



THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD

A STORY FOR ALL SEASONS

360 DISCUSSION GUIDE: 12.06.15

BACK IN NAZARETH | LUKE 1:26-38

The Gospel of Luke begins exactly as we might expect it to. We find ourselves in the Holiest place of the grand temple complex in the ancient city of Jerusalem. An aged man whose face is worn with the kindly wrinkles of a long and humble walk with God is offering incense before the ark of the covenant. An angel appears with long awaited news from God. There is no better time or place for God to resume his promises to his people than right here, right now.

If we expect this to be the beginning of something grand, we are wrong. It is little more than a side note. We are a few months away from a far more significant announcement in a forgotten hamlet that is little more than an outpost for the Roman army. Those who knew of Nazareth, despised it. Those who lived there, longed for life to sweep them away to the more pleasant hamlets in the heart of their homeland, like Bethlehem and Bethsaida.

The recipient of the angel's announcement was a young girl in her early teens, who is mentioned without heritage or any remarkable qualities—except that she was pledged to be married to a man who was a descendant of David, and was a virgin. It is almost as if Luke gives us her name as an afterthought.

Paul would later tell us “God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are.” If that is true, then it all began with the announcement of Jesus’ birth in Nazareth.

AN UNLIKELY VISITOR (vv. 26-29)

READ VERSES 26-27. In first century Judaism it was not at all uncommon for a young girl to be pledged by her father in marriage as early as twelve. The formal pledge was accompanied by a bridal price, lasted for one year and was consummated in marriage at the end of the year. The most common age for betrothal was 13. Mary was more than likely a young girl in her early teens.

1. What makes Mary a highly unlikely candidate to play a significant role in the plan of God?
2. What makes her a highly likely candidate to play a significant role in the plan of God?
3. How would you have responded if your daily routine was interrupted by a divine messenger?
4. Why is the phrase, "The Lord is with you," such an important foundation for what is about to follow?
5. Where do you see the deep truths of the gospel peaking through the strands of Luke's narrative?

A REMARKABLE ANNOUNCEMENT (vv. 29-37)

READ VERSES 29-33.

1. Why might Mary have been afraid?
2. Why, according to Gabriel, did she have nothing to fear?
3. How does this truth apply to our fears, as we pursue God's plan for our lives?
4. List everything these verses tell us about the child that is to be born to Mary?
5. While we most often think of Jesus as our Savior, in this passage he is described as the Davidic King. How does it shape our overall understanding of Jesus, if we come to view him as both Savior (Suffering Servant) and Messiah (Davidic King)?
 - a. What does it mean to know him as Savior?
 - b. What does it mean to know him as King?

READ VERSES 34-37.

1. From Mary's perspective, what was the major obstacle that needed to be overcome?
2. Why was this not an obstacle for God?
3. What are some of the major obstacles you face in your personal life/your walk with God?
4. How does the fact that the same Holy Spirit who was at work in the creation of the world, and the birth of Jesus, is residing in you (if you have come to faith in Christ) lend a fresh perspective to the obstacles we face?
5. What is one area in your life you need to claim the promise, "For no word from God will ever fail?"

A FITTING RESPONSE (V. 38)

READ VERSE 38. How should our response to God's plan for our lives mirror Mary's response to God's plan for her life?

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Unless otherwise noted all Scripture references are from *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).