

Christmas 2021
The Reality of Christ

I am thankful that our Lord knows us so very well! He knows that we need appointed times and seasons in which we pause from our usual daily routines of work and activity to remember, to celebrate and to worship Him for who He is.

Folks, we really do need to be reminded that this Christmas season really is not just about family gatherings and gift-giving. It is that yes, but we must always remember that these days that we are celebrating are first about the birth of our Savior and our Lord, Jesus, the Christ.

And we want to do that today. So, turn with me to the Book of Luke and follow along with me as I read. This is Luke chapter 1, beginning in verse 26 . . .

²⁶In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God . . . ³⁷For nothing is impossible with God."

³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:26-38)

And then turn with me to Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 1 . . .

¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed . . . ³And all went to

be taxed, everyone into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) ⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

Folks, in this secular culture that we live in today, where the simple, but supernatural truths of God are pushed aside in favor of more easily believable stories about Christmas, these simple words found here in these scriptures do sound quite impossible, unbelievable, even fable-like . . . an angel coming to speak to a young virgin girl about having a baby, and telling her that it is God Himself who will cause her to conceive the child.

. . . That sort of thing has never happened to any of us or to anyone we know, and so, while we might generally accept it, there still remains room for doubt within some people's minds.

And as we know, the media voices that we hear daily across our airways at this time of year are quite powerful and convincing, and they go to great extents to further our doubt. While they may not openly deny the birth of Christ, they do insert cleverly devised words and thoughts that suggest alternatives. And in the end, they treat this account of the birth of our Lord Jesus as being just one more fable.

And the worldly-wise media truly is clever in its efforts. I've noticed that over these years of increased media influence, "distraction" has become a very effective weapon of the world, the flesh and the devil. Instead of producing movies about Jesus, they simply produce more and more enjoyable movies and cartoons about Santa Claus and about elves and other such seemingly harmless stories.

And while yes, in themselves those movies and cartoons may be somewhat harmless. The simple truth is, while we watch those movies and cartoons, we are being cleverly distracted away from the real and true message of Christmas, the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The devil is so subtle and so clever, isn't he?

And folks, as believers, you and I need to guard ourselves carefully that we are not led astray in our faith, and that we not let those who control the media keep us from God's true intention for the celebration of Christmas.

A question . . . At the human level, why would men and women in the media and also all across our world seek so determinedly to deny the truths that these precious words bring to us? I'm convinced that it is for a very simple reason! It is because, somehow, down deep inside, the Holy Spirit makes them to know that if they do accept the truth of just these few simple words about the birth of Jesus, then they will also have to accept the other things that are said in this Book, and they can't allow themselves to do that, because other words in this Book call them into account for their actions and their behaviors. And most people don't want that

It's all a part of the great battle that the Apostle Paul spoke of in Romans chapter 7, a hard-fought battle within the soul and the spirit of a person, a battle to win us away from the salvation that Christ gives to us, in favor of the destruction assured to those who do not accept it.

And it all begins here! If we can only believe these simple truths about this little baby, then a whole world of wonder opens up in front of us, a new and different form of reality.

Most of us have become so accustomed to the kind of reality that we live in, one with such turmoil and strife, distrust and disagreement, that we think that that is real life, but folks, it isn't. That awful daily lifestyle is only a counterfeit that satan supplies us with each day.

"Real reality" is what God promises to us, and that "real reality" is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control. And all of it really can be ours, but only if and to the extent that we do believe. And our belief begins here, with simple words like these about the birth of Jesus.

But as we know, belief, even simple belief is not an easy assignment. God is not logical as you and I perceive logic to be. And the way that He does things is not often logical.

This account of an angel visiting Mary, and Mary conceiving a child while still being a virgin, is not logical to us.

And the natural workings of the mind want so badly to fit God into a more natural sense of rationale. And at this time of year our secular media will go to

the furthest extents offering their worldly-wise explanations, attempting to explain the occurrences of the virgin birth of Jesus with more natural and logical sounding explanations. But it can't happen folks.

And you and I must also cease in our own efforts to bring who God is and what He does down into our own level of thinking. No matter how badly we want for God to fit into our natural sense of rationale, He won't. He can't. God is not natural! He is supernatural!

But let me warn both you and me that that can only be done through faith and faith alone and not by intellectual effort. Faith is the one and only special equipping that God gives to you and me to enable us to truly understand the impossible, supernatural things that He does. Simple faith! Simply believing! And it all begins with the virgin birth of Jesus.

And please do note carefully that these verses clearly state that Mary truly was a virgin? A question many have asked . . . Is it important that Mary be a virgin? And the clear answer is yes, yes! It is so very important for many reasons. One of those reasons being that there must be no doubt that God the Father is the Father of this baby Jesus. And then secondly, Mary needed to be a virgin so that there could be no possibility that the sin nature could be passed on to Jesus through the seed of a common man.

And that folks is important beyond measure. The Lord Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God, without stain, wrinkle or blemish, utterly perfect in every way. And it was because He was perfect that he was able to be our acceptable sacrifice. If He had of had a sin nature, He could not have done that.

Mary was truly a virgin. And yes, that is a question that is debated regularly even in our seminaries today, but please, don't ever let anyone debate that question with you, or give you cause to wonder. As we just read in verse 37 of Luke chapter 1, ". . . nothing is impossible with God."

And yes, all of this truly is a mystery. And God has kept it a mystery for one all-important reason. If it were explainable, it wouldn't require "faith" to believe it. And God has ordained that faith is to be the foundational basis for all that we are and ever hope to be in Christ. And faith is the one and only "doorway" into the Kingdom of God.

And yes, as you and I are bombarded daily with secular denial that Jesus Christ is who He says He is, we need to hold fast to our faith. As the scriptures tell us, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God".

And so, as we look at this mystery of the birth of Christ, let's always remember and fully accept that our simple faith is the key that will open the doors to this mystery. Listen again carefully to these words, beginning in verse 26 of chapter 1.

²⁶In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:26-28)

These words immediately presume that we have faith, that we truly believe that there truly is a God and that He is personally involved in the things that take place in our lives. Unfortunately, we most often live at such a pace that we are not able to take notice of God's hand in the events of our day.

But here, we are being told that yes, God is real and that He has a plan that He is carrying forward, a plan that will result in the redemption of untold millions. And this portion of the plan involves an angel and a simple virgin girl.

Again, it requires faith in God to believe that there is even such a thing as angels, but here, the angel Gabriel brings the most important message that mankind could ever receive. Verse 30,

³⁰ . . . the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." ³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:30-35)

One final thought and we will close and then worship with the taking of the Sacrament of Communion. There in Bethlehem, just moments before Jesus was born came the first rejection that He would receive. There was no room for Him in the Inn. And Jesus would experience many more rejections and denials while He lived and walked among us. The word tells us that "He came to His own, but His own received Him not".

Many people have continued to reject and to deny Jesus, even to this day. But dear, dear friends, we must always remember that whether a person receives Him or rejects Him, Jesus truly is still Lord of all.

Let us never be guilty of turning Him away. Let us instead, this moment and every moment, surrender our hearts to Him and welcome Him as our Savior and Lord. And let us do that afresh every day that we remain here on this earth, surrender, absolute surrender. Listen to these precious words!

- 6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
- 7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be no end*,
Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,
To order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice
From henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform
this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Let's pray!