

He Will Reign Forever

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[0 : 00] All right, well, two weeks ago, we began a new sermon series in the Gospel of Luke. And we looked at Luke's introduction to his Gospel account.

We talked about his purpose in writing. It was so that Theophilus and others might have a well-ordered account of what happened with Jesus.

And it was also so that we might have certainty of the things that we've been taught about Jesus. In Luke's own words, even though he himself was not from the first an eyewitness, he later carefully investigated everything from the beginning.

And we heard two weeks ago from Luke about where the first signs of God at work began to take place. It all started with Zechariah, the priest, at the temple of the Lord.

God sent his angel, Gabriel, to appear to Zechariah in the holy place at the temple in Jerusalem.

And the angel brought good news from God.

[1 : 08] Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. And they were to name that son John. And John would be great in the sight of the Lord.

He would be someone to cause great joy for many people. He would come in the manner of Elijah, the prophet from long ago, meaning that he would do similar things to what Elijah did, which was to call people to repent and to turn back to God and to God's ways.

And we heard two weeks ago that Zechariah did not believe the angel's words. He and his wife were elderly and Elizabeth had been barren and unable to conceive.

And because of his unbelief, Zechariah was given this disciplinary consequence of becoming mute and unable to speak until the birth of John.

And just as the angel had declared, Zechariah's barren and elderly wife conceived. She became pregnant.

[2 : 14] And this was the first sign, the first indication that God was on the move. An angelic messenger, a miraculous conception, and a priest who lost his speech in the hill country of Judea.

Well, the months went by and Elizabeth's baby bump began to grow. She came to the sixth month of her pregnancy, third trimester about to begin.

And at this time, Luke tells us of another supernatural sign, another angelic encounter, another message of a coming child.

Let me read it for you from Luke chapter 1, verse 26. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. So the same angel, Gabriel, the same one that said to Zechariah, I am Gabriel.

[3 : 25] I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. God sends that same angel now to Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, they lived in the hill country of Judea, which was in that southern part of Israel, down around the same area as Jerusalem.

The capital city was located. But Nazareth was way up north in the region of Galilee, a little south and a little west of the Sea of Galilee, a very small, inconsequential town in the northern hill country of Galilee.

And Luke tells us that there in Galilee was a virgin who was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. The word for virgin here means more than simply young woman.

This word was often used very specifically to refer to a young woman of marriageable age who had never been with a man. And that this is meant is confirmed later by Mary's own words.

[4 : 35] We're going to get to that in a minute. The other detail that Luke highlights here is the family lineage of Joseph, the man that Mary is pledged to be married to.

Luke says that he was a descendant of David, that is, King David, who lived a thousand years before this. And this too we're going to see the significance of in just a moment.

So here's this couple. They're living in Nazareth. They're not yet married. In our word today we might say engaged. They're engaged.

In the Jewish culture of that day, engagement was much more than it is in our day and in our culture. They actually had the legal status of being husband and wife during that period leading up to the wedding.

And then for them to break off that betrothal was the equivalent of a divorce. Nevertheless, they had not yet had the wedding. They had not yet had the consummation.

[5 : 31] And they were still living chaste lives apart from one another. And all this is implied in that word betrothed, or pledged to be married, as the translation on screen says.

So God sends Gabriel to Mary there in Nazareth. The angel went to her and said, Greetings, you who are highly favored.

The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary.

You have found favor with God. Can you imagine this? Can you imagine what it would have been like in those moments for Mary?

An angel appears to her, seemingly out of nowhere, and begins to speak. Luke says that Mary was greatly troubled, thoroughly startled, shaken.

[6 : 40] And it's almost like she's just sort of caught in this moment, wondering what's happening here, unsure of what's going on. Luke says she was wondering what kind of greeting this might be.

We see in the words of the angel that she was indeed afraid. The angel said, Fear not, or do not be afraid, Mary. And then this statement, You have found favor with God.

Two times the angel refers to this, or says this. At the beginning, he says, You are highly favored. Greetings, you who are highly favored. And then at the end, You have found favor with God.

This phrase, found favor, others have noted that this was a Hebrew figure of speech that was often used in the Old Testament. It may refer here to how Mary is a person of true faith.

It may refer to, or imply that up till now, she has lived well in the sight of God. And so as a result of that, has God's favor or pleasure.

[8 : 00] But more likely, the main emphasis here is not so much on how Mary has lived up until now. More likely, the main emphasis is about what God is about to give her and do with her in the present and in the immediate future.

She is highly favored because she has been chosen by God for something exceedingly special. That word translated favor is often translated elsewhere as grace.

It's actually the same word. And it has mainly to do with the giving of a gift. Not because the recipient is so deserving, but because the giver is truly gracious.

And generous and kind. In fact, we often define that word grace as unmerited favor. That's most likely what is meant here.

You have found favor with God. I don't think it means that God is so pleased with Mary's faith and performance that he's about to give her a reward. I think it means that she's about to know and experience the deep and rich generosity of the Lord who gives.

[9 : 19] In a very abundant way because of what God is about to do with her. What does the angel say next to explain this favor or grace that is coming her way?

Verse 31. Mary, you will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the son of the most high. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father, David.

And he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom will never end.

So Mary, this is the favor or grace of God that you were about to receive and know you're going to have a baby boy. You're going to conceive and give birth to a son and the name of your son, you shall call him Jesus.

[10 : 25] Jesus is the Greek equivalent of that Hebrew, Yeshua or Joshua which means Yahweh saves. The Lord saves. And then the angel goes on to tell Mary about who her son will be and what he will do.

And this must have utterly blown Mary's mind and heart away. your son Mary will be great and will be called the son of the most high.

The most high is one of the names of God himself. It was one of the ways that God was referred to in ancient times as far back as the days of Abraham. Maybe you remember the story of when Melchizedek the priest of God most high came and blessed Abraham.

He was referred to there as the creator of heaven and earth. And now here is Gabriel telling Mary that her son will be called the son of the most high.

Imagine what Mary must have been thinking in this moment. Like are you saying that my child will be the son of God?

[11 : 56] But before we even have time to think about what that means Gabriel goes on to say more. The Lord will give him the son that you will bear. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.

his kingdom will never end. Probably the first thing Mary understood from these words is that the angel was telling her that her son would be the long awaited Messiah.

The great king whom God had promised. That's probably the first thing she would have thought of. The fulfillment of all that God had promised to King David a thousand years earlier.

The reestablishment of David's kingdom through one of his flesh and blood descendants. Gabriel saying that promise of God made long ago all the promises made concerning that kingdom are going to be kept through the son that you will bear.

Mary your son will be the son of David who sits on his throne and reigns over that kingdom.

[13 : 14] But then here's another mind-blowing thing. Your son the son you will conceive the son you will give birth to Mary he will reign forever.

His kingdom will never end. Like just imagine that you are Mary for a moment here. Like it's one thing to be the mother of a king that part we can wrap our heads around.

Okay I'm going to be the mother of the Messiah the greatest king to ever live. But up until this point in human history there has not been a human king who has reigned forever.

Every human king has eventually died. More often than not even the greatest and best of kingdoms has fallen and failed following the death of a great king.

Now there were some exceptions some kingdoms passed on to the sun and some for many generations some ancient dynasties lasted a good many generations but all of them have eventually faltered and failed.

[14 : 37] Even the kingdom of David by all outward appearances has gone this way. The people of Israel and Judah were ripped out of their homeland and taken into exile by the Assyrians and Babylonians and since coming back the people of Israel have scarcely known their own sovereignty like they had before under King David and King Solomon.

They've been living in subservience to the powers of the day whether it be the Greeks and now the Romans. They have a king now his name is Herod but he's kind of a political puppet of the Roman Empire.

every human king till now has eventually died and every kingdom the world has ever seen up until this point has eventually fallen.

But Gabriel comes from the presence of God and says to Mary your son will sit on the throne of David and reign forever.

his kingdom will never end. The only way that this could be true is if somehow Mary's son becomes the first man ever the first king ever to overcome death either to never die or somehow after dying to rise from the dead and then live forever.

[16 : 15] I'd love to know just what Mary was thinking as she heard this. The days and years that followed as she pondered this. This would take great faith to believe.

Statistically the chances of this happening naturally are zero. Everybody dies. We could maybe point to Elijah the prophet who was caught up to heaven by a chariot of fire before he died but generally everybody dies and yet God says Mary your son will reign forever over a kingdom that will never end.

Now imagine you're Mary in this moment. What's your first question for the angel? There were probably so many questions that she could have asked.

So many that she wanted to ask in this moment. And this is the question that Mary chose to ask. How will this be?

Mary asked the angel since I'm a virgin. Of all the things she could have asked, like are you saying that my son will be the son of God?

[17:32] Are you saying that my son will be the Messiah? Are you saying that my son will live forever? forever? Yet there's no question of whether it will happen.

This is not like Zachariah who expressed his disbelief with his question. The first question Mary asks has to do with how. Not if, not whether, but how.

How will I conceive and give birth to this child since I'm a virgin? Actually this translation on screen is kind of giving us the dynamic equivalence.

It's translating idea for idea, but let's hear the word for word translation. Quite literally Mary asks, how will this be since I have not known a man?

And that phrase, known a man, is indeed a figure of speech for what you think it is. So she's asking the angel about the logistics of this.

[18:35] Since presently, by the natural way of things, conceiving is biologically impossible. Like I've never been with Joseph or any other man.

So like is this going to happen after Joseph and I have the wedding? Or what? The angel answered, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God. So the angel very clearly answers Mary's question.

The conception of this Son is not going to happen in the natural way. it's not going to happen from you knowing a man Mary. This is how it will happen.

The Holy Spirit of God will come upon you. His power will overshadow you, causing you to conceive.

[19:51] This is going to be a supernatural, miraculous conception with no human father. God himself is going to make it happen in the womb.

And so therefore as a result the Holy One to be born will be called rightly called the Son of God. God this was one of the first things Gabriel said to Mary just a moment before this that he would be called the Son of the Most High.

What is Mary thinking? Like are you saying that people will call my child the Son of God? And with this explanation Gabriel is saying yes they will call him that and in reality that is what?

That is who he will be. And at that moment I just sort of imagine Mary's eyes going wide. I imagine it because of what the angel says next.

[21:10] What the angel says next seems to offer assurance that God can in fact do this thing that is seemingly impossible. The angel says even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age and she who is said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month for no word from God will ever fail.

So the angel just kind of spells it out. Yes this is seemingly impossible. This is naturally impossible just like for your relative Elizabeth who's now six months pregnant.

It was said about her she can't have children and now she's elderly but just as God said according to his word which came through me Gabriel she's in her sixth month now.

What God says he will do however impossible it seems. Same goes for you Mary you will conceive you will give birth to a son he will be all these things he will do what I have said and all this will take place apart from any union with any man because God will be the father of this child.

Let's take a moment just to think about the biological aspect of this miracle. For those of you who have studied biology how does a new human life come to be?

[22:58] Well there's one cell from the man that meets up with one cell from the woman and the two merge. Each one of those cells on their own contains only half the chromosomes needed for human life.

And so these two cells they merge at the moment of conception and a new human being comes into existence. Without that cell provided by the man meeting up with that cell from the woman it is biologically impossible for a human life to begin.

100%. It will never happen. There cannot be a human being with just 23 out of 46 chromosomes.

They must be paired with 23 pairs half supplied by the mother half supplied by the father.

Each of those chromosomes is made up of a single DNA molecule that contains many genes.

That's the information that's required to assemble you properly or to develop you into a fully functioning human being.

Think about Down Syndrome for a second. It occurs when there's an additional copy of chromosome 21. Just one chromosome.

[24 : 29] And as you know, the implications of that one little error in the process are life altering. And so there simply cannot be a human being of any kind without both the DNA, the genetic information supplied by both mother and father.

It's biologically impossible. And so with Joseph out of this equation, what's required for Mary to conceive is no less than the miraculous supernatural intervention of God.

God. I mean, it's so impossible according to the natural biological laws that we know of that we might be tempted to ask whether God can even do this.

But let's not forget who God is. He is the most high. He is the creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the author of life. He not only fashioned the first man and woman out of the dust of the earth but breathed into them the breath of life and made them to live.

[25 : 42] He didn't just form the first man and woman by his power but he's the very source of the idea and design of who they are. Who they were.

Every functioning, every detail. And if God can do that and he can he did then by his power he can cause Mary to conceive without a human father.

He is all powerful. He is the almighty one. Is anything too hard for him? Even our ability to wonder and think about this comes because he gave us that ability.

to think and to reason. Of course God can do this. But it will be an amazing miracle of God's power.

I love the final statement of Gabriel to Mary. For no word from God will ever fail. Some translations say for nothing will be impossible with God.

[26 : 54] And both of these translations are important. I think each of them captures something the other misses. First of all, this is about God doing the impossible. This statement comes in the context of two impossible things seemingly.

Elizabeth bearing a child in her old age and Mary conceiving without a human father. But second, this is also about God's word. What is it that shall not be impossible with God?

Quite literally, every word shall not be impossible with God. Some translations render it as nothing or no thing shall be impossible with God.

But that word translated as thing is actually the word word. No word shall be impossible with God. Hence the translation that you see on the screen. I'd suggest to you that both of these taken together point us to what Gabriel meant.

Nothing God has said he will do is impossible for him to bring about. And this has been God's pattern not just so far in Luke but in all human history right back to the beginning.

[28 : 15] The whole Bible is the story of God speaking and his word is powerful. What he says comes to pass comes about.

Nothing he says is empty or impotent and so I think it's both a statement of God's all powerful nature as well as a statement of his faithfulness to keep his word no matter how difficult or impossible that may seem.

And I love Mary's very simple response of faith here in verse 38 she says I am the Lord's servant may your word to me be fulfilled and the angel left her.

So Mary doesn't doubt or disbelieve like Zachariah did. She says I'm the Lord's servant quite literally I am the Lord's slave slave.

That word has been variously translated as servant bond servant maid servant hand maid bond slave and the reason is because we don't have today in our culture slaves like they had back then.

[29 : 31] The most recent form of slavery that we're all familiar with is that sort of abusive dehumanizing cruelty towards people of a particular ethnicity but that's not the kind of slavery that was the norm back then.

People back then sometimes sold themselves into slavery to deal with debts or to survive if they were unable to provide for themselves and it was just the way things were. People were considered as part of a household if they were a slave and sometimes they were happy and lived happy lives even in a lower kind of situation.

Sometimes they were treated very well by their masters but what's Mary expressing here by this? I am the Lord's slave. Well the idea of ownership was very much still a part of slavery even back then.

It's as if Mary is saying I belong to the Lord my God he is my master it is my place my role to serve him to do what he asks or what he chooses.

So this is a statement of deep reverence and submission. We see an attitude of humility here. I am not my own I belong to you Lord and I'm willing to do whatever you ask of me to serve however you desire me to do as you have said with me.

[31 : 04] it's almost like a verbal bowing down to the ground as low as she can. I love this passage.

Luke is the only one who details this amazing moment. It would be about 30 years before Jesus hits the spotlight of the nation but isn't it wonderful that Luke went back to the source and carefully investigated everything and quite probably tracked down Mary herself to hear the story of how it all began.

There she was. She and Joseph pledged to be married with a wedding on the horizon when one day out of nowhere God's angel appeared to her with this truly awesome news.

You're going to have a baby boy and he will be the very son of God. Joseph will not be the father of this child according to the natural way of things.

God will be the father of this child and he will be the Messiah a forever reigning king. I could preach on this passage all day long.

[32 : 19] This passage is so precious. I mean it's here that we understand something of why Jesus is constantly referring to God as his father.

this explains something of the how and the why that was. This is the very start of all those arguments between Jesus and the Pharisees over whether he was blaspheming by calling God his father.

It all traces back to this. In fact that would play a significant role in why they would go after him and try to kill him. we see here too the promise of God about how Jesus would reign forever.

I just think that's amazing. Anticipating the resurrection of Jesus 30 years before it happened and then over all of this truth that the angel speaks God will do all that he has said no matter how impossible that may seem because no word of his will fail to come true.

There's so much that we could linger over here but as we come to the Lord's table this morning let's linger here. Why is it that Jesus death on the cross could atone for our sins?

[33 : 48] Think about this. if Jesus had just been another man born of two sinful parents like all of us are then atonement for us would have been impossible.

Only a man without guilt of his own can atone for the guilty can stand in as a substitute for others. The Old Testament law which God gave through Moses foreshadowed this.

Only a spotless lamb without blemish could atone for sin. Every one of us inherits that sinful nature and that guilt from our father Adam but Jesus is different.

He was born of a woman and so truly human truly one of us but he is the son of God begotten fathered by God and so truly he is holy sinless perfect righteous blameless guiltless and incorruptible just as his father because of this he is able to make atonement for our sins he's able to put his own flesh and blood in the gap he's able to take our place and to take on himself the punishment that we deserve so that we can be spared and so as we look again to the cross this morning by way of the Lord's table we partake again of the bread and of the cup may this word of the angel to Mary remind us of just whose body was broken and just whose blood was poured out for our forgiveness it was the body and blood of the very son of God the body and blood of the Messiah God's king it was the body and blood of Jesus the savior whom the Lord has given in just a moment we'll have the bread and the cup served passed around and if you believe in Jesus the Christ the son of God then I invite you to partake with us if not please let the elements pass you by we're going to take a few moments now just to pray and to reflect quietly and as the elements come to you just ask that you'd hang on to them until everybody has been served we'll pray we'll give thanks together and then we'll eat and drink together in remembrance of Christ Christ