

# Announcing Baby Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please be seated. Every little girl has a dream. It's a dream that can only be realised at kindergarten or at the very latest in primary school.

Every little girl secretly has this dream, yet the sad reality is that it can only be fulfilled in the lives of very few. You see, this dream involves the wearing of a blue scarf, having a cushion shoved up your jumper, much serene smiling, and then the cradling of a plastic baby doll.

Yes, you guessed it, every little girl dreams of being Mary in the nativity play. I was a camel. Yes, I was a camel, but it's better than it could have been, I tell myself every night.

If it hadn't been for one of the boys being sick, I would have been a sheep. And that just... I wouldn't have distinguished myself at all. But because one of the little boys was away, then I got to wear orange wool on my back instead of white wool.

And I got to distinguish myself just a little from the crowd. But I wasn't Mary. And Mary is the accepted star of the show at the nativity, isn't she?

[ 1 : 32 ] In fact, I recently heard a story of a dad who went to see his son in a kindergarten nativity play. And as the stage got more and more crowded, as the sheep and the angels and the shepherds and the kings and the camels, no doubt, came onto the stage, the little girl playing Mary started to feel rather overlooked, standing behind this major thing, left holding the baby, and basically being pushed into the background.

So apparently this wasn't good enough for the little star of the show. And she decided to improvise, which for her meant chucking the baby behind her and coming out in front of the manger to be the centre of attention.

This was her time to shine. It was her dream being fulfilled after all. Well, this morning we're looking at the second part of Luke's infancy narrative, traditionally called the annunciation or the announcement to Mary of God's plan to make her the mother of Jesus by a miraculous virginal conception.

And as we read it, we can't deny that Mary is an amazing part of this story. She really is an essential character in what Luke is communicating to Theophilus, the person that he dedicates his two-volume work, Luke Acts 2, but also communicating to us in his carefully researched account of the life of Jesus.

Mary's important. Yet Mary's role is not nearly as captivating as the announcement itself brought by the angel.

[ 3 : 28 ] It's the message that is the showstopper. The message that, one, God is taking the initiative to save humanity.

And two, the amazing truth of who this child to be born to Mary will be. Mary is important.

And we'll explore that just a little at the end of our message this morning. But as we look at the passage together, you might want to have it open in front of you, page 831. I hope that we will see that it is not Mary who is centre stage, but actually it is Jesus who is being spotlighted by the Father's gracious initiative and Jesus who is centre stage.

So let's start at verse 26. In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. Our passage today begins with a time marker in the sixth month. But it's a pregnancy marker actually.

[ 4 : 55 ] Quite a few of my friends are pregnant at the moment and they all look fantastic and glowing and perfectly rounded which I'm sure I will not be when it's my turn one day.

But I'm very excited for them and I find myself praying for them often and I try and keep a kind of note of where they're up to and when the baby's due and what week they're up to.

And Luke is kind of doing that here. he's keeping us up to date with a very special pregnancy that is the first part of God's plan being unfolded here.

It's Elizabeth's pregnancy promised to Zechariah in verse 13 of this chapter that we looked at last week and fulfilled in verse 24.

After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she remained in seclusion. She is pregnant with the one who will be known as John the Baptist the prophet who comes to prepare the way for God's Messiah.

[ 6 : 06 ] And now it is the sixth month after John's conception. And by giving us this time marker Luke shows that what is happening with Mary, Joseph and Jesus is linked to what is happening to Elizabeth Zechariah and John.

We can see many similarities in fact between the two events the appearance of the angel to announce the birth the fear the reassurance the giving of both the name and the mission of the child the question and the reply.

Yet the differences between the stories highlight how much more special this event this birth of Jesus will be.

Elizabeth was a barren woman whose womb was opened to naturally conceive with her husband. Yet Mary was a virgin whose baby would be miraculously conceived before she had ever known a man to use the language of the original Greek in verse 34.

Elizabeth and Zechariah were well known respected members of the Jewish community. Yet Mary was a young girl living in a town called Nazareth probably not well known to people not well known so that Luke had to say this Nazareth it's in the region of Galilee.

[ 7 : 34 ] Joseph is simply described by his background from the house of David. Zechariah was a priest and the announcement came to him in the most holy place in Jerusalem the temple.

Mary and Joseph were ordinary people and the announcement came in private. No witnesses no public drama. so just as it would be John's mission when he grew up to point to Jesus so these contrasts between his conception and the conception of Jesus point us to the centrality of Jesus Christ in God's plan and highlight even more God's amazing gracious powerful initiative as he puts his plan to save us into action.

Mary and Joseph were humble people living humble lives yet God sent the angel Gabriel to break into their worlds and work through them to bring about the salvation the whole world needed. Gabriel's greeting to Mary shows God's gracious initiative so clearly. Verse 28 and he came to her and said greetings favoured one the Lord is with you but she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

This is a greeting of grace of God's grace toward Mary. There's an old less accurate translation of this verse that you might be familiar with whether you're a regular church goer or not and it actually uses this word grace but it kind of obscures the source of it.

[ 9 : 28 ] Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee. But you never thought we'd say Hail Mary is in this church but there you go. In that old translation it seems like Mary has kind of done something to merit the angels visit.

She's full of a special type of grace that makes her a special serene person that God would definitely have to choose her. She deserved it.

But actually no. The word here is about God's unmerited favour being poured upon her. It's his gift of grace.

The message of Jesus is about God's initiative. God taking the first step and the last step. God announcing by his grace that Mary had found favour and would bear the child.

But no wonder Mary is perplexed this word meaning greatly troubled disturbed confused at the angel's message. Not only has an angel appeared to her which would greatly trouble disturb and confuse most of us I think.

[ 10 : 44 ] I think this happens whenever angels appear and they should probably get used to saying do not be afraid before they say hail or greetings or hello or anything because they always have to say it afterwards.

It's such an overwhelming experience. But not only that he's brought a message to Mary that God is honouring her by his grace to take part in something very special.

The Lord is with you you have found favour with God. What was he going to do to her through her in her?

The angel said to her do not be afraid Mary for you have found favour with God and now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end. God's gracious action to Mary has one purpose to bring forth the person who will be the pivotal part of God's plan for salvation this plan that has been throughout the ages but will come to birth now in Jesus.

[12:16] Yeshua meaning God saves. But what kind of person will this saviour be? Well firstly we learn from what the angel says that he will be great.

This Jesus is going to be a great man. People may never have heard of Nazareth Mary and you may be poor and obscure but don't judge by merely human outward appearance.

This son is going to be great. If we were to keep reading through Luke's gospel this morning we would see just how great he really is.

What type of greatness God had in mind. The greatness of a man who reached out to the marginalized, who touched the lepers, who went head to head with the religious hypocrites of his day, who healed the sick, who gave sight to the blind, who walked on water, who fed the multitudes, who died on a cross, rose again, ascended to the father and is reigning now.

He was great, he is great. the next thing that Gabriel says about Jesus is that he will be called son of the most high.

[13:31] The term most high is simply another term for God. As verse 35 shows, which is a little bit of a parallel, the child to be born will be called holy, the son of God.

And we see later in Luke's gospel that these terms can be put together. In Luke 8, 28, there's a man who's possessed by a demon and he cries out to Jesus, what have you to do with me, Jesus, son of the most high God?

Mary, this child is going to be the son of God. But what does it mean to say that Jesus is the son of God? We might automatically think of the second person of the Trinity, you know, where good churchgoers, God, the son, of course, God in human flesh when we read these words.

But would that have been what Mary understood when she heard these words? Not automatically, no. The Bible uses the phrase son of God or sons of God in a few different ways, sometimes talking about angels, sometimes talking about the Messiah, sometimes talking about the king of Israel, sometimes talking about disciples or other special individuals who served God.

I don't think Mary would have automatically thought that the angel was announcing the incarnation, the enfleshment of God himself in Jesus when he said these words.

[15:05] Yet, as the angel continued to tell of who this person, this son, would be, Mary would have begun to see two things. firstly, that Jesus' sonship did mean he was the promised Messiah king and secondly, his sonship was unique in all the world.

So firstly, Jesus was the son of God in the sense of being the Messiah king. Three words in verses 32 and 33 tell us this. Throne, the Lord will give to him the throne of his father David.

Reign, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever. Kingdom, and of his kingdom, there will be no end. These words would have definitely taken Mary's mind to the conclusion that Jesus will be the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, the king of Israel.

Perhaps she would have even thought back to a prophecy in the Old Testament to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7 where the prophet Nathan says to King David, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your son after you who shall come forth from your body and I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he shall be my son. Gabriel is clearly presenting Jesus as the one who will ultimately fulfill this prophecy to David.

[16:46] Look at the links. Jesus is said to have David as his father in verse 32 and of course we know that his adopted father, if you like, Joseph, was from the house of David.

So legally Jesus was absolutely of the line of David. Mary's background may have had Davidic ancestry as well, we don't know. But certainly legally Jesus fulfilled this.

He was from the house of David. 2 Samuel 7.12 says that the coming king will be the offspring of David. Jesus is called the Most High by Luke.

And in 2 Samuel 7 God says of the Davidic king, I will be his father and he will be my son. So Gabriel's announcement is that this child will be the anointed son of God, the king chosen to bring God's reign on earth.

In the line of David, the house of Jacob, restore God's relationship with his people, bring in times of peace, justice and righteousness.

[17:57] Yet there had been other kings in David's line before. David's own son Solomon is in view in that passage in 2 Samuel, isn't he?

He built the temple and he reigned for many years in peace and prosperity. Would this king, this son to be born be any different?

What would actually be unique about Jesus? Well, there's a third link back to the 2 Samuel passage. Luke 1.33 says that Jesus' kingdom will have no end.

And 2 Samuel 7.13 and 16 say that the throne of the Messiah's kingdom will endure forever.

Solomon and his descendants partially fulfilled the promise of 2 Samuel 7, yes, but Jesus is the final and ultimate fulfillment.

His divine sonship is like theirs, the previous kings, in that he is a king and will enjoy God's fatherly care. But Jesus is unique as the final eternal seed of David.

[19:07] All the others died and stayed dead. But Jesus conquered death, lives forever, reigning even now at God's right hand for eternity.

He is the one who was promised. So verse 34, Mary said to the angel, how can this be? since I am a virgin?

There has been an immediacy in the angel's words. The conception of this child is imminent and yet Mary knows that she is only betrothed, not married.

and so she has not had or will not have sexual relations with Joseph until their marriage.

How can the birth of such a child, such a Messiah, come about? Unlike Zechariah, she's not questioning whether the angel's words are true.

[20:10] she's not even asking for a sign although she is given one, isn't she? In the sixth month, Elizabeth, your kinswoman, is already pregnant, but she's simply asking to understand the plan of God.

I think we're allowed to ask those questions. We can say, God, yeah, I believe, I trust you can do it, but how? Would you let me in on it?

I'm confused. How? The angel said to her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be holy. He'll be called Son of God. This child was even more special than even Mary first realized.

he would not be begotten of a human father, because his father would be God himself. His substance would be God's substance.

[21:17] Not just his role and function and character would come from God, but his being is of God. As Paul says in Colossians 2 9, in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.

God's fully God, fully God, God from God, light from light, true God from true God. And yet, he would also be true man, fully human, born of a woman, growing like any other man from conception to embryo to fetus to baby to child to teenager to adult.

God. In the initiative and power of God, the Holy Spirit would come upon Mary and the greatest event in the history of mankind would begin.

The incarnation of God, the appearance of the God-man, Jesus Christ. All the other descendants of David were called sons of God because they belonged to David's line.

It was their earthly relationships that qualified them to be sons. But this promise of the virgin birth shows that it was the reverse with Jesus.

[22:39] He is the Son of God and so he is the King. Let's stop and think about what this means.

Jesus, the one now in the spotlight, the child to be born of Mary, is to be both man and God. In God's plan of salvation, this is essential.

Not just because it was predicted that a virgin would bear the Messiah. No. It's essential because God is not asking another person to deal with our sin.

He is dealing with it himself. He is becoming flesh. God himself is the only one holy enough to become our substitute in Jesus Christ, to die for our sins, taking the punishment that we deserve.

Only God's sinless sacrifice of himself could put us right with him. And it does when we believe. Yet because Jesus was also born of a woman fully human, his sacrifice would truly be on our behalf. [ 24 : 03 ] He was our representative before the Father, offering himself for our sins, interceding for us, and then rising to new life to open the way for all men and women who believe, to follow him to eternal life with God.

That's what this message, the virgin birth, the incarnation, means to us. What an amazing, gracious gift of God.

So we have God the initiator pointing the spotlight on Jesus. Jesus, but as we come toward Christmas, isn't it incumbent upon us to make a response toward this message?

And that's where Mary comes in as our example. See what an essential role she plays in showing us how to respond to the grace of God.

What does she say? verse 38. Then Mary said, Here am I, the servant of the Lord. Let it be with me according to your word.

[ 25 : 25 ] Then the angel departed from her. Mary says to God, Whatever you want to do to me, through me, in me, I am yours.

I am your servant. I am your slave. Because you are God and you are good. I am yours. What an example for us of the right response of a disciple in faith to God, but not just a serene, yes, let it be to me according to your word, but a costly decision, a costly submission.

Think of Mary, this young teenager, we know that it was possible for women to be betrothed as early as 10, but maybe around 12 years old, and then it would be maybe another year before they were married.

So at least we know Mary is in her early teens. Think of the disgrace, the potential disgrace, of having a baby, being pregnant without being married.

Think of the conflict, the potential breaking of the relationship with Joseph. It required a certificate of divorce to break a betrothal, not like our engagements today, and he would have been well within his rights to do that if it looked like she had committed adultery.

[ 27 : 01 ] more than that, actually it was legal to stone a woman to death for adultery. What a costly decision she is making to submit to God's promise to her.

And yet we know that of course God reveals himself to Joseph, encourages her to take Mary as his wife, and they do bring up the child together.

But this morning, can I encourage you to think about your response to this beautiful, gracious initiative of God to come as a baby to grow up to save us.

Will you question what he does for you, or will you say like Mary, here am I, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word, accept his death on your behalf, and serve him all of your days.

Amen.