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- a. Wonder of the Son
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^A Hebrews 1:14, 13:2; 2 Corinthians 11:14, Colossians 2:18, Galatians 1:8

^B Luke 11:20

^C Deuteronomy 22:12-29; 24:1

^D Zechariah 7:9; Micah 6:8

^E Isaiah 7:14

^F Luke 1:46-55

A. Introduction

1. Angels

- a. in the past few years, there has been a growing obsession with angels
- b. stories of angelic intervention are quickly spread by the internet
- c. angels have become the centre of a media-fostered religion
- d. but are these indeed angels as described in the Bible?
- e. there is no doubt that angels are involved in human affairs:
 - (A) the writer of Hebrews describes their role, 'Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?' (Hebrews 1:14)
 - (B) and later cautions his readers, 'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.' (Hebrews 13:2)
- f. but the Scriptures also warn us concerning angels:
 - (A) for, 'No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.' (2 Corinthians 11:14)
 - (B) do not make angels objects of devotion, 'Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,' (Colossians 2:18)
 - (C) be wary of any angelic message: 'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!' (Galatians 1:8)
- g. yet it is only fitting angels should serve at the incarnation
 - (A) the entry of God the Son into the world as a human being
 - (B) doing their work as messengers of God to mankind
- h. moments ago we read the angel message to Mary and then to Joseph
- i. Luke 1:11-20 record an earlier message to Zacharias, the priest and husband of Elisabeth, announcing the birth of John the Baptist.
- j. that angel, who was the same angel who spoke to Mary, describes himself in Luke 1:19, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.'

k. so, this angel, had the proper credentials, which by the time he spoke to Mary, as we shall see, had been demonstrably proven

2. Two Examples of Christmas Art

a. consider, for a moment, these two pictures

b. the one on the left is that of a current, Canadian postage stamp

c. the one on the right is that by the realist, African-American artist, Tanner, painted in 1898 and entitled, "The Annunciation"

d. I think that you will have no difficulty in detecting which one comes closer to portraying the events as they really happened

e. neither Mary, nor Joseph her husband to be, were rich

f. you will find confirmation of that in the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise recorded in Luke 1:46-55, and in Joseph's profession

g. both were, as I understand the Scriptures, descended from King David, but so many generations had gone by, so much had happened in the past 1,000 years, that they held no special position in Jewish society

h. for many reasons then, the message by the angel was shocking news to this couple, news that upset their whole world; they were to be ...

3. Parents of the Messiah

a. this poor couple were chosen by God to be the parents of His only Son, sent to earth in human form to be a Saviour

b. Joseph

(A) was a carpenter; a manual tradesman, whose work would include the making or repair of ploughs or carts

(B) it was an honest and necessary, but not a prestigious job

(C) in common with Isaac his ancestor, and with the norms of his society, it is unlikely that he was much below forty years old: he would have worked for years before being able to afford a wife

(D) so by the time Jesus entered His ministry, Joseph would have died – that is why at the crucifixion,

Jesus gave Mary His mother into the care of the beloved disciple, John

c. Mary

- (A) on the other hand would be relatively young
- (B) marriages were often arranged with the bride's parents while the girl was still in her childhood – that seems strange in our culture
- (C) in her early teens when she was physically ready for marriage, she would be espoused (betrothed or engaged) to her husband
- (D) this was as legally binding as marriage itself and could only be terminated by divorce or death; she was referred to as his wife, and if the husband died, she was considered to be a widow
- (E) after about a year in this state, they would be publicly married, and he would take her from her family to live in his own house

d. Mary and Joseph and their families

- (A) had all these plans laid out
- (B) possibly for some years
- (C) and then the angel messages came to them
- (D) first to Mary, at which she hastened away to Elisabeth, a relative whom by Gabriel's words would seem to understand her situation
- (E) and then, when she returned, when her expectant state became known to Joseph
- (F) the angelic message of explanation also came to him

e. all their plans – they had to be thrown away

- (A) their concepts and ideas of how God works – discarded
- (B) their very lives – radically changed
- (C) because the words of the angel bore with them
- (D) a message of difficulty, as well as,
- (E) a message of joy

B. A Message of Difficulty

1. Respecting Public Opinion

a. Mary's character

- (A) consider what this would do to Mary as a virgin; chaste and pure
- (B) her words to the angel show that she was neither ignorant nor naïve; even at a young age, hers was the purity that knew the alternatives and chose the best
- (C) the Magnificat shows her knowledge of Scripture: she would have known from Deuteronomy chapters 22 and 24 what stigma and judgement would befall her as an unmarried mother
- (D) the easy acceptance of promiscuity in our day and age would be foreign to this young woman chosen by God to be Jesus' mother
- (E) and even if she escaped stoning, then uncommon under Roman rule, she faced the dissolution of her marriage hopes and plans

b. Joseph's dilemma

- (A) Joseph was a just man; that is an expression that is used of very few people in Scripture: Job, Zacharias, Elisabeth, Simeon, Joseph
- (B) and as a truly just man, he was aware that being just did not only entail judgement, but also mercy
- (C) "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another.'" (Zechariah 7:9 NIV)
- (D) 'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' (Micah 6:8 NIV)
- (E) and that was Joseph's dilemma: how to be true to his own just soul and yet show mercy to this young woman he loved and who to this point had ever shown herself pure; to believe her
- (F) if he married her, it would be as good as confessing that he had himself been indiscreet in their period of espousal

2. Respecting Responsibility

a. of simply being parents

- (A) as anyone who is a parent knows, this is in itself a daunting thing
- (B) but to be so in such unusual circumstances, much more so

b. but also, of parenting Immanuel

- (A) this was to be no ordinary baby
- (B) his name, Jesus – Jehovah is Saviour – was given by God, 'for He shall save His people from their

sins.'

- (C) 'he will be great ... called the Son of the Most High'
- (D) this was Messiah; the Christ – given 'the throne of His father David'
- (E) the fulfilment of the promise to David of an everlasting throne: this baby, Jesus, 'will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.'
- (F) this 'holy offspring shall be called the Son of God,' this is Immanuel, God come down to earth in the form of man
- (G) ^{2}What Child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping? Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, While shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and angels sing: haste, haste to bring Him laud– The babe the son of Mary.
- (H) what a responsibility to parent this child; who could do it?

3. Respecting Submission

a. Mary's words

- (A) answered all these and other questions flooding her heart
- (B) 'behold, the bondslave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word' – Lo, I am the Lord's handmaiden, owned by God...
- (C) that submission by faith to God answered all questions

b. Joseph's obedience

- (A) likewise was the response of faith: position, gossip, mocking – it mattered not – whatever rumours, he knew the truth about Mary
- (B) he 'did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife; and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son: and he called His name Jesus.' – the obedience of faith

C. A Message of Joy

1. To Mary of Such Favour

a. the Prophetic word

- (A) there is no doubt that the words of Isaiah 7:14, which Matthew quotes came to mean a great deal to Mary in these days: 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with

child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.'

(B) but also every prophetic word of Gabriel to her must have been inscribed indelibly upon her heart: indeed, she was the favoured one, the mother of the long-awaited Messiah; the Saviour

b. the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55)

(A) again shines forth with Mary's joy – 'my soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.'

(B) no proud boast was this, but Mary's humble confession

(C) 'from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.'

2. To Joseph of Doubts Erased

a. untroubled conscience

(A) now this just man – who sought the will of God and to carry it out

(B) had his dilemma solved; he could be both just and merciful

b. the long awaited marriage now was possible

(A) the cost of public disdain

(B) was worth the joy of the privilege of raising this Christ Child

3. To Them Both

a. the wonder of the Son

(A) the visits of shepherds; of wise men; of angels

(B) things that Mary kept and pondered, treasured in her heart

(C) but seeing this child entrusted to their care 'increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.'

b. in Sustaining Grace

(A) through the angelic assurances given independently to each

(B) through the visit to Elisabeth

(1) where Mary could find an understanding heart

(2) from a godly kinswoman who by the Holy Spirit could give further assurance

c. yes; indeed this was a message of joy; a joy we can share today

D. Conclusion

1. God had a staggering goal for a little maiden named Mary.^{—{3}}
 - a. An angel told her that she would bear a son while still a virgin, and that her son would be the Savior of the world. When she inquired about this seemingly impossible feat, the angel simply said, 'Nothing will be impossible with God' (Luke 1:37).
 - b. You wouldn't give your child a task he couldn't complete, and God doesn't assign to you goals you can't achieve. His goals for you are possible, certain and achievable. When God's will for us appears impossible, let's say with Mary: "Behold, the bonds slave of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).
 - c. Imagine the overwhelming assignment that confronted Mary. She was to have a baby without being with a man. She was to raise the child who would save the world. The entire course of history would be altered, and the eternal destiny of believers would be established. The fact that we are celebrating Christmas is proof that Mary's child Jesus was indeed the world-changing Son of God.
 - d. Despite the staggering nature of the task announced by the angel, Mary gave herself to accomplish God's will. God is still looking for a few bonds slaves who will dare to believe that nothing is impossible with God.
2. Lord, I yield to You as Your bonds slave. I choose to believe that whatever You want me to do I can do.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified (in my extended notes) as follows:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 8 © 1984 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan, *Luke*, by Walter L. Liefeld. ISBN 0-310-36530-9 (v. 11)
- EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament
- TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The Gospel According to Luke*, by Leon Morris. Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Compan, ISBN 0-85111-872-0
- Kerux– The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. *What Child Is This?*, by William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)
3. By Neil T. Anderson – <http://www.christianity.com/print/544992/>: Kerux illustration 35104