

Mary and the Birth of God's Promise

Luke 1:26-35

Introduction

Peace, justice, renewal, reconciliation, and redemption—these are the things we all long for. From the beginning of human history, every generation has desired Eden. We long for a world where everything is as it should be: where God dwells with His people, where sin and death no longer reign, where justice and peace finally embrace. Yet life east of Eden often feels far more like wandering in the wilderness than living in paradise. Scripture reminds us that we were not only made for Eden, but for something greater than the first Eden—a redeemed world where God dwells with His people forever.

If you read the Bible as one unified story, you quickly discover that this longing for Eden never disappears. After the death of Solomon and the division of David's kingdom, God's people endured centuries of instability, exile, and oppression. Kingdoms fell apart, kings failed, and the land itself was lost. Yet through it all, God preserved a single, persistent promise: redemption would come through a child—a king, a deliverer, a son.

From the serpent-crushing offspring promised in Genesis 3, to the blessing pledged to Abraham, to the scepter of Judah, to the covenant God made with David, and finally to Isaiah's promise of a virgin-born son, God repeated His word again and again: salvation was coming. The Deliverer would crush the head of the dragon. Into the darkness of Galilee and the nations, a great light would shine.

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will name Him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

“For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of armies will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:6–7)

Then—astonishingly—for four hundred years, heaven was silent.

Imagine being born, living, and dying without hearing a prophetic word from God, yet clinging to promises handed down from your fathers and grandfathers. Empires rose and fell—Greek, then Roman—until a paranoid ruler named Herod sat on the throne of Judah. The world looked anything but ready for redemption. And it was precisely then that God spoke again—not to a king, not to a priest, but to a young girl in an obscure town.

The Promise We Can Trust

Mary was likely between fourteen and sixteen years old. Joseph was a carpenter—faithful, quiet, and largely unnoticed. They were not influential, powerful, or impressive by worldly standards. Yet God chose them. This should not surprise us. Throughout Scripture, God delights in working through obscurity. He does not wait for ideal circumstances or impressive résumés. He chooses ordinary people who trust Him. Obscurity is not a barrier to obedience, and faithfulness in small, unseen places is often where God begins His greatest work.

When Mary was told she would conceive by the Holy Spirit, her response was an honest question: ***“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*** This is in contrast to Zechariah’s response after the angel Gabriel revealed to him that he and his wife, Elizabeth would have a son in their old age who would prepare the way of the promised Deliverer. Here is what Zechariah said: ***“How will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in her years.”*** (Luke 1:18-20). While Zechariah struggled to believe, Mary’s response was not unbelief; it was faith seeking understanding. Mary does not say, “That cannot be,” but “How will this be?” Biblical faith does not silence questions—it submits them to God. There is a world of difference between humble inquiry and hardened disbelief.

Joseph, however, initially responded with disbelief. As a righteous man, he planned to divorce Mary quietly, sparing her public shame. But God intervened. Once Joseph understood that God was at work, he obeyed. He moved when God told him to move. He fled when danger came. He returned when it was safe. History remembers Herod as powerful; God remembers Joseph as faithful.

Joseph is often treated as a footnote in Jesus’ story, but do not assume that there was not cost for him in following the will of God for his life. Think about the cost to his reputation, consider the courage he demonstrated from the news of Mary’s pregnancy throughout Jesus’ childhood years. There is a lesson to be learned through Joseph’s life in what faithfulness, fatherhood, and true masculinity really looks like.

The gospel did not make Mary and Joseph’s lives easier—it made them riskier. God’s promises often disrupt our plans. Obedience may cost comfort, reputation, and control, but it always leads us into God’s purposes.

The Promise that Secures Our Good

Gabriel proclaims five astonishing truths about Mary's child—each one unveiling a facet of Christ's unparalleled glory and majesty.

First, His name will be Jesus (v. 31).

Jesus—*Joshua*—means Savior and Deliverer. Before Gabriel speaks of crowns or kingdoms, he speaks of salvation. Jesus would exercise His kingship not by domination, but by deliverance. He did not come primarily to improve circumstances, but to rescue sinners. This is the heart of the gospel: a Savior before a Sovereign, mercy before majesty.

Jesus will be great (v. 32).

Gabriel offers no explanation—only a proclamation. Scripture later fills in the meaning. Jesus is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Lord. He is the image of the invisible God, the One through whom all things were made and in whom all things hold together! Consider Colossians 1:15-20,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also the head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

He is the radiance of God's glory, the exact imprint of His nature, who upholds the universe by the word of His power (Heb. 1:1-4). Words ultimately fail to capture His greatness. Gabriel simply declares it: "*He will be great.*" Jesus eternally existed within the fellowship of the Trinity, entered human history, clothed Himself in flesh, lived among us, died on a Roman cross for our sins, and rose on the third day. This is not a small Savior. This is a great one.

Jesus will be called Son of the Most High (v. 32b).

This does not mean Jesus was created or that He is merely another "son of God" like the angels. Gabriel is proclaiming something far deeper: Jesus is uniquely God's Son—the eternal Word, begotten not made, sharing fully in the divine nature from all eternity.

- When the Father spoke creation into existence, it was *by Jesus and through Jesus that all things were created!*
- Jesus is, "**before all things, and in Him all things hold together.**"
- It is the Son, who "**emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men...humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross**" (Phil. 2:7-8).

The demons grasped with chilling clarity the truth that many humans do not. Consider their desperate plea in Luke 8:28: **“What business do You have with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!”** Even the forces of darkness recognized that Jesus, as the Son of the Most High, possessed absolute authority and power over them—He alone holds the right to command, conquer, and torment the hosts of Satan. The spiritual realm itself trembles before His greatness.

Jesus will inherit the throne of David (v. 32c).

It is only fitting that Jesus—who is Savior, who is great, and who is the Son of the Most High—should sit on the throne of David. Mary and Joseph were descendants of David, but this child would not merely restore an earthly kingdom. Jesus would reign over the nations as King. Isaiah foresaw this when he wrote, **“In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious”** (Isa. 11:10).

When Simeon later held the infant Jesus in the temple, he declared that his eyes had seen God’s salvation—a light for the Gentiles and glory for Israel. Yet Simeon also warned Mary that this child would be opposed and that a sword would pierce her own soul: **“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and as a sign to be opposed—and a sword will pierce your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed”** (Luke 2:34-35).

Redemption would come, but not without suffering. Glory would be preceded by rejection and the cross. The Son would be despised, rejected, struck down, and afflicted for our sins through a cross, and it would be on the cross that the Son would be crushed by the Father (see Isa. 53:3-10).

Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob forever (v. 33)

Finally, Gabriel assured Mary that Jesus would not only inherit David’s throne, but that His reign would be everlasting. He would rule over Israel for all eternity—the ultimate and final King whose kingdom would never end. Yet His rule would not be confined to the twelve tribes of Israel. Like a mustard seed that grows into a great tree, His kingdom would expand to encompass the whole world, welcoming people from every nation. It is to this Jesus that all the nations will one day bow, for He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, just as the Scriptures declare: **“For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Phil. 2:9–11).

The Promise that Will Not Fail

Mary and Joseph were not sinless or perfect parents. They struggled as we do. Yet they were entrusted with the greatest news the world had ever received: salvation had come in the form of a

child growing in Mary's womb. One wonders whether, as Mary felt His small hands and feet and Joseph gazed at Him in awe, they ever reflected on Ezekiel's promise that David's servant would be king forever and that God would dwell among His people (see Ezek. 37:24-28).

Their lives teach us four enduring lessons. 1) The Good News moved them to action. 2) They guarded what God entrusted to them. 3) They treasured the gift they received. 4) And they were faithful stewards, willing to step back and let Jesus be who He was sent to be.

As Christians who have received the gospel, we too have been entrusted with this Good News. The question this story presses upon us is simple and searching: *What will we do with the Good News we have received?* Will it move us to action? Will we guard it as precious? Will we treasure it as the greatest news we have ever heard? And will we steward it faithfully, giving it away as ambassadors of the King of kings and Lord of lords?

When Herod sought to kill Jesus, Joseph took his family to Egypt just as he was told to do to protect Mary and Jesus. Joseph's obedience cost him something. Most of us will never be called to flee to Egypt, but we will be called to trust God when obedience costs us something!

When Mary received the news that she was to be the mother of the promised Deliverer and Son of God, her response is simple and yet profound: **"I am the Lord's bond-servant, may it be done to me according to your word"** (1:38).

For centuries before Gabriel visited Mary, God's people waited—through exile, through silence, through suffering—clinging to promises they could not yet see fulfilled. And then, in the fullness of time, God spoke again. Not with thunder, not from a palace, but through an angel sent to a young girl in an obscure town.

The first coming of Jesus tells us something vital about the way God works. He does not bypass weakness; He enters it. He does not avoid suffering; He redeems it. He does not wait for the world to be ready; He comes to save it. The King arrived not with armies, but in a womb. The Savior came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

The child promised to Mary is the King who now reigns. The Savior who came in humility will come again in glory. The Jesus who was laid in a manger will one day return as Judge and King, and His kingdom will have no end.

So we live now in the in-between. We wait as a people who know the promise is true, even when the world still feels broken. We wait with hope, not because circumstances are easy, but because Christ has come—and because Christ will come again.

As you wait with hope, what kind of bond-servant will you be? What kind of bond-servant is Jesus calling you to be? What does faithfulness look like for you in 2026?