

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE

(Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Special Delivery

Getting Christmas presents to loved ones on time takes extra planning and extra money. Making sure that a gift isn't received too late probably entails an investment beyond the present itself. And if the destination is in a remote or dangerous or undeveloped location it will take even more planning and cash to insure the package's safe arrival. *Special Delivery* may be the only way to get it done when something must arrive absolutely, certainly on time. God's Gift of Jesus had to be delivered at just the right time, at just the right place, to just the right person for that first Christmas (*Galatians 4:4*). The triune God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) had selected the Gift of a physical body in which He would come offering salvation to the world (*Hebrews 10:5-10*). His list of recipients was also determined in eternity past (*Romans 9:23-26 & Ephesians 1:3-6*). This advance planning and personal investment by God was essential due to the long distance from heaven to earth, the hostile environment, and the primitive spiritual darkness into which the Gift had to be delivered (*John 1:9-13*). God's special delivery also included employment of a special angel (Gabriel) to recruit a special 'mail woman' (Mary) to wrap and keep the Gift secret until Christmas.

God certainly went to extreme measures in getting His Gift of Jesus to us right on time almost 20 centuries ago! And He still goes to extreme measures to 'call' us to come and get our free Gift from heaven – Jesus. He moves us around in life, brings people who already have come to Jesus as Savior into our path, makes things happen to show us our need of Christ and keeps reminding of us to receive His Gift before we leave this life for the next. All you can say is, 'Wow! God must really love me to go to all that effort to give me the Gift of eternal life!' If you haven't gone to the Lord in prayer to personally pick up your *Special Delivery Savior*, what are you waiting for? The Gift is here in the Person of Jesus. The postage is paid in full at the cross where He died to cover the full debt of your sin. The Gift was once wrapped up in the physical body of Mary, but now He wants to come live in your heart. The Gift has your name ('Whosoever' / *John 3:16, Romans 10:13*) on it, but you must pick 'It' up by reaching out in a prayer of faith asking for it right now (*John 6:37, 1 John 5:11-13*). If you don't receive Him by faith (*John 1:12*), the Gift of salvation in Him remains undeliverable – what a shame! Whenever you change your mind about turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, tell Him in prayer that you want the Gift of Him and He will deliver His presence into your heart and life (*Romans 6:23*). The only gift God wants from you this year is 'you'! And if you already gave Him yourself, He wants more of you until He has all of you because He loves you so very, very much!

A Very 'Mary' Christmas!

(The Immaculate Conception of Jesus Christ)

Luke 1:26-38 (Part 1)

Gabriel's Immaculate Communication

(You've Been Chosen! – Rejoice!)

*"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to *a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, **"Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" 1:26-28*

**(prophecies of the virgin birth = Isaiah 7:14 & Jeremiah 31:22) (parallel gospel passage = Matthew 1:22-23)*

** The original Greek language of the New Testament affirms that the *highly favored one* indicates that Mary is the one who has been favored (or graced). She is the recipient of God's grace, not the dispenser of God's grace or favor as heretically taught by Roman Catholic doctrine. Grace can only be conferred by God through Christ to man (*John 1:14-17, Romans 1:5, etc.*). No one ever came to Mary for grace, nor did she ever offer it to anyone; she, like all other believers, simply received it for herself by faith in the Savior. It is from this misunderstanding of the original language which has erroneously led to the worship of Mary as reflected in the hymn 'Ave Maria' which sadly advocates prayer and worship and intercession through her.

Application: It is an awesome honor to be chosen by God to be used by Him for His glory! When He reveals His will for us it may complicate our prearranged plans but in the end the privilege of being used of God will bring us more joy, blessing and fulfillment than anything we can imagine.

A Meditation for MONDAY: God knows your address, your status, your name and your plans – He may be calling upon you unexpectedly to do something very special in His Name...I hope you'll hear Him when He calls. Oh, it probably won't be an angel; more than likely it will be by the Holy Spirit as you study your Bible, pray to God, hear a sermon, etc.

A Meditation for TUESDAY: Sometimes God's plans change our plans. If He does it's only because what He desires is more important at the moment. Sometimes what He wants to do in another Christian's life affects us (like Joseph) and we just don't understand for a while. In the end everyone will understand and be blessed if we truly seek to obey Him and put His plan before ours.

God's Immaculate Consolation

(God consoles you when He controls you – Relax!)

*“But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, **you will conceive** in your womb and **bring forth a Son**, and shall call His Name **Jesus**. He will be great, and will be called the **Son of the Highest**; the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And **He will reign** over the house of Jacob forever and of **His kingdom** there will be no end.”* **1:29-33**

Mary's ministry was to be the channel for God's entry into the human race. From her, God the Son acquired her human nature without acquiring her sin nature (since there was no human father, the sin nature of Adam was not conveyed to Jesus). Since Jesus was/is 'Son of the Highest' the divine nature of the heavenly Father was imparted by the Spirit to Him at conception. The incarnation (putting on of a physical body) was the holy plan of God to give us a Savior Who is both fully man and fully God in one divine Person, Jesus Christ.

God's awesome plan explained by Gabriel reveals the Lord Jesus' eternal purpose: 1) He will be the one and only way of salvation/ 'Jesus' means 'Jehovah saves' which was the purpose of His first coming; and 2) He will (future) literally rule over the earth during the kingdom age to come and forever which is the purpose of His second coming.

A Meditation For WEDNESDAY: Your assignment from God is much like Mary's – bring forth the Son of God and announce to all that He is Jesus, the only way of salvation for man. Failure to give birth when the time is right can be very painful; so is not presenting the gospel of Christ to someone needing to hear about the One Who lives in you. Go ahead and deliver the message of Jesus to someone today. You may experience the relief and joy that comes with seeing the miracle of new birth in a new, born again believer.

A Meditation For THURSDAY: Notice the above words about Jesus: 'Great', 'Highest', throne, reign, kingdom – He is very royal, isn't He? Are these words descriptive of the way you are letting Him rule in your heart and life? He is willing to bring order, purpose and fulfillment to your life if you surrender 'the throne' of your own heart and let Him be what He was born to be – King! If you've usurped the throne from Him, give it back and let those words become your praise once again. Romans 12:1-2

Mary's Immaculate Conception

(God will fill you, to do His will through you - Receive!)

*“Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “**The Holy Spirit will come upon you**, and the power of the Highest will **over-shadow you**; therefore, also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For **with God nothing will be impossible**.” Then Mary said, “Behold **the maid servant of the Lord!** Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”* **1:34-38**

Unlike Zacharias, Mary does believe the miracle God will do in her and through her. Her question is one of awesome wonder, not doubt. She seems amazed that God will do this without a human father being involved. What Gabriel explains to Mary is always God's way of performing His will in our lives; His Spirit comes upon us; His will is implanted in our heart and His Son is glorified through our obedience. Our part is to just say 'Yes! Thy will be done, Lord. I believe Your Word and am honored to be your servant.' When we simply submit, nothing is impossible with God.

A Meditation For Friday: Do you want to be greatly blessed by God this weekend? A tip from the above passage is 'if you want to be blessed, settle for nothing less than His best'. You have a lot of choices about where you go and what you do and who you do it with – to be blessed, pray for God's Spirit to fill you, empower you and guide you into the center of His perfect will. If you start out the weekend like that some wonderful (formerly impossible things) suddenly become very possible. Matthew 6:33

A Meditation For Saturday: Do you consider yourself and your situation 'a sign' from God? Don't underestimate the value of what God is doing in your life, Gabriel used Elizabeth's pregnancy to stimulate the faith of Mary to trust God more! Ask Him to help you handle what He has caused or allowed in your life in an admirable way so He can direct people to you for strength and encouragement. And when they begin to cross your path today, don't be surprised that God chose you to be a blessing to them. 1 Peter 3:15-17 Invite someone to attend church tomorrow and pray for the services, okay?