

“Kingdom People” – Week 15

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2025 - MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Kingdom People in the Christmas Story”

Last week we saw that God is a personal God with an eternal plan through the story of Zechariah, Elizabeth, and the birth of their son John. The angel Gabriel came to Zechariah, in the temple, to inform him that he and his wife Elizabeth would conceive a child, the child's name (John), gender, and that he would be the foreteller, the announcer, that Jesus the Messiah was coming. There are so many surprises in Luke 1 from this encounter, but there are more to come this week as we step into the story of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ. We are going to see once again: God is a personal God with an eternal plan.

Scripture - Luke 1:26-56

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And 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 call his name Jesus. ³² He 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, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” ³⁵ And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. ³⁹ In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” ⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; ⁵² he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” ⁵⁶ And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

Matthew 1:1-2:23; Luke 1:1-2:52; John 1:1-15; 2 Timothy 2:3-16, Hebrews 4:12

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

God is a personal God with an eternal plan.

God doesn't always work in the way we expect, and God doesn't always work through the people we would expect.

Imagine the setting: Luke 1:26-38

- Nazareth - small town, not Thomasville-size, not Denton-size, small town. (Population range: 200-1400) Those from this town were considered unclean because of their association with Gentiles. In the book of John, it is recorded that one of the disciples said of Nazareth and Jesus coming from this region, "Nothing good comes out of Nazareth." Agricultural society - everyone knew everyone, a close-knit group.
- Her family was most likely impoverished.
- She was, like many girls of the day, uneducated, especially in the area in which she lived.
- Her outlook would be marriage, children, children, home.... nothing special or out of the ordinary.
- She did, according to scripture, have the royal heritage of David, but politically, that was of no merit during this time, when the maniacal Herod ruled.
- She was betrothed to a young man named Joseph.
- Marriage in those days:
 - Family arranges and agrees upon marriage. Often, when the girl was 12-15 years old, the male was a little older, but not by many years.
 - Betrothal period - engagement in our culture, but really, this was more formal; it was legally binding. It could only be broken by an official divorce.
 - It should be noted that during this time there had not been, nor was there to be, any physical relations between the betrothed. This is an important note. Any violation of this regulation, especially by the young woman, could result in public death.
 - We don't know what she was doing or her exact location, but Gabriel shows up and gives her a dose of "unexpected news," to say the least—the surprise of all surprises.

The passage tells us she is going to bear a child, which is medically impossible given her current relational situation. He is the one your people have been waiting for - the Messiah is coming, and you are going to be the mother. Imagine receiving this news on your own and knowing your physical status and marital plans. Imagine living in a culture where this news could bring you death, at minimum, it would get you embarrassment, alienation, and shame.

Notice Mary's response is not one of doubting the promise of God, but simply approaching this from a medical position. (Luke 1:34)

Her question is often translated the same way as Zechariah's. Still, Luke's Greek is precise: Zechariah wants the angel to tell him how he will know the angel's word will come true (doubting the announcement), whereas Mary wants to see how the angel's promise will be fulfilled. She is asking a logical question about what will be. It's really a question built upon her faith and trust in God.

Key Thoughts

Jesus will be great (Luke 1:32-33). No qualifier needed. He does not need a list of accomplishments to make him great. He will simply be great. Because of who He is, what He will accomplish. And his titles are given to Mary, which would have resonated with her spiritual upbringing.

- 32 He 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,
- 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Study Light commentaries on these verses reads, "Jesus is great. Jesus is the fulfillment. Jesus is going to be the savior they have been waiting for. He was going to come to meet our greatest need, a savior to forgive us of our sins.

- If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator.
- If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist.
- If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist.
- If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer.
- But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior."

Mary had every reason to be filled with fear; however, we will see her respond with faith-filled trust in the Lord's calling. A key truth that we must see here is that her response takes place in the form of a song. Her response to the most remarkable/life-changing announcement ever, the moment that would destroy her previous plans, her hopes and dreams, was to do what - worship God.

Mary is a young woman, obviously chosen by God because of her "favor with God." She was not super-human, but we don't need to pass over her too quickly, because her response to God's calling upon her life sets the standard for all of us. She is an incredible example of how allowing God's calling in her life can flip her world upside down.

She sets the standard for those of us who are cruising through life, going about our business, when a radical calling is placed upon her life that, by saying yes, will open her to ridicule, pain, and watching her son suffer for the sins of mankind. In this moment, she sets the standard for worship and paints one of the most beautiful pictures of God: Mary worshipped the God of history, not the idols of anxiety, doubt, and fear.

She had everything in the world to worry about. She could have been consumed with her difficult lot in life, but she does not give in to the idol of anxiety; she instead submits herself to the God of history (Luke 1:46-49).

Notice Mary's attitude; she starts to sing with a joyful spirit. The 1st thing we see her doing is praising God. She is rejoicing that her life has been turned upside down. There are two ways to magnify something: one is with a microscope, where you look into the details, and the other is with a telescope, where you take something far away and make it larger than life. You take something distant and make it something you can visualize, and in this case, worship. She is making God's name great! Why? She recognizes she has a Lord and needs a savior.

Key Thoughts

When we face trials, tests, fears, and difficulties, it reveals our steadfast belief in God. Our belief in who God is changes who we are, therefore changing how we live.

The most difficult moments in life will unveil our honesty and accurate view of God. We find it easy to praise God when things are great, but can we muster up a song of worship to God when the circumstances around us only present gloom and despair?

Most of us, if we are honest, allow our circumstances to guide and define our view of God. If things are great, God is great. If things are bad, God must be mad at me or out to get me. The fact is this: God never changes, he is Lord, he is Savior, and our circumstances do not change who God is, if we start by viewing God as Mary does: Lord & Savior.

Mary's response in 1:46-49 is incredible because she got it. God is all-knowing. God is worthy of her worship. That was her reaction - worship! But not just any God, the God of history and promise.

God is what, according to this pregnant single poor uneducated teenage girl: (Luke 1:50-53)

- God is a God of mercy for the helpless: He is going to forgive. Ultimately, God will fulfill his promise to those to whom he has promised, even though they are undeserving. God is going to be kind, he is going to restore, he is going to rescue. He is going to move in powerful ways.
- God is strength for the weak, lifts the humble, and feeds the hungry: This is Mary. This is us. We are so weak. We fall into sin and experience failures in our lives. In our weakness we need a strong Savior.
- God is a God of history and promise: Mary knew the promises of God. But in this moment, she could have turned and begun saying, "Why did God do this to me? I am a good girl. I have behaved. I am on the straight and narrow. Why me?" Instead, she trusted God because of what He had done, and if God had worked before, she believed He would continue to work in her life. (Luke 1:54-55; Genesis 12)

She is singing to God regarding all that He has done in her life and in the past (Abraham & Sara)

- You were great then, you are great now.
- You did miracles then; you do miracles now.
- You were mighty then; you can do mighty things now.
- You saved your people then from themselves; you can provide a savior now.
- Your people were hungry, and then God provided manna from heaven. You provide now.
- You showed mercy then; I have no doubt you will show mercy now.

Mary worshipped the God of history, eternity, and the promise of salvation. She was not consumed with her past; God was providing a Savior. She would face ridicule, God would rescue her, and provide.

We are gathered together to worship the Lord, the Savior, the provider, the strong God, the mighty God, the redeeming God, the God of the helpless, the God of mercy, the God of forgiveness, the God of history. The God who has done immeasurably more for each of us than we have ever deserved, and it began in this fantastic moment: The birth of Jesus Christ. Our savior, our sacrifice, our King, our God was born. Will you worship the God of history or the idol of anxiety and fear?

Reflect & Respond

Do you truly recognize and understand your need for a Savior? Why do you need Christ, His life, His work at calvary? Explain.

It can often be easy to worship when everything is going well, but can you worship the Lord when circumstances are less than favorable? What does worship look like for you in troubling seasons?

When we come to worship the birth of Jesus, are we recognizing Him as our Lord (sovereign, in control, completely trusting) and are we recognizing Him as our one and only Savior? Do you come before Him in worship with this mindset whether that be Sunday morning, in your time of prayer, or in your personal worship. What does this look like for you regularly?

We have spent a good bit of time discussing the “upside down kingdom” of God. We see this clearly at play in Luke 1:26-34. This is a situation that to the world would seem and look highly troubling, yet to Gabriel, and ultimately to God, it is one of great favor for Mary. Can you share a time in your life where perhaps a situation seemed about as troubling as it could possibly be, yet, through it God was doing something incredible?

In Luke 1:38 we see an incredible response from Mary regarding her situation and showcasing her absolute trust in the Lord when she says, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” There is a trust and a willingness here to follow God regardless of what may come. Do you have trust like this in the Lord? Are you willing to follow Him regardless of what the outcome may look like?

We see in Luke 1:45 where Elizabeth says to Mary, “And blessed is she who believed...” Mary believed in the word of God that was given to her. How about you? Do you believe in the word of God that has been given to you (Bible)? Do you see scripture (the word of God) as just as important and powerful as what was given to Mary from God in this moment? Would it change the way you read and studied the word if you believed it was (See 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 4:4)

Take the time to read through Mary’s Song in Luke 1:46-56. What stands out to you most? As you read through it ask the following:

- Does my soul magnify the Lord in worship? Does my spirit rejoice in God my Savior?
- Do I see God for all the things that He has done in the past (Biblically/historically and in my own life)?
- What mighty things has God done (again, Biblically/historically and in your own life)?
- How have you seen His mercy at work (Biblically/historically and in your own life)?
- How have you seen His strength at work (Biblically/historically and in your own life)?
- How do you trust in who God is according to scripture and all the incredible works which He has done, even when you cannot see how He is working in your life specifically in a tough season? How can you hold fast to what is true even in a season of trouble, darkness, fear, anxiety, etc.?