

Mary was engaged to a man called Joseph. In British law there is a civil crime called breach of promise. One can be sued for breaking off an engagement without reason. But that is nothing compared to the obligations imposed on the betrothed in this ancient world. To break a betrothal required something equivalent to a divorce. At the same time, it wasn't marriage, and so Mary was a virgin waiting to become a wife.

The angel's greeting in verse 28 of Luke 1 was an announcement of grace. Mary was an object of grace. The Lord was with her in power and in purpose. In verse 29 we are told that this salutation perplexed her. The most gracious are usually the most humble, and those most signally used of God have been the most surprised by the privileges that have become theirs.

It is quite clear from verse 30 that her perplexity was mixed with fear. Mary's distinction was that she would be the vessel by which salvation would enter history. It was favor far in excess of any other. She was to conceive and bear a son and call Him Jesus. He was destined for greatness.

He would be called *Son of the Most High*. In the Old Testament this was a title associated with that aspect of the doctrine of God in which his sovereign rule over all the earth was front and center. It was one of the names of God. Here Mary is told that her son would also be his son. Sovereign omnipotence was breaking into history, and a new King would sit on the throne of the house of Jacob to rule the people of God. The son would rule the House of Jacob in a kingdom with no end.

This was none other than Messiah! Messianic expectations were very confused at this time. Some thought Messiah's reign would be of limited duration; others believed he would usher in a final and consummate kingdom that would be forever. Some of the theologians of Israel distinguished between the earthly reign of the Messianic King and God's eternal kingdom. What the angel did here was bring these ideas together. There would be a kingdom, but it would not be of this world; it would be heavenly, spiritual and eternal, and would transform this world.

Where Zechariah had been unbelieving this young girl was merely puzzled. She asks, *How can this be?* verse 34. The answer in verse 35 is *The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, said the angel, And the power of the Most High will over-shadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.*

Nothing is more important than that we be clear about this. *Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*

This is the Christian story, if you will. It is the revelation that constitutes the very heart of the message, *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 holy; He will be called the Son of God.* What a description of our glorious Savior--**the child to be born will be holy**. There will be no sin in Him; He will be unlike any other child that has ever been born.

We must, of course, mention at this point the whole question of the virgin birth, for it is taken for granted in many quarters that no well educated Christian could possibly believe this anymore. A famous New York Presbyterian stood in his then famous pulpit and began his sermon with the words, "I do not believe in the virgin birth and I hope you don't either." Some suggest that the virgin birth was Luke's adaptation of similar events in Greek and Roman literature. There were stories of Zeus begetting Hercules, they say. Apollo begat Ion, Asclapius, Pythagoras, and so on. And Luke took these familiar stories and used them to talk about Jesus. The problem is that such myths have nothing in common with this account.

Pagan mythologies where gods rape women to produce half-breeds who are neither human nor divine have no correspondence with the claims of this Gospel. The virgin birth made possible the uniting together of full deity and full, perfect humanity. Have you ever imagined the various ways in which Christ could have come to the earth. Each year so-called radical feminists meet in various parts of the United States to reimagine the gospel, and they reimagine how God could have become flesh.

Perhaps God could have created Jesus as a complete human being and sent Him to the earth like an extra-terrestrial. The problem there is that he could not then have been one of us. Perhaps God could have had Jesus enter history through two human parents, and have had the divinity united to Him at some point in His life. But then again, it would be hard to see how Jesus could be fully and truly God under those circumstances.

We may think we are very clever and very wise, but the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Here was the method, my friends, by which God and man could be joined together in one person without either nature diminished or compromised by the other--two natures dwelling together in one person. Not a man who was also God, or a God who was also man, but the Man-God--the God-man. What a glorious thing to contemplate. I consider it my greatest privilege to declare these great truths! *When the fullness of time had come God sent His Son, born of a woman.*

Do you know Him? That's the only question that matters. He is the One who entered history to unite us in Himself to God. He came to make us one with God. To unite in Himself deity and humanity. Knowing Him is everything. You may know many great names, but this is the only one that will count when history is brought to a close and we stand before the glory of God. The name that is above every name--the mediator who brings us to the Father, who to know is to know the Father. "...veiled in flesh the Godhead see hail the incarnate deity." He's the Savior, the Redeemer, the Lord of history, and the coming King. To know Him is to love, and to love Him is to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.