

## *He Came! He Is Here! He Is Coming!*

Luke 1:26-38

**Introduction:** (Read Luke 1:26-38) High on the list of my favorite texts of Scripture – those which have had the greatest impact on my thinking, my perspectives and my hope – is the prologue of John’s gospel – my favorite gospel (1:1-18). Central to the message of John’s prologue is verse 14 – “And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” There is perhaps no single verse of Scripture that contains a greater statement of “theology” than this pivotal verse in John’s prologue. It is the heart of the gospel and it succinctly and eloquently declares the Incarnation – the full humanity and full deity of Jesus.

There is no biblical truth more critical to our hope than the Incarnation with all that it means. It has fully captivated my thinking and study in these final years of my ministry – and I trust will continue to do so as long as I have a mind to think on these things. I am currently working through 4 substantial volumes on the Trinity and the Incarnation – and as I mentioned last week – I am rereading Dawson’s work on the Ascension.

I tell you all of this to say – despite my deep and growing love for thinking on the nature of God and the mystery of the Incarnation – my favorite Christmas text is the passage we consider today. It seems that this story brings all of the big truths of God down into the real world struggles of individual lives – lives confronted with the struggles, heartaches, the insecurities of living life in a badly broken world in these fallen and failing bodies. Scott Harrower would refer to the struggles of life as “horrors” which afflict us all at one time or another.

All of the power and majesty of the infinite and incomprehensibly Glorious God is intentionally, purposefully, lovingly, graciously poured into this single moment and into the life of this one young Jewish virgin (this is to include Jesus life, death, resurrection, ascension and exaltation to glory) so that it could be poured out in power to rescue and restore all of creation under the curse, through the redemption of the “children of God” – (cf. Romans 8:18-23).

This is so relevant to me today because I walk among a people – who like myself – feel as though we are at the mercy of powerful people (leaders) and events which do not care for me/us, let alone give us voice in the decisions which affect our lives.

J.C. Ryle in his book “Holiness” wrote: “Statesmen, rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, heads of governments, have their schemes and plans and think them of vast importance. But there is another work going on of infinitely greater moment, for which they are only ‘axes and saws’ In God’s hands (Isa. 10:15). That work is the erection of Christ’s spiritual temple, the gathering in of living stones into the one true church.”

This passage shouts the truth that the God who is the Creator and Sovereign over our existence – the One who is over all of creation (including a virus), over all rule and authority (cf. Ephesians 1:15-23; Colossians 1:15-20) – He has not forgotten us nor has He abandoned us to our circumstances. He has remembered His ancient promises and He came!! He is present in love!! And He is coming!!

A major theme of this passage must be that God has come – When we are in the throes of the suffering that is part of our fallen condition and the incredible grief it brings with it - when we look around at the governments and their leaders who exploit the people they are commissioned to serve and seemingly have no regard for the individual – who afford them no voice and seem to gain power and wealth on the backs of their citizens... when we look around at cultures and segments of society which appear to be in wholesale decay and which stand against everything that is good and noble ... it is then that we understand why God came – He entered in – Fully God and Fully Man!!

***Jesus, The Promise Of God Fulfilled, Came In A Specific Time And Place In Human History***  
- 1:26-27

- The context given by Luke for Gabriel's visit to Mary seems to me to indicate, as I mentioned last week, that Luke's "telling" of Mary's story is a continuation of the narrative of Gabriel's visit to Zechariah to announce the birth of John. I believe Luke is indicating that this is to be understood as a single narrative – together they make up the birth/infancy narrative. This makes perfect sense in that John is to be the forerunner to the coming Messiah – Jesus.

In addition, Luke's connection of the two events makes the historical and geographical details provided in the previous section, for context, equally applicable in this context. The additional historic, geographic and personal details provided in 1:26-27 are intended to assure us that

1. These events are real events taking place in a specific period of time and in a known location.
2. These events are taking place in the lives of real people, real people who, we saw in Gabriel's earlier visit to Zechariah, are being made part of a cosmic and eternal work of God.
3. The personal details provided in 1:27 coupled with the words of the angel tell us that God is fulfilling an ancient promise in this coming baby.

- 1:28-29 – The initial greeting in vs. 28 indicates that God has favored Mary uniquely and specifically. In fact there is an indication that this "grace" shown Mary was both a prior grace and the basis for this visit to her uniquely (cf. 1:28 – the perfect tense participle and Bock's discussion). In vs. 29 Mary's response is unspoken but obvious and predictable – She was troubled (frightened per/vs. 30) and confused. **Not only was the visit frightening on the face of it but she was troubled by what he might have meant when he declared that she was favored of God and that God was "with her"?**

### ***Jesus, An Ancient Promise Fulfilled/Kept - 1:30-33***

- The hope filled truth in these words is simply stated – “God has not forgotten or abandoned us!!” – Think of the world into which this declaration came – the real world of the nation of Israel as a vassal of Rome under a the regional reign of a brutal “pretender” to the throne of David (Herod). Think of the people to whom this promise/declaration was now being made – humble people whose humble lives were filled with labor and struggle just to live simply. People from whom their leaders would extract the money needed to fund their arrogant and extreme/extravagant lifestyles – they would pay the very wages of the people who would tyrannize them. They must’ve felt as though God and the ancient promises were so very far away and that God had at best forgotten them and at worst abandoned them – the angel’s visit this night declared to them and to us that He had not forgotten them!!

1. The Gabriel’s response connects his visit, and the child whose birth he announces, to the covenant promises of God to the nation – promises of a coming Messianic King who will deliver the nation and bring in the Kingdom.

The language speaks of the Messianic king in terms that are reminiscent of the language used in the covenant made with David – language which in the near application refers to Solomon but in the far clearly was understood to apply to the ultimate King – the Messiah – who would sit on David’s throne. This language implies that David’s throne, though occupied by earthly kings, was really established for this baby boy who would be the Messianic King. All of the kings before Him were occupy the throne of David in anticipation of His coming and His forever reign. That Davidic reign was established with promise and hope and this was the day when that hope would be profoundly and in unexpected fashion – fulfilled in Mary’s baby!!

2. Gabriel’s announcement language, when coupled with the announcement made to Zechariah, makes clear that God has been working to this moment within human/creation history since the call of Abraham on the national scene and since Genesis 3 on the scene of human history. We know that this has all along been part of God’s plan in eternity past. Redemption is part of the calculus of creation (cf. 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Revelation 13:8).

He would sit on David’s throne as Israel’s promised Messianic King but He is also given the name “Jesus” which means “the Lord is salvation” and speaks very simply of salvation. That implies that this baby would be the Savior of all of who would believe from every nation (cf. Revelation 5:1-14).

### ***Jesus, The Power Of God’s Miraculous Intervention - 1:34-38***

- Mary’s question in 1:34 reveals her struggle with this news (God “came down”! God entered in!!) Mary asks a legitimate question in the light of her circumstances. She was “betrothed” to Joseph which meant that within the year of Gabriel’s visit she would be having marital relations with Joseph. However, the language of the Angel, in 1:28, 30-33, seems to imply immanency. I

believe there were two levels to Mary's question. The first is obvious and has to do with the biology of conception – I have not had the intimacy with a man that is necessary for conception. The second level could be a bit more concerning for Mary – If I show up pregnant before I am formally married I will experience shame and bring shame upon my family and my betrothed. It may cost me my life – at the hands of those who love me!! When Gabriel answers her question there are three things, which are clear - on which I would like to focus;

1. This was indeed a virgin conception and birth – Mary would conceive without “knowing” a man. This was accomplished as a creative act, by the Spirit, done in the power of God – as God did in speaking into existence all that is from nothing. God broke in on us in a display of power which displays His personal love and commitment to us. This is consistent with what He did in the conception and birth of John (cf. 1:36-37).

2. The incredible power on display in this event is far beyond the conception of life without the biological contribution of an earthly father. What Gabriel describes in 1:35 is the power on display like unto His work in creation where He brings life out of nothing – the word for “overshadow” and its parallels in OT and Luke are highlighted by Darrell Bock in his two volume work on Luke;

*“Jesus’ birth will be the work of God’s creative power....The Creator god who brought life out of nothing and created humans from the dust is also able to create human life in a womb. God’s act involves his overshadowing Mary...” A word which “...in the OT refers either to the Shekinah cloud that rested on the tabernacle...or to God’s presence in protecting his people...Thus overshadowing refers to God’s glorious presence before his people...the conception of Jesus results from God’s creative work.” (Bock pages 121-123)*

John 1:14 uses similar language when he writes that “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” The word John uses translated “made his dwelling” is related to the language of the OT used to describe the glory of God “present” among the people – which is the meaning of *shekinah* – the glory of His presence. The power of the Spirit overshadowed Mary and by the power of God the Son of God “became” fully human while remaining fully God!

This was the Son of God becoming man. This is not God indwelling a human person Jesus, nor is it the Divine Son of God simply and temporarily putting on a human body. **Jesus is the person of the Son of God, entering in on behalf of fallen humanity and becoming fully and permanently human while never diminished in His nature as God – because of the horrors imposed on humanity and creation by fallen humanity – Jesus is the Son of God.**

3. This is scandalous on so many levels to our world (see Bonhoeffer – “God is in the Manger,” page 53). It is a condescension beyond our comprehension – a humility that is ironically the pinnacle of glory!! Therefore, this is the focal point or the reality qualifying event of all of creation history – that truth from which all right perspective is derived. It is the very root and

foundation of our identity and hope!! GOD CAME!! GOD ENTERED IN!! HE DID IT IN PERFECT LOVE FOR YOU AND ME!!

- In Gabriel's witness to the Lord's presence and power he cites his visit to Zechariah and Elizabeth – though it is not the same it is similar in that what was previously a known biological impossibility was accomplished by the intervening power of God (cf. 1:36). Gabriel's summary statement/declaration was a call to faith (cf. 1:37). This was followed by Mary's submission in the exact terms by which the promise was made – “Let it be to me according to your word.”

- In Gabriel's words to Mary we are reminded that no matter how things look or what appears to be true based in the circumstances we face - **God has not, nor will He ever abandon us!! He has entered in and profoundly so!! He is always present in purposeful love!!**

We must understand that Mary's words of submission were not based in a profound understanding of what was announced by the Gabriel. It was the consequence of a “high Christology” which was out of reach for most all of the prophets and generations which have come before – though possible. Neither was her declaration of submission based in some foresight or knowledge of how this would all play out. It was far more simple and humble than all of that. She entrusted herself to the Lord, and was honor if not frightened to do so, submitting to His plan to use her to fulfill the great promise of Messiah. People in the midst of a moment like this are like those in a deep well. They can't see forward or back out of it their circumstances. They can only look up to the One who is the light.