

Luke 1:26-33

Sermon: **Son of the Most High**

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2022



GOD SENDS AN ANGEL

1 (Luke 1:26–27)

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and virgin's name was Mary.

This most likely refers to the time when Elizabeth was six months pregnant. The same angel who appeared to Zechariah now appears to the virgin Mary.

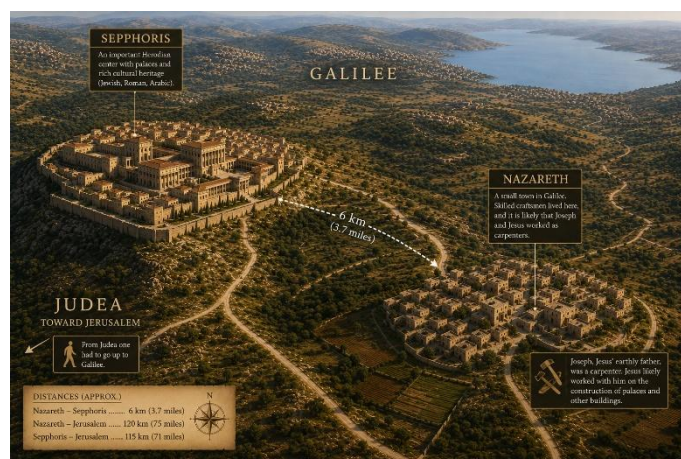
The word “virgin” did not mean to the author who wrote this, nor to the culture of that time, what it means to us today in the tradition in which we grew up.

Virgin in Greek is *parthenos*. The meaning of the word is: young girl or unmarried daughter. The word “virgin” here does not primarily refer to the sexual experience of the woman, but to her age.

1.1 Although the word clearly shows that Mary was a virgin – which indeed she was – the meaning in this context emphasizes that Mary was of marrying age. At that time, rabbis (teachers) set the minimum age for marriage at 12 years and above. Most women married at 15 or 16, and by the age of 17 you were already considered too old for marriage.

Later Christian tradition, particularly under the influence of some of the Church Fathers and medieval Western theology, came to assign additional theological significance to Mary's virginity by associating it with Christ's sinlessness. At this point, however, Luke is simply describing Mary as a *parthenos*—a young unmarried woman who was betrothed to Joseph.

1.2 The text says that God sends an angel to the Galilean town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a small place located north of Jerusalem. From Judea, one had to ascend upward to reach Galilee. Six kilometers northwest of Nazareth was a place called Sepphoris.



Archaeologists have found there a rich historical legacy that included Jewish, Roman, and Arab presence. In Sepphoris stood one of the many palaces owned by the Herodian kings.

Nazareth was surrounded by Sepphoris, and most likely the people of Nazareth were craftsmen who built those palaces and structures. We know that Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, was a carpenter. I assume that Jesus also worked with his father on those palaces.

1.3 We read in the text that Mary was engaged to a man from the house of David. Why is it important that Joseph belonged to David's line?

Later we will see that the prophecy about Jesus is directly connected to the promise God made to David—the promise that from his house would come the King who would reign forever.

That is exactly why Luke emphasizes Joseph's ancestry.

1.4 Someone might say, “But Joseph was not Jesus' biological father.”

That is true.

But I believe Luke is not emphasizing a biological relationship here. He is emphasizing Jesus' legal right to David's throne.

In Jewish culture, a son belonged to his father's household. Through his legal father, he inherited his family's identity, status, and the rights that belonged to that family.

1.5 If we also look at Jesus' genealogy, we find people from other nations, such as Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabite. This shows that God's plan was not limited to bloodline alone, but also included those who became part of his people.¹

So even though Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, it is through Joseph that Jesus receives the legal right to David's throne. He is the rightful heir to David's throne.

1.6 (Luke 1:28)

And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings favored one! The Lord is with you."

When the angel addresses Mary with the word "favored one", what does he mean?

In Luke 1:29, we see that Mary is confused by his statement.

I believe the angel here is saying: "Mary, you have received an incredible gift from God – you will give birth to the Messiah, the one the Jewish people have been waiting for so long!"

1.7 The angel then says that the Lord is with her. The word "Lord" in the Bible is used in two ways:

1. The Lord Yahweh – the Creator of all, the One who revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of a burning bush.
2. The Lord as a man – the Messiah, the King, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

A Lord is someone to whom we owe our loyalty and whom we must serve. The Jews did not call God Yahweh, because they believed that name was too holy for their lips. Instead, they called Him Lord.

In this context, I believe the angel is speaking of Yahweh. He is telling Mary that God is with her. And if God is with you, then He is not against you – logical.

1.8 In the Old Testament, when a prophet addressed Israel with the words: "The Lord is with you," it meant: "God has not forgotten you. He remembers the promises He gave you. He will fulfill them. He is still here." Those were words of comfort and encouragement for the Jewish people: "The Lord is with you, Israel. He has not abandoned you."²

1.9 (Luke 1:29)

But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

As I already said, Mary still does not know why God has shown grace specifically to her.

THE TITLE "SON OF THE MOST HIGH"

2 (Luke 1:30–33)

¹ Matthew 1:5; Joshua 2; Ruth 1–4.

² Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8; Haggai 1:13; Zechariah 8:23.

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 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; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

The angel tells Mary that the gift she will receive will be a child – the Son of the Most High – and that she will be His mother.

2.1 Let us pause here for a moment. In our Christian tradition, at least for me personally, I understood that Jesus came from God the Father and that He was part of Him, just as we are part of our parents.

But the difference between us and Jesus is that He is not part of the created order as we are – nature, humans, animals, the universe, the world. He belongs to divinity. Flowing in Him is divine blood – creative, eternal, unlimited. That is how I used to understand the title Son of the Most High. And I believe many Christians still see it that way today.

2.2 When we study the Bible, especially the Gospels, we see that the priests of the Sanhedrin kept questioning Jesus: “Are you the Messiah? Are you the Son of God? Are you the Son of Man?”

Jesus used those very titles for Himself: Son of God, Son of Man. And I believe they carry the same meaning.

To understand this, we need to go back to the Old Testament – to the time of King David. There God, through the prophet Nathan, gave David a promise: that He would raise up a descendant from his line who would reign over God’s kingdom forever.

2.3 In (2 Samuel 7:12–16) God says:

“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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you; Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

2.4 Through the prophet Nathan, God says to David:

“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you... Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

At first glance, it may seem that God is speaking only about one of David's sons. But if we read the passage carefully, we see that the main emphasis is not on one descendant but on David's throne and kingdom, which God promises will last forever.

2.5 We know that after David, his son Solomon became king. He was the one who built the Temple God referred to when He said, “He shall build a house for my name.”

But when God immediately adds, “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever,” He is not saying that Solomon himself will reign forever. He is speaking about David's royal house. In other words, David's royal line would not be rejected as Saul's had been. And that is exactly what we see throughout Israel's history. After David, his descendants continued to reign over the kingdom.³

2.6 Then God says: “When he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men.”

I believe God is speaking about the kings who would come from David's family throughout history. Many of them did not love God. They turned the people toward idols, lived for themselves, and rejected God's commandments. Because of that, God disciplined them, removed kings from the throne, and raised up others in their place.⁴

2.7 But immediately afterward God adds something remarkable:

“My lovingkindness shall not depart from him as I took it away from Saul.”

I believe the words “from him” point beyond one individual king to David's royal house. In other words, no matter how unfaithful many of David's descendants would become, God would not break the promise He had made to David. David's throne would not end the way Saul's did. God would remain faithful to His covenant.

2.8 This is why Gabriel's words to Mary carry such tremendous weight.

The angel says:

“The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Now the promise God gave to David nearly a thousand years earlier reaches its fulfillment.

This is not merely another descendant of David.

This is the King who will reign forever on David's throne.

2.9 This is one of the clearest examples of God's faithfulness.

For centuries, both faithful and unfaithful kings sat on David's throne. Most of them disappointed both God and the people.

But God never forgot what He had promised David.

He remained faithful to His word.

And now, as Gabriel speaks to Mary, we see that God is fulfilling exactly what He had promised through the prophet Nathan.

To me, this is another powerful reminder that God never forgets His promises. We may have to wait years—or even centuries—but when God gives His word, He will always keep it.

THE TIME OF POLYTHEISM

3 What kind of language is God using here? God is using an idea that David would understand. In the time of polytheism, it was believed that any non-Jewish king who ruled over his land represented his god in heaven.

³ 1 Kings 1–11; 2 Kings 8–25

⁴ 1 Kings 11:9–13; 2 Kings 17:7–23; 2 Chronicles 36:15–21



They believed that a god somehow manifested or localized himself in a human being and expressed his authority and power through that person.

3.1 For example, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was the “son of the sun god Ra.” The king of Babylon was the “son of the god Marduk.”

God uses this very idea (a theological belief of that time) and gives David a promise: that one day, as Yahweh, the King of the universe, the Creator of all, He would entrust all His authority to that one human being, who would be His representative on earth forever.

3.2 God said: “He will be My Son, and I will be His Father.”

From that moment on, the titles Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah – in Greek Christos – remained in Jewish language as names for the One who would eternally reign over God’s kingdom. The prophets, for example, used that term in their writings whenever they wanted to announce the coming of “the One.”

Examples:

(Daniel 7:13–14)

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him, And to Him was given dominion Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language, Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

(Jeremiah 23:5–6)

“Behold the days are coming”, declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as a king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely...”

3.3 So then, when the authors write that He will be the Son of the Most High, they are not primarily telling us readers that Jesus literally and metaphysically came from God the Father.

What they want to emphasize is that now the long-promised Son has come onto the scene – the One who will reign forever over Israel’s kingdom and the rest of the world. Now comes the visible image (Jesus) of the invisible God (Yahweh).

3.4 After the death of King David, the titles Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah were inherited by men who came from David’s line. But they never fulfilled the role that God had promised to David. Why? Because they were selfish, foolish, sinful human beings who pursued their own glory rather than God’s.⁵

Still, they carried that title, which one day would be taken up by the Son with a capital S – Jesus Christ. He is the long-promised Messiah who will rule over Israel and the rest of the world forever.

And Mary recognizes this in the angel’s statement, when he told her that she would be the mother of the Son with a capital S. Her Son would fulfill God’s promise to David: “I will be his Father, and he will be My Son; he will reign over My kingdom forever.”

3.5 Finally, in Luke 1:31 we read: “You shall call His name Jesus.”

The angel gives instructions, just as he did with Zechariah: “When the child is born, Mary, you will give Him the name Jesus.”

⁵ 1 Kings 11:4–6; 2 Kings 21:1–9; Jeremiah 22:13–17; 2 Chronicles 36:11–14.