

**AMAZING MESSIAH**

How has God been answering your prayers? Zechariah and Elizabeth were surprised in their old age with the blessing of their son John. But what if God made a promise you hadn't asked for? Let's ask Mary!

In Elizabeth's sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel on another mission with good news. This time he spoke to her cousin Mary, a virgin in the city of Nazareth, who was engaged to Joseph, of the house of David. It's all recorded in the gospel of Luke 1:26-38, as prelude to the Christmas story.

**1- JESUS' MANIFEST MOTHER** - *the betrothed virgin*. Gabriel said to Mary, "*greetings O favored one, the Lord is with you.*" She was troubled at this saying. He said, "*do not be afraid Mary, for you have found favor with God.*" God had chosen her by His sovereign will for His own special purposes.

The phrase "*found favor*" is used of Noah, chosen to build the ark (Genesis 6), of Abraham, chosen to be the father of faith (Genesis 18), of Moses, chosen to lead God's people to become a holy nation (Exodus 33), and of Gideon, David, Nehemiah, and Esther. It's an echo of Ephesians 1:5-6, "*in love He predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved, according to the riches of His grace.*"

**2- MARY'S MORAL PURITY** - *sexually pure*. Gabriel's greeting "*O favored one*" reveals God's sovereign choice of Mary. It does not mean that she somehow was to bestow God's grace, but that she had received it. By definition, God's favor is never deserved or earned, but always given by grace, for God's own purposes. Grace means getting what you do not deserve (and mercy means not getting what you do deserve). God's grace is written in every aspect of the Christmas story.

God had chosen Mary and Joseph to be the parents of His promised Christ, the Messiah. Engagement was a virtual marriage, but they could not live together nor be intimate until their wedding. True today, in God's divine design, any sexual intimacy outside of marriage is sin. It is fornication, even for an engaged couple. The holy character of the Triune Godhead forms the basis for "becoming one flesh" in marriage. Several Scriptures show how marriage is a covenant between a man, a woman, and God (including Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6, Malachi 2:14-16, 1Thessalonians 4:1-8, and 1Corinthians 5-7).

**3- JESUS' MAGNIFICENT NAMES** - *promised by God*. Gabriel said, "*behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. 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, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there will be no end.*" These are stunning words!

Note that Zechariah and Elizabeth were told "*you will bear a son*" because they were married, and John means "*God is gracious.*" But to Mary he said, "*you will conceive in your womb and bear a son.*" Jesus means "*Jehovah is salvation.*" As a prophet of the Most High, John would be great before the Lord, and turn the people to God. But Jesus would "*be great*" and He will be called "*Son of the Most High.*" This title refers to God as El Elyon, the Lord, the true God, creator of heaven and earth, above all gods. It is used in Daniel 3-4, and in Genesis 14:8 where Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, blessed Abraham.

**4- JESUS' MESSIANIC HERITAGE** - *prophesied by God*. The magnificent names of Jesus point to His fulfillment of the coming Messiah, the Christ. He is the one and only unique offspring God had promised throughout the Old Testament in a thread of Messianic prophecies about the "anointed one," the Christ.

It begins in Genesis 3:15-16, about the offspring of the woman who would crush the deceiving serpent and remove the curse of sin. And He is the offspring of faith spoken to Abram in Genesis 18, through whom all nations of the earth would be blessed. This was extended to his son Isaac, his son Jacob, and his son Judah, head of the royal tribe: "*the ruler's staff will not depart from Judah until He comes to whom it belongs*" (Genesis 49:8). The promises regarding this special One are truly remarkable.

The promise (Psalm 89) extends to Judah's descendant David, as in 2Samuel 7:12-16: "*I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom and the throne of His kingdom forever, and My steadfast love shall not depart from Him.*" All this points to Christ!

**5- JESUS' MIRACULOUS BIRTH** - *conceived by the Holy Spirit*. Mary's head must have been spinning. She knew these prophecies! To hear them applied to her son brings her back to the reality of the moment. She says, "*how will this be, since I am a virgin?*" She is not naive. How can she have a baby since she has never been with a man, and guards the purity of her engagement? It's a fair question, and sounds a lot like Zechariah's "*how shall I know this, for I am an old man and my wife advanced in years.*"

But he spoke in unbelief, seeming to doubt God's ability to give him a son. Mary's question is innocent of unbelief. Pastor-author Colin Smith notes, "*the angel's answer takes us to the heart of the greatest and most wonderful mystery in the Bible*" - the mystery of our amazing Messiah, Jesus the Christ! □