

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. 31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. 36 "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 "For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, the slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

What a wonderful section of scripture we have to look at this morning. This angelic announcement is news from heaven. God is at work once again with His people Israel, and ultimately through them the whole earth will be impacted.

All nations will be blessed beginning with this miracle that the angel is revealing to a young virgin in no-where-ville Israel.

The 400 year silence is broken! Miracles are happening. Angels are visiting and revealing God's plans for His people. God is at work.

Mary is startled and frightened by this appearance. Anyone would be. We believe angels are present, good and evil, but our eyes do not see into that non-physical dimension, so when one of God's messengers appears it's a frightening and startling and unusual reality.

Angels are intelligent beings. Sensitive to our fears and so this angel, who has identified himself as Gabriel, begins by putting Mary at ease.

30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."

Favor. We've seen it over and over in this opening passage. It's kind of a theme, a common thread. Favor with God. And that's really the bottom line common denominator to everything, isn't it. Favor with God.

Those who are found in His favor will enjoy Him forever, and those who are found in rebellion and conflict with Him will be cast away from Him in a place of torment forever.

He is the Sovereign King and Judge of all creation. And this world, this planet is in rebellion against Him. Since the fall, every man is born into that rebellion. We are born into dis-favor. We are born enemies of our loving creator.

Something has to happen to reverse that conflict. A knowledge that we are sinners and a repentance and sorrow for our rebellion and a dependence on His mercy. A longing for His righteousness.

These heart conditions were found in Mary. She was a lover of God and a seeker of His mercy and when Gabriel appears to her and she has a natural fear, vs. *30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God."*

We could further say, this whole issue of fear, which is built into us by our creator, is resolved by the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:28 *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill*

the soul. Instead, fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

The angel's message to Mary is based in simple logic. Favor with God, no reason for fear. Dis-favor with God, you should fear. So the angel is using Mary's position before God to calm her fears. No need to fear, Mary, you are favored by God. And favor with God is the highest court.

Each one of us should ask that question. If Gabriel showed up at my house, and my initial reaction was fear, would he say, fear not, God is for you. You have found favor with God. Is rebellion with God gone. Have my sins been washed away by Jesus blood.

There is no more important question to resolve than that one. Am I at war with God because of sin? Or . . . has my sin been washed away by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

Gabriel's message is straight forwardly simple. Mary, you're going to conceive, become pregnant and have a baby, and this baby will have the name, Jesus.

Jesus. ee-ay-sooce the transliteration of the Hebrew term, ("Yehoshua"/Jehoshua, contracted to "Joshua") which means "Yahweh saves" (or "Yahweh is salvation").

Jesus was a common name in Israel. We still name children Joshua, but rarely the greek version Jesus. After Jesus the Messiah, no one else can live up to that name. Jesus was once for all, YahWeh's Salvation. Gabriel continues;

32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Of all the prophecies indicated in that statement above, my mind first races to Daniels prophecy that speaks of all the kingdoms of this world which are ultimately crushed by a stone cut out without hands and a kingdom that lasts forever over all the nations, indeed a kingdom, a one world rule over this planet forever.

Before we look at that, let me remind you as I often do that the word kingdom, used in the Bible, is not about physical real estate. Kingdom means authority to reign. Ultimate authority to rule and reign.

So Mary will bear a son and this son will have these distinctives. He will be great, and that greatness will be connected to his family, His Father. He will be called Son of the Most High. Literally He will be the Son of God.

and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever,

This was the messianic promise. Let me read just a couple of the prophecies about this king. These are the most familiar to us and would have been very familiar to Mary. First, Samuel the prophet says to David; 2 Sam. 7

12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 “I will be a father to him and he will be a son

to Me;

And Isaiah says; Isaiah 9:7

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from that time and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

Those were familiar promises to the Jews, and especially in these times of the yoke of foreign rulers, the Jews would look back on these promises of a Son who would reign and rule on David's throne.

But the first one my mind thinks of is the all encompassing vision that King Nebuchadnezzar had, the dream that Daniel interpreted, and you'll recall that the king's dream envisioned 4 world empires represented by a giant statue made of different elements.

All of the empires that ruled the entire world, up until the final one which is about to be formed in our day, we believe, very soon, a one world government made up of elements that do not combine well and have no strength.

But then a Stone. A single Stone cut out without hands, will crush all of the kingdoms of this world and will set up a rule, a kingdom, an authority to reign, to rule the world, and that authority which crushed all of the other authorities, will rule forever.

So when Gabriel tells little Mary that she will become pregnant and bear a son who will rule forever, that can only be one person. It will be the Stone cut out without hands. Son of the Most High. King of kings. Lord of lords.

34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Why does Mary ask the angel about this? I confess that I did the best I could in my untrained status to look into the greek tenses of the words the angel said to see if Gabriel said the announcement in some singular tense that means only one person is involved, and if that is there, I didn't find it.

Rather, I think Mary understood something of the prophetic importance of a child who will be called Son of the Most High and who will reign on David's throne forever.

And her mind must have raced to who's going to be the father? This doesn't sound like Joseph. Son of the Most High would preclude Joseph. How will this work. How will I have a baby? I'm a virgin. I've never had relations with a man.

It was a good question. She looked around and said, no earthly father can produce a son who is Son of the Most High.

Did she know Daniel's prophecy of a stone unlike any other stone, a perfect corner stone, but one not cut by any human hands? Did she know and understand Isaiah's prophecy? Isaiah 7;

10 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" 13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? 14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

We don't know all of the reasons Mary would ask Gabriel about

how this child will be progenerated within her womb. But it's wonderful that she asked, because it re-inforces the fact again, she has never had a sexual relationship with a man.

The modern church puts little weight on this doctrine. A virgin having a child without any man being involved.

When modern times came, and it looked as if science could eventually provide all of the answers that had previously only been addressed by the revealed word of God, theologians, un-saved theologians distanced themselves from the Bible's miracles.

They argued that in order to "save" christianity in an age where science had shattered the innocence of simple belief, the miracles had to go or no one would believe this book any more. The christian church needed to get with modern times and modern thinking.

They argued that no person sitting under an electric light bulb, provided by the magic of modern science and understanding could believe in a bunch of old wives tales in the Bible. The miracles had to go, or the church would die, they said.

That was 150 to 200 years ago, but we have the same argument today. In order to "save" christianity from itself, we have to align ourselves with the larger worlds modern view of sexuality without any constraints or rules at all. Particularly the questions about homosexuality. The biblical view is untenable. And christianity will die with those who insist on holding onto the biblical view.

Same old argument. Same un-regenerated people trying to "save" christianity from itself. Nothing new under the sun.

We aren't here today to argue the latter, but the old argument about

miracles is important for us in this passage.

Does the miracle of a virgin bearing a child have any importance? Is this doctrine something important to hold onto? Does it really matter?

First of all, if Mary wasn't a virgin when Jesus was conceived in her, you have a couple of choices. Either Jesus isn't the messiah, that's one possibility, or the other is Isaiah's prophecy is meaningless.

If Jesus isn't messiah, then you are drowning in sin that you cannot pay for. Only destruction and seperation from God in hell is left, if Jesus isn't the messiah.

Or, perhaps Jesus is the messiah and Isaiah's prophecy is meaningless. If that's the case, you can throw your Bibles away, because if Isaiah is meaningless, so is the rest of it. Good for nothing

So there's that. But furthermore, if Mary didn't conceive Jesus without any seed from Adam's fallen race, then Jesus is born in sin, just like the rest of us, inheriters of sin from Adam, and He therefore has no perfect life to offer up in our place to pay for our sins.

Soteriology, the study of the means or mechanics of redemption, is based on a trade. Jesus takes my sin, and in it's place, He gives me His perfect righteousness. I can stand before God and offer Him a righteousness, not my own, but given to me, imputed unto me, the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

And my sin is imputed to Jesus who then bears the punishment due, which is death on a cross. And we know *that* death was

effectual, it accomplished all that God intended in redemption, because Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. The most magnificent miracle of all.

So the virgin birth is necessary for my effectual redemption from sin. Jesus could not have been one of Adam's sons and accomplished my redemption, my purchase by the cost of His blood.

If you're going to throw the miracle of the virgin birth away, the baby goes out with the bathwater. All the other miracles go with it. And you stand helplessly mired in sin, ruined, filthy and vile. God will not have his heaven defiled by the filth of sin.

So Mary asks, *“How can this be, since I am a virgin?”* How is it possible for this child who is son of the Most High to be conceived in a virgin? Our brains can't fathom how God accomplishes things.

35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.

The answer is; God will accomplish this, by His Holy Spirit, with His power, in you, miraculously. The Holy seed will be placed in you by God the Holy Spirit.

And the angel affirms what we've just said; *and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.*

No earthly father. No seed from Adam's fallen race. And therefore, this Child, this Holy Child is in fact, the Son of God. What a miracle

Never before. Never again. One time, God will place the seed in

the woman, and the Child will be the Son of God.

This hearkens back to the very first reference after the fall of man, to a redeemer. Way back, all the way back to Adam and Eve in the garden, when upon uncovering the original sin, caused by the lies of the serpent, God actually addresses the serpent, Satan; Genesis 3 The first prophecy of future things, in the Bible.

*14 The LORD God said to the serpent,
“Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;*

*15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

The woman's seed, combined with God produces the "He" who crushes the serpent's head, but not without damage. The heel that crushes is also crushed.

Complete in that first imagery, immediately after the first sin and the fall, is the image of redemption. The seed of the woman produces the **He**, the person who will crush Satan and evil. But not without suffering crushing himself. But God will raise this He, this person from the dead.

Mary is the chosen vessel that God will use to accomplish the Person, the He, the Son of God, who carries out His plan of

redemption.

It's a lot for a teen age girl in Nazareth to comprehend. All of the miracles of God will look forward and then backwards onto this one miracle that God is going to do in Mary.

How does your brain get a grasp on something this lofty? This is too fantastic, too awesome, too important a miracle for Mary to grasp. This sounds impossible to a teenage girl in Nazareth. Well, Gabriel is going to offer Mary some help.

Mary probably thinks she's alone in all of this lofty work of God. But Gabriel will tell her, no, this machinery is already in motion. The miracles surrounding this miracle of miracles that the world has been waiting for throughout the centuries, the miracles are already in motion.

36 "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."

A miracle to prove the miracle. Mary, you can believe this is going to happen, because God is already at work, and He has already performed a mighty miracle in your relative, Elizabeth, who was long barren, and well past child bearing years, and she is six months pregnant.

Maybe Gabriel is a mind reader. Maybe Mary was thinking to herself, this all sounds so impossible. Virgins having babies because the Holy Spirit of God causes the woman's seed to conceive. It sounds impossible.

And Gabriel has the perfect answer. You're exactly right. It is impossible. Just as impossible as it was for your relative,

Elizabeth, a barren old woman, to conceive by her husband Zacharias, also ancient. But that impossibility is already in it's sixth month.

Because with God, impossible is possible. 37 *“For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

Mary says, how is this going to happen? and Gabriel says God, the accomplisher of all impossible things, is going to make it happen, and the gears are already in motion, you're not alone in what God is going to do, other miracles are already in play to bring this about.

That little truth would turn your mind around. From *how will this happen*, to *it's already happening!*

I recall pleasantly, something that my generation may have been the last to experience.

When we would camp in the Sierra's at Burgers Sierra Retreat, in those days, there was an ice box that we stored perishable foods in. And we would have to get a block of ice every other day or so, in Lee Vining.

Next to the grocery store, there was an ice machine, and you would have to put 3 quarters in, the equivalent now to the cost of 3 gallons of gas, so the block of ice at today's prices would be between 10 and 12 dollars, and that exorbitant amount would always bring a loud complaint from my grandmother. Highway robbery!

Anyways, those machines worked on the same principle, but much larger, as a gumball machine. Your money releases a 10 pound block of ice onto a ramp inside the big box like refrigerated

machine, and you could hear that ice coming.

When you put that third quarter in and slid the thing in so the quarter dropped into the money box, and you pulled that thing back out, that triggered the mechanism and you could literally hear that ice clunking around going down the chutes inside the machine on it's way to burst through a rubber flapper onto a big tray outside the machine where you picked it up and quickly took it to the ice box.

Gabriels message to Mary, who is pondering how in the world is this miracle going to happen, is similar to that third quarter going into the money box. Mary, this is already in motion. The ice is coming down the chute. This isn't potential energy any more, this is already kinetic energy.

Elizabeth is pregnant. That was impossible. It's already 6 months in motion. There's no stopping the ice in the chute once it's released, and there's no stopping God's miraculous intervention in this world either. It's already well in motion.

And Mary's response is classic. What Mary says is feminism's worst nightmare. *38 And Mary said, "Behold, the slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.*

Mary does not say; Are you asking me, or telling me? Do I get a say in this? Do I get to grant permission? It's my body afterall.

Feminism in 2018 must forever dismiss the God of the Bible who just picks a young women and without any mutual consent, without permission, without asking, just sends a messenger and says, this is what God's going to do.

Mary's response is the necessary response of every child of God in

every age in every instance that the King of Kings selects one of His children to accomplish His good pleasure.

Let me say that again; Mary's response is the necessary response of every child of God in every age in every instance that the King of Kings selects one of His children to accomplish His good pleasure.

Mary's words aren't just for Mary. This is the required response of every one of us who have been purchased out of this world by blood. His blood sacrifice.

38 And Mary said, "Behold, the slave (doulos) of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word."

He is Master. We are slaves. Period. That's the most perfect picture of our position that can ever be given.

We hate American slavery with the ugly sin of white supremacy and racial bigotry and hatred. And rightfully so.

But there is a slavery, designed by God, where there is no higher calling and privilege on earth, than to have been purchased by the blood of Jesus, bought by God, to be in His family, adopted children, who want nothing more than to be subject to Him, obedient children to Him.

Mary says, I belong to you God. You own me. May this marvelous thing be accomplished according to your will. Mary belongs to God and her one most supreme desire is to do His will. Above anything else.

Search your hearts a little bit. Two things we have seen this morning that must be normative for our experience with the God of

creation.

When the angel comes, does he address you as favored. Are you resting securely in God's unmerited favor? And the second thing that actually causes the first.

Do you see yourself as purchased out of this world by the blood of Jesus, and therefore, the possession of God. Is He Master, and you slave? Does that seem un-tenable to you to be owned by a Master, and the logical position of that ownership, you are owned. Your position is one of obedience to another person's wishes.

In this world, that is mostly un-tenable. Dis-tasteful. But when the Master is a benevolent loving merciful God who purchased you with His Son's blood, that changes the slavery.

How wonderful to be like Mary and say; *“Behold, the slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.”*

To this world, that sounds twisted. Rediculous that you would give your life to be in the control of the will of another.

But what they don't understand is, that's exactly what they were born into. Sin enslaves. And Adams race is subject to an evil taskmaster. They live empty lives, fearing death, never at inner peace with their creator.

This worlds people are dupes. Pawns of Satan in a war of hatred against a God who loves them and died to purchase them out of that slavery. Lost people are in a continuous search for inner peace in a thousand different dead end streets. Always searching, never finding. Weary of the search.

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I

will give you rest.

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Mt. 11:28,9

Soul rest comes with a yoke. But the Master is meek and lowly of heart. He doesn't treat us harshly. He is a Master who treats us as brothers. And under His yoke is rest. Inner peace is found in belonging to the King of Kings who reigns forever on David's throne.