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Mary: Mother of the Promised Seed Luke 1:26-35

INTRODUCTION

Since King David's death, Israel lost its sovereignty as a nation. Israel had experienced the oppressive heel of the Babylon empire, Persian empire, Greek empire, and now the Roman empire to name a few. It has been 400 years since the voice of any legitimate prophet has been heard.

During this time, Alexander the Great had Hellenized the known world, everyone spoke a universal language. The evolution of travel was unparalleled to the ages that preceded Alexander's. After the Greek Empire there arose one much more fierce: the Roman Empire.

Under the Roman empire, there was one main language spoken in the known world: Greek, and all Rome made sure that all roads led to its capital which revolutionized the ability to travel and communicate. This was the fullness of time; this was the world of Mary and Joseph. Listen to Galatians 4:4-5, "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*"

How did God accomplish this? He accomplished this through a young teenage virgin. Let's look at Luke 1:26-35, for there are three persons that made Mary's pregnancy of the promised seed possible...

God the Father: The source of the Promised Seed (vv. 26-30)

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Here again we see that God does not operate in our categories. Who in their right mind would chose a young teenage girl of about 13-15 years of age, from a rural town to become the mother of the King of all creation? That is what's happening here!

The angel Gabriel appears only two other times in the Bible: in the book of Daniel (chapters 8; 9) to interpret visions concerning God's redemptive plan and in Luke 1:19 for the announcement of John the Baptist. Here he appears to Mary. I think he is extremely excited about what he is

about to announce, and the first words that Mary hears uttered out of Gabriel's mouth is, "*Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*"

Wow! Mary was betrothed to Joseph; now betrothal involved two steps: the formal engagement which involved a dowry paid by the groom's family to the bride's family and then a marriage about a year or so following the engagement. The other thing that we should understand is that in the culture she grew up in, she could have been as young as twelve.

So here is Mary, somewhere between the age of 12-16, from a poor family (we know this because she was betrothed to marry a carpenter), and out of the blue an angel appears to her to tell her that she is *favored* by God. Mary finds herself as the recipient of God's grace based on His own sovereign choice.

Like Abraham, Noah, Moses, and David, Mary had done nothing to deserve this kind of grace. In fact Mary would have been the least likely in her culture to become the mother of the Son of David, for she was insignificant in the world's eyes and yet God chose her to bear the One who would become King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelations 19:16).

But you see God does not operate on the same playing field as this world does. This is why we read in the Bible, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD*" (Isaiah 55:8).

God in His sovereign grace chooses Mary to bear the promised seed, the same seed that every other generation that preceded her longed to see, and He does it to demonstrate His power and wisdom; listen to 1 Corinthians 1:26-29,

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

So how did Mary find favor with God? She simply found favor with God. Like Abraham, Noah, Moses, and David, Mary found favor with God because God chose to favor Mary, and He did this to demonstrate His own glory; this is part of the reason He chose a teenage virgin and a young carpenter to parent the King of kings and Lord of lords. The only thing that this couple had to offer was their willingness to serve God.

There is another person who was responsible for Mary's birth of the promised One, and that was...

God the Son: The Promised Seed; the Son of David (vv. 31-33)

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

³² *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to*

him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Not only does this good news come directly from the throne of God, but unlike the covenantal promises of the promised seed to those who preceded Mary, this one is tangible: Mary will be the one to conceive and bear the promised seed.

There are five things Gabriel says about Mary's child that warrants our attention:

1. His name will be Jesus (v. 31)

In Hebrew Jesus is translated as Joshua, which means both savior and deliverer. So the first thing that Gabriel tells Mary is that her child will be a Savior and Deliverer. Before Gabriel tells Mary how her child will be great, how He will be King, and how He will reign forever, Gabriel tells Mary that He will exercise His kingship, power, and sovereignty as Savior.

The other thing Gabriel says about Mary's child is that...

2. He will be great (v. 32)

We learn in the Bible that Jesus is great in that He is the heir of all things, He is the agent of creation, He is the sustainer of the universe, He is the image of the invisible God, He is perfect sacrifice for mankind, and He has conquered death by rising three days after He was killed. I don't think Mary ever really fully grasped these things about her Son until He rose from the dead, listen to some passages,

Colossians 1:15-20. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Hebrews 1:1-4. Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Philippians 2:5-11. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,⁸ he humbled himself by becoming

obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There is nothing that Jesus cannot do, for He is God. He was always God, he was never created; Jesus existed in the fellowship of the Trinity, participated in creation, active in human history, voluntarily zipped Himself up in human flesh, lived among us for 30 years or so, died a vicious death on a Roman cross for your sins and mine, rose on the third day. Jesus is great! Words fail at capturing the essence of Jesus' greatness, so Gabriel simply states, "*He will be great.*"

3. He will be called Son of the Most High (v. 32b)

What does Gabriel mean by calling Jesus, "*Son of the Most High?*" Gabriel does not mean that Jesus was somehow created by God the Father, and He doesn't mean that Jesus is a son of God like the angels are called sons of God; no, what Gabriel means is that Jesus is uniquely God's Son in that He is the divine Word and image of God, begotten from all eternity.

The demons understood this very well, look at Luke 8:28, "*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High? I beseech you, do not torment me.*" The demons understood that Jesus, as Son of the Most High, has the right and power to torment the forces of Satan.

4. God will give Him the throne of His Father, David (v. 32c)

It is only fitting that Jesus who is Savior, who is great, and who is Son of the Most High be the One who sits on the throne of David, especially since Mary and Joseph are direct descendants of David himself. Jesus will not only sit on the throne of David and will rule over Israel, but He will rule the world as King; listen to Isaiah 11:10, "*In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*"

When a man by the name of Simeon saw baby Jesus for the first time after Jesus was dedicated in the temple, he took Jesus in his arms and blessed God and said,

"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

Simeon then looked at Mary, as both Mary and Joseph marveled at what Simeon has just said, "*Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.*"

Basically what Simeon told Mary was that this will not be any ordinary child, for His ministry on this earth and the fierce rejection He will face will cause her to feel a mother's pain unparalleled to most mothers; her heart would be pierced with grief and sorrow for her Son, especially at the cross.

5. Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever (v. 33)

Finally Gabriel tells Mary that Jesus would not only sit on the throne of David, but that He would reign over Israel forever. Jesus would become the final King to reign in Israel and His kingdom would endure forever. But Jesus' kingdom would not be limited to the twelve tribes of Israel, for it will be world wide.

This does not mean that Jesus is not King today, for He is; in fact, Jesus specifically told the Pharisees that His kingdom was present and in the midst of them, listen to what He tells them in Luke 17:20-21,

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, ²¹ nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

Now did Jesus mean that the kingdom was fully realized the day He told the Pharisees this? No. What we see, especially in Luke, is that the kingdom of God is progressive in its realization. When Jesus came on the earth, the kingdom was present, today Christ is King, but there is a day coming when He will physically sit on the throne of David. Just because He is not sitting on the throne of David physically doesn't mean He is not King (David was still king even after his son Absalom drove him out of Jerusalem).

This is why Paul is able to charge Timothy with the following words,

I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he will display at the proper time- he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Timothy 6:13-16)

This means that Jesus is alive and ruling over His people this very hour and every other hour of the day. Jesus, Savior, the great One, the Son of God and the mighty King is ruling today just as realistically as any other king on earth, the only difference is that Jesus is King of kings. Have you bowed before King Jesus and given Him your life? Whether you do it this day or the next, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess in heaven and on earth and under the earth that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

So, Gabriel tells Mary that her son will be called Jesus, Savior, Son of the Most High, the one who will sit on David's throne and reign forever. That is a lot to swallow for someone who is somewhere between 12-16, poor, betrothed to a carpenter and from Galilee. So what is Mary's response? *"How will this be, since I am a virgin?"*

God the Spirit: The Enabler of the Promised Seed (vv. 34-35)

And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"³⁵ And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.

Unlike Eve who took the forbidden fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which caused death, Mary is told that the fruit of her womb would be the source of eternal life; the seed that she would give birth to was the seed that Eve so desperately longed for but never saw.

Mary's question is legitimate, "How in the world can this be, I am not married yet and I have been faithful to my betrothed." Mary's question was humble and sincere; Gabriel's answer to Mary's "how" is, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*"

And permit me to make one thing very clear here; The fertile egg that the Holy Spirit fertilized to conceive baby Jesus was Mary's egg. It was not some supernatural egg, it was Mary's egg, that is why when Jesus was born, he was born fully human as well as fully divine.

There is something very important that I want you to see here before we conclude. Jesus' divine Sonship is linked to the Holy Spirit enabling Mary to become pregnant. This does not mean that Jesus was not part of the Trinity before He was born on earth, what it means is that He took on the title of Son of the Most High because it was through God the Spirit that enabled Mary to conceive. Look at verse 35 again, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.*"

Gabriel in essence says that because the Holy Spirit will overshadow you and make you pregnant, the child will be born and will be called the Son of God. In other words the virgin birth is essential to the doctrine of the incarnation. This is a mystery that is unfathomable, and it should be for God is so far beyond our comprehension. But just because it is mysterious to us it doesn't mean that it didn't happen or that it is untrue.

APPLICATION

So, how does Mary conclude this divine encounter with Gabriel? She concludes by stating, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word*" (v. 38). Can we respond to the Holy Spirit that way? Can we say to Him, "I am your slave; take me; use me as you will; do with me as you please." Mary was some kind of woman, for her heart belonged to God.

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for

sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4)