

The Promise of a Savior

Luke 1:26-38
SS Lesson for 12/04/2016

Devotional Scripture: Matt 1:21-25

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson teaches us how Jesus fulfilled the **The Promise of a Savior**. The **study's aim** is to see that God makes and fulfills His promises and to realize how completely trustworthy they are. The **study's application** is to trust every word from God even when we do not understand how or when it will be fulfilled and to rest confidently in God's promise as the basis of our security in life.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Luke 1:31

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

1:26-27. In the sixth month, that is, when Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy, **God sent... Gabriel to Nazareth. Mary** had not yet had sexual contact with a man, for Luke called her a **virgin** (*parthenon*; cf. 1:34) and noted that she was **pledged to be married to... Joseph** (cf. 2:5). In Jewish culture then a man and woman were betrothed or pledged to each other for a period of time before the actual consummation of their marriage. This betrothal was much stronger than an engagement period today, for the two were considered husband and wife except that they did not live together till after the wedding.

1:28-31. The angel said that **Mary** was **highly favored** (*kecharitōmenē*, a part. related to the noun *charis*, “grace”; the verb *charitoō* is used elsewhere in the NT only in Eph. 1:6). Also Mary had **found favor** (*charis*, “grace”) **with God**. Obviously God had bestowed a special honor on her. She was a special recipient of His grace. Gabriel's admonition (Luke 1:30-31) was the same as to Zechariah: **Do not be afraid, for you will have a Son** (cf. v. 13). As with John (v. 13b), the naming was by the angel (v. 31).

1:32-33. The angel predicted five things about Mary's Son.

1. **He will be great.**

2. He **will be called the Son of the Most High** (cf. v. 76). The Septuagint often used the term “Most High” (*hypsistou*) to translate the Hebrew *ēlyōn* (cf. v. 76). Mary could not have missed the significance of that terminology. The fact that her Baby was to be called the “Son of the Most High” pointed to His equality with Yahweh. In Semitic thought a son was a “carbon copy” of his father, and the phrase “son of” was often used to refer to one who possessed his “father's” qualities (e.g., the Heb. trans. “son of wickedness” in Ps. 89:22 [KJV] means a wicked person).

3. He will be given **the throne of His father David**. Jesus, as David's descendant, will sit on David's throne when He reigns in the Millennium (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-29).

4. **He will reign over the house of Jacob forever**. Jesus' reign over the nation Israel as her King will begin in the Millennium and continue on into the eternal state.

5. **His kingdom will never end**. These promises must have immediately reminded Mary of the promise of Yahweh to David (2 Sam. 7:13-16). David understood the prophecy as referring not only to his immediate son (Solomon) who would build the temple, but also to the future Son who would rule forever. David stated that Yahweh had spoken of the distant future (2 Sam. 7:19). Mary would have understood that the angel was speaking to her of the Messiah who had been promised for so long.

1:34-38. Mary did not seem surprised that the Messiah was to come. Rather, she was surprised that she would be His mother since she was a **virgin** (lit., “since I do not know a man”). But **the angel** did not rebuke Mary, as he had rebuked Zechariah (v. 20). This indicates that Mary did not doubt the angel's words but merely wanted to know how such an event would be accomplished. The answer was that **the Holy Spirit** would creatively bring about the physical conception of Jesus (v. 35). This miraculous conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ was necessary because of His deity and preexistence (cf. Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Gal. 4:4). Like Zechariah, Mary was given a sign: **Elizabeth... is going to have a child**. Mary affirmed her part in her Son's subsequent birth by assenting to the plan of God: **May it be to me as You have said**. She willingly submitted to God's plan, calling herself **the Lord's servant** (*doulē*, “slave”; cf. Luke 1:48).

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator

In biblical times the name given to a child was very important. Names were often laden with significance. Today's parents are likely to name a child based on personal preference, sometimes just because they find it superficially appealing. There may be some family meaning perhaps, or some other intended significance, but the import does not run as deep. In Bible days the name spoke of character and sometimes even had prophetic significance. This was certainly the case when the Lord Jesus was given His name—a name that, as the song says, is the "sweetest name on earth" ("Oh, How I Love Jesus," Whitfield). This week's text brings this home to us. In the prophecy of the visiting angel, the promise of the birth of the long-expected Saviour came to Mary. The context here is both miraculous and amazing. It is hard to fathom the profundity of the virgin birth of our Lord. There were astonishing prophecies made in conjunction with the Lord's birth, an example of which is Luke 1:32-33. Christ's greatness, uniqueness, deity, sovereignty, and Lordship are all conveyed. Clearly no other such person has ever been or ever will be born. The glory of the Lord Jesus is seen in the name He was given, which is at the heart of this week's text. Interestingly, His parents did not choose the name; rather, the Angel Gabriel announced what it would be. It most certainly came from God Himself. Mary learned from the angel that she would conceive and bring forth a son, but she did not get to pick His name. The name of the Messiah had its roots in the Old Testament. The original Hebrew term is a term that refers to God being deliverance or salvation. The term is used often in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus' name announces that He brings the promise of salvation to mankind. Jesus was meant to be a deliverer, a rescuer, a savior. That is why He was given this name. Every man, woman, boy, and girl across the earth must turn to this one Saviour in order to receive the gift of eternal life. We should realize that the Lord's name in the Hebrew language was the name Joshua. It was a common name at the time of the Lord's birth. But in the New Testament, the Lord is always distinguished from any other Joshua. He is Jesus, the unique and only Son of God, the Saviour of the world. We see Jesus' name in Scripture associated with titles like Christ and Messiah. He was the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One prophesied for centuries. He is the only hope of the world. It is important to remember that the deliverance the Lord Jesus brings is primarily a spiritual deliverance. Matthew 1:21 makes clear that the Lord came so that sinners could be forgiven before God. Christmas is about Jesus. Jesus provides the forgiveness of sins. The peace, love, joy, and hope of Christmas are found in Him, the unique and only Son of God. He is the one who saves us.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

I am the kind of person who likes to follow a plan. When our family goes on vacation, I want to know the distance and time between each day's destination. I do my homework about where we will stay and how much it will cost. Realizing that this tendency may not always make a vacation as enjoyable as it should be for others, I have asked my family to plan daily activities once we get to where we're going. Whether my plans or theirs, sometimes plans need to change. When this happens, my wife will often say, "It just means we're going on an adventure!" It's her way of saying, "Changing our plans isn't a bad thing, because we're facing the unknown together." In today's lesson Mary learns that God wants her to be a part of his plan to bring salvation. Her part in his plan is one that will change the plans she and Joseph were making for their life together. As each was visited by an angel, they found their plans being adjusted by God's extraordinary plan to put on human flesh. Joseph and Mary were about to begin an adventure unlike anything either of them could have imagined. It was an adventure that changed their lives, and ours, forever.

Today's lesson examines a vital segment in a sequence of bigger stories. On a personal level, it is Mary's story. At the time of Gabriel's visit, she was a virgin and pledged to be married to Joseph (see Matthew 1:18). The path modern couples take to marriage can cloud our understanding of Mary's circumstances. In the ancient Near East, couples might become married through a variety of arrangements. These customs involved various levels of freedom and consent on the part of one or both persons to be married. The betrothal custom was one in which a man and woman became legally bound to one another before the actual marriage ceremony. Betrothal was much more binding than today's custom of "being engaged." The betrothal period usually lasted about a year. A betrothed couple was committed to see each other but did not live together or engage in sexual intimacy. During that time, a couple made preparations to live together as husband and wife. Since a betrothal was legally binding, ending the relationship required a divorce. Indeed, Joseph considered taking such an action (Matthew 1:18, 19). The text of today's lesson is part of the larger story of God's relationship with his covenant people.

The era in which Gabriel appeared to Mary was a time of subjugation for the Jews. Although Jerusalem and the temple had been rebuilt after the Babylonian exile, the Jewish people remained under the control of various pagan powers over the centuries that followed. The Roman Empire was the occupying power at the time of Jesus' birth. Oppression by those Gentiles fueled hope and expectation that God would send his Messiah to liberate and lead his people.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Promise of a Savior through a Chosen Vessel (Luke 1:26-29)

26 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.

To be chosen (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The Divine communication becomes real and clear with the greeting to Mary. This is the heavenly greeting to the noble virgin who is to become the mother of the **Messiah**, Jesus. What is about to be offered is by the grace and favor of God. She is chosen in preference to all other women on earth at the time. It means something to be chosen. Do you not recall those times as children when the group you were a part of was going to play ball? The teacher appointed two to choose their teams. What a thrill it was if you were the first one to be chosen! But that thrill was by no means to be compared with the favor that God displays in choosing Mary. Nor does it compare with the blessing that we Christians have as the chosen people of God. Being "chosen" brings with it the important responsibility of personal response.

Being Chosen

Christians are chosen to be a royal priesthood belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9)

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

God chooses His people out of the world and now we belong to Him (John 15:19)

19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

God chooses His people as a people for Himself (Acts 15:14)

14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

Those God chooses, He also justified and will glorify (Rom 8:30)

30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

God chooses His people to be holy and blameless (Eph 1:4)

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

God chooses His people through His grace and for His purpose (2 Tim 1:9)

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life-not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

God chooses His people through His foreknowledge and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:1-2)

To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood:

Perplexed - we'll understand it better by and by (from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

Some years ago, a teenage girl went to church camp. She was asked to sing a solo for the vesper service. The campers and the counselors knew that her father had died a few months before, suddenly and unexpectedly. So they were greatly moved when she sang a song of assurance that God would someday make everything plain to her. Mary could have sung such a song. She was perplexed at the visit of the angel. She was perplexed at the visit of the shepherds in Bethlehem (Luke 2:19). She was perplexed at the wisdom of the boy Jesus when he was in the temple at age twelve (Luke 2:42, 51). No doubt she was perplexed often during his ministry and certainly at his crucifixion. Eventually, however, she did understand. The disciples also were sometimes perplexed, but later they came to understand as well (John 12:16). Often, we are like Mary and the disciples. We do not understand things that happen to us or to someone whom we love. Sometimes, years later perhaps, we come to understand. In other cases we will not understand until we get to Heaven. But still we believe that the old songs are correct. We believe that we will understand it better by and by, and we believe that someday he will make it plain to us. Until then we live simply by trusting him. We live in an age when people want to understand everything fully. It takes faith, and a lot of patience to wait for the answer to our perplexity. But such faith and patience will be rewarded. If it is not at some time later in this life, then certainly it will be in the life to come.

Promise of a Savior through a Prepared Vessel (Luke 1:30-33)

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."

Prepared by not being afraid

Fear God, not man, because God can destroy the body and soul (Matt 10:28)

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Don't fear, be ready to die if necessary and pray for God's will to be done (Acts 21:13-14)

13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, "The Lord's will be done."

Don't fear or worry but keep the faith (2 Tim 4:6-8)

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Don't fear, just be faithful and the reward is the crown of life (Rev 2:10)

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Don't fear, trust God (John 14:1)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.

Prepared when called

Called to do good works (2 Tim 2:20-21)

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Called to give an answer for hope in God (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Prepared when called because no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt 24:44)

44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Prepared when called because the end time is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Prepared when called because the day of the Lord is coming (2 Peter 3:11-13)

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Prepared for eternity

Prepared for eternity in a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28)

28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

Prepared for eternity in God's eternal glory (1 Peter 5:10)

10 After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

Prepared for eternity in Jesus (Col 2:6-7)

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Prepared for eternity by remaining in Jesus (John 15:5-7)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

Prepared for eternity by focusing on the godly unseen (2 Cor 4:17-18)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Promise of a Savior through a Willing Vessel (Luke 1:34-38)

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.

Willing despite understanding

Willing despite understanding through belief (1 Cor 1:18-21)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Willing despite understanding through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:3-7)

4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. 6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

Willing despite understanding because human understanding is foolishness in God's sight (1 Cor 3:18-19)

18 Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a "fool" so that he may become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.

Willing despite understanding because true wisdom and understanding comes from God (Eph 1:6-9)

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ

Willingness enabled by the Holy Spirit

Enablement that is glorious (2 Cor 3:7-11)

7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Enablement that is at work in us (Gal 2:8)

8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

Enablement that comes from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:4-5)

4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Enablement that is part of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 4:20)

20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Divine enablement (2 Cor 10:3-6)

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 6 And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

Enablement that strengthens the inner being (Eph 3:16)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Enablement of the gospel (1 Thess 1:5)

5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

Enablement that keeps one from being ashamed to testify about God (2 Tim 1:8)

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

Willing to trust God

Trust God because God never forsakes those who seek Him (Ps 9:10)

10 Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

Trust God because He is our God (Ps 31:14-15)

14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." 15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me.

Trust God so that God will make us righteous and just (Ps 37:5-6)

5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: 6 He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

Trust God so that we will not be afraid (Ps 56:4)

4 In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?

Trust God because no one else can save us (Ps 146:3-6)

3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. 4 When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. 5 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, 6 the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them-- the LORD, who remains faithful forever.

Trust God because He guides us in the straight ways (Prov 3:5-6)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Trust God so that we can be overflowed with hope (Rom 15:13)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Willing to be used

Willing to be used by first giving ourselves to God (2 Cor 8:5)

And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.

Willing to be used by submitting to God (2 Chron 30:8)

Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.

Willing to be used by offering ourselves to God as an instrument of righteousness (Rom 6:13)

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Willing to be used by living for the Lord because we belong to Him (Rom 14:8)

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Willing to be used by honoring God with our body (1 Cor 6:19-20)

19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Virgin's Visitor (1:26-38)

I believe that Luke's record of the angelic announcements to Zacharias and to Mary provide us with a study in contrasts. Zacharias was a man; Mary was a woman. Zacharias and his wife were elderly; Mary was young. Zacharias and Elizabeth were married; Mary was a virgin, only engaged to be married; Zacharias doubted the angel's message; Mary believed.

In Elizabeth's sixth month, Gabriel appeared to Mary, announcing to her that she would miraculously bear a child who would be Israel's Messiah. Her child would be great in the sight of God, and called the "son of the Most High" (v. 32). He would reign forever on the throne of his father David (vv. 32-33).

Mary had a request of the angel Gabriel, too, but her request was not for a sign, but for clarification. Zacharias wanted some kind of proof that he and his wife would have a child in their old age. Mary wanted clarification as to what she was to do, in order to cooperate with the purposes of God, as the angel announced them to her. She wished to learn how her conception would be achieved, since she was a virgin.¹³ She was asking for clarification, not confirmation. There is a world of difference between her request and that of Zacharias. Hers stemmed from her faith; the question of Zacharias stemmed from his lack of faith.

Gabriel explained to Mary that she would not need to do anything, that the conception in her womb would be the result of God's miraculous intervention. It was to be a miraculous virgin conception. Therefore, the child will be called the "Son of God" (v. 35). As a further word of encouragement to Mary, Gabriel informed her that her elderly relative, Elizabeth, was in her sixth month of pregnancy, which bore testimony to the fact that nothing is impossible with God (vv. 36-37).

Mary's response is a marvelous testimony to her faith in God and her submission to His will:

"Behold the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (v. 38).

No one could have asked for any better response. What a marvelous testimony to the magnificence of Mary, a topic which we will take up more in detail in our next lesson.

Conclusion

Several lessons emerge from our initial study in the Luke's gospel. Let us consider them as we conclude this lesson:

(1) We have seen some of the features of this gospel which are unique, which make it a book well worth our study.

(2) Luke's gospel conveys a divine philosophy of history, as opposed to a merely secular approach to history. There are several features of a divine philosophy of history which set it apart from a secular outlook on history. A divine perspective of history sees all of history as a part of the divine plan. It therefore looks for a continuity of action, from the very beginning of history, to its culmination. Luke views the birth and the life of Christ as a part of God's redemptive plan and purpose for history.

A divine philosophy of history views history in relationship to Christ. Christ is the key to history, the central theme. Thus, everything is viewed in terms of its relationship to Christ. Herod, one of the great and powerful figures of that day, is barely mentioned, for Christ meant little to him, other than to be a threat to his dominion. Herod is only a chronological point of reference to Luke. Elizabeth, Zacharias, and Mary, while they would have been given no attention by secular historians, are significant to Luke because they played an important role in the appearance and ministry of our Lord. One of the significant statements in the first chapter of Luke's gospel is "... in the sight of the Lord." Elizabeth and Zacharias were "righteous in the sight of the God" (1:6). John would be "great in the sight of the Lord" (1:15). Divine history measures the greatness of men in terms of God's evaluation, not man's.

In the final analysis, it does not matter what men think of us, of our significance, of our contribution to mankind, of our greatness, of our goodness; it matters much what God thinks of us. Each man, woman, and child, the Bible tells us, will stand before God and be judged by Him. The purpose of Christ's coming to earth was to reveal God's righteousness to us, and to offer that righteousness in place of our sin and rebellion. It was to offer us salvation and eternal life, in place of condemnation and eternal death.

Where do you stand with God, my friend? Does God view you as "righteous," as He did Zacharias and Elizabeth? Does He view you as "great," as He did John? When all is said and done, God's approval or God's rejection is the only thing in life, in history, that matters. Jesus Christ came to the earth so that we could be approved by God, by accepting the righteousness of Christ in place of our unworthiness and sin. I pray that you have found favor with God, through faith in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. That is what the Gospel of Luke is all about.

Luke's attention to those whom the Messiah's first coming was announced is relevant to those of us who await Messiah's second coming. There were 400 years of silence between the last words of the prophets and the first coming of Christ. Suddenly, the silence was shattered, and Messiah came. We, too, live in a period of "silence," but God's promises pertaining to Christ's second coming are just as certain as those in which the godly took comfort and found hope. Thus, as we study the lives of those who awaited His coming we learn how we should be ready for His return, as New Testament prophecy (and unfulfilled O. T. prophecy) assures us.

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/silence-shattered-luke-11-38>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Mary's life was already changing by the time of Gabriel's visit: she was betrothed to Joseph, legally committed to becoming his wife. But when God chose her to be the earthly mother of the Messiah, His plan changed her plans. Even given Gabriel's answer to her question, "How will this be?" there was still much she didn't understand about God's plan. Yet Joseph and Mary didn't need to understand everything about that plan to be part of it. What they needed to do—and did do—was trust God. Before Jesus was born, both Joseph and Mary understood at some level that he would be the promised Messiah. Both Joseph and Mary accepted the "adventure" of the divine plan, even though it meant changing their own plans. At different times, we all need to trust God's promises and plan. When such times come our way, there will be some things we understand and there will be some things we don't. The challenge is to trust when our understanding is incomplete. When we do so, we change forever. When we agree to be part of God's "adventure," we won't be taking the journey alone. He will be with us every step of the way!

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

1. God does not burden us with unmanageable tasks (Luke 1:26-27; cf. I Cor. 10:13)
2. Understand that you are part of God's royal family (Luke 1:28)
3. Trust a true word from God (Luke 1:29; Heb. 4:12)
4. As children of an esteemed and exalted Parent, we are privileged (Luke 1:30-33; cf. John 1:12)
5. Respect the order and timing of God (Luke 1:34)
6. The Holy Spirit's power makes Christians overcomers (vs. 35)
7. Obedience resurrects dreams (vss. 36-38)