."* You see, there wasn't anything inherently worthy about Mary. She didn't receive any commendation from the angel here. It doesn't say, *"And the virgin's name was Mary, and Mary was righteous and godly and loved God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength, and served the Lord with all her heart,"* and on and on. It doesn't say that. It just says, "Mary, period, you've been chosen." Nothing about her. We don't ever know anything about her. We don't know anything about her life.

But we do know that Mary is not the bestower of Grace. We do know that nobody can go to Mary and receive any Grace. And I need to say this- even if it shakes you up a bit- Mary can't hear your prayers either. Mary doesn't answer anybody's prayers, and neither does Joseph, and neither does Luke or Paul or Moses or Isaiah or David or George Washington or Mary Tyler Moore.

Only God hears and answers prayers. Mary cannot even hear the prayers of anyone. And Mary has no Grace whatsoever to give to anyone. Whatever personal righteousness that Mary may or may not have had at its best is no better or no worse than the personal righteousness of anyone else- it is as a filthy rag. So Mary is not the *giver* of Grace- she is the *receiver* of Grace.

What the angel said was that Mary was going to receive God's Grace which God would freely give her- unconditionally. She was highly Graced. She was receive the wonderful Grace that God alone could give. And this Grace would come because the angle said,

"The Lord is with you".

And that statement is very similar to what was said to Gideon in **Judges 6:12- The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."** The Lord is with you, Mary, you're going to receive Grace from God- Divine Grace.

And we must understand that it had to be that way because Mary was unworthy. The Lord gives Grace by definition to people who are not worthy to receive it- that's why it's called "Grace" and not called "Payment". If Mary *deserved* God's Favor- it would be a payment or a reward for her righteous life- but because it is called "Grace" that shows us that it is given to those who are unworthy and undeserving.

Those who receive payment or reward for their deeds are called righteous, holy, and perfect- which is why we don't know any of those people. But those who receive Grace are simply called "sinners", because if they weren't sinners they wouldn't need Grace.

Now look at the end of **Luke 1:28:**

... Greetings, favored one!

The verses used in these sermons are from the New American Standard Bible; The King James Version adds:

blessed art thou among women.

Now be very careful here. The angel said that Mary was blessed among all women. But notice that the angel did not say that Mary was the one who blesses- but that she was the one who was blessed. Mary was blessed by God- even though she did not deserve it because God had chosen her to bear Jesus. But she does not have the ability or the power to bless anyone else- she was the recipient of God's gracious blessing- not the one who gives the blessing.

Nobody should ever say, "O Mary, forgive my sin", or "O Mary, bless me", or "Mary, take me to Jesus", or "Mary, plead for me before Jesus", because Mary can't do that. Mary doesn't hear anybody's prayer- never has- and never will. That is a very terrible false teaching that has deceived millions over the years.

But the Truth of the matter is that since Mary died- and ever since Mary has gone to Heaven and been in the Presence of God- like all of those who are in Heaven- she has known only the Glories of God's Presence. She doesn't know anything about you or anybody else- neither does any saint. The only one who hears our prayers is God. Mary never gave Grace to anybody because she has no Grace of her own to give. You and I can't give Grace to anybody, can we? And Mary is just like you- born in sin and needing forgiveness and the imputation of Christ's Righteousness to enter into Heaven. I can't give you Grace either because only God gives Grace.

Now some will hear what I am saying about this issue and the only thing that you will get out of all that I have said is that I am just railing out against Roman Catholics and that is sad because if that is all you hear- you have missed the whole point.

The correct point for you to hear is that unless you come to God through Jesus alone for Grace and Mercy and for His Blood to wash your sins away and for His perfect Righteousness to be imputed to you by the agency of faith alone- you will die in your sins. That is the seriousness of what we are talking about here. You come to Jesus alone and you come in the one single way that Jesus said to come or you die in your sins. And I don't want anyone to go to hell- so I am risking being called a bigot and mean and hard so I can be faithful to warn you to guard your heart and to be sure that you are trusting in Jesus and in Jesus alone for Salvation.

And that's what shook her to the core, look at verse 29:

Luke 1:29

But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

Don't you know Mary was confused. The great angel Gabriel is standing before this young girl- giving her the greatest news that the

world has ever heard and she is saying, "What in the world- I'm just a young girl getting ready to marry this man- and now this angel is telling me all this?"

Now remember that Mary has had no formal religious training. And it may be possible that she has had no religious training even in her own home with her parents other than very vague concepts about God. And then keep in mind that even Zacharias- who did have formal religious training and was a priest for many years- back in verse 12- even Zacharias was fearful at the appearance of Gabriel. So just try to imagine how frightened Mary must have been right about now.

And it's not so much the appearance of Gabriel that strikes her, although she does have fear as we will find out in verse 30- but it's what he said that shook her. She is *diatarasso*- that's the Greek word that was translated into English here as "disturbed", and that means that she was perplexed- she's confused. But unlike Zacharias- this word does *not* mean that she was in unbelief or faithless- but simply that she was confused.

This word speaks about a mental state- not a sinful condition of her heart- that she was perplexed by what the angel said. It was like Mary was saying, "*What do you mean God has graced me and that the Lord is with me?*" Now why would Mary be so perplexed by this kind of statement? Precisely because she knew she was a sinner and unworthy of such a greeting.

Mary knew full well who she was just as we know full well who we are. And even though Mary has incorrectly been placed as being almost Divine- she is really just one of us- she is not some quasi-supernatural being- she is just a simple girl who lives in a very unremarkable little town in a very small nation that is under the very cruel domination by the Romans, and God has not visited this people in over 400 years, and God has not spoken to this people in over 400 years, and now the angel Gabriel is standing in her house talking to her!

And Mary knows that she is not worthy of this kind of greeting, and Mary knows that she is a sinner- that's why in Luke 1:47- when she praises God, she says, "*God, my Savior.*" Because she knew full well that she needed a Savior. She knew what all righteous people know- that our righteousness is as filthy rags and we are all sinners who have transgressed against God and we cannot earn God's favor by what we

do- so we must come to God broken over our sin, helpless to deserve Grace, and beg God to forgive us, and so that we may trust in the finished Work of Christ alone to satisfy God's demand of Judgment against our sins and to receive Righteousness by faith alone.

And the fact that Mary called God her Savior makes me think that she was already a saved lady and that she really did know God and that she was a true believer. And the reason I say that is because she was struck with the fact that she didn't deserve anything from God. And it's that kind of humility that demonstrates true righteousness. All genuinely righteous people are distressed when they come before God because they know they're sinners.

All saved people say things like, *"What would God ever have in mind in choosing to favor me with grace?"* Now Mary might well have been less surprised if the angel had showed up and said, *"Mary, God's going to judge you. Mary, God knows your heart, He knows your sin and He hears what you say and He reads what you think, and I'm here to tell you you're going to be judged."* And Mary might have reacted just like Isaiah did when he saw God and say, *"Woe is me, for I am undone."* Mary might have expected the angel to say something like that to her.

But for her to be told that she is going to be graced by God, that she is going to be the recipient of God's Grace, and for her to know that she's just a humble, sinful, lowly girl engaged to a common carpenter with all the struggles of the heart of a young person. How is it that she could be the object of anything but God's judgment? How could she be singled out for any special favor?

So Mary just kept pondering- *"What kind of greeting is this?"* Because nothing at all could have prepared her for this breathtaking announcement. Humble, common, uneducated sinful girl- how did she arrive at the focal point of Divine History? *"Why there hasn't been an angel to appear to anyone in over four centuries- why me, why now, what does all this mean"*

And in the middle of Mary's great confusion- the angel keep right on giving her the Divine Announcement that he had received directly from God- look at verse 30:

Luke 1:30-33

30 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 bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; 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 His kingdom will have no end.”

The fact that the angel said, *“Fear not, Mary”*, shows us that he knew full well how frightened she was. And this is what angels often said to people when they appeared to them, “Fear not”- especially during this time of many angels appearing to many different people in many different ways.

Luke 1:13- the very same angel Gabriel says to Zacharias, *“Fear not”*. **Luke 2:10** when the angels appeared to the shepherds in the field, they said, “Fear not”. So seeing a holy angel out of the very Presence of God is a very frightening thing to people who realize that they are sinful.

But there is nothing for Mary to fear- because Gabriel has not brought her news of cataclysmic Judgment because here the angel tells her- *“Nothing to fear, Mary- because you have found favor with God”*. In other words, God has graced you. Why? Divine Choice. Sovereign Election. Mary had not done anything to earn this Divine Favor; Mary had not done anything to deserve it- but it was a free gift of God’s Merciful Grace to an unworthy sinner. Mary was not and is not a source of Grace. But like the rest of us- Mary was a recipient of God’s Amazing, magnificent Grace.

So the issue here is not Mary’s worthiness- because she wasn’t worthy just like you are I am not worthy. No, the issue here is God’s Own Choice. The issue here is not Mary’s merit- the issue here is God’s Sovereignty. It was said of Noah, “Why did God spare Noah? God drowned the whole world and saved Noah? Why?”

Genesis 6:8

But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

God graciously chose Noah- not based on anything that Noah did or did not do- but only because it pleased the Lord to do so. And God graciously chose Mary. She didn't deserve it, she wasn't worthy of it- she was just a young girl- just a sinner like everybody else- yet God Sovereignly chose her to bear His Son.

So this is not a statement about Mary's spiritual life- Scripture does not give us one single statement about Mary's own personal spiritual life. And I think that's a good thing because if any small thing had been said- imagine what people would have concocted and said about this little girl.

But God wants you to know this morning that this Grace from God came to one of whom nothing could be said to make her worthy. And Mary knew it.

Later on this young girl praised God. In **Luke 1:46-55** Mary said,

46 ...“My soul exalts the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48 “For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

49 “For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.

50 “AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

51 “He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.*

52 “He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

53 “HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed.

54 “He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy,

55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

Look again at the end of verse 48:

... behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed

Notice that she didn't say that all generations will call her "the one who blesses"- but from this day forward all generations will call

Mary "the one who was blessed by God with grace and favor that she did not deserve". *"For the mighty One has done great things for me."* And what is amazing about it is, *"Holy is His name."* But how can a holy God do such great things for such a sinner as me? She knew. She was humble because God had blessed her. Do you know? Do you know how a holy God can bless sinners through this Child that Mary was to birth? Do you know Jesus? Has God visited you with Divine Choice? Has God's Sovereign Will come to you? Have you found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord?

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.