

Mary The Blessed

Luke 1:26-56

Sunday December 12th 2010 Morning Service

Rupert Bentley-Taylor

Who is this passage about? The person who is most often referred to is God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christmas is a God centred. How are we responding to our God this Christmas?

1. The God Who Is Before

Everything starts with God's action: v26 'God sent the angel Gabriel'. Before Mary knew God set everything in motion.

Everything rests on God's favour: v28 'Greetings you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you', v.30 'You have found favour with God'. That favour is in God before Mary is even aware.

Everything is the outworking of God's words: here are God's promises to Mary, before any of it happens. v37 'nothing is impossible with God'. As God promised to David (see v32-33 & 2 Samuel 7) and 'even as he said to our fathers' v54-55.

Mary's Response: she wanted to understand: v29: her concern is what the angel has said. v34 asks 'how will this be?' Not expressing unbelief but seeking to understand. Maybe you have never understood: like Mary you can ask God 'make it clear to me'.

2. The God Who Goes Ahead

God rules the future: look at all the future tenses, v31-35. God determines future events but we can never be sure what we plan will happen. But God also speaks of the eternal future v33 & for v55. The whole future, eternity, is in God's hands.

God rules the impossible: Nothing can stand in God's way. This was true in Elizabeth's case v37 'For nothing is impossible with God'. But Mary's case is unique. She is a virgin v27. V34 she asks 'How will this be, since I do not know a man?' Every other human birth had involved a mother & father. But not here. And this is as

God promised in Isaiah 7:14 'the virgin will be with child & will give birth to a son & will call him Immanuel (God with us)'.

How does all this happen? By the action of the whole Godhead, Father (v32), the Son Jesus (v32&35), the Holy Spirit (v35). This is the power of the God, who rules the universe and determines the future.

Mary's Response: she believed. See v.38. She surrenders to God's will & embraces God's will: 'May it be to me as you have said'. Elizabeth says about Mary v45 'Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished'. Beautiful response. Is that your response to what God says?

3. The God Who Stoops Low

1) He stoops to come. Who is this conceived in Mary's womb? V32-35 tells us he is 'great, the Son of the Most High', the promised King of an eternal kingdom, the 'Holy One, the Son of God'. Elizabeth says v43 it is 'my Lord'. The creator of the world in a human womb. Truly God become truly man. Then Mary v31 'will give birth', to Jesus, to God, come as a newborn, entirely helpless & lying in a manger. Our God is the God who stoops to become one of us. Was there ever a stooping like that? Yes: on a Cross outside Jerusalem, 33 years later. Jesus is truly the God who stoops to save us.

2) He stoops to provide. Here is a wonderful overruling of detail and timing for the blessing of human beings. The angel ends by referring to Elizabeth in v36. And in v39 first thing Mary does is hurry off to be with her, surely as God intended. She was in an extremely vulnerable position. Who would believe her? Elizabeth was the one person on earth whose own experience might incline her to. God knows our needs & stoops to the details of our lives. Do we always see that so clearly? Did Mary see that clearly on the day she saw Jesus hang on a cross? No. But it was & is still true.

Mary's Response: she rejoices in God as Saviour, v46. She understands that what God is doing at Christmas is acting to save. The name Jesus (v31) means 'the Lord who saves'. Matt 1:21 'you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins'. This is the Saviour come: who came to die on Cross for sinners. And Mary rejoices in two things.

Firstly that God is her saviour: v47. Mary is not sinless but saved. 'God my Saviour'. In v48 Mary is overwhelmed that God has stooped to her: given her a privilege such that all generations rightly will call her 'blessed' v48.

Secondly: she is rejoicing that he can be our Saviour too. From v50 she charts the significance of what God has done. God has acted in mercy (v50 &54) by sending Jesus. But the benefit of what God has done is open to all now (v50). But there is a condition.

1) those who cannot be blessed this Christmas: those who are 'proud in their inmost thoughts' v51, 'the rulers on their thrones' v52 & the 'rich' v53. Identifies 3 sources of human self sufficiency by which people shut God's salvation out: pride in themselves, trust in power & status: trust in riches. They may like the season but don't want a Saviour. They are 'scattered' v51, 'brought down' v52 & 'sent away' v53.

2) those who will be blessed this Christmas: those who 'fear God' v50, take him with utmost seriousness: those who are humble v52, don't exalt themselves: those who are hungry v53, that is as Jesus later put it, 'hunger & thirst for righteousness'. They 'find mercy' v50, are 'lifted up' v52 & 'filled' v53. Is that us?

God has spoken, God has acted & God has stooped to us. Mary responded: she wanted to understand what God had said & was doing: and she then believed what he said was true: & then she rejoiced in what God had said & done in sending Jesus, the Lord who saves. You & I can do just the same. We must do it that we too may be saved.

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