

## Responding to a Christmas Miracle

### Luke 1:26-38

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

It is almost Christmas time again! While I am not a big fan of insane traffic and shopping in overcrowded malls, how I love to visit family and friends and gorge on some of the best cooking one could ever desire! And while expressing love towards one another is part of our obligations to God at



Christmas time I can't help but think that there is more asked of us during this joyous occasion! For instance, when the virgin Mary was told she was about to have a child who would be called the “Son of

God” who would fulfill the Messianic prophecies, how did she respond? God asked her to risk her very life and fulfill a role in His kingdom beyond her understanding and yet she had incredible faith and said, “may Your word be fulfilled in me!” Even though Mary was a teenage with a low social status, this “ordinary person” was told she would become the mother of

Jesus! The Bible states we are Christ's ambassadors, royal priests and have been given spiritual gifts to accomplish the divine roles assigned to each one of us! Since we are divinely enabled should we not respond to the babe lying in the manger with more than just enjoying presents and great food? Are we not like Mary being invited to love Jesus by doing great things in His kingdom? What keeps us from serving Jesus this Christmas, is it fear of being ridiculed, fear of not being capable, laziness, or outright disbelief that the Good Shepherd can do anything in and through our very lives? During this sermon, please listen to how Zachariah and Mary responded to the angel Gabriel and ask yourself, how should I respond to Christ's birth so that I might honor Him rightly on His birthday!

## Jesus's Birth Foretold

### “In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy” (26a)

In foretelling the birth of Jesus Christ Luke invites us to go back to the first of the chapter and review the foretelling of the birth of John the Baptist. The story begins stating that in the time of king Herod there was a priest named Zachariah who was married to Elizabeth who was a descendant of Aron (5). Though both were “righteous in God's sight, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly” (6),<sup>1</sup> like Abraham and Sarah, Elkanah and Hannah they were beyond childbearing years<sup>2</sup> and “faced lifelong disappointment and shame”<sup>3</sup> of not being blessed by God with children. One day when Zachariah's division was on duty he was chosen by lot to “go into the Holy

<sup>1</sup> John G Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 11.

<sup>2</sup> John G Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:5–7.

Place before the presence of God and burn incense during the sacrifice.”<sup>4</sup> This was a once in a lifetime experience<sup>5</sup> but what made it even more miraculous is what happened next. The angel of the Lord Gabriel appeared and told Zechariah to not be afraid for he was “gripped in fear” (12). Gabriel told him that his



prayers had been heard and he was going to have a son and who was to be named “John” (13) which means “the Lord has shown favor.”<sup>6</sup> John would be a prophet that would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, he was to take

the Nazarite vow<sup>7</sup> to never take “wine or fermented drink,”<sup>8</sup> and would be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born (15)!<sup>9</sup> John would be the promised Elijah of Malachi 4:5-6 who would “turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Malachi 3:1-2, 17)!<sup>10</sup> While John would later deny that he is actually Elijah in person, Jesus called him Elijah in spirit (Mark 9:12; Matthew 17:12)<sup>11</sup> for he was the

messenger Isaiah foretold, a voice calling in the desert, “prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him” (Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:1-3)! Though Zachariah was a righteous man and was in the Holy Place in the presence of God, due to the old age and closed womb of his wife Elizabeth he doubted the glorious news that Gabriel had just shared with him (18).<sup>12</sup> Christmas is filled with the miraculous! Like Zachariah do you have doubts God is sovereign? Like him are you walking by sight and not faith and if so, will not this destroy your witness and your service to the Lord on His birthday?

**“God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. This virgin’s name was Mary” (26b – 27)**

Like John the Baptist, God sent the angel Gabriel to announce the birth of Jesus to His soon to be mother, Mary. Even though Luke interweaves both stories so closely together they represent one<sup>13</sup> “narrative of God’s great plan of salvation,”<sup>14</sup> they differ significantly. First, John the Baptist’s birth is foretold in the temple of the Lord while Jesus’ birth is foretold in a “small, backwater town that had a bad reputation (John 1:46).<sup>15</sup> “Nazareth, a shoddy, corrupt halfway stop

<sup>4</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:8–17.

<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Lk 1:8–9.

<sup>6</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 39.

<sup>7</sup> There is no indication that John would take any of the other Nazarite vows: such as not cutting one’s hair and to not go near a dead body (Numbers 6:1-21)

<sup>8</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 39.

<sup>9</sup> John G Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 328.

<sup>11</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Lk 1:17.

<sup>12</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:18.

<sup>13</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 82.

<sup>14</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 331.

<sup>15</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:26–27.

between the port cities of Tyre and Sidon was overrun with Gentiles and Roman soldiers<sup>16</sup> and was so insignificant in its day that it was “not even mentioned in the OT, Josephus, rabbinic literature, Mishnah, or the Talmud.”<sup>17</sup> Second, while Zachariah and Elizabeth were married and older, Joseph and



Mary were betrothed to be married and significantly younger. To be betrothed meant the “first stage involving the payment of the dowry or bride price had been made,”<sup>18</sup> Mary would still be living with her parents,<sup>19</sup> no sexual intercourse was allowed,<sup>20</sup> and to get out of the arrangement required a certificate of divorce.<sup>21</sup> Since most young women were betrothed between the ages of twelve and fourteen,<sup>22</sup> she was likely a teenager. While Luke does not mention the virgin-birth prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, his use of “virgin” here points to the Messianic virgin birth.<sup>23</sup> And lastly, even though like Elizabeth Mary was likely of the Aaronic

descent,<sup>24</sup> Luke tells us that Mary’s husband Joseph is a direct descendant of king David, fulfilling the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 9:6-7.<sup>25</sup> At this point in the story it is almost like Luke is inviting the reader to see that God not only chooses the “great” but also the “significant” or “obscure servant”<sup>26</sup> to do great things in His kingdom! Is this not an invitation for each of us to serve knowing that He alone will guarantee the harvest?

### Fearing the Miracle

**“The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God” (28-30).**

While Elizabeth would only later come to realize the favor that she had received from God, Mary was told in the angel’s greeting that she was highly favored, and that God was with her (28)!<sup>27</sup> Mary’s response to the angel was mixed with

<sup>16</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 28–29.

<sup>17</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 43.

<sup>18</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 331.

<sup>20</sup> John G. Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 15.

<sup>21</sup> A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Lk 1:27.

<sup>22</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 31.

<sup>23</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 34.

<sup>24</sup> John G. Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 15.

<sup>25</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 42.

<sup>26</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Lk 1:26–38.

<sup>27</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 34.

many emotions. First, Mary was “greatly troubled” and as the angel confirmed she was afraid. “Angels are glorious creatures, majestic and awesome”<sup>28</sup> and the “people who usually reacted with angelic revelations in the Old Testament were overwhelmed with fear.”<sup>29</sup> Also, Mary might have feared the angel because it was a social taboo for a man to greet an “unknown woman in Judaism for such an act would be seen as



a challenge to the finance’s authority.”<sup>30</sup> Second, while Zachariah was filled with doubt concerning the angel’s mission, Mary was filled with wonder as to what kind of greeting the angel had given her. For God to have bypassed Judea, Jerusalem, and the temple<sup>31</sup> to a shoddy, insignificant, town overrun with Roman soldiers and ask a young, unknown teenager

out of the billions of women alive<sup>32</sup> to “be the receptor of God’s greatest favor,”<sup>33</sup> this was more than Mary could understand! While we might be tempted to think that Zachariah was chosen because he was a priest,<sup>34</sup> the angel leaves no doubt that Mary

was the “beneficiary, not the bestower, of God’s favor!”<sup>35</sup> “Like Moses, Mary is the recipient of God’s unexpected, undeserved, and overwhelming grace.”<sup>36</sup> To hear the words, she was “highly favored by God, “language that placed her in the company of the heroes of the OT,”<sup>37</sup> would make any humble person ask the question: why would God honor someone so insignificant and what was the divine task being set before her? Have you ever felt like Mary that your life is so small and insignificant that God would is not aware of you? Even though Scripture states you are an ambassador of Christ and His royal priest do you wonder what divine role God has waiting for you, especially at Christmas time? Are you willing to be like Mary and ponder the answers to these questions with faith that whatever God asks He will enable you to fulfill it for His honor and glory?

**“You will conceive and give birth to a Son, and you are to call Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; His kingdom will never end” (31-33).**

<sup>28</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:8–17.

<sup>29</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Lk 1:12.

<sup>30</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 44.

<sup>31</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 32.

<sup>32</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 32.

<sup>33</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 32.

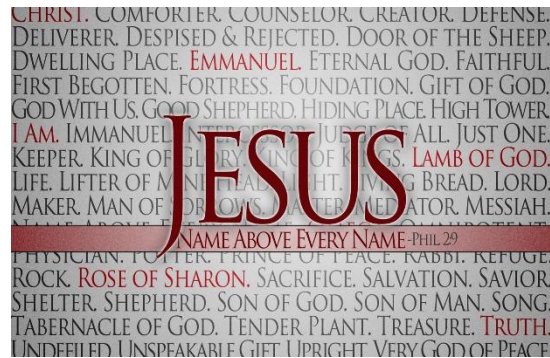
<sup>34</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:28–33.

<sup>35</sup> John G Mason, *Luke: An Unexpected God*, ed. Paul Barnett, Second Edition., Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2019), 15.

<sup>36</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 45.

<sup>37</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 35.

After the angel Gabriel tells Mary to not be afraid, he explains to her the miraculous birth that was about to happen. Mary was told she was about to conceive and give birth to a son “like no other in all of history!”<sup>38</sup> She was about to become pregnant<sup>39</sup> and if that was not exciting enough imagine how Mary felt when she heard the angel say, “you are to call His



name Jesus” (31) which according to Matthew 1:21 implies, “He will save His people from their sins.”<sup>40</sup> Even if Mary did not know of this verse, she would have likely known

that “Jesus” in Greek is the equivalent of the Hebrew words Yeshua, or Joshua, which means “Yahweh saves.”<sup>41</sup> Not just through His name but also in the angel’s next four points one finds “God’s messianic intentions for the Child!”<sup>42</sup> First, Gabriel states Jesus is going to be great as signified by His title, Son of the Most High (32). While John would be “great in the

sight of the Lord” (1:15), “Jesus’ greatness would be unqualified and absolute.”<sup>43</sup> Not only would Jesus be “the representative of divine promise of salvation,” (3:6)<sup>44</sup> which later He would claim to be the way, truth, and life (John 14:6), but He would also be the one and only Son of the “Most High” which was one of the major titles of God (Genesis 14:18-20; 2 Samuel 22:14; Psalms 7:17)!<sup>45</sup> Second, the “Lord God will give Jesus the throne of His father David” (32). This fulfilled the prophecy to king David that “I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish His kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for My name (2 Samuel 7:12-13). Hearing that Jesus would fulfill this key foundational messianic prophecy<sup>46</sup> must have excited or made Mary ponder even more about the significance of the Child she was about to bear!<sup>47</sup> Third, not only would Jesus build the house but would also reign over Jacob’s descendants forever. “This reflects Isaiah 9:7 (he will reign on David’s throne) and the prophecies of the eternal reign of David in 2 Samuel 7:13–16; Psalms 89:3–4; 132:11–12; Isaiah 9:6–7; Daniel 7:14.”<sup>48</sup> And finally, Jesus’ kingdom would never end which fulfills the prophecy of Daniel 7:14 which states, “His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be

<sup>38</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 35.

<sup>39</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 34.

<sup>40</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:28–33.

<sup>41</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 331.

<sup>42</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 36.

<sup>43</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 47.

<sup>44</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 57.

<sup>45</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 36.

<sup>46</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 34.

<sup>47</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:28–33.

<sup>48</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 36.

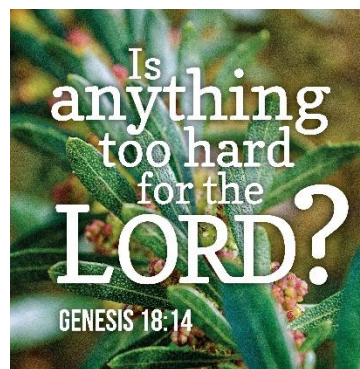
destroyed.”<sup>49</sup> As we can see in this miraculous discourse, Christmas is not just about a babe lying in a manger it is about God sending His one and only Son to be the incarnate Savior to offer salvation to the lost to be a heir of a kingdom that would last forever!

### Faith Seeking Understanding

**“How will this be.” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Host High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail” (34-37)**

While Mary’s response to learning she is about to have a child is like Zachariah’s response in 1:18 it is not the same.<sup>50</sup> Zachariah’s response, “how can I be sure of this?” indicates doubt whereas Mary’s response “how will this be since I am a

virgin?” points more to being puzzled,<sup>51</sup> pondering and genuinely looking for “how” this miracle was to happen!<sup>52</sup> While her question might suggest some doubt it more likely suggests one whose faith seeks understanding! The angel states,



“the Holy Spirit will come on you (Mary), and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (35). Gabriel was not saying that the Holy Spirit would have sex and impregnate Mary but instead would like in Genesis 1:2 would hover over her<sup>53</sup> and the Shekinah glory of God that was present in the tabernacle in Exodus 40:35<sup>54</sup> and in the mount

of transfiguration in Luke 9:34<sup>55</sup> would result in the birth of the incarnate Christ, fully human and fully God! “It was divine, not human, agency that will bring forth this Child!”<sup>56</sup> Mary got to hear firsthand of the “two greatest mysteries in the universe the incarnation and the Trinity”<sup>57</sup> ... no wonder she pondered these things! Echoing the prophecy of 2 Samuel 7:13-16<sup>58</sup> once again the angel states Jesus will be called the Son of God which “while

<sup>49</sup> Grant R. Osborne, [Luke: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 37.

<sup>50</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, [Exalting Jesus in Luke](#), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:34.

<sup>51</sup> Leon Morris, [Luke: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 90.

<sup>52</sup> Grant R. Osborne, [Luke: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 37.

<sup>53</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, [Exalting Jesus in Luke](#), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:35–37.

<sup>54</sup> Grant R. Osborne, [Luke: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 37–38.

<sup>55</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke](#), vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 332.

<sup>56</sup> Grant R. Osborne, [Luke: Verse by Verse](#), ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 37.

<sup>57</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, [Exalting Jesus in Luke](#), Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:35–37.

<sup>58</sup> Craig A. Evans, [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 40.

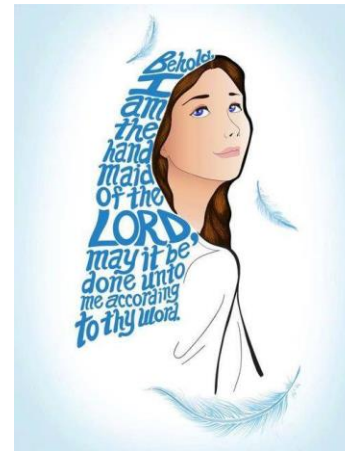
not a direct ascription of divinity<sup>59</sup> profoundly points to “Jesus’ essential deity”<sup>60</sup> as Apostle John would later describe Him as “the word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14)! The angel then tells Mary that Elizabeth who “was unable to conceive” (36) was in her sixth month of pregnancy! God’s sovereignty over even the “laws of nature” is absolute<sup>61</sup> for “no word from God will ever fail” (37)! The prophecy concerning the God-man Jesus Christ was being lived out exactly as foretold by the prophets! Echoing Genesis 18:14 Mary needed to hear the words spoken to Sarah, “is anything too hard for the Lord?”

### Accepting the Miracle of Christmas

**“I am the Lord’s servant,” answered Mary.  
“May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the  
angel left her. (38)**

With an allusion to the words of the rejoicing Hannah (1 Samuel 1:11)<sup>62</sup> Mary boldly states she is the Lord’s servant! Even though fulfilling her divine role would most likely lead to the public shame of conceiving a child out of wedlock, a possible divorce<sup>63</sup> which Joseph contemplated (Matthew 1:19), or even a death penalty for supposedly breaking the betrothal by

committing adultery (Deuteronomy 22:23 - rarely was this carried out was still a possibility);<sup>64</sup> Mary said, “may your word to me be fulfilled.” “Luke contrasts Zechariah’s stumbling in unbelief with Mary’s unwavering faith.”<sup>65</sup> Mary demanded “no



signs or outside proofs”<sup>66</sup> and though she most likely did not fully understand her divine role she trusted that those whom God has found favor will be divinely enabled to do great things in His name! She was the Lord’s servant and no matter what He asked of her she would respond like Isaiah, “here I am send me” (Isaiah 6:8) and with the faith of Esther, “if I perish, I perish: (Esther 4:16)!<sup>67</sup> Is this not how believers today

should respond to God’s plan in our lives?<sup>68</sup> How will you respond to the babe lying in a manger? Will He be but merely a momentary thought, drowned out by all the shopping, presents, family gatherings and food gorging or are you going to be like Mary and not only believe but choose to live God’s plan instead of that of your own?<sup>69</sup> While the world is likely to mock you for your belief in the miraculous birth of the God-man, will you

<sup>59</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 38.

<sup>60</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 332–333.

<sup>61</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Luke: Verse by Verse*, ed. Jeffrey Reimer, Elliot Ritzema, and Danielle Thevenaz, Awa Sarah, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 38.

<sup>62</sup> Craig A. Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Matthew–Luke*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2003), 42.

<sup>63</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:38.

<sup>64</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 35.

<sup>65</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Lk 1:26–38.

<sup>66</sup> James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, ed. D. A. Carson, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2015), 50.

<sup>67</sup> Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 91.

<sup>68</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:38.

<sup>69</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Exalting Jesus in Luke*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2018), Lk 1:38.

shrink in fear or will you be like Mary and ponder and despite not knowing the intricacies of the incarnation will you answer the call this Christmas to give reasons why you have hope in Jesus (1 Peter 3:15)? Even if He asks you to do the impossible will you doubt or will you be like Mary and believe, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mark 6:10)? Jesus wants us to believe and trust in Him wholeheartedly not with the self-seeking glorification of a Pharisees but as one fully in love with He who bought us at the price of His very life (1 Corinthians 6:20)! So, what will you give Christ on His birthday? May your gift to your Lord, Savior and King be the total surrender of your heart, mind, and soul to He who carries you in the dark valleys, gives you reasons for thanksgiving on the mountaintops, and enables you to do more than you could ever ask or image (Ephesians 3:20)!