

Christ the King Luke 1:26-33

This morning we are going to go back to a story we looked at last week and continue to look at the description and details that the angel gave to Mary when she first found out that she was going to have a baby. Last week we saw that every part of his description would have meant something to Mary and guided her thoughts and dreams of what her baby would be like. There were seven details she was given and we looked at the first four last week.

We saw the significance that her firstborn would be a son who would represent the rest of her children and be consecrated to God to signify his claim over all of them. We saw the meaning of the name “Jesus” or “Iesous,” which means “Yahweh is salvation.” We saw the proclamation that he would be great, including his position as Son of the Most High and that he would have supremacy and authority in the heavens, higher than any other name, rule or authority. And this week we will continue to see his greatness in the last three details Mary was given.

We’re looking at these things not only to understand what Mary was thinking about, but to fill up our understanding of who Jesus is as we seek to know, follow, and worship him, and as well as celebrate the miracle and gift of his birth this coming week.

Read Luke 1:26-33.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

We're going to focus on the details in that last sentence today. The angel made three statements about Mary's baby and you'll notice they're all related to him becoming a king. And the only way for us to truly understand what those things meant to her we have to understand where she was coming from. These statements wouldn't have left her confused and wondering what they meant. They would have left her bewildered because she knew exactly what they meant, at least to the extent that had been revealed at that time. So I want to try to help us see what they meant to her because that will also remind us of what they mean for us today, and who Jesus is.

Mary wasn't an American, and she wasn't a Christian. Let that sink in a little bit... She wasn't an American, and she wasn't a Christian. She didn't know anything about presidents, democracies, voting, and inalienable rights. She didn't know anything about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, or trusting in him for salvation, or making disciples, or spreading the gospel, or the church. None of that had happened yet. She was an Israelite and she was a Jew. That was her whole history and identity and it's much, much different than ours, so I want to take a minute to try to explain what that was like.

Mary's identity went back to a man named Abraham and a God named Yahweh. About 2,000 years before her lifetime, Yahweh called a man named Abram, who's name was later changed to Abraham, and he called him to leave his homeland and go to a distant land that he would give to him and his descendants. Abraham believed Yahweh and set out for the land of Canaan, and that's where the history of Israel began.

In Canaan, God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to multiply his offspring and give them the land of Canaan forever. He would be their God and they would be his people. Yahweh continued this covenant through Abraham's son Isaac, and through his grandson Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, and he fulfilled his promises through Israel's sons and descendants who became the 12 tribes of Israel. After spending 400 years in Egypt as slaves, God set them free, renewed the covenant with them and brought them to the land of Canaan where he drove out their enemies and gave them possession of it.

Israel struggled to walk in obedience to God for most of their history, and that too was a big part of their identity. They went through 400 years of judges and about 600 years of kings. There were times of obedience and blessing, but most often they disobeyed God and violated the covenant. They indulged in all kinds of wickedness and God brought judgment upon them. After about 1000 years of this they were finally defeated by the Babylonians and went into exile. But God had mercy and remembered the covenant and brought them back to Canaan. They were there for another 500 years leading up to Mary's lifetime, but there was much upheaval and distress and disobedience, and they were currently under the rule of a foreign king named Herod and occupied by the Roman governors and soldiers, oppressed, hated, and heavily taxed by the Roman government.

Now, there's one more covenant that took place in Israel's history that was also key to understanding where Mary was coming from, and why the angel's words would have been so astonishing to her. That covenant was made with Israel's most revered king – King David. King David was Israel's second king, and though he had many flaws, he was a king that remained faithful to God. He loved God with all his heart and worshipped him with all his might. God had chosen him and anointed him and loved him.

Early on in David's reign, God gave him a promise through the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:16: *“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”* That was a promise that had become very near and dear to the hearts of faithful Israelites throughout the following generations, including Mary. God fulfilled that promise in a physical monarchy for about 600 years in the southern kingdom of Israel called Judah. David's descendants were always on the throne. Unfortunately, few of them were godly men like David and eventually Judah fell and went into exile and there was no king. When they returned they did have a couple series of kings during the 500 years leading up to Mary, but they weren't of the line of David.

So in Mary's lifetime, one of the things that the faithful Israelites were looking and longing for was a righteous king in the line of David. A king who would fulfill God's promises to David as well as many other promises foretold by the prophets. Based on different songs and prophecies we have in the gospel

accounts we can see that they were looking for a king who would bring forgiveness, mercy, and peace to Israel. They were looking for him to fulfill God's covenant with Israel – he would save them from their enemies and overthrow the proud, mighty, and rich, and exalt the humble, weak, and poor. And he would lead the people of Israel in holiness and righteousness. They referred to this king as the Messiah and they had been longing for him for a long, long time.

That's where Mary was coming from when she was visited by the angel. So what do you think she would have thought when he told her she would have a baby boy and that "*the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end*"? I think she would have realized that her son was going to be the promised Messiah... The fulfillment of all the prophecies... The very one that she herself had been longing for. She would have begun to realize that Jesus would be king and reign over his people forever. He would bring salvation and forgive people of their sins. He would save his people from their enemies, humble the proud, exalt the humble, and lead his people in holiness and righteousness.

Mary would have understood these things as an Israelite and a Jew, which would have been incredible and astonishing, but still narrower than what her son's fulfillment actually would be. The mystery of the gospel hadn't been fully revealed yet. So faithful Jews were expecting the Messiah to establish an earthly throne and rule with political and military power. They didn't know Jesus' kingdom would be of a spiritual nature and extend far beyond that.

So it made sense to them when Jesus performed miracles and taught the ways of God with authority and power. But it didn't make sense when he didn't take the throne in Israel, or when he went to the cross and died. Mary was filled with anguish at that point and it didn't make sense until 3 days later when he rose from the dead. It was then that his disciples began to understand the mystery that Christ's kingdom was a spiritual kingdom. He brought that kingdom to earth and it would spread throughout the world in people's hearts to include people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. He died on the cross to provide the only way for our sins to be forgiven so we

could enter his kingdom and he rose again to give us new life in God. Everyone who puts their trust in Jesus will receive forgiveness and enter his kingdom.

That's who Mary's baby would be and that's the birth we celebrate at Christmas.

But there is a question we all must consider: In light of what history and the Bible teaches us about Jesus, will you receive him as the Messiah and Savior in your life? Do you believe that he lived, died, and rose again to save you from your sins and bring you peace with God? Each of us is faced with this decision and whether or not we will trust and follow him.

John 1:9-13 says, *"The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*

Will you receive him and believe in his name?