

LESSON 5

THE BIRTH OF JESUS FORETOLD



Scripture Texts: Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-21

God had predicted this event over and over. Now the time has come. The announcement was simple, without fanfare, and not made publicly, but only to the two people most concerned. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, a country village of great natural beauty, but great wickedness also. The question was asked, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?** (John 1:46). Yes, It did, but first It came into Nazareth from God above.

MEMORY VERSE: *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21*

Mary Only a Part of God's Plan

Luke 1:26-27 In the sixth month—the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy—**Gabriel was sent**—the same angel who about 530 years before had spoken to Daniel (Daniel 9:21). Gabriel also spoke to Zacharias (Luke 1:19). **To a virgin**—a maiden, never married but engaged to Joseph (Isaiah 7:14).

Luke 1:28-31 Highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed . . . No greater words of encouragement can anyone hear than this priceless greeting. **Troubled . . . and cast in her mind**—sought an explanation. Gabriel called Mary **highly favoured** and **blessed**. She did not gain this favor by anything she had done. God's favor is not won by our efforts but by trust in Him, love for Him, yielding to Him, by the freedom we allow His life to have within us. Not what Mary had done, but that she had found God's favor. She was a tool suited to God's use, receiver of blessings, not the source of them. In her praise she acknowledged her humanity and sin by calling God her Savior (verse 47). Any inventions of men attempting to lift Mary out of her true position as purely human like all women only distort the truth, wrong Mary, and blaspheme God, Whose place is usurped. Mary was only a vessel of clay used by God for His purpose. **Fear not**—words used often by angels and by Jesus. God is gentle and kind. Tormenting fear is not His plan for His people. **Found favour with God**—consoling words. **Thou shalt conceive . . . son . . . JESUS.** A name divinely given that would fit His character and mission. He was the Savior.

Luke 1:32-33 Great . . . Son of . . . Highest. The Highest is God Himself. **Throne of his father David.** King David was an ancestor of Jesus. Mary descended from David (as did also Joseph Luke 2:4). **Of his kingdom there shall be no end. . . upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this** (Isaiah 9:7). He promised David this King would be **of the fruit of thy body**—that is, David's descendant (Psalm 132:11; Psalm 89:3, 4).

How Can It Be?

Luke 1:34-38 Said Mary . . . How shall this be? She knew the natural impossibility. This had never happened before and would never happen again. **Know not a man.** She stated her virginity. The angel explains—**The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . therefore . . . called the Son of God.** Called so because He was. He was not born illegitimately. God was His Father. **For with God nothing shall be impossible.** Here is the foundation for all miracles. As the angel spoke Mary took hold of this truth and responded favorably. **Behold the handmaid of the**

Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. Willing and glad to do God's will. She accepted the responsibility, care, and misunderstanding that would come to her along with the honor.

Joseph Also a Part of God's Plan

Matthew 1:18-19 Now we look from Joseph's standpoint. **Before they came together, she was found . . .** They were not yet married. Betrothal in those days was practically equivalent to marriage. An engagement could only be broken by the process of divorce. After the betrothal the bride lived with her parents for one year, at the end of which time the marriage ceremony was performed. Joseph . . . **was minded to put her away privily**—to break the engagement without publicity. The discovery was a blow to Joseph, for he was a righteous man, loving and merciful as well as just. He was being called on for more kindness than the circumstances seemed to require—for it would appear that Mary had been unfaithful, sinful. His suspicions were what any man's suspicions would have been. He could have denounced Mary for infidelity, and her punishment would have been severe. Instead, he chose the more merciful course and decided **to put her away privily**, which means to divorce her and to give her the bill of divorcement, which the Mosaic law required. By so doing, he would have assumed the chief blame for what appeared a scandalous state of affairs.

Matthew 1:20 Angel of the Lord appeared . . . fear not . . . is of the Holy Ghost. As he dreamed, the angel appeared with a great revelation, correcting his mistake. The coming Baby was **of the Holy Ghost**. If anyone finds it hard to believe in the doctrine of the Virgin Birth today, consider that no one else in all history has found it so hard to believe as did Joseph. Mary's assurances were of no avail; Joseph had to be assured of this great truth by revelation from God. We are left with no excuse for unbelief in our situation. Jesus Christ is the world's greatest miracle. It is fitting that His entrance into human life should be accompanied by a miracle. For Christ to come from Heaven to Earth had to be a miracle, no matter how God chose to send Him. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament begin with a great miracle. The Old Testament begins by telling us that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and creation resulted. At the very beginning of the New Testament is recorded that work of the Holy Spirit which caused a new Being to appear among men, a new age in human history to have its origin.

Matthew 1:21 He shall save his people from their sins. This Son is the One promised Who was to turn away evil and bring righteousness and great salvation, He of Whom it would be said, **in him was life; and the life was the light of men.** This birth was the only one of its kind. Right at the beginning of the Gospel we are instructed of the fact that Jesus Christ is a Savior from sin. He is much more than a leader, a teacher, or a great person. What is He to you?

JUST A THOUGHT

Serving my own comfort or pleasure is not serving God.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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