

Luke 1B

- The writer Luke is preparing us for the arrival of the promised Messiah, the promised King of Israel
 - Luke alone chose to emphasize a comparison between the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus
 - But this makes perfect sense considering Luke's purpose and emphasis
 - His account is emphasizes the human qualities of the man, Jesus
 - Among synoptic Gospels, Matt wrote to the Jews, emphasizing Jesus as King, the Messiahship of Christ
 - Mark wrote his Gospel for the gentile Roman church, emphasizing the Servant nature of our suffering Lord
 - And Luke wrote for the gentile Greeks, emphasizing the perfect, ideal man that was Jesus, the Son of Man
- Last week we learned how the arrival of John the Baptist was announced in advance to Zacharias, and yet he doubted the word of the Lord spoken through Gabriel and received a rebuke in the form of silence
- Now we see the fulfillment of that promise and a similar set of events in the life of Mary and Joseph

[Luke 1:24](#) ¶ After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,

[Luke 1:25](#) "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked *with favor* upon *me*, to take away my disgrace among men."

- The scripture says that after these days, meaning after the week when Zacharias has served in the temple, his wife becomes pregnant
 - She was old
 - She had never had a child
 - But she was married and had every opportunity for natural process of conception to take hold and to produce children

- But now the marriage produces children where it never had before
- Once she recognizes she is pregnant, Elizabeth goes into seclusion
 - Couple often hide the fact of pregnancy while waiting to get through the difficult first few months
 - In her case, the extreme nature of this late pregnancy probably made her extra cautious
- But notice her immediate response to the fact of the pregnancy
 - She credits God and praises Him
 - Think with me...How much did she understand of her husband's experience in the temple?
 - He was mute, and it would be hard to explain and convince her under the best of circumstances
 - But she probably came to this conclusion putting 2 and 2 together (from Zacharias' sign language) together with her own faith in God
 - Elizabeth exclaims that God found favor to take away her disgrace before men
 - Elizabeth understood that though she was considered a disgrace before men, she was favored before God
 - Childlessness was an occasion for reproach
 - Woman was blamed, not the man
 - And her role was to produce children
 - We ourselves may suffer reproach from the world
 - Our appearance, our weaknesses in health or ability like Elizabeth
 - Our lack of formal education, our low social status
 - Our devotion to raising our children certain ways
 - Our devotion to honest business practices

- But no matter how much disgrace we have before men, we are made perfect before the Lord
 - And He may chose to remove our disgrace before men, as He did for Elizabeth or Joseph, but He may not
- Moses, for example, went the opposite direction in God's plan
 - God actually brought him to a point of reproach before men, where before he had been in a position of remarkable prominence

[Heb. 11:24](#) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,
[Heb. 11:25](#) choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,
[Heb. 11:26](#) considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.

- One of the first and most important growth steps for a Christian to take is to recognize that our experiences in this world -
 - Our joys
 - Our gains and losses
 - Our health
 - Our material happiness
- They are a very poor measure of our righteousness and of God's pleasure with us
- Now, six months into her pregnancy, Elizabeth gets company from a relative

[Luke 1:26](#) ¶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,
[Luke 1:27](#) to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
[Luke 1:28](#) And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you."
[Luke 1:29](#) But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.
[Luke 1:30](#) The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

[Luke 1:31](#) “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

[Luke 1:32](#) “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;

[Luke 1:33](#) and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

[Luke 1:34](#) Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

[Luke 1:35](#) The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

[Luke 1:36](#) “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.

[Luke 1:37](#) “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

[Luke 1:38](#) And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.

- Gabriel is a busy angel, and now we see him dispatched to visit Nazareth
 - Luke generously describes Nazareth as a city
 - It was more of a settlement
 - To Luke’s gentile readers in his day, it would have been a completely unknown town for anyone living outside Palestine
 - Remember, in John 1:46 people ask can anything good from Nazareth
 - I used to have similar reactions when I told people I lived in El Paso
 - Here Luke begins his contrast between John the B and Jesus
 - John’s parents come from the strictly Jewish center of Jerusalem, a place of Pharisaic tradition
 - Jesus’ parents live in dusty, backwater Nazareth, a place that was influenced by the pagan world and less strict in observance
- The angel visits a young woman, Mary
 - Her name probably meant exalted one
 - She is called a virgin, young and unmarried

- In those days, betrothal took place upon puberty, but the consummation of the marriage would await the man's ability to care for the woman was established
- Her husband-to-be is Joseph, a man descended from King David
 - In fact Joseph's father, Eli, is the 40th generation after David, which is an interesting number spiritually speaking – and we can speak more about that fact when we get to chapter 3
 - Joseph is essentially Mary's husband at this point, though there has not been a formal wedding ceremony
 - They were considered husband and wife but lived apart and did not have sexual relations
 - Only a divorce or a death could separate them at this point
- Consider God's comparisons at work here:
 - Mary is a young woman , while Elizabeth is old
 - Mary has made now attempts to bring forth life, while Elizabeth has been working her whole life unsuccessfully
 - Mary is from a place without religious significance (at least in man's eyes), while Elizabeth life is steeped in the culture and formality of Jewish religious practices, focused on the carrying out of the law and sacrificial system
 - Even their husbands reflect this contrast – Zacharias is a priest in the Jew's religious system while Joseph can legitimately lay claim to the throne of Israel by birth
- It seems clear even now how Luke positioned these two accounts as contrasts between the old and the new
 - The Old Covenant and the New Covenant
 - The age old desire to create new life within our dead bodies by our own means vs. a new birth brought by God and through God and given freely to those He chooses
 - A comparison of the old system of man-made rules, of dead religious practices, & of following the law outwardly vs. a new

grace to be found apart from works, a humble and unadorned faith

- Of God's reigning in the hearts of His people vs. men ruling through a system of laws and regulations
- The child, John, who would be the last of the Old prophets foretelling of the arrival of Jesus, the New Adam who would set men free from slavery under the law
- When Gabriel arrives at Mary's door, the scene plays out very differently than it did for Zacharias
 - Gabriel begins with "Greetings, favored one."
 - Favored one means one who received grace
 - Not the usual do not be afraid greeting, although that comes later
 - In fact, the whole scene plays out in such a way to suggest that the angel has appeared in here in a more human form – less threatening
 - Mary is not bothered by the presence of the messenger, just his greeting
 - Mary was the be that favored one, and she was perplexed as the messenger's greeting, probably because she had not yet had opportunity to conceive
 - The announcement stuns Mary, because every believing Jewish girl dreamed of being the one through whom God would bring the Messiah for the nation of Israel
- The angel senses her concern, and offers his customary line, "Do not be afraid"
 - Then, he explains why she is so favored
 - She will have a son
 - A son of the Most High
 - Who will inherit David's throne and sit upon it forever
 - Gabriel uses language almost identical to those in Isaiah 7 when King Ahaz declares:

[Is. 7:13](#) Then he said, “Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?

[Is. 7:14](#) “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

- Then Mary asks the natural question – how?
 - This is fundamentally different than the response that Zacharias gave
 - Mary is assuming the truth of the angel’s statement, which is why she asks for clarification on how it can happen that she conceive without a husband
 - Gabriel answers that the conception would be by the Holy Spirit Himself
 - In other words, God Himself would be the Father
- In fact, did you notice that the angel gives God’s revelation of a coming child to the woman here rather than to the man as in the case of Zacharias
 - Luke is making another contrast here
 - Remember, Luke’s intended audience, Theophilus was a Greek and had reason to desire proof of what he had been taught of Jesus
 - The Greeks had their own religion based on stories (we call mythology) that included children produced by the mating of Gods and human women
 - In Greek mythology, Zeus the king of Gods had many offspring from both goddesses and human women
 - So to teach that God produced His own offspring through an earthly woman was not news to a Greek
 - But the truth and significance of such an event was important for Luke to stress to his Greek audience
 - Every other faith has stories of prophets, representatives of God, or gods themselves

- But they all lack proof of the deity's endorsement – the ultimate proof that their claims can be trusted – the power over death
- Confucious, Buddha, Mohammed are still in their graves
- Christ, though he walked earth as a man, died and then walked the earth a second time. He rose from the dead
- Even though John the Baptist was a child created by God's divine intervention, the revelation of his arrival was given to Zacharias because it was to be Zacharias' physical child
 - Luke wanted God to receive the credit for producing the child, but he wanted his audience to understand it would come by natural means
- But in the case of the announcement of Jesus, the revelation is given to Mary – a virgin
 - This helps make the point that Mary would carry a child without regard for Joseph – Joseph was not a factor in the making of this child
 - In fact, Joseph would adopt Jesus to ensure He was properly included in David's kingly line, but as Luke records in chap 3, Jesus was merely supposed to be a son of Joseph
- Gabriel also mentions to Mary that her son would be the Son of the Most High, the very Son of God
 - The term Most High was a common term – even among Greeks – to describe the chief deity
 - There is no doubt that Luke is testifying to Theophilus and the all Greeks that Jesus was both a true man and truly God
- Luke wanted his Greek readers to appreciate the humanity of their Lord
 - Luke wanted it to be clear that God's son was not the product of God and a woman mating – as with Greek gods
 - No, God's Son was placed in Mary supernaturally by the power of the Holy Spirit

- And though Jesus was a man, he was not to have the nature of fallen man
 - Remember the first Adam was also created by God's hands, not born of a woman
 - And so he was created perfect and without sin
 - But his disobedience of God introduced sin and changed his nature
 - it produced a creature with a spirit opposed to God and unable to please God or even be in His presence
 - And he would forever produce children after his kind, in his image: i.e., sinful and with a nature opposed to God
- But rather than end it all then, God preferred to make a plan for Adam's redemption
 - He needed someone who could begin again, as it were
 - Someone who could start where Adam started but not yet not fail as Adam did
 - Then God could take all the wrath that His justice demanded and that the first Adam and all those of his kind deserved
 - And He could choose to pour it out on the second Adam, who had not earned any wrath of his own and did not deserve it
 - Thus he could save the first Adam by sacrificing the second Adam, so long as the second Adam willingly accepted the wrath that was not his, and the first Adam willingly accepted the glory that was not his
- So, God had to produce another "Adam" –
 - One that was not born of the fallen nature of the first Adam,
 - Yet one who had all the same desires and limitations of the first Adam so that he would be a suitable substitute
- In other words, God's plan of salvation by substitutionary atonement

- Finally, Gabriel announces to Mary that her relative, Elizabeth has also conceived
 - We don't know the exact nature of the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth
 - The word for relative literally means kinsman, but we know that Elizabeth came from the line of Levi while Mary descended from Judah
 - perhaps it refers to their kinship as Jewish woman or the common bond they would now share in their children
- The angel offers this fact as proof of God's ability to do anything
 - Mary never asked for proof of the angel's statements, unlike Zacharias, but the angel determines to give one anyway
 - His announcement of Elizabeth's impending birth is intended to reinforce Mary's trust and hope
 - After all, Mary didn't know that Elizabeth was pregnant, and now the news coming from the angel would cement Mary's belief
 - Even in this detail God's plan was perfect
 - Elizabeth's pregnancy was now self-evident and her birth would proceed Christ's by at least 6 months, giving her added hope
- Mary ends by calling herself a bondservant of God and says let everything happen as you have said
 - You have to take a moment to appreciate the courage in that statement
 - Mary was agreeing to become a pariah, an outcast
 - She would be hated and misunderstood
 - People would assume she was not chaste until marriage and would shun her
 - Yet she accepts this sentence of worldly condemnation willingly
 - Here Luke is offering another contrast

- Elizabeth's child would remove reproach from her while Mary's would bring reproach in her lifetime
- Consequently, Elizabeth continues to reflect the Old Covenant,
 - A covenant that produced outward praise by men for those who could confirm to their expectations of righteousness
- While Mary reflects a New Covenant that often brings upon its followers the world's scorn and derision
 - For it does not bring righteousness by conformance with outward measures but by inward change that rejects the world
- Next, Luke will bring the two story lines together, as Mary and Elizabeth meet to share their good news
 - The meeting produces some of the most compelling examples of God's sovereignty in the lives of His people in the Gospels
- But we should end today with prayer and meditation on the awesomeness of a God who would take human form to correct Adam's mistake

[Heb. 2:5](#) ¶ For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking.

[Heb. 2:6](#) But one has testified somewhere, saying,

“WHAT IS MAN, THAT YOU REMEMBER HIM?

OR THE SON OF MAN, THAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?

[Heb. 2:7](#) “YOU HAVE MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS;

YOU HAVE CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR,

AND HAVE APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

[Heb. 2:8](#) YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.”

For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.

[Heb. 2:9](#) But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

[Heb. 2:10](#) ¶ For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings.

[Heb. 2:11](#) For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one *Father*; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

[Heb. 2:12](#) saying,

“I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME TO MY BRETHREN,
IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE.”

[Heb. 2:13](#) And again,

“I WILL PUT MY TRUST IN HIM.”

And again,

“BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME.”

[Heb. 2:14](#) ¶ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Heb. 2:15](#) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

[Heb. 2:16](#) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.