

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

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 1- Luke 1:26-38** **10 The Child to Be Born Will Be Called Holy**

December 21, 2008

Luke 1:26-38

Verse 26: **“In the sixth month** [that is, the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy with John the Baptist] **the angel Gabriel was sent from God . . .**”, and that is the most fundamental fact about Christmas and about the Incarnation. The angel was sent from God, Christmas comes from God, the Incarnation comes from God, Salvation comes from God, Love comes from God, Joy comes from God, Peace comes from God, Truth comes from God, Morality comes from God, Hope comes from God.

So this Story of Salvation starts with *God*. It comes from *God*. An angel was sent *from God*. So therefore- Christmas has no Biblical meaning at all without God. Now it has an *American* meaning without God and it has a *European* meaning without God and it has a *secular* meaning without God and it has a *commercial* meaning without God. Christmas has a *materialistic* meaning without God, it has an *idolatry* meaning without God, it has an *atheistic* meaning without God, and it even has a *Buddhist* meaning without God—as one of our missionaries pointed out to me recently.

But we must know that Christmas does not have a *real* meaning or a *meaningful* or *important* meaning or an historically *true* meaning, or a *Biblical* meaning without God.

And that is because Christmas is about the Creator of the universe- Who is not Himself part of the universe- Who is separate and holy and distinct from the Universe- it is about this God deciding in Himself and moving by Himself- in and through the Person of His Son- and inserting Himself, thrusting Himself, imposing Himself onto the

universe and into the lives of these common people and- by extension- into the lives of every living soul in all the world that He made.

You see, one of the deepest of all theological questions that has ever or will ever be asked is this:

Where was God before He made the world?

Because the fact that God made the Universe tells us that God is not a part of the same Universe that He made. You see, God is Holy and when we use the word "holy" in our descriptions of God- we are referring to the profound difference between God and everything and everyone else.

And we worship this God- not because it makes us look noble to do so- but because God is Holy- God is worthy and is *deserving* of our adoration, and our worship, and our love, and our devotion, and our obedience. So to say that God is Holy means that God is "other" or "different" from His Creation in Glory. And that makes it correct to worship God and it also makes it sinful not to.

So God is "unlike" anyone or anything that He made. He is superior to and more important than anything else. God is not "like" Man in that He does not think, speak, act, love, or desire what we do or like we do. And part of what we do as obedient children is to learn of God correctly by what God has revealed about Himself in Scripture so that we may worship Him correctly because we cannot worship and love what we do not know.

Now the Holiness of God is so great that one of the greatest sins ever committed was when people began to "bridge the gap" between themselves and God by thinking of God and referring to God as though He was nothing more than an exalted Man.

Psalms 50:21b

... You thought that I was just like you...

Thinking about God and referring to God as nothing more than an exalted man is classic idolatry because it always results in Man being elevated higher than he deserves and it always results in God being brought down lower than He deserves.

So when we speak about people or objects being "holy" we are

speaking about them being "set aside", "consecrated", or "made different" precisely because of the "Touch" of God that is upon them- not because of any inherent holiness or sinlessness in them- but simply because God has chosen them to be unique for His Glory. For example- in **Exodus 3:5**, God told Moses

... Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.

Now the dirt that Moses was standing on was *made* "holy" only because God was there- speaking to Moses from the burning bush- not because the dirt *itself* had holy qualities about itself. So it is the Presence of God that makes the ordinary to be extraordinary, the common to be uncommon, and the unholy to be holy.

The Apostle Peter declares that we are a holy people in that we have been chosen by God to be separate and set aside- not because we are better than anyone else- we are not better than anyone else- we are sinners saved by Grace- but we are holy in that we have been chosen and set aside by God so that we have the honor and the privileged to concentrate and dedicate our lives to the Glory of God alone.

When we are called to be holy (**Leviticus 20:7; 1Peter 1:15&16**), that does *not* mean that we are asked to share in God's Divine Majesty or that we are to reach a place of sinless perfection. But rather that we are to live and act and speak and behave in a way that testifies to the fact that God has "set us apart" or "made us different" from our normal fallen sinfulness. To be called to holiness, therefore, is for frail humans to *attempt* to reflect the moral Character and Activity of God and to *mirror* His Goodness.

But nothing is more holy than God and therefore nothing is deserving of worship and respect and adoration and fear and obedience more than God is deserving of it. And that means by default that God is separate and different and unique from everything that He made. So God is not a part of the Universe that he made- He is Holy or separate from His Universe.

Yet in order to redeem fallen Man- God had to insert Himself into the Universe that He created by becoming part of it by condescending from His High Place as Owner and Creator and becoming Man. And that is what Christmas is all about- The Incarnation- the miraculous

and wondrous and spectacular Event that only happened one time in all history when God inserted Himself into the Universe that He created and became Man.

And God did this without losing His Holiness or His Uniqueness, and He did it without becoming sinful.

And what makes this Event so incredible is that this created Universe—the personal part of it- the moral part of it—doesn't deserve for God to do this in any way. Because it is in constant rebellion against its Maker, and yet God inserted Himself into the Universe that He made in order to save those who are in active and constant and hostile and consistent rebellion against Him.

And that is why I believe that one of the clearest statements in all the Bible is **1Timothy 1:15**:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,

And so Christmas is about something that God Sovereignly initiated without seeking counsel from any Man- something that God did and that God Sovereignly imposed, Sovereignly interrupting the normal flow of the lives of people all by Himself.

And Christmas has to do with the way the created universe relates to the One Being Who is Absolute- a Being Who has no beginning and no ending and no development and no learning and no becoming- but a Being Who simply is Who He is. In fact, God says in **Exodus 3:14** that His Name is “**I am who I am.**”

So, Christmas is about how this one true living God relates to us and how we relate to Him. So, there could not be a greater issue than this. So I ask you this morning- How do you relate to this God? Are you in right standing with this God? Does this one single and true God welcome you as belonging to Him as being purchased by Jesus Christ or are you a candidate for His Wrath?

And what Luke does in this passage of Scripture—**Luke 1:26-38**—is to tell us two things. Luke tells us:

1. Just *how* this Absolute God broke into or inserted Himself into His Own creation to save sinners.
2. *Just Who* it was Who came from this insertion or this imposition.

So that is what I would like to talk about this morning: the how and the Who of the Incarnation. *How* did Christmas happen, and *Who* came of it? And in answering the "*who*" question my goal will be to answer the "so what" question at every turn: What difference can this make for you?

Q: How did the Creator of the Universe insert or impose Himself into His Universe?

A: He broke into the universe by doing the impossible.

Luke 1:37

For nothing will be impossible with God.

And the angel Gabriel says this to Mary as the bottom line answer for how God can become Man in the womb of a virgin. When all our objections have spent themselves, when we have beat our heads against the wall and we have argued and we have pondered and we have struggled - this Truth remains firm and constant and absolute and unmovable and unchangeable and like a rock:

...nothing will be impossible with God

You see, dear friends, God had been preparing the world for this very impossibility that we read about here in **Luke 1** for literally *thousands* of years. Listen to the testimonies:

Genesis 18:14

Is anything too difficult for the LORD?

Job 42:2

I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

Jeremiah 32:17

Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,

Jeremiah 33:14

‘Behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah.’

And now here during the reign of Herod- the time has come for the most impossible thing to be done: God Sovereignly inserts Himself into His Own Creation as a part of it- a man Who is Born of woman- while at the same time- never ceasing to be the uncreated God Who is separated and Holy and different and unique from His Creation.

And we have lost the wonder of this moment dear friends, and we must recapture the glory and the awesomeness of this thing that we call The Incarnation- the Moment when the Omnipotent God inserted Himself into His Own Creation as a part of His Creation in the form of a Man who is born of a woman. And we must work very hard, beloved, to rid our minds of the waste and the insipid puke of this world, and we must recapture the Wonder of this, and we need to stand in utter speechlessness with our mouths hanging open and in silence at the Glory of the invincible God becoming Man.

And so God imposes Himself into the universe by choosing to enter it through a virgin. In **Luke 1:26&27** Luke says,

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.

And the angel says to her in verse 31,

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

And Mary gives testimony of her own virginity in verse 34 when she said

... How can this be, since I am a virgin?

That is, “How could I obey the command of the Lord when I have never had sexual relations with a man- I am betrothed; I am engaged;

my father has already paid the dowry and I am promised to Joseph- but I am not married and Joseph and I have not slept together.

So we can see that this was God's choice. An angel sent from God to a virgin. This is God's Way of inserting Himself into the universe was that He would be conceived in the womb of a virgin.

Now we should take great heed to ourselves that we do not speculate very far from the text as to exactly how God did this. The clearest answer that we can find in all the Bible as to just how God Almighty allowed a virgin to conceive and bear Jesus is found in **Luke 1:35:**

... 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.

God chose to be conceived in the womb of a virgin so that the fatherhood of this child would be absolutely unique. Jesus was, in fact, the Son of God- but He was not the son of Joseph. Jesus has a Divine Father- but not a biological human father. So that makes Jesus to be both Divine and Human- making Him the most unique Person Who ever lived.

Jesus was Divine as God's Son, and Jesus was human as Mary's Son. In fact, there is a phrase that tries to capture the uniqueness of Jesus that is commonly translated into English as "Only Begotten of the Father" that is actually better translated to say, "The One and Only of the Father". The third Century Church apologist, John Chrysostom, put it best when he said,

"Jesus was fully God and fully Man in the same body at the same time without conflict or contradiction"

So we can see from this passage that God chose to insert Himself into the universe by choosing to enter through a virgin.

But from this same passage- we can also see that God inserted Himself into the universe by choosing for His Son a legal human father who would be an heir of David- the beloved king of Israel.

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 he descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

Now for two thousand years, since the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob- God had been preparing for this moment in history. God gave Promise after Promise that pointed to the day when a son of David would become- a King- an Heir to the throne. Over 600 years earlier- the prophet Isaiah said this in **Isaiah 11:10**:

Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

And at the end of the Bible in **The Book of the Revelation 22:16**, Jesus waves His Banner over all of history with the words,

I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

So we can see that God inserted Himself into the universe- not as a generic human being- but specifically as a Jew- in fulfillment of 2,000 years of Covenant Promises so that Israel would glorify God for His Truthfulness, and so all the nations would glorify God for His Mercy.

He came as the Son of David and as the Son of God- a Jew- to vindicate every Promise- and as a Man- to identify with every nation.

And we can see that God inserted Himself into the universe by sending His Holy Spirit with Divine Power to come upon and overshadow the virgin Mary with a Divine Child.

And Mary asks the angel in **Luke 1:34**

“How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

And the next verse (Luke 1:35) must be one of the most important statements that has ever been made in any book in all of history. You ask “How,” Mary? Here’s how:

“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.

God himself, the Holy Spirit, with impossibility-working-Power—the Power of the Most High—will take the place of a human father, and under the shadow of His Wing—Pure, Virtuous, Holy, Unseen, Mysterious—you will become pregnant with the Son of God.

That is what Luke tells us about how the Infinite and Absolute God inserted Himself into His universe. God inserted Himself into His Own Creation in four unique ways:

1. By doing the impossible,
2. By choosing to enter the universe through a virgin,
3. By choosing a legal human father who would be an heir of David, the king of Israel,
4. By sending his Holy Spirit with Divine Power to impregnate the virgin Mary with a Divine Child.

Now we turn to the second question: *Who* was it that came from this insertion of God into His Universe? And what difference can this make for us today?

And let's answer the question about *Who* was it that came from this insertion of God into His Universe by starting with the controversial Fact that the Person Who came from this insertion of God is a King.

Luke 1:32b&33

32 ... 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.

Three words in this passage tell us that this Person Who comes forth from God Sovereignly inserting Himself into His Creation will be a king:

- ✓ **“Throne”** in verse 32- **“the Lord God will give Him the *throne* of His father David”**

- ✓ **“Reign”** in verse 33- **“And He will *reign* over the house of Jacob forever,”**
- ✓ **“Kingdom”** at the end of verse 33- **“And His *kingdom* will have no end.”**

And what makes these words somewhat controversial for us who live in America is that we believe in Democracy- not in Kingdoms. And we have grown to believe that Democracy is in all ways superior to Kingdoms in all ways, and that is not necessarily true. The Government of Saudi Arabia is not an attractive system to us because it is a Kingdom and not a democracy. Democracy is what the world is moving toward. And it is what we are fighting for in Iraq. We normally think that Government by a king is a more primitive form of Government and that Democracies are more advanced, more developed; that they offer more freedoms to more people and they are much more suitable for the modern world. So this is where history is going- toward Democracy- not Kingdoms- and in many ways that is a good thing and a productive thing.

But please allow me to suggest to you that one of the reasons why Democracies are so attractive to us is because we are fallen and sinful human beings who naturally rebel against anyone telling us what to do- including any form of Government- including God Himself- Who only operates Heaven and Earth as His Own Personal Kingdoms and not as Democracies.

And here in America- we have a unique challenge to read and interpret the Scriptures and to fashion our comprehension of God by pushing our sense of Democracy with its cry of human freedom and rights aside and to accept terms and concepts like Sovereignty, Predestination, Omnipotence, and Grace.

Now I am not in any way advocating that the United States become a Kingdom rather than a Democracy by what I am saying- but I am advocating that as you comprehend the God of the Bible- you must realize that as an Omnipotent Sovereign- God is infinitely more concerned about His Agenda and His Plan than your dreams and your personal fulfillment, and that the secret to us walking in Power is in us abandoning our wills to be subservient to His Will as found in Scripture and that the fullness of our Joy is found only in total submission to Christ as His bonds slave.

And so as Americans with democratic ideals burned into our minds- we struggle with God manifesting His Omnipotent Sovereignty in the earth through His Governance and His Morality and His Mercy more so than those who have only known Kingdoms.

And I would also say that the only legitimate reason that Kingdoms do not attract us is because in this age and in this world- the only Kingdoms available are finite and sinful. Listen to what C. S. Lewis describes as to why he believes in Democracy:

“A great deal of democratic enthusiasm descends from the ideas of people like Rousseau- who as a humanist- who believed in democracy because he thought mankind so wise and good that everyone deserved a share in the government. The danger of defending democracy on those grounds is that they’re not true. . . I find that they’re not true without looking further than myself. I don’t deserve a share in governing a hen-roost, much less a nation. . . . The real reason for democracy is . . . Mankind is so fallen that no man can be trusted with unchecked power over his fellows. Aristotle said that some people were only fit to be slaves. I do not contradict him. But I reject slavery because I see no men fit to be masters.”¹

But, dear friends, we must acknowledge that if there could be a king- who is not limited in his wisdom and his power and his goodness, and was not limited in his genuine love for his subjects- then a Kingdom Monarchy would be the best of all Governments. If such a ruler could ever rise in the world- who had no weaknesses, no filly, no sin- then no wise and humble person would ever want Democracy ever again.

So the question is not whether God broke into the universe as a king- because the Scriptures clearly say that Jesus was a King at His birth. The real question is: What kind of king is Jesus? And What difference would His Kingship make for you?

And there are four words in this text to answer that question, and they all imply that your joy will be best served by you earnestly and fully submitting to the Kingship of Jesus Christ.

1. Holy
2. Son of God

¹ C. S. Lewis, “Equality,” in *Present Concerns: Essays by C. S. Lewis*, qtd. in Wayne Martindale and Jerry Root, eds., *The Quotable C. S. Lewis* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1989), pp. 152-153.

3. Jesus
4. Forever

1. Holy

Luke 1:35

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.

Holy as used in this verse means: *separate; unique; set apart because of an inherent pureness and goodness; something that is without any defect or deficiency or blemish*. And this word is full of hope for us, because it means that this Person is fit to die as a spotless Lamb of God in our place, and He is fit to rule as a flawless, sinless, pure, and holy King. Throughout time the abundance of unholy kings created the need for democracy. But a perfectly holy king would create universal peace and perfect justice- which is far better than anything a democracy provides. So this is who this King is- He is holy.

2. Son of God

Luke 1:35b

... for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God

This means that when God inserted Himself into the Universe the Person He became was the most unique and Special Person that the world has ever known before or since. And the uniqueness of this Person lies in the fact that this Person was both Divine and Human at the same time. Nobody has ever or will ever be able to legitimately make that claim. Not any Angel, not any Old Testament Prophet, and not any New Testament Apostle- nobody but Jesus.

The King who rules the world is not just the king of Israel as the Son of David, but this King is the King over all the other kings of all of the man-made kingdoms of the entire world, and He is Lord over all of the other lords of all of the other territories of the entire world. He is in fact - the Son of God.

And we have to remember that one of the greatest benefits of having a king or a lord over you was so that he would provide you with

protection from thieves and robbers who were stronger than you but who were weaker than the king or the lord who was over you.

And so to have *this* kind of King like Luke describes here as *your* King is to be protected by Infinite Power. No one could ever destroy you.

3. Jesus

Luke 1:31

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

God chooses the Name of His Son: Jesus. And **Matthew 1:21** adds,
... you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

Now the Name "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Greek "I ēsous" which corresponds to the Hebrew name "Joshua", and means: *Savior*.

Therefore, the King of the entire Universe is given the Name that means: Savior. Not the Savior of the righteous; not a Savior of those who deserve to be saved, but a Savior of sinners.

... you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

1 Timothy 1:15

... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ...

All of the Holiness and all of the Deity and all of the Power of this King stand in the service of His Saving Mercy. God inserted Himself into the Universe to be a Holy, Divine, Saving King.

4. Forever

Luke 1:33

And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.

This King of Israel- Who is also the King of the entire Universe- will never be replaced. There will never be elections for a new King of

the Universe. There will never be a successor sitting upon the throne of Jesus- because this King will never die. His kingdom is forever. And because His Kingdom is forever- therefore- His Salvation and His Protection are also forever.

So God inserted Himself into the Universe to be a Holy, Divine, Saving King- Who would rule forever. And that is the answer to the question: Who is it that came from Christmas?

And this king has commissioned me on this Lord's Day just prior to Christmas of 2008- to declare publicly that there is an amnesty for all who have rejected His Kingship up to now. Because before He sat down on the Throne of the Universe- this King died for our sins so that whoever would believe on Him, and trust in Him might not perish- but have eternal life.

So whoever there is here today who have lived their lives up until now in rebellion against this King- if you will lay down the arms of your rebellion, and if you will receive the forgiveness that comes only from this King, and if you will swear allegiance to Him alone as the only Holy, Divine, Saving King Who will live and rule forever- your sins will be forgiven, your names will be written in His Book of Life, and you will spend eternity in His Presence- praising and Glorifying His Name forever.

So in the Name of King Jesus- come and receive this gift!

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.