

*11Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12Zechariah was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. 13But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. Luke 1:11-12*

*26Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, 27to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29But she was very perplexed at this statement, and was pondering what kind of greeting this was. 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 give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Luke 1:26-33*

In the first chapter of Luke we have two angels (ἄγγελος), messengers, ones who are sent, that visit two people, one a priest in the temple and the other a young maiden, who was not yet married. Zechariah the priest and his wife were told they were to have a son and his mission would be to *turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God and be a forerunner before Him (Jesus, the Messiah) in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF FATHERS BACK TO THEIR CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*" (Luke 1:17) John was to *prepare the way Lord. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Is 40:3*

And then there was Mary, the young virgin, who was to be the mother of the long expected one. This birth was also prophesied, *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Is 7:14* In both of these cases God is displaying that He is interrupting the affairs of man, this is special, the child's name is to be, *Immanuel*, God with us. John wrote, *the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father (the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. John 1:14* Jesus was "wholly other" since He was fully God and fully man.

*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 give birth to a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; for that reason also the holy Child will be called the Son of God.*

*34 But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"* One version of this passage puts it *"How will this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?"* This was a very honest question from Mary but this is an angel talking with her and telling her *not to be afraid*. Zechariah has to accept an angel claiming his wife was to have a baby past her child bearing age, but Mary has to deal with the violation of her reputation and even the loss of her upcoming marriage. We learn in Matthew 1:19 of the righteousness of Joseph in not wanting to shame Mary for what seemed to him to be an indiscretion, her lack of good judg-

ment or care in behavior. Matthew wrote, *And her husband Joseph, since he was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.* After Mary receives what must have been earth shattering news, she tells the angel, *be done to me according to your word.* Luke 1:38

There are two prophetic prayers or song given in this first chapter Luke. One is by Mary and the other Zechariah. This is very fitting since these are the major events of history, God working to redeem sinful flesh. Mary's prayer is called The Magnificat (*Latin for "[My soul] magnifies [the Lord]"*.)

*My soul exalts the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant; For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name. And His mercy is to generation after generation, toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things, And sent the rich away empty-handed. He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, Just as He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.* Luke 1:46-55

Mary praises the Lord, *My soul exalts the Lord.* She understands just how important what is God is going to do through her, *from now on all generations will call me blessed, Mighty One has done great things for me.* She declares prophetically the work God is planning to do through the fruit of her womb, *God's mercy will be from generation to generation, He has given help to His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy.* This wasn't just happening in her day but God had begun this work when He began working with to build a nation. Mary declares *God spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever.*

This calling a people and God intervening in the affairs of man began with Abraham. Isaiah declared, *Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was only one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.* Isaiah 51:2 We see how similar the beginning of this work was with Abraham to what God was doing with the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus. Like Elizabeth and Zechariah, Sarah and Abraham were both beyond the years childbearing when the Lord promised more descendants than the stars.

*Your reward shall be very great."* 2But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 Abram also said, "Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir." 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." 5 And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." 6 Then he believed in the LORD; and He credited it to him as righteousness. Gen 15:1-6

Sarah laughed when she heard the news, knowing this was not physically possible for her. Mary didn't laugh but she understood the impossibility for her to have a child. The Lord said, *"I will certainly return to you at this time next year; and behold, your wife Sarah will have a son."* And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. 11Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, *"After I have become old, am I to have pleasure, my lord being old also?"* Gen 18:10-12 When God was beginning the work of calling out a people and He did that miraculously. It was a sign that what was happening was of God

and He had a plan. God purposed to reveal this to Abraham.

*17The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, 18since Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? 19For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." Gen 18:17-19*

Abraham was to be the father of a called out people. God had chosen him, *so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice.* God intervened in the affairs of man to call out a people. After God brought Israel out of Egypt He told them *For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His prized possession out of all peoples on the face of the earth. Deut 7:6* But they were chosen because of their greatness or virtue but because they were descents of the promise God had made to Abraham.

*7The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8But it was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Deut 7:7-9*

As believers we need to see that we are part of God's promise, *the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery.* Peter picks up on this promise, *you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy 1 Peter 2:9,10* God began building a people with Abraham, by giving him a miracle son and then having him be willing to sacrifice that son. This was be a picture of God's giving His only Son to *redeem for His people.* And not just the Jews, also the Gentiles, *Simon has told us how God first visited the Gentiles to take from them a people to be His own. Acts 15:14* Zechariah's talks of the plan of God, with two miraculous births to begin the fulfillment of God's redemption plan. Paul wrote, *the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Col 1:26,27* Zechariah proclaimed,

*"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David—Just as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times—Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; To show mercy to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, would serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. "And you, child, also will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; To give His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, To shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*