

His Kingdom Will Never End

Luke 1:26-38

Key Verse: 1:32,33

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

In this passage the angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce the birth of Jesus. This passage can be divided into four parts. Verses 26-30 reveal the nature and meaning of God's favor upon a person. Verses 31-33 tell us who Jesus really is and the character of his kingdom. Verses 34-37 proclaim the power of God to accomplish his will. And verse 38 is Mary's acceptance of God's favor with obedience and faith. In one sense, this is an old, old story that tells us about history. Yet it is so much more than that. It is God's very word to us today which can open our eyes to his kingdom and teach us the way to receive and bear God's great favor on our lives. Let's accept this word as we begin to prepare Christmas 2008.

First, "Greetings, you who are highly favored" (26-30). Look at verses 26-27. "In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary." It was now six months since God had broken into the lives of two senior citizens, Zechariah and Elizabeth. The Lord answered their prayer by giving them a son, John the Baptist, forerunner of the Messiah. Little John had been in his mommy's womb for six months. Now, according to God's time schedule, the promised Messiah should be conceived. Humanly speaking, with the wicked King Herod on the throne, the times looked dark. However, God was directing history to fulfill his redemptive purpose. The world is often troubled, yet God carries out his redemptive plan without fail.

As God prepared to send his Son into the world, he needed someone to serve as a mother. Entrusting the Son's life into human hands was not a light matter. Human parents usually choose only the best babysitter, checking credentials carefully. Who did God choose? God chose Mary. What kind of person was she? She was from Nazareth in Galilee, a country town which despised by some (Jn 1:46). At the same time, she was a virgin, young and pure. She was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David, the great king of Israel. Mary must have been thrilled with the anticipation of her upcoming wedding. If she was a modern girl, she might have spent an hour on Facebook every day sharing her feelings with her girlfriends. Mary seemed to be little more than an ordinary country girl with her own small dream. Mary was not like Hannah, who came to God in agony of soul over her barrenness. Rather, Mary was peaceful and happy.

All of that changed suddenly, in an instant. Look at verse 28. "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'" Humanly speaking, Mary looked like an ordinary person. Yet the angel called Mary, "you who are highly favored." It was because God had chosen her to be the mother of the Messiah. Many young women might have hoped to be chosen for this great privilege. Yet Mary was "the one," chosen by God. This was God's grace and special love for her. Though Mary had many good qualities, being chosen by God was purely God's grace.

However, Mary did not respond positively at first. Mary was greatly troubled at the angel's words (29). She sensed that God's favor required a disruption in her life, and that God would ask her something challenging. She might have felt like those who receive a letter from the President, that is, a draft notice. We must acknowledge that God's intervention in a person's life is disruptive. It requires us to acknowledge God as God, putting aside our own dreams and desires. Mary had to decide to surrender to God, and she was scared. The angel helped Mary overcome her fear by emphasizing God's great favor to her.

Here we learn that to be chosen by God for a mission is God's favor or grace to us. All Christians have received this grace. Romans 1:5 says, "Through him and for his name's sake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." For example, before meeting Jesus, Paul had been a terrible sinner who persecuted the church of God. But Jesus forgave his sins and made him his servant, an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was overwhelmed by a sense of awe and thanks. He said in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." All who are in Christ Jesus are included in this grace. To be entrusted with a mission from God is great grace. To some, it is to be given one campus to pray for and serve. To others, it is to care for one Bible student whom God wants to

bless. To others, it is to be chosen to help prepare the Christmas worship service through drama, dancing, chorus, or working behind the scenes. Regardless of the task, when we sense God's favor upon us, we feel a great sense of privilege and find absolute self-worth. However, from time to time, when we face many practical problems or difficulties, we can feel burdened by God's favor. When we see people living carefree lives without any mission, we can envy them. Then we can begin to complain about the very mission that makes our lives special. Let's come back to our senses, acknowledge God's grace in choosing us and thank him.

Second, he will reign on David's throne (31-33). In verses 31-33, the angel tells about the child to be born. Look at verse 31. "You will be with child and will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus." The name "Jesus" means Savior. Matthew 1:21 explains that he would save his people from their sins. The real problem of mankind is a sin problem, that is, a broken relationship with God. God made man in the image of God to live in fellowship with him. God wanted man to rule over the created world and bring the reign of God to all creation. God made man with freedom of choice to willingly choose to love and serve God. God did not want man to be a robot, but a person of dignity, whose decisions would have real significance. Thus, God made it possible for man to disobey him. Under Satan's temptation, man fell into disobedience. Through one act of disobedience sin entered the world, and death through sin, and all creation fell under the power of darkness. Sin has made all men sick. Romans 1:29 says, "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity." This past week, terrorists struck Mumbai, India, killing over 180 persons. They were sick with the disease of sin. People try in many ways to solve this problem. However, no matter how hard man tries, the basic problem remains unsolved. Man needs a Savior. God sent Jesus as our Savior.

How is Jesus our Savior? Look at verse 32a. "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High." What does it mean to be great? Alexander was known as great for his spirit of conquest. However, his moral behavior was despicable. Jesus is different than any other human being. Jesus is great because he is the Son of the Most High. Jesus is in very nature God. Jesus is holy and pure. Jesus never made a mistake. Though Jesus was severely tested through trials and hardships, he always revealed the power, wisdom and character of God. Jesus is truly great because Jesus is God.

On the basis of his divine character, Jesus is worthy to take the throne of David, which the Lord God gives him. Look at verses 32b-33. "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." The "throne of David" and "the house of Jacob" refer to the right to rule God's people. God had a plan from the beginning to raise his people as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God established David as their king. David destroyed the enemies of his people and united the kingdom and reigned justly with peace and love. It was a time of prosperity and victory for the people of Israel. However, David was not perfect. One fateful night, David fell into temptation and sinned greatly against God. Consequently, sin destroyed his household and marred the kingdom, bringing injustice and pain. Still, through David, God had painted a picture of what the reign of the Messiah would be like. God promised to send an offspring from David's line who would reign over a perfect kingdom. In this kingdom, God's people would enjoy life and love and joy and peace forever. Jesus is the king who reigns on David's throne and over the house of Jacob forever.

In order to establish this perfect kingdom, Jesus had to deal with man's sin problem. Throughout his lifetime, Jesus lived a pure and holy life. Jesus obeyed his parents and he obeyed the law of God. Jesus defeated the devil's temptation by the word of God. Jesus served people as a good shepherd by healing their diseases, driving out evil spirits, and planting the word of God in their hearts. Jesus lived out the very life of God on earth. Being the perfect man, Jesus did not deserve to die. Yet, in obedience to God, Jesus offered himself for the sins of the world. Jesus died on a cross, shedding his blood. On the third day, God raised him from the dead. Jesus has the right to forgive our sins and the authority to give eternal life to all who believe in him. Jesus makes us new in the inner person by purifying us from all unrighteousness. Jesus is redeeming for himself a people who are washed and cleansed from sin, a people who can serve God in holiness and righteousness. We obey Jesus willingly because Jesus gave his life for us. In this way, Jesus became our spiritual king who sits on David's throne.

The last part of verse 33 says, "...his kingdom will never end." How can this be? All human kingdoms have an end. The 20th century was, in many ways, an American century. America grew in economic and military power at a steady rate. But in the last six months we have seen the stock market lose nearly half of its value. A large part of the problem is corruption and greed among financial managers and irresponsible use of credit by consumers. In other words, sin is at the root of the problem. However, in Jesus' kingdom there is no sin and no death. There is no sorrow

and no pain and no darkness at all. There are no elements of corruption in Jesus' kingdom. In Jesus' kingdom God reigns over all, and people willingly serve God in love and joy and peace. That is why his kingdom will never end. We human beings were made to live in such a kingdom. We have sorrow because we get old and die someday. But Jesus gives us eternal life in a kingdom that never ends. This is the true and living hope for all mankind.

Third, nothing is impossible with God (34-37). The message that Mary had just heard was of epic magnitude. The whole world would be redeemed from the power of sin and death and God's perfect paradise restored. Mary's heart was deeply moved. She was ready to obey God's will and aid in ushering in his kingdom. However, there was one thing that still bothered Mary. It was the issue of her fiancé Joseph, whom the angel had not even mentioned. So Mary asked, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel still did not mention Joseph. Instead, he talked about someone else. Look at verse 35. "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Mary would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through the human egg of Mary, Jesus would be fully human. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus would be conceived by God himself. Thus he would be in very nature fully human and fully divine. As a human being, Jesus understands us fully. Jesus knows our weaknesses and he is a sympathetic ruler who bears with us. At the same time Jesus is fully God with all power and wisdom. So Jesus is always victorious. This Jesus is the true Savior for mankind.

The nature of Jesus' birth required extreme measures. Uniquely in all of human history, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. No one had ever heard of such a thing. To be part of this work, Mary needed faith in God who does a new thing. To plant faith in her, the angel told Mary of Elizabeth's miracle pregnancy in her old age. Then the angel said, "For nothing is impossible with God" (37). We need this faith. Some of us believe God's favor upon us and have accepted Jesus as king and the hope of his kingdom. Yet when it comes to believing that we personally can be used in God's work, we may wonder how it can be. This is personal unbelief. We must have personal faith, not personal unbelief. Then God can use us greatly in his work and history. Let's read verse 37. "For nothing is impossible with God."

Fourth, "I am the Lord's servant" (38). How did Mary respond? Look at verse 38. "I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered, 'May it be to me as you have said.' Then the angel left her." Mary identified herself as "the Lord's servant." To Mary, God was her first priority. Mary did not call herself, "Joseph's girl," but "the Lord's servant." Mary put God first. This was a risky decision. Mary knew that Joseph could not understand. Mary could lose Joseph. Mary also knew that her townspeople would not understand. Most likely they would think she was a wayward woman. She would be terribly mistreated, even condemned. Yet, by faith, Mary accepted the word of the angel. She believed God was establishing his kingdom, the perfect kingdom of God, and that his kingdom would never end. Mary's pain and difficulty would last for a season, but her joy and victory in Christ would last forever.

In preparing Christmas 2008, there are many opportunities for each one of us to participate in advancing the Lord's kingdom. However, we must be ready to sacrifice, and ready to obey the Lord. Only then can we be part of the kingdom that never ends through our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's decide to believe and obey the word of God personally during this Christmas season.