

FAITH FORETOLD

The angel Gabriel told Mary the most amazing news: she would bear a son to be named Jesus, as the great Son of the Most High God, come in the flesh, who will reign forever on the everlasting throne of David. These incredible words introduced even more astounding promises, as recorded in Luke 1.

1- JESUS' MIRACULOUS BIRTH *conceived by the Holy Spirit.* Mary is a young virgin, betrothed to Joseph, and cannot fathom how she could bear a son. The angel Gabriel explains in Luke 1:35-37, "*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.*" Her sincere question receives an amazing answer! And a way for her faith to be strengthened by corroborating the angel's words: "*And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren, for nothing will be impossible with God.*"

Elizabeth would have a miraculous birth, but she is not a virgin, she is one flesh with Zechariah. The Greeks had myths about gods having children with humans. But the virgin birth of Christ to Mary, by the Holy Spirit, is a distinctly and uniquely Christian concept. The sovereign God, who has eternally existed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will do a miracle in Mary's ordinary human body, to deliver the Son of God in the flesh, in the person of Jesus, the promised Christ.

2- MARY'S IMPOSSIBLE MISSION *to trust and obey.* Pastor-author Colin Smith observes, "it is significant that the angel did not tell Mary to do anything. She was told that God would do something. God acts, Mary is passive. God takes the initiative. He does not wait for a deliverer to arise from the human race. God the Son became man, taking flesh through the virgin Mary."

God long prophesied a special offspring. And 700 years before Mary, He said it would happen through a virgin. The prophet Isaiah was sent to King Ahaz, who demonstrated a lack of faith in trusting God's protection from enemies. Isaiah 7:13-14, "*hear then, O house of David, is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*" which means "God with us." He warned Ahaz, who offered his own sons in a fire (2Chronicles 28:3) and rejected God's word and covenant.

3- MARY'S AMAZING CHILD *son of the promise.* The historical child who fits the circumstances is Jesus Christ, the Messiah, born of the virgin Mary some 700 years after God spoke the words of promise through Isaiah. The word *virgin* in Scripture means not just a young maiden of marriageable age, but one who had never been intimate with a man, just as we understand the term virgin today.

Mary's promised child also fulfills Isaiah 9:6-7, "*for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be on His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over His kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness, from this time forth and forevermore.*" For nothing will be impossible with God! He is El Elyon, God Most High, Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of Hosts, Jehovah, I AM. Jesus' miraculous birth, magnificent names, Messianic heritage, all come about in God's amazing grace.

4- MARY'S AMAZING FAITH *a legacy for all believers.* In the face of impossible human obstacles, Mary simply believed what God had spoken. She had faith that not only could God do them, but that He would. As the angel declared, "*for nothing will be impossible with God.*" And Mary said, "*behold, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word,*" and the angel departed.

Gabriel quotes the rhetorical question of Genesis 18:14 "*is anything too hard for the Lord?*" which God Most High said to Abraham and Sarah when they laughed at God's promise of a son. Just as God gave Isaac to them, so He would deliver John to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and Jesus to Mary and Joseph. Mary knew Scripture, and the God of Scripture. And she believed, replying to the Most High God with grace-filled words, "*I am your servant, let it be to me according to Your word.*" By grace through faith.

A virgin conceiving a son not by a man but by the Holy Spirit? No problem. A son who would be called "God is salvation" and be the Son of the Most High God? No problem. A son to reign on the throne of David forever? No problem. All this in spite of being a young virgin, in purity with her betrothed husband, and a righteous family who will certainly misunderstand. This is the risk of faith!

5- YOUR RESPONSE? *Faith is believing the evidence,* in spite of the obstacles, because of the overpowering trustworthiness of the object of faith: the Most High God. How can you not believe what Almighty God promises? Job 42:2 "*I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.*" Jeremiah 32:27, "*I am the LORD, the God of all flesh, is anything too hard for Me?*" As Jesus said in Matthew 19:26, "*with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*"

What impossible thing do you face? Health, job, relationship, finances, temptation? In God's written Word each day you encounter His promises and His record of keeping His promises. RC Sproul notes, "*Mary says to God, 'if this is Your will, then I will do it.'* So the beginning of Jesus' life is marked by a mother who submits to the will of God. And the end of Jesus' life is marked by His words, 'not my will but Yours be done!'" May you too trust and obey: "Be it unto me, according to Your word"! ☐