



Believing the Impossible?

Luke 1:26-45

Message for Mary

□ Read **Luke 1:26-38**. God sent the angel Gabriel¹ to give a message to Mary in the humble town of Nazareth. Mary was pledged to be married² to a man named Joseph. Gabriel greeted Mary with the words “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” (1:28, *ESV*).

1. What message did Gabriel give to Mary? (1:30-33) What is the significance of this announcement? (Consider 2 Samuel 7:4-16)³

Mary's Response

□ When Gabriel greeted Mary, she was “greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be” (1:29). She was surprised, confused and disturbed, and wondered what was going on. But Gabriel told her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God” (1:30). Then Gabriel made his announcement (1:31-33).

2. How did Mary respond to Gabriel’s announcement? (1:34) What do you think of her response?⁴
3. How did Gabriel respond to Mary’s question? (1:35-37) What does this indicate about the nature of Jesus’ birth?⁵



📖 “For nothing is impossible with God” (1:37)

¹ God sent the angel Gabriel ‘in the sixth month’ of Elizabeth’s pregnancy (1:24). Only two angels are named in the Bible (excluding the evil angel Satan). These angels include Michael (*Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7-8*) and Gabriel (*Daniel 8:15-16; 9:21; Luke 1:11, 19, 26*). Gabriel appears to be the chief messenger angel.

² Mary (*Mariam*) was ‘pledged to be married’ (engaged, betrothed) to a man named Joseph (1:27). This was the first stage of a two-stage Jewish marriage process. At this point, Mary and Joseph were legally obligated to one another, but the marriage would not be finalized until the marriage ceremony took place (about one year after the betrothal). Verse 27 says Mary was a ‘virgin’ (*parthenon*), confirmed by her statement in verse 34, which is literally ‘since I know no man’ (that is, Mary did not have any sexual relations with a man).

³ Gabriel’s announcement concerns the fulfillment of God’s promise to David (2 *Samuel 7:11b-16*). Jesus would be the great King (Messiah, Christ) the Jewish people had been waiting for. The promised Messiah would be a descendent of David, and he would reign over an everlasting kingdom. Though Joseph was not Jesus’ physical father, he was his legal father. Thus Jesus was considered a descendent of David even if Mary was not. Though Luke does not mention it, Matthew said the virginal conception was a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 (Matthew 1:22-23).

⁴ Some have found Mary’s response confusing. Since she was approaching marriage, she could have had the baby after she was married. However, Mary must have understood that the conception would be more immediate, that is, prior to her marriage to Joseph. Thus Mary’s question was reasonable. It is a question of elementary biology!

⁵ Gabriel explained that the Holy Spirit would work with creative power to bring about the conception. In other words, God would perform a miracle, as He had done in the case of Elizabeth (1:36; 1:13, 18) [though that miracle seems less impressive]. How did the virginal conception actually happen? The Bible does not report the details. All we know is that Jesus (in his humanity) was conceived in a woman’s body without a human father. Many people do not accept the virginal conception because of its miraculous nature. However, if God created the universe and the first human life (*Genesis 1:1; 2:7*), He could perform this miracle. What seems impossible to finite human beings is possible with the infinite God (1:37). The virginal conception signifies Jesus as the unique Son of God (1:35). Why would the eternal Son of God enter our world through the process of human birth and growth? To fully identify with us in our humanity.

4. How did Mary respond to Gabriel's explanation? (1:38) What do you think of her response?⁶

Mary's Visit to Elizabeth

- Read Luke 1:39-45. Mary traveled to Judea⁷ to visit Elizabeth. When Mary greeted Elizabeth, Elizabeth's baby⁸ leaped for joy in her womb (1:41, 44).
5. What did Elizabeth seem to know about Mary's baby?⁹

Believing & Blessing

6. According to Elizabeth's words in verse 45, why was Mary blessed?¹⁰ How does Mary's example apply to us?



- Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and returned home (1:56). About six months later, while Mary and Joseph were in Bethlehem, "the time came for the baby to be born, and [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn, a son" (2:6-7).

Message for Us

- The Bible gives us this message: The eternal Son of God took on human flesh (*John 1:1, 14*). He was born of a virgin and given the name Jesus (*Luke 1:34-35; Matt. 1:18, 21*). He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises (*e.g., Luke 1:30-33*). He was the Christ and Savior of the world (*1 John 4:14*). He died for our sins and was raised from the dead (*1 Cor. 15:1-5*).
- 📖 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (*John 3:16, NIV*).

Reflection/Application

- Do you believe the message of the Bible? Is this "believing the impossible?" No! "For nothing is impossible with God" (1:37). Do you need to believe?
- Believers too can struggle with lack of faith. Do you need greater faith to believe that the Lord will fulfill his promises to us? (1:45) Ask God to strengthen your faith. Surrender your life to Jesus every day, so you (like Mary) can sincerely say, "I am the Lord's servant" (1:38).

⁶ Mary responded in an attitude of humble service to God. She was probably still confused about how this would happen, but she was willing to trust and obey God, despite the potential troubles ahead (misunderstanding from her family and Joseph, resulting in relationship troubles; scandal due to her getting pregnant before her marriage, etc.)

⁷ The precise location of Zechariah and Elizabeth's home is not given, but was likely 3 to 5 days journey from Nazareth.

⁸ Elizabeth's baby would be born about three months later. He would be named 'John' as God instructed (1:13, 59-62). This John is known as 'John the Baptist' (*Luke 3:1-20*). He is called the immediate forerunner of Jesus, sent by God to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah (*Luke 1:17, 76; Matthew 11:10*).

⁹ Elizabeth refers to Mary as 'the mother of my Lord' (1:43). She apparently knows that the baby is the Messiah, probably revealed to her by the Holy Spirit (1:41). Thus she says, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you bear!' (1:42). The identity of Mary's baby is confirmed by the joyous movement of Elizabeth's baby (1:44). John the Baptist, who would later herald the arrival of Christ (3:16) now signified his coming with a jump of joy.

¹⁰ Who is blessed? 'She who has believed.' What did she believe? That God would fulfill His word. God is faithful, and the one who trusts in God will be blessed. Mary was already blessed because of God's grace in choosing her to bear the Messiah (1:28, 30, 42), but she was also blessed as a result of her faith.