

SURPRISED AND EXPECTANCY Sunday School- December 1, 2013

Unifying Topic: JESUS' BIRTH FORETOLD

Lesson Text

I. Surprise, Surprise (Luke 1:26-30)

II. Accepting The Impossible (Luke 1:31-40)

The Main Thought: And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. (Luke 1:31, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People are always amazed and often perplexed when unexpected things happen in their lives. How Christians handle these unanticipated events that occur? Mary responded at first with surprise and then with dedication to the angel's announcement about the birth of her baby.

Lesson Aim: To review the foretelling of the birth of the Messiah.

Life aim: To help students reflect on the unexpected events in their lives as well as dedicate themselves to the purposes of God.

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- 1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,
1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
1:28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.
1:29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.
1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.
1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.
1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:
1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.
1:34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.
1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.
1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.
1:38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.
1:39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;
1:40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

HISTORY:

Luke 1: 1-25 Luke's gospel is a record of historical events to establish the truth. Luke's purpose in writing this book was to show that many had attempted to write accounts of the life and ministry of Christ. Those accounts may have been truthful and authentic; however, even if they were eyewitnesses and actually observed what took place, Luke says it seemed good for him who had perfect understanding of all things to write these things. He himself was not an eyewitness of the day to day life of Christ but he was a constant companion of Paul; also had contact with the apostles. His investigative work led him to the beginning which some of the other accounts then in existence (Matt., Mk.) were not only fragmentary and partial, but also somewhat disarranged. Only Luke recounts the birth announcements of Gabriel to Zacharias and to Mary. The accuracy of his investigation speaks of precision and exactness. Luke felt led to write these things to a man named Theophilus. The writings to Theophilus were not a long letter but a whole book. He said: **1)** he had perfect understanding of all things; and **2)** that Theophilus may know the certainty of those things instructed (**vv.1-4**).

Luke is very exact in giving precise historical and chronological information. ¹Luke places the time here as during the time of Herod, king of Judea. "Abia" was a priest in the time of David. He was in the ancestry of Zacharias and his wife's lineage was trace back to Aaron. It seems as though Zacharias and Elisabeth were both of priestly ancestry. Zacharias' name meant "remembered of Jehovah" and Elizabeth's name meant "one whose oath is to God." Both were righteous before God walking in His commandments and ordinances, however, they didn't have a blessing of

¹ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/luke/01.html>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

a child because Elizabeth's womb was barren. This was a problem in that day. Children were considered a blessing from God; a heritage of the Lord. A Jew whose wife could not bear children was thought to be cut off from God and he was expected to divorce his wife, remarry, and bear children. Now, Zacharias and Elizabeth were of old age; passed the time to child-bearing (vv. 5-7).

The temple was built by Zerubbabel and others, and was in the process of being enlarged and redone by Herod the Great. Zacharias had the unique opportunity of offering incense before the Holy of Holies while the people outside prayed and awaited His blessing in the Outer Court. Incense was burned twice in the Temple daily. When the people saw the smoke from the burning incense, they prayed. The smoke drifting heavenward symbolized their prayers ascending to God's throne. In the midst of Zacharias prayers and incense unto God, an angel of the Lord appeared on the right side of the altar of incense. Zacharias became afraid and the angel said, "*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*" The Messenger brought fear but the Message was to bring joy and gladness! Many including them would rejoice over this news! The angel didn't say your prayers were heard, so it had to be a specific prayer prayed that God heard and was bringing to pass! Their need had been meant in a very personal way. Their son would be great in the sight of the Lord; shall not drink wine nor strong drink, as a Nazarite; and would be filled with the Holy Spirit even in his mother's womb. Their son would be a prophet turning many to the Lord and he would be the forerunner of the promised Messiah! His ministry would be like that of Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, to make ready a prepared people for his arrival (vv. 8-17).

Now, Zacharias begins to talk by asking a question: "*Whereby shall I know this?*" He informed the angel of he and his wife's old age. It was like asking for a sign from the angel. The angel lets Zacharias know who he is that he is talking to: he is the one who stands in the presence of God; he is the one who is sent to speak to him by God; and show him these glad tidings. This was not the time to challenge the angel of God after such good news, for now Zacharias will become dumb; silent and not able to speak until these things proclaimed by the angel would be performed—the day of the birth of Zacharias' son. Why? Because *Zacharias did not believe the angel's words to be fulfilled at its proper time!* Zacharias asked the very same question asked by Abraham (Gen.15:8), but Zacharias asked in a spirit of unbelief! Zacharias being a priest who also stands in the presence of God in the temple of the Holy of Holies should have known God speaking to him! The angel had already said that his prayers have been heard. The Word of God had come to him by the angel who stands in the presence of God; and speaks the Word of God. He now speaks to him, but he could not conceive it. It's not enough to pray but we must believe that what we prayed for will be answered by God. He could not spread his doubt because the angel had made him silent. Do we look at the circumstance or do we look at God, who is able to do all things in His season? (vv.18-20).

The people had gathered and were waiting for Zacharias to come out of the Temple from doing his priestly duties, for he had been in there for an unexpected length of time; longer than usual. He went into the Temple able to talk but did not come out in the same way. He was supposed to lead the people in a benediction, but now, he was not able to speak a word. All he could do was motion with his hands. Because he had tarried so long in the Temple, they assumed he displeased God and was killed, but now they knew he had seen a vision in the Temple. Each priest had a certain amount of time to accomplish his work in the temple (about a week) and Zacharias fulfilled the number of his days of administration before returning home. He did, and at the proper time Zacharias's wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months, she did not go out in public. Notice two things:

1. Zacharias had completely lost his voice, yet he fulfilled his duties. He did what he could responsibly and faithfully. We know after returning home he did a lot of praying and meditating because of his experience in the Temple. He is now not able to talk with Elizabeth on a continuance basis or with others.
2. Elizabeth hid herself. Why? For the same reason any of us would withdraw after being visited by such an angelic being with so great a message. She needed time alone with God to absorb all that was happening and to prepare herself for the rearing of one who was destined to be so greatly used by God. This reminds me of (Judges 13) when the angel of the Lord appeared to the barren wife of Manoah before appearing to Manoah himself, to proclaim conception of a son who was to be a Nazarite unto God. His son's name was Samson.

They as parents also needed to know how to raise their son. The point is: the call to special service necessitates a period of preparation, especially in the presence of God. Time alone with God for meditation and prayer for five months was essential for Elizabeth! After that time, she became public to everyone. She was now able to say that God had taken away her disgrace of having no children. People would stop thinking that God was punishing her (vv. 21-25).

LESSON:

Surprise, Surprise (Luke 1:26-30)

1:26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,— When Elizabeth had been expecting a child for six months, the same angel sent by God that had spoken to Zacharias is sent to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth. Elizabeth was in Judea. There is no boundary for God's Word to be sent!

1:27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. This was Gabriel's second mission surrounding the birth of two cousins; one old, one young. This was why John was to come first, to announce the Savior of the world! Gabriel speaks to Mary, a virgin (never been touched sexually by a man) engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. This birth was only going to be done miraculously! Mary's conception of Christ was to be the incarnation of an already existing person. There are three steps involved in a Jewish marriage:

1. **The engagement/ espoused:** the parents usually determined who a child was to marry—often at a very early age.
2. **The betrothal:** at a determined time the couple agreed with the engagement. If they followed through, the betrothal was immediately binding. A legal divorce was thereafter required. The betrothal lasted one year. When Joseph discovered Mary's pregnancy, they were already betrothed to one another.
3. **The marriage:** the consummation of the couple took place. It should be noted that in Joseph's case consummation did not occur until after Jesus' birth.

Both Mary and Joseph were direct descendants of King David. Matthew's genealogy gives Jesus' legal or royal lineage through Joseph. Mary's ancestral line is recorded in Luke 3:23-38. Also look at (Matt.1:1, 16, 20; Lk.2:4).

1:28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Gabriel's salutation to Mary: *"Hail, thou that art] highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."*

1. Mary is *"highly favored by God!"* Highly favored meant that she was chosen for a unique privilege and that meant no matter where Mary had to walk or what she had to do, God promised to be with her. Mary's life had pleased God to the point that He could favor her and be with her.
2. Mary is to be *"blessed among women."* You may call yourself blessed, but to be blessed for this privilege God had in store is truly blessed.

1:29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. First, Mary was troubled when she saw the angel. You could imagine that he was gigantic and dazzling in appearance. Second, Mary was troubled at the angel's saying. She couldn't understand how God could so favor her. She never dreamed she was anyone special or expected this favor. So she was trying to figure out what kind of salutation this was.

1:30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. *"Fear not"* was the same exclamation the angel had made to Zacharias. He was still in the annunciation phase to Mary, but he had to bring peace by saying— *"Fear not"*, Why? Because he wanted her to know that God was pleased with her; there was favor upon her life!

Accepting The Impossible (Luke 1:31-40)

1:31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. When the angel said *"behold"*, he wanted her to really regard this as true, consider, and comprehend this as something new

and unexpected. This young girl that was espoused to Joseph is hearing the angel Gabriel say to her, that *"she will conceive in her womb a son"*; have a baby. And his name will be Jesus. *"Jesus"* came from the name Joshua and meant *"Savior."* Many people in that day named their baby Jesus knowing that God had promised a Savior and hoping their child would be the one. But there will only be one Savior and He is coming through Mary. Don't forget Mary is a virgin—never been touched by a man.

1:32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:— Five things the angel said: The angel is still speaking about the Son Mary will have: *"He will be great and called the Son of the Highest."* We know the Highest of course is God. Therefore, Jesus is the Son of God. *Third, God will give Him the throne of his father David.* Jesus is the Son of David, a descendant of David; therefore, the throne is not given to Him by ordinary men but by God Almighty. This throne promised to David, is given to him in his seed, Christ, not the temporal throne, on which Christ did not sit, but the spiritual throne, of which David' temporal throne was a mere type, a mere shadow. She heard all of this. This would by no means be an ordinary baby. His name is great; His descendants are great; and His throne is great! Yes, that would be hard to comprehend that she was chosen by God for such a task!

1:33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. *Fourth, Jesus will also rule over the house of Jacob with a kingdom (fifth) that will have no end!* God promised David that his throne (rule) would never end (2 Samuel 7:16). This has both a literal and spiritual meaning; and a temporal and eternal meaning. Jesus reigns over physical Israel (the Jewish nation) and spiritual Israel (the believers in Christ). Every ruler in this temporal world is replaced, but Jesus' reign is forever.

1:34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?— Mary was expected to believe the miraculous, but she was puzzled. She was not doubting or asking for some sign like Zacharias (v.18). *Whereby shall I know this?"* means what sign shall you give me? This is of a different connotation than what Mary asked: "How shall this be...?" Mary was asking for information out of curiosity. She was single and had never known a man sexually. She and Joseph had not gotten together. How could she possibly bear a child without knowing a man sexually? Mary was thinking of the physical and not the spiritual.

1:35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. The angel speaks of this conception:

- *"The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee."* The operation of conception is by the Holy Spirit. He shall descend from Heaven. ²God's glory comes down on a place or person. God's power, through the Holy Spirit, would make it possible for Mary to have the Son. God is to be the Father of Jesus and Mary is the mother. Mary furnishes the body and God provides the Spirit.
- *"The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee."* *"Highest"* here means the Eternal Father. Jesus Christ is the Eternal Word. The Word takes on the form of flesh and dwells among us. The mother's body is miraculously overshadowed and the child's body is prepared by the Spirit of God. The power of the Highest causes her to conceive (the Word made flesh) the Son of God in her womb without the help of man. He shall be called the Son of God. Wow!

This shows that Jesus would be the true Son of the Most High by the Holy Spirit. But, He will also be identified as the son of Joseph. Mary's betrothed would be Jesus' legal father, not his biological father—in the earth realm. He will be both God and man (God clothed in man-suit); Gabriel points out that the baby would be a holy thing and would not share the sinful human nature of man. This is no ordinary birth and no ordinary baby!

1:36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. Again, "Behold", the angel wanted Mary to really regard this as true, consider, and

² <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/luke-lbw.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

comprehend this as something new and unexpected. Her cousin Elizabeth in her old age has conceived a son. She had been childless, but now is six months pregnant. This only demonstrates God's miraculous power to do the unexpected and for her to believe such a thing could happen.

1:37 For with God nothing shall be impossible. Things of this nature are impossible for man to do, but with God nothing shall be impossible. This can only be possible for God to accomplish!

1:38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. Mary's response was not wait, let me see; let me check with my intended. Her response was "*Behold*" (regard this as new and unexpected). She places herself as a handmaid. A handmaid was the lowest kind of female servant which shows how much Mary trusted God. She only knew God was asking her to serve Him! Now she is God's handmaiden revealing, "*be it into me according to thy word.*" The Messenger brought a word that would not come back void; brought a word that was not impossible for God; brought a word that would enable the Son of God to be legally in the earth realm! Hallelujah! And at the word of Mary's willing acceptance, the angel departed from her.

1:39 And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;— Mary didn't waste any time. She prepared and went with haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth some sixty or more miles south of Nazareth in Judean territory. She went with purpose. This was not a casual visit. Mary knew about Elizabeth's miraculous conception but Elizabeth did not know about Mary's conception.

1:40 And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. She arrived at her destination, at the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. Three unusual things immediately happened:

1. The babe leaped in Elizabeth's womb (v. 41).
2. Elizabeth was instantly filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 41b).
3. Elizabeth spoke in a loud joyful voice, and a very special spirit of prophecy was given her (v. 42).

SUMMARY:

When Elisabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy God sends His angel to a virgin by the name of Mary in the town of Nazareth. Mary had not yet had sexual contact with any man. She was engaged to be married to a man by the name of Joseph. In Jewish culture, at that time, a man and woman were pledged or engaged to each other for a period of time before the actual marriage. The engagement period was much more binding than an engagement period today, for the two were considered husband and wife except that they did not live together until after the wedding. The angel Gabriel is sent from God to Mary, a young virgin to let her know that she is highly favored by God, blessed among women because she will conceive in her womb and bear a son and call his name Jesus (**vv. 26-31**).

He will be great; the Son of the Highest; He shall be given the throne of his father David; have reign over the house of Jacob, and His kingdom shall have no end; will be an eternal kingdom. Mary asked How? The angel answered how this would not be accomplished by man but by God's Holy Spirit's power overshadowing her. The baby would be a holy thing and called the Son of God. Mary was encouraged by the angel to believe when he told her of her cousin Elizabeth's conception of a son in her old age. With God's great power nothing was impossible! Mary was humble and submissive unto the word of the angel, as she declared, as thou handmaiden, be it unto me. The angel departed and Mary goes with haste to see her cousin Elizabeth in Judea (**vv. 32-40**).

APPLICATION:

When there are unexpected interruptions in our lives, apply Mary's rule, believe God is able to do the impossible; the unexpected in our situation. No matter where our walk takes us, God's power will be there.