

God's Unlikely Plan for the Birth of His Son (Part 2)

Luke 1:26-38

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Yesterday, as I was taking a little time just to think about the significance of what we were celebrating, I was struck with the reality that as you and I celebrated the birth of our Lord yesterday, there were billions of people, literally, on this planet who were celebrating Christmas without thinking one time about Jesus Christ. There were those who never even uttered His name unless it was the passing curse. They were largely ignorant of who He is and why He came.

What a tragic reality to be celebrating the birth of the Son of God and reference Him none at all; not to understand why He came and what He came to accomplish. We don't want to be that. We want, as God's people, to understand the depth of what He came to accomplish.

So, we began last Sunday to look together at Luke's record of the announcement of Jesus' birth to Mary. Because in that announcement, in what's called the annunciation to Mary, we get a glimpse of what makes this Child's birth unique. In what the angel says to Mary, we come face to face with what her Child really was and is. Let me read it for you again. Luke 1, beginning with verse 26.

Now in the sixth month [that is Elizabeth's pregnancy was done] the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you." But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 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. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God." And

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

In this verse Luke identifies for us three unique characteristics of the Child whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. If we are going to truly celebrate the reality of who He is, and not do so largely in ignorance, we have to understand these things that are true, these things that make Him unique; the unique characteristics.

Last week we considered the first characteristic and that is His unlikely parents. Mary is certainly not a likely candidate to bare and give birth to the Messiah. She is an unknown thirteen to fifteen-year-old Jewish virgin. She has only recently become engaged to Joseph, the village craftsman, the village carpenter. They are both very poor. And they both live in a tiny Galilean town called Nazareth, a backwater village of probably less than 500 people. They are a most unlikely pair to be the parents of the Son of God. So why did God choose them?

Well, as we saw last week, the angel explained it to Mary, verse 30, “... you have found favor with God.” The word translated “favor” there is the normal Greek word “grace.” The angel Gabriel says, Mary, you have found yourself to be the recipient of God’s grace, His undeserved favor; His goodness to those who have earned exactly the opposite of His goodness. Mary had already experienced God’s grace in her own spiritual salvation, her own spiritual rescue. In her Magnificat she cries out about God, her Savior. And now Gabriel tells her that she has found grace with God again. And this time it is to conceive and give birth to a truly unique Son.

If this was the first time you had heard the story; if this was the first time you were introduced to the parents of the Messiah you had come to embrace, it would become absolutely shocking that the person who stands at the center of human history came from such an humble pair; that God chose this humble couple so that they would never be the point of the Christmas story, but His Son always would.

Now that brings us to the second characteristic of this Child, we want to begin to look at today. The second unique characteristic is His unrivaled position, His unrivaled position. You are going to conceive Mary, in your womb, so that nine months later you are going to give birth to a Son. And then Gabriel goes on to explain that this Child, this Son, will be absolutely unrivaled, unique in the position that He holds.

First, He will occupy the position of a Savior from sin, a Savior from sin. Look at verse 31. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you will name Him Jesus. “Jesus” in the Greek text. This is a command. Name Him “Jesus,” name Him Jesus.

More than a hundred years before Jesus was born a group of Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures. The Old Testament, as we know it, was originally written in Hebrew. And a hundred years before Christ these scholars translated it out of Hebrew into what has become the sort of market language of the world. Because of Alexander the Great, Greek has spread over all of the earth. And so, they translated the Old Testament Hebrew Bible into Greek. It was the most common, by far, the most popular version of the Bible in the first century. If you had lived in the first century, and had a Bible, it probably would have been the Septuagint, as it was called. If you had heard the Septuagint read, you would have been very familiar with the name Jesus. That's because the name Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Old Testament, Joshua, or "Jeshua" So, wherever the names "Jeshua" or Joshua occur in the Septuagint, the Bible they had in the first century, it is always translated "Jesus" Jesus.

So, if you were to be reading the book Joshua from the Septuagint, over and over again you would see the name "Jesus" Jesus. But God does not tell Mary to name her child Jesus because of Joshua. He tells her to name Him Jesus because of the meaning of the name Joshua or "Jesus" because in both Hebrew and Greek the name Joshua of Jesus means "Yahweh." That's God's personal name, Jehovah, you might hear it sometimes, Yahweh saves, Yahweh is salvation. God says I want you to name the Child, Yahweh saves. I'm telling you that's His name.

Now why would God want the Child named this? Because God is working out this great eternal plan. And He has sent this baby boy to accomplish spiritual salvation. Fast forward nine months. You remember what the angel says to the shepherds on the night of Jesus' birth? He says today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, someone comes to save, to rescue who is Messiah, the Lord.

But frankly, if you just jump ahead from this announcement to Mary, three months. Because about three months after this announcement to Mary (you remember Mary) after she has been told this, she immediately leaves and goes to the hill country and visits her relative Elizabeth. She stays there three months. She apparently stays there until John the Baptist is born, and then she returns home.

Probably, after that three-month time, and when she returns home, is when she told Joseph. Joseph said, you know what, this is not my child. My wife, that I'm engaged to, that I'm planning to marry, she is pregnant with someone else's child, and I'm going to divorce her. And so, God sends the angel to Joseph. Look back in Matthew, Matthew 1:19, ... "Joseph her husband", he decided he was going to divorce her quietly. That was the only way he could see out; not my child; my wife to be, has been unfaithful to me. Verse 20,

But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bare a Son; and you [Joseph, now this command comes to Joseph] you shall call His name Jesus, “Yeshua” Joshua, for He will save His people from their sins.”

There is the reason God wanted Jesus to have this name, because of what He would accomplish. He would accomplish spiritual rescue for His people from their sins the penalty of sin and the power of sin. But did you notice how startling that comment is. Look at it again, verse 21. The boy’s name is to be Jesus. What does Jesus mean? Yahweh saves. And you are to name Him that because this Child will save His people from their sins. Yahweh saves. This Child saves.

So, Jesus’ name means not only that God initiated our rescue. It means much more. It means that this Child is, in fact, Yahweh, and He has come on a mission to accomplish our spiritual rescue. That’s what Jesus said in John 12. He said, I did not come on My first advent to judge the world but to save the world, to rescue the world. From what? From sins.

That’s our problem. The Bible, everywhere says that every person stands guilty in the sight of God for sins. He has given us His law and conscience, and His Spirit brings conviction to our hearts when we violate His law. We understand the reality of our sin, and yet we keep on sinning. We keep doing that which we know is wrong, and that sin earns us God’s judgment. It earns us eternal damnation. It’s not a word you hear much anymore, but that’s what Jesus said. He said unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. That’s not me, that’s Jesus.

So, He came to accomplish our spiritual rescue. And how is He going to do that? What was the key to our spiritual rescue? How was He going to save us from our sins? The answer is by taking them on Himself as if He were guilty of them and dying in our place, dying the death we deserved. In the most famous prediction of the Messiah, Isaiah 53 in the Old Testament, what does it say? He was pierced (what?) for our transgressions. That’s how He would rescue us.

This Child holds an utterly unique position. He is the Savior of the world, the One sent to rescue anyone who will respond. And He’s the only Savior. He’s the only rescuer. He Himself made this very clear. You know, we live in a postmodern world where it’s just not polite to say that Christianity is exclusive, and that Jesus is the only way. When I was growing up, there were bumper stickers everywhere you looked Christians would put on the back of their cars that said that Jesus is the only way. You don’t see those anymore because that is very unpopular. That’s very out of touch in the postmodern world in which we live.

Listen to Jesus, again I didn’t say this. This is Christ. He said, “I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me.” It couldn’t be much clearer than that, could it? His

disciples got it. Peter's preaching in Acts 4, early in the life of the church after Jesus' ascension, and you know what He told them? He had the unmitigated gall to say this in Acts 4.

“There is salvation [that is there is spiritual rescue] in no one else. For there is no other name under heaven that has been given by God among men by which we must be [rescued or] saved.”

Listen, you cannot, you will not find spiritual rescue from sin anywhere else. Not in another guru; not in another religion; not in your own efforts to live a good life; not in some self-help program; not in your parents' faith; not in some spiritual experience; some vision; some dream; not in your good works. You will find spiritual rescue from your sins nowhere else but in Jesus Christ, He is the Savior. That's it. Jesus is the only Savior from sin, the only One who can rescue us from the problem of sin. That's His unique position.

But He has another unique position. Notice, He's the Son of God. Verse 32, “He will be great....”

Now, Gabriel had said the same thing, as far as greatness, about John the Baptist. Look back in Luke 1:15.

“... [John the Baptist] will be great in the sight of the Lord, ... He will drink no wine, no liquor. [He will take a Nazarite type vow.] ... He will be filled with the Holy Spirit while ... [he] is still in His mother's womb.” [He is going to be a preacher of righteousness] and turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. ... [he's going to be] *a forerunner* before ... [the Messiah.]

He's going to be great, but Mary's Child is at a whole different level of greatness. Notice verse 32. “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High....” He will be, in reality, and be acknowledged as the Son of the Most High.

By the way, that expression “Most High” that name is the very common Old Testament name for the one true God used more than 40 times for the one true God. So, this Child will be the Son of God. Now, in itself, that doesn't necessarily mean anything dramatic because, in a sense, we're sons of God, right? I mean, Luke even uses the expression, sons of the Most High in Luke 6:35 of followers of Jesus. We're all sons of God in the sense that we're His creation. And as Christians, we are sons of God by adoption. God adopted us into His family.

But Jesus is different. As the New Testament unfolds, it becomes clear that Jesus is the Son of the Most High, not by creation, not by adoption, but by nature. He is the one-of-a-kind Son of God. You begin to see glimpses of it in the Old Testament.

Read Psalm 2 where God says to His Son that He is going to make all of His enemies a footstool for His feet, where He basically says You are going to rule. And listen, you better kiss the Son; you better do homage to the Son, or you are going to experience His wrath. Read Psalm 110 which the apostles quote often in their early sermons in the book of Acts. You see glimpses in the Old Testament, but you come into full HD clarity in the New Testament.

You remember the passage we read just this morning in John 1. Listen to it again, John 1:18, “No one has seen God at any time [talking about the Father, the Father is Spirit, God is Spirit. So,] no one has seen God [the Father] at any time, but the only begotten [you expect what? Son, what He says is, and what’s in the text is] the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.” The only begotten God, Jesus, who was in the bosom of the Father, who was in personal, intimate, equal communion with God, He has literally exeged God. He has explained God because He is God. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God in a very unique way.

You say, how can we be sure of that? Well, His enemies got it. In John 5 the Jews are seeking all the more to kill Him because He was not only breaking the Sabbath, but was also calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. Oh, and by the way, Jesus never said now wait a minute, oh no, no, no you misunderstood Me. I, I’m a son of God like you are. Not at all, He let it stand.

In John 19 this what ultimately what the leaders of Israel throw out against Jesus. You remember when Pilate says, you take Him and crucify Him, I don’t find any guilt in Him. This is their response. The Jews answered and said we have a law and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God. They understood He was claiming something really unique, the one and only, the one-of-a-kind Son. So, this Child will be utterly unique in His position. He will be the Savior of the world, and He will be the Son of the Most High.

There is another position He will hold. That’s “the sovereign of everything,” the sovereign of everything. Look at verse 32. “... and the Lord God will give ... [this Child] the throne of His Father David.” Now, we have already established that God chose Mary and Joseph solely because of sovereign grace. But in spite of that (and that is true), but in spite of that, there were necessary qualifications. But the necessary qualifications for Jesus’ parents weren’t really ones they had any control over. It had to do with their birth families.

You see Mary was engaged to Joseph. That meant during the betrothal, during that engagement period, by Jewish law any child born to Mary during the betrothal period would be legally his regardless of whether it was actually his or not.

And Joseph was descended from king David, specifically through David's son, Solomon. You can read about that and see it unfold in Matthew 1, the genealogy is there. Joseph ultimately descended from David through Solomon, David's son. That was absolutely crucial. Why? Because God made a promise to David. Go back and read 2 Samuel 7. God said to David, the Messiah is going to come from you through Solomon. So, having Joseph as the legal father gives Jesus the legal right to the throne of David.

But Mary was also a descendant of David, not through Solomon but through another son of David, a little different line on the family tree, Nathan, son of David. You can trace this in what is probably Mary's genealogy in Luke 3. You will find Nathan there instead of Solomon after David. So, through Mary, Jesus would be a physical descendant of David, which the Messiah had to be, but He would not be a descendant of Solomon, physically. And that was absolutely crucial. Why? Because that allowed Jesus to escape a curse God pronounced on one of Solomon's descendants, a man by the name of Jeconiah. Jeconiah, in Jeremiah 22, is told that none of his descendants would ever sit on David's throne.

So, think about it for a moment. We talked about this last Sunday night in more detail. If you want to track with me a little more, you can listen to that message. But basically, God promised David that the Messiah would come from Him through Solomon. And God promised, cursed, Jeconiah that none of his descendants would ever sit on the throne. So, you've got two promises that appear to put God in an impossible situation.

Mary and Joseph are God's perfectly wise solution. As Joseph's adopted Son, Jesus had the legal right to the throne through Solomon, but through Mary, Jesus could be a true physical descendant of David without being tainted by Jeconiah and his curse. He was qualified. So, because of that, verse 32 says, God will give Jesus the right to rule from David's throne. In other words, He is going to be Israel's true Messiah and will have the right to rule as king or as sovereign. Notice verse 33, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and His kingdom will have no end.

Now Mary was very versed in the Old Testament. What would have immediately come into her mind when Gabriel said that was the very familiar text about the Messiah and His kingdom. Go back to Daniel 7, Daniel 7. Here, as Daniel learns about all the kingdoms of the world, he learns about one kingdom that put an end to all other kingdoms, and in Daniel 7:13 we read,

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days [that's God the Father] and was presented before ... [the Father]. And to Him [that is to one like the Son of Man] was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the

peoples, nations and *men of every* language Might serve Him, His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

Notice, it is comprehensive, it includes everything, and it is eternal, it lasts forever. In chapter 9 we learn that this is the prophecy of the Messiah, the Prince, who will come. It is a promise that the Messiah's kingdom will be over everything and be forever.

You see the same thing when you come to the New Testament. I love that passage in Philippians 2 where Paul says look at what Jesus did.

... He humbled Himself; [He became one of us]; He ... [became] obedient [even] to the point of death, [and not even just death but] death on a cross. [like a common criminal. Therefore because "He humbled Himself.] God [has] highly exalted Him and ... [given] Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, ... and ... every tongue ... confess (what?) that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Every knee is going to bow, and every tongue is going to confess. He is going to be sovereign over everything. In Hebrews 1:8, God, the Father, speaking to His Son calls His Son, God. Listen to what He says, of His Son, God says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever...."

It's going to last forever. You're going to reign. You're going to rule. You see Jesus is not only the Savior of the world and the Son of the Most High, He is also the sovereign of absolutely everything. He is the rightful king of the universe. He is my rightful king. He is your rightful king. Jesus rules. He rules over the created universe; He rules over a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His people.

And yet let's be honest, today there is still a rampant rebellion against His authority. It is led by Satan and his fallen angels, and they have been able to enlist, as their allies, the people of this planet. We live on a planet that is filled with people who are in rebellion against their rightful king.

The Bible teaches that, someday, after Jesus comes for His own, for 7 years He will unleash a series of cataclysmic judgments on this earth. And then, when that's done, He will personally return to this earth and put down the rebellion against His authority. And after that He will set up a literal, physical, geopolitical kingdom right here on a renovated planet earth. And He will reign as the literal king over this earth for a thousand years, Revelation says.

And at the end of that thousand years, He will allow one final rebellion of Satan and of sinful men against His throne. And then He will crush that rebellion, and He will consign all of those

involved to eternal punishment. And then, as if to wipe away the stain of sin, He will destroy this entire universe that He spoke into existence. It will go out of existence, and then with the word of His mouth, according to Revelation, He will create a new heavens, and a new earth in which righteousness is truly at home. And Jesus will reign in that newly created universe forever. You see our future is not heaven. Certainly, it will be heaven if the Lord does not return. And it will be for a time, but our eternal future is a new earth in which righteousness is at home.

Mary's Child is unique. He is unique in His unlikely parents. He unique in His unrivaled traditions.

There is one last characteristic that makes Him unique. Gabriel points us to, here in his announcement to Mary, to His unique conception, His unique conception.

Because, although Jesus is obviously full Deity, He is the unique one-of-a kind Son of God. He will also be fully human at the same time. Look at verse 31, He will be the Son of Mary. Verse 32, He will be the Son of David or descendant of David. And as such, as a human being, He will be conceived in Mary's womb.

Now understandably, Mary, this wonderful but young girl, has a question. Verse 34, "Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'" Literally the Greek text says, "How can this be since a man I am not knowing." Mary understood what Gabriel was telling her and assumed that this conception he is talking about is going to happen soon, perhaps immediately, and she knew that she was a pure virgin.

Now at first glance, Mary's response here might sound a lot like Zacharias. You remember his response back earlier in chapter 1, back in 1:18? When he was told that he and his elderly wife, Elizabeth, are going to bare a child, he said, "How will I know this *for certain*? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."

I love this, verse 19,

... [Gabriel] answered, and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news."
[What more do you need? You know, an angel shows up] "And behold, you ... [shall] be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

You see Zacharias' response was unbelief. Can you give me a sign because I's not sure I'm buying this. Mary's response was different. She isn't asking for a sign. She's not questioning that it will happen. She's wondering how it will happen. She says, I am not knowing a man.

By the way, just as an aside. Mary is not claiming here, as many Catholic theologians try to say, she is not making a vow of perpetual virginity. So that even after Jesus was born, this doctrine says that even after she and Joseph lived together, they never consummated the marriage. In fact, a couple of biblical texts imply exactly the opposite of that.

Matthew 1 says, “Joseph ... took *Mary* as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son....” In Mark 6 Jesus has four brothers who are named and sisters plural. We don’t know how many, but at least Jesus was the oldest in the family the firstborn, while Mary was a virgin, and then there were six siblings at least who followed. In addition to that, if Mary had remained a perpetual virgin while she was married, she would have violated Paul’s clear command in 1 Corinthians 7 about a relationship between a husband and a wife. So, that is not what she’s saying.

What’s she’s saying at the time of this conversation with Gabriel, Mary knows she is still a virgin, and she rightfully wonders how is this going to happen? Now listen folks, there is universal agreement that Jesus was not conceived within the context of marriage. Joseph was not Jesus’ human father. There are only two other options. Either He was conceived illegitimately, (Mary got involved with someone else other than Joseph) or Jesus was conceived in the womb of a virgin by a supernatural act of God.

Now where does that idea come from? Well, it comes from the Old Testament. It comes from the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 that a virgin would conceive and bear a Son. We studied that passage a couple of years ago. I’m not going to take you there now. But that is where it has its roots. And it is reiterated here by Gabriel’s explanation in response to Mary’s question. How is this going to happen? Look at what he says in verse 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....”

It’s a beautiful expression, isn’t it? And in that expression Gabriel explains the mysterious process by which Mary will conceive. It’s going to be different from all other conceptions. By the way, Jesus, we talk about Jesus’ virgin birth, and Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus, but Jesus’ birth, in and of itself, the birth wasn’t miraculous. He was born like very other human being. It was His conception what was miraculous. And here Gabriel tells us a couple of very important things about this as he explains it to Mary. First of all, her pregnancy is not going to involve a man.

And secondly, her pregnancy is going to be the direct result of the creative act of God. In fact, the language of verse 35 there where it says, the power of the Most High will overshadow you. That language really paints a picture that takes us back to Genesis 1.

You remember after the initial creation of the earth. It is without form and void, and darkness covers the face of the deep, and it says, "... and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters." It describes a sort of shadowing that includes the transmission of energy from the Creator to the creation. He's forming and shaping and creating. Gabriel's point is that this human conception will be produced solely by a creation act of God.

And by the way, Gabriel is very clear here, in his language, that there was no intercourse of any kind, no human sexual intercourse, or in contradiction to Mormon theology, there was no supernatural intercourse between God and the woman. Instead, the virgin birth was a special creation miracle produced by the work of the Holy Spirit. Notice the result, verse 35, "... and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God." Notice, because of the special intervention of the creative power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' humanity will be protected from sin so that as a Child, He can rightly be called holy.

Now, as you know, Sheila and I are the proud parents of three daughters, and I love my daughters. And through the years I have called them a lot of different things. You know where I am going here. I have called them cute. I have even perhaps called them innocent, not in the sense that they weren't sinners, but in the sense that they hadn't experienced the full range of human sinfulness of sin. I have called them lots of things, but I have never once referred to my young children, and probably neither have you, as holy. But this Child will be holy. He will be without the taint of sin.

Now some theologians, primarily Catholic ones, have tried to protect Jesus' sinlessness by claiming that Mary was conceived in such a way, listen carefully, that Mary was conceived in such a way that she had no sin and no sin nature. That is called the doctrine of immaculate conception. For you football fans that is not immaculate reception, that's conception. That's describing Mary's conception, not Jesus' conception. That's what the doctrine teaches. They say that Mary was conceived without sin. And that's why she could conceive Jesus in turn without sin. That is not what the Bible teaches.

And in fact, here, clearly, Gabriel is saying that the sinlessness of Christ is tied to this creative work of the Spirit of God in Mary's womb. Christ's humanity was real. Since He had no human father, His humanity had to be made out of the substance of Mary. But since she was sinful, the Holy Spirit has to act upon her so that what is born of her will be sinless and absolutely pure as well. Because if our Messiah wasn't sinless, we could not be saved. It was absolutely imperative. This was a second miracle, not merely that Jesus was conceived by a virgin but that the Holy Spirit protected this Child's humanity from Mary's sinfulness, and it wasn't passed down.

Now this isn't hard for God, is it? Think about it. God created Adam's sinless humanity out of the dust of the earth. This is so important, the virgin birth. Only two of the four gospels mention the birth of Jesus. Both of them make a strong point of the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin. It is absolutely crucial to our faith. In fact, the early church fathers, Tertullian, for example, said that you could not be a Christian and reject the virgin birth. And I agree. Why?

Well, let me, first of all, tell you what the virgin birth did not accomplish because I think sometimes our thinking is a little fuzzy here.

The virgin birth did not accomplish this. It was not the cause of Jesus' deity. He was eternally the Son of God. It was not the cause of His sinlessness. You know, there are those that argue that human sin is only passed down through the male. I resent that. And there is no evidence biologically or biblically for that position.

In fact, when David talks about his sin in Psalm 51, he said in sin did my mother conceive me. It didn't mean he was illegitimate. It meant sin was part of the makeup of both my parents. It was a reality, and that's why I was born a sinner. The Holy Spirit had to miraculously protect the humanity of Jesus from the sinfulness of Mary. So, what did the virgin birth accomplish. Why is it important? Best I can figure, there are three reasons.

Number 1, It fulfilled God's prophecy to Isaiah. He said a virgin will conceive and bare a Son.

Number 2, It protected Jesus from the curse on Jeconiah. You think about that. It was really the only way that God could fulfill both His promise to David and the curse He made on Jeconiah.

But thirdly, and I think most importantly, it was simply the divinely determined means through which the eternal, already existing, Son of God, could add to Himself, full humanity. It was simply the means God chose for Him to add full humanity and to do so without creating a second person. Think about it for a moment. If a man and a woman had been involved, you've got another person. So now, Jesus is two people, instead, as the Bible teaches, one person with two natures, a divine and a human nature. That's Gabriel's explanation.

But Gabriel doesn't stop with explaining the process. Notice, he goes on to offer Mary encouragement to believe this whole idea of a virgin birth. And in doing so, Gabriel provides, I think, timeless answers to the skeptics of the virgin birth. He says, listen Mary, this virgin that I am telling you about is possible if you simply look at the other miracles God has accomplished. And here Gabriel points her specifically to the miracle of Elizabeth. Look at verse 36. He's going to encourage her. He is going to say, listen, God can do this. Take a look at Elizabeth. "...

Behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age...." She is well past child-bearing years. This shouldn't happen. It can't happen, but it is happening. She who was

called barren is now in her sixth month. Mary, look at the miracle God has done for Elizabeth, and you will realize that what I am telling you about giving birth as a virgin is just not that much harder. God can take care of this.

And then Gabriel adds another encouragement. He says, Mary, you can believe this is going to happen because of the omnipotence of God. Look at verse 37, “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Now this passage has been widely used and abused to mean God can do whatever I want Him to do. It’s kind of like my genie in a bottle, and I just rub the bottle, and He pops up and says what is your wish, and He gives it to me. But that is not what this verse is saying.

Let me give it to you, literally translated from the Greek text, even in the word order. It’s a little awkward in English. “Not will be impossible with God any word.” Not will be impossible with God any word. In other words, no word of God will be impossible. No statement of God will be impossible. If God says it’s going to happen, He can and will make it so. There is absolutely nothing that can limit God’s power except His own will. If God wills it, He’s got the power to do it, and He will do it.

Genesis 18, you remember He said to Abraham about Abraham and Sarah having a child in their old age. “Is anything too difficult for the Lord?” Seriously, are you saying you don’t think God, Who spoke the universe into existence, can handle this? Just look at the omnipotence of God. No word of God will be impossible. If He says it, He can do it, and He will do it.

Look at Mary’s response, you have got to love this, verse 38, “And Mary said, ‘Behold, the bonds slave [by the way the word bonds slave there is the Greek word “doulas” in its feminine form, she says, slave] Behold, the slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

What is that? That is just wholehearted submission. And you know what, that was not easy. Mary is a thirteen to fifteen-year-old virgin engaged to be married. Have you ever considered what it may have cost Mary to submit to God’s will in this? You know, we look at the end of the story, and it’s like, wow, look at Mary. Look at the privileged position she got. Well, think a minute about what this could have cost her.

It did cost her ridicule and criticism. In that culture it cost her a lifetime of quiet suspicion, at least, or inuendo, or outright accusations of being a sexually immoral woman. It cost her potential alienation from her family and from her fiancé. You remember Joseph. When he heard the news, he wasn’t like real eager. He decided he was going to divorce her. And he could have been even stoning her. But in spite of what it may have cost her, Mary submitted herself to God’s plan.

By the way, later Mary submitted herself to the Lordship of her own Son. Read the early chapters of Acts. Mary is included by name with the one hundred and twenty who gathered in the upper room who worshiped Jesus Christ as Lord and embraced Him as a Savior. Mary wouldn't want us exalting her. In fact, listen to the words of her Son, our Lord Jesus. Luke 11,

... one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to ... [Jesus],
"Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts at which you nursed." [How blessed must be your mother.] But He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the Word of God and observe it." [That's all Mary was doing. She was simply responding and obeying what God said.]

Let me ask you this morning. In response to this account that Luke carefully researched and then wrote under the controlling influence of the Spirit of God, let me just ask you, do you believe it? Do you believe that Jesus is a real historical person who lived in a particular place at a particular point in human history? Do you believe that He was, as He claimed to be, and as Gabriel announced to Mary, the preexistent Son of God? Do you believe that He was united to humanity in the womb of a virgin; that in the womb of Mary, by a miraculous act of the Holy Spirit, the eternal second person of the Trinity received full humanity, a human body and a human soul? Do you believe that?

I think you probably do. I think probably everyone here this morning, almost, believes that. And that's good. But that's not enough. You can't just accept part of Jesus. You can't just accept Him as Son. You must also accept Him in the other position Gabriel announces that He holds. You must accept Him as Savior, your Savior, your Rescuer. You know what that means?

That means you have to acknowledge that you need rescue; that you can't get to God; that you can't please God; that you can't make God accept you; and nothing you have God wants. It means you come to God as a beggar, saying, I need rescuing from my sins, from the penalty that You will one day pour out against them and from their power which is controlling me and enslaving me. You need to relinquish your own efforts to be right with God; to put your full, complete confidence and trust in Jesus Christ, in His perfect life and in His substitutionary death and resurrection. But that's not enough. You must acknowledge Him as Sovereign, as your Sovereign. You recognize His right to rule.

In the words of Paul in Romans 10, even to become a Christian you must come and confess or acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Lord. And to live life as a Christian, you continue to acknowledge Jesus' sovereignty; His right and authority, not only to rule, but to rule you. He is in charge. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God; if you claim Him as your Savior, if you acknowledge His sovereignty over everything in your life? You say, what does that look like?

Well, how can you do that? By obeying His commands as they are recorded here, Jesus Himself said that. There were people who said, oh, You're my king, You're my Lord, You're my Master, and He said to them in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and don't do the things which I say?"

That makes no sense. It's illogical, I'm not your king, You don't do what I tell you. You're in rebellion against Me. So, ask yourself this question? Do I regularly and intentionally expose myself to Jesus' teaching in His Word, and do I consistently try to do what He has commanded me to do? That's how you acknowledge Jesus' sovereignty in your life.

Jesus is the virgin born, Son of God, and that's always true. That's what we celebrate. But that's not all He is. The question is, is He your Savior from sin? Is He your rescuer on which you alone are dependent? Is He your sovereign King. Listen, the Jesus whose birth we just celebrated yesterday, will settle for nothing less because that's Who He is.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for the clarity of Gabriel's announcement to Mary. Thank you for Luke who so carefully investigated, probably interviewed Mary herself, and then under the inspiration of the Spirit recorded that conversation for us. Lord, we thank You for Your Son. We thank You that He is not only Son of God and Son of Man, but He is also the Savior and the Sovereign. Lord, may we acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord.

Lord, I pray for those here this morning who have celebrated Christmas but have really never genuinely bowed their knee to Jesus Christ as their Savior, their Rescuer and their Lord. Father, I pray that before this day is done You would be, in the message of the truth they have heard this morning, effectually calling them to Yourself, so that before this day is done, they would find a quiet place and pour out their heart to You in confession of sin and in repentance and in faith in Jesus Christ.

Father, I pray for all of us here who have come to know You through Him. Help us to live out the implications of this in our own lives. Father, may we not only fully acknowledge that He is Your Son, but may we live in light of the fact that He is our Savior, our rescuer from sin, and that He is our sovereign King.

Father, we pray this for His glory, for His sake so that He would be exalted like He deserves to be exalted.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

