

The Divine Announcement

Luke 1:26-38

1. Introduction.

- a. Luke is writing as a formal historian.
- b. The entire birth narrative (chs. 1-2) begins the explicit fulfillment of God's redemptive promise.
 - i. God tends to announce His plans before He brings them to pass.
 1. The angel, Gabriel, announced the coming of John the Baptist to Zacharias in the temple (1:13).
 2. In the same way, Gabriel will announce the coming of Jesus to Mary (1:31-33).
 - ii. This passage realizes what the whole of the Old Testament anticipated.

2. The Divine Messenger (26-29).

- a. There is a great parallel throughout the infancy narrative between the events surrounding John the Baptist, and events surrounding Jesus. The structure is designed to point to the greatness of Jesus. It also shows how Christ has come for the sinner (represented by societal outcasts and the weak).
- b. The temple was the center of the nation's life. It was the place where God met and communed with His people. They were unique among all the nations in the world because they alone were chosen to be God's people.
 - i. As such, the account opens up at the center of national life (1:8-26).
 1. God comes to Zacharias.
 2. God announces that his barren wife, Elizabeth, will bear the forerunner of the Christ.
 - ii. As we enter the birth announcement of Jesus, the center moves away from the temple to the fringe of society.

1. The more important a message or figure is to the Gospel narrative; the more unadorned Luke describes the event or figure.
2. There is a downward trajectory from the temple to the trough.
 - a. The point is to show that God was coming to this world in an unprecedented way. It would no longer be through religion (e.g., the temple), but through Jesus Christ.
 - b. Moreover, God was coming to commune with all people beyond the nation of Israel. This is why Jesus comes to a teenage woman in an unknown town on the fringe of society.
 - i. The temple was no longer the center, but Christ—and He comes to an unlikely figure to represent how the Gospel would expand to the Gentiles (people whom Israel regarded as being outside of God's blessing).
 - ii. This is not teaching a theology of liberation from societal oppressors, but a theology of liberation from sin.
 - iii. The scene begins in the 6th month—a reference to the 6th month of Elizabeth's pregnancy (cf., 1:36).
 - c. Mary and Joseph are qualified in unique terms (27).
 - i. Mary is described in two ways: a virgin and engaged.
 - ii. Joseph is identified as one who belongs to the line of David.
 - iii. The virgin birth.
 1. The function of the miracle is more important than the miracle itself.
 - a. The virgin birth was to function as a sign.
 - b. Isaiah 7:14.
 - iv. The betrothal.

1. Engagements in 1st century Jewish culture were much different than engagements in our culture.
 - a. They were much more than a simple promise, but a legal status.
 - b. Women were often betrothed by age 12 or 13, and married by about age 14.
 - c. During this time, the girl would live in her father's home. It was a time to test her faithfulness and purity.
 2. Betrothals involved more than the families. The surrounding community was involved.
 - a. This was an honor/shame culture. Any impurity would have had massive implications for the family.
 - b. At the announcement, Mary would have been flooded with immediate thoughts concerning what this pregnancy would mean for her and her family.
- d. The Divine Greeting (28).
- i. "Favored one" is the language of grace (Gk. charis).
 1. The Roman Catholic Tradition, picking up on the Latin Vulgate, understands the verse to mean Mary was inherently full of grace.
 - a. The problem with this view, by even Catholic admission, is this is not how the "charis" word group functions in Greek.
 - b. "Charis (lit. grace)" means to be shown undeserved favor/merit.
 2. A proper understanding of this greeting means that Mary is being shown favor, despite who she is or what she's done.
 - ii. How is Mary being shown favor?
 1. She's about to be shown favor in that she would bare the prophesied Christ.

- a. Mary was told, “The Lord is with you.”
 - i. This is an allusion to the original prophesy in Isaiah 7:14.
 - ii. “Immanuel” literally means, God is with you.
 - b. As such, it is through Mary that God would now be with Mary (and among this world) in an unprecedented way. He would be with us in the flesh.
2. This is the way grace comes to any person. It always comes in the form of Jesus Christ.
- e. Mary’s response (29-30).
 - i. Mary is perplexed and responds with wonder.
 - ii. This is a strong contrast to how Zacharias responded, which was only with fear toward the angel.
 - iii. Mary is not so much perplexed at the angel’s presence, but at the angel’s proclamation.
 - 1. This is the ideal response.
 - 2. Aware of who she is, she responds in humility.
 - iv. Gabriel tells her not to be afraid (30).
3. The Divine Announcement (31-33).
- a. The child will be called “Jesus (lit. YHWH saves).”
 - i. Salvation would no longer be through the temple or sacrifice.
 - ii. Salvation would be exclusively through Jesus Christ.
 - b. He shall be “great.”
 - i. This is an unqualified term.

- ii. Throughout the Old Testament God is called “great.” It is a term in reference to deity.
 - 1. The term functions to identify what Jesus is, rather than what Jesus would do. It identifies his divinity—that He is God.
 - 2. It speaks to the fact the Messiah would be God Himself, possessing the fullness of deity.
 - c. He shall be called “Son of the Most High.”
 - i. This is another reference to deity.
 - ii. It also speaks to God’s creative power, and that He rules over all things.
 - d. He will be given the throne of His Father David.
 - i. This child shall be the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2Sam. 7:12-15).
 - ii. He will reign over Israel forever (“the house of David”), but also the whole world (“His kingdom shall have no end”).
 - e. This announcement depicts God as utterly faithful to His promises.
4. The Divine Answer (34-37).
- a. Mary questions how this can be since she is a virgin.
 - i. This is in contrast to Zacharias, who demanded a sign as a result of his unbelief.
 - ii. Mary doesn’t lack faith, but knowledge. Her question is not whether this will happen, but in what way this will happen.
 - b. Her question reveals she understands this pregnancy will be immediate. In other words, she’s not thinking it will happen once she marries Joseph and becomes pregnant by him.
 - c. The angel’s response is simple, non-scientific, and reveals the heart of what God is—that He is One who stands outside creation. As a result, nothing is impossible with Him (37).

5. The Divine Response—Faith (38).

- a. This is the main point of Luke. He wants to portray the right response to the divine announcement of Jesus Christ—faith.
- b. Mary is an immense model of faith.

6. Conclusion.

- a. At a cosmic level, this passage shows us the faithfulness of God to His promises.
- b. At a personal level, this passage shows us how a person ought to respond the faithfulness of God in Jesus Christ.
 - i. Luke begins his account with two announcements and two responses.
 1. The first (Zacharias) is a model of how we ought not to respond to the Gospel.
 2. The second (Mary) is a model of how we must respond to the Gospel.
 - ii. The key theme of Luke is faith (i.e., belief and trust). Faith is how we must respond to the divine announcement that Jesus Christ has come to rescue us. He has come and it is pure grace.