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***Jesus: the Promised Son***

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### **Intro:**

As you know, this morning is the first Sunday in the season of the church known as Advent. Advent is the time of year that includes the four Sundays just before Christmas. It is a time set aside by many churches to prepare for the celebration of the coming of Jesus almost 2000 years ago.

The *wreath* here at the front is the traditional symbol used during the Advent season. The wreath (because it is formed into a circle) symbolizes eternity or the all-encompassing love of God for the world.

The wreath contains *four candles* that will be lit one at a time on each of the Sundays from now until Christmas beginning with the first one today.

The *first candle* is called the “prophecy candle”. I’m not going to tell you what the other candles are called now... that’s supposed to be a surprise! To add to the suspense, the meaning of each candle will be revealed on future Sundays.

Let me ask you a question: “How do *you* prepare for the coming of Christmas?”

I recently heard a story about a wife who, as she was waking her husband up in the morning said, “Wake up honey, its time to start going through the motions!” When Christmas comes do you feel like you’re “just going through the motions?!”

Every year Christmas holiday seems to edge earlier and earlier into Dec. and even Nov. What with Christmas parties, decorations, gift buying, etc. The days *before* Christmas tend to become the days *of* Christmas. Sometimes, it seems that the last thing we associate with Christmas is the birth of Christ!

I’m not saying that all the things that we associate with Christmas are wrong. I’m saying, “We need to take time to remember ‘what the main reason for the season is!’ ” Are we too busy with our routines and too *wrapped up* (no pun intended) in the celebrating of our religious traditions to remember that the Messiah has come?! First and foremost, Christmas is a time for remembering the birth of Jesus Christ.

In our passage in Luke this morning we begin our preparation for celebrating Christmas as we look at some prophecies that were made concerning his birth

Please open to Luke chapter 1 starting at verse 26... [pause]

### I. The Angel’s Announcement (vss 26 – 35)

#### A. The setting: (vss 26 – 27) (the scene for the rest of the passage)

1. “...in the sixth month...” makes a connection with the preceding passage which pertains to Liz and John the Baptist (i.e. the events are in some way related).
2. “...the angel Gabriel...” being sent from God tells us that what is about to happen has been initiated by God. God is about to take direct action.

- a. Gabriel is 1 of two “good” angels mentioned in the Bible by name (the other is Michael).
  - b. In Luke 1:19: he appeared to Zechariah to tell him that his wife will have a baby (John).
  - c. Gabriel is mentioned in two other places:
    - (1) In Dan. 8:16, 9:21 God brings Daniel the understanding about his visions.
    - (2) It serves to link this with the last passage because Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in 1:19.
3. The town of Nazareth was relatively insignificant compared to the city of Jerusalem where the last scene took place.
- a. Nazareth is not mentioned in the OT, Josephus, or the rabbinical writings.
  - b. John 1:46 gives us the attitude that was possibly current concerning Nazareth at the time—“Can anything good come out of it?”
4. Vs 27: The angel was sent to see Mary. Luke uses the word virgin twice in this one verse. (I.e. let it be understood that Mary was a woman who had not yet had sexual relations.)
- a. She was engaged:
    - (1) Marriage at that time in Palestine took place in two parts. First was the period of engagement.
      - (a) Normally it lasted no more than a year but had to be at least 1 month.
      - (b) It began with a formal exchange in the presence of witnesses of agreement to marry and the paying of a “bride price” or dowry to the father of the bride.
    - (2) The second part was the marriage proper—the taking of the wife to the husband’s home at which time the marriage would be consummated
    - (3) The engagement was legally binding (the woman could even be called his wife already at this point) and could only be broken by death (in which case the woman would be considered a widow) or an official divorce.
    - (4) Women frequently became engaged in there early teens (anytime after 12½ years).
  - b. She was engaged to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David in the OT. Therefore, Joseph’s children would obviously also be descendants of King David.
  - c. This is important because as we shall see later in the passage, Joseph will not be Jesus’ biological father.
  - d. Thus, Luke here considers Jesus to be a legitimate member of the royal line by what we today might call adoption (Liefeld).
  - e. Jesus was to be the son of David through Joseph as his legal father (Marshall).

5. With this as background we are ready for the entrance of the angel Gabriel.
- B. The angel appears to Mary (vss 28 – 29).
1. His first word to her is a very ordinary greeting like “Greetings” or “Hello”. In Latin it is “Ave Maria”.
  2. That is followed by a more interesting word translated by NASB as “favored one” and NIV as “you who are highly favored”.
    - a. Not so much because of merit or worthiness on her part but because she is the recipient of divine favor (something freely given by God).
    - b. Just what that is is yet to be revealed in the passage so “don’t touch that dial!”
  3. “The Lord is with you”:
    - a. A declaration not a wish, and not the point of Jesus’ conception.
    - b. It is a common greeting in the OT that was used to prepare the recipient for divine service with the assurance that “the Lord will be with you to help you.” (Marshall)
  4. Vs 29 says that Mary was “greatly troubled” at the angel’s words.
    - a. Well, how would you feel if an angel were to appear to you, addressing you with such exalted terms, and implying that God had chosen you for a special service?!
    - b. No matter how much we are willing and ready to serve God whole-heartedly don’t you think there would be a little fear and anxiety about what that might involve?!
    - c. You, too, with Mary might say to yourself, “Now that’s a strange way to greet someone, I wonder what he has in mind...” “I wonder if I’ll like it!”
    - d. In Mary’s case, she didn’t have to wait too long to find out!
- C. Mary is going to have a Son (vss 30 – 31).
1. Before he goes on, the angel reassures her (vs 30).
    - a. “There is no reason to be afraid—you are not being punished! You have found favor with God!”
  2. The announcement begins in vs 31.
    - a. Like many times before when the birth of a child was foretold (e.g. 1:13), Mary is told by the angel that she will become pregnant and will give birth to a son and that he should be named Jesus.
    - b. There was nothing unusual about the name itself although it becomes deeply significant for Jesus because it means “Yahweh saves”.
      - (1) “Jesus” or “Joshua” was a common Jewish name that remained popular through the first century.
      - (2) It is significant in that the name was given by God but that it was not unique to Jesus (others had received their names from God - 1:13).

(3) It also provides us with a clue as to who to look for as Luke proceeds his narrative.

3. If what the angel has said up to now is not absolutely unique then what he says next.

D. Jesus will be the Son of God (vss 32 – 33).

1. In this list we discover just how extraordinary and unique Jesus will be.

2. In these vss 2 – 5 statements are made about who Jesus will and what he will do:

a. “He will be great”. His greatness will have no qualifications or expressed limitations whatever. This is surprising because unqualified “greatness” is an attribute of God in the OT. E.g. Ps. 145:3 says

“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.”

b. “...the Son of the Most High”. “Most High” can only refer to God as it is used to translate ‘elú’elyon (אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה) in the OT (e.g. Gen. 14:18-20).

(1) In the OT, “son(s) of God” is used of angels (Gen. 6:2, Job 1:6, 2:1, Ps. 29:1, Dan. 3:25), for Israel in a collective sense (Ex. 4:22, Duet. 14:1, Hosea 11:1, Is. 1:2), of Davidic kings (II Sam. 7:14, Ps. 2:7), and of judges (Ps. 82:2).

(2) Luke even uses this exact phrase for referring to disciples in 6:35.

(3) Yet, the sense in which it is used of Jesus in this context reveals a unique relationship with Yahweh, the God of Israel, which is not shared with any other being.

(4) As will be seen when we get to vs 35 it is meant to signify much more than adoption into a close relationship with God.

c. “...the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David”

(1) Jesus’ legal father will be Joseph who is a descendant of David. Therefore, as we saw above, Jesus will also be a descendant of David.

(2) God made a promise to King David which we read in II Sam. 7:12-13: The LORD to Nathan to report to David:

“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will rise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

(3) This same prophecy is made even clearer in Ps. 132:11:

“The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: ‘One of your own descendants I will place on your throne...’ ”

(4) Gabriel tells Mary that Jesus is to be the fulfillment of God’s promise to David.

d. “...he will reign over the house of Jacob forever”. “House of Jacob” is a traditional term for Israel in the OT.

(1) Not that one of his descendants will always reign but that he will reign forever!

- (2) This anticipates an eternal reign of Christ.
  - e. "...his Kingdom will never end". An eternal kingdom ruled by the Messiah is also predicted in a number of OT passages:
    - (1) This is closely tied to the preceding two phrases. It would be hard to separate an eternal throne or reign without an eternal kingdom!
    - (2) The ideas of an eternal reign and/or an eternal kingdom is not rare in the OT:
    - (3) Is. 9:6-7 is a prophecy that contains all three elements:
 

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Might God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”
- E. As the son of God, Jesus’ conception will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit (vss 34 – 35).
1. At this point Mary asks Gabriel a question: “How will this be since I am a virgin?” (vs 34)
    - a. Notice that she does not ask a question about the prophecies concerning her future son!
    - b. Why did she see a problem with bearing a son in the future since she was engaged and would probably be married in less than a year anyway?
    - c. It may be that she had her immediate situation in mind and wasn’t expecting the angel to be talking about a time yet in the future when she would be able to have normal marital relations.
    - d. And, as a matter of fact, the angel wasn’t talking about a time in the future when Joseph could have fathered the son in question.
    - e. From a literary standpoint then, it serves to highlight what the angel is about to say
  2. Gabriel explains the situation to her: (vs 35)
    - a. Jesus will be called the Son of God for a unique reason. His conception will take place as the result of the Holy Spirit coming upon his mother, Mary.
    - b. The uniqueness of Jesus with respect to his birth reaches its climax here. The major emphasis is that Jesus will be born by divine not human agency.
    - c. We are told that Jesus’ origin is due to the effect of the creative power of God (i.e. the Holy Spirit) on Mary. There is a causal connection between the virginal conception and Jesus’ divine sonship.
    - d. "...the power of the Most High" is just another way to refer to the Holy Spirit here; and the word for "overshadow" carries the sense of the holy, powerful presence of God (Liefeld).

- e. This figurative language reminds of the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle in Ex. 40:33b-35.
    - (1) The cloud of glory signified the divine presence and power that was with the nation of Israel as the people wandered in the wilderness for 40 years after God delivered them from slavery to the Egyptians.
    - (2) The same imagery is used here to show that it is under such an influence that Mary is to become a mother (Plummer).
  - f. Thus, Jesus will be called the son of God because God will literally be his Father!
  - g. It is impossible to miss the parallel between what is going on in this passage and Is. 7:14:
 

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

    - (1) Although the fulfillment of this prophecy is stressed more in Matt. 1:22 – 23 than here, it is still seen as fulfilled here in Jesus because of the stress on the fact that Mary, though she is a virgin, will conceive and bear a son.
    - (2) Note the similarity of the wording between Is. 7:14 and Luke 1:31.
  - h. Thus, Jesus will not only be the Davidic Messiah and so fulfill many OT promises and prophecies but he will also be God’s own son!
- F. Luke’s account of this encounter is a highly dramatic way to get across to his reader who Jesus is. Compared to the more poetic account found in John 1:1, 14:
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
- 1. In Luke’s account we can feel the drama as it is recreated for us!
- G. With the announcement completed, the angel now offers Mary a sign to prove that what he has prophesied will surely come to pass.
- II. The Angel’s Assurance (vss 36 – 37)
- A. Proof—Elizabeth is 6 months pregnant (vs 36).
- 1. Well, what’s so miraculous about that?! People get pregnant all the time!
  - 2. The miracle is this: Liz was now in her old age and had been barren all her life. The miracle given as evidence of God’s marvelous power is therefore twofold in the case of Liz.
  - 3. Not only did God have to overcome her age factor but also the biological problem that had prevented her from getting pregnant all her life.
- B. “Nothing will be impossible with God” (vs 37)
- 1. Gabriel’s assurance concludes with a grand affirmation. Surely it is one of the most reassuring statements in all Scripture! “Nothing is impossible with God”.

2. When God is at work nothing can interfere with his plans! No matter what it is that might seem unconquerable to us, God can overcome it in order to accomplish his purposes!
3. Mary is being asked to believe that what God has revealed to her through the angel Gabriel will be accomplished.
4. She has been given something by which she can verify that what was promised will surely come to pass (i.e. Liz) and also the awesome reassurance that God can do absolutely anything!

### III. Mary's Response—Acceptance (vs 38)

- A. Vs 38 shows us Mary's response to this fantastic angelic visit.
- B. She humbly acknowledges that she is the Lord's servant. She is willing to set aside her own plans for her life so that she can be available to submit to the Lord's special purpose for her.
- C. She expresses her wish that all that the angel had told her would be accomplished in her.
- D. Whether she fully understood everything that the angel had told her would be hard to say, but, she was willing to trust the Lord to accomplish what he was promising to do.
- E. Mary is thus seen as the model believer—a picture of true Christian discipleship.
- F. "Mary's servant hood is not a cringing slavery but a submission to God that in OT times characterized genuine believers and that should characterize believers today." (Liefeld)

### **Conclusion:**

Although the passage ends with the idea of Mary's servant hood, that is only a secondary theme. The main thrust of the passage is the uniqueness of Christ. We must decide what to do now that we have been confronted with who he is. And although the passage deals with the announcement of his birth, to talk of Bethlehem apart from Calvary and his second coming is, as one writer put it, "to open ourselves to being merely sentimental."

The question we are left to ponder each Christmas is "Why did he come?" For even as Christ lied in the manger he was destined for the cross. He had come for the purpose of dying. We must avoid being too sentimental about Bethlehem, shepherds, cows in the stable, baby Jesus of whom it is said, "no crying he made", etc.

As we remember the link between Jesus' birth and his death we are reminded that we are all sinners. Jesus' birth only has meaning for the person who has acknowledged the need to have Jesus wipe away his or her own personal guilt.

If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord then you will not be able to understand the true meaning of Christmas. For Christmas is about Jesus being born in order to die. Why don't you begin to trust Christ and him alone for salvation this Christmas?! One writer put it this way, "We properly look backward and forward only as we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord here and now. Without that, backward [i.e. Christ's birth, death, and resurrection] is merely history and future [i.e. his second coming] is fantasy. Each only producing emotional effects as they are detached from our daily lives."

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord then the passage we studied today should illicit awe, amazement, wonder, and worship as you consider what it meant for God to become a man! The application is simple: understand who Gabriel was speaking of and worship him, today and always! You also have something else to rejoice about because he is coming again! As we remember his first coming we cannot help but look forward to his second coming!

Regardless of which category you find yourself in, I suggest that you take time today to review the details of this passage and let it really sink in! Resolve right now to take time today!

Advent is meant to facilitate our preparation for Christmas. It is to be characterized by joyful anticipation as we remember that not only did the event that we celebrate at Christmas happen but that it happened for me!

Prayer: [Thanks for the birth of Jesus that we might be reconciled to God through his death on the cross.]