



Mary: Taking the trust test

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 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, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

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. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

Pivotal moment in the world's history

Mary will be pregnant - a fulfilment of Isaiah 7:14

He will be great - a fulfilment of Isaiah 9:6 - "For to us a child is born...and he will be called...mighty God..."

- He will be called the Son of the Most High

- He will be given the throne of his father David - fulfilment of prophecy of 2 Samuel 7

In many circles Mary is venerated to the point of being deified. There is clearly no biblical justification for this. However the danger is that we then swing to the other extreme and we dismiss all that Mary's life and obedience can teach us. She seems to have a level of trust in God that is so rock-like that it stands as a provocation to us.

Background

Nazareth - Galilee. Small rural community- probably 50-100

Only one fresh water source-

John 1:46 "Nathanael said to him 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'"

Mary

1. Mary trusts God for the present.

Mary's meeting with the angel comes directly after Zechariah's similar encounter.

Zechariah	Mary
Angelic appearance- Gabriel	Angelic appearance- Gabriel
"Troubled " fear fell upon him vs 12	"Greatly troubled" "do not be afraid" vs30
Promise of miraculous birth	Promise of miraculous birth
"How shall I know this?"	"How will this be....?"
Questioning spirit.	Asks questions

We can't be sure but it seems that the difference between Mary and Zechariah wasn't in what they said but what was in their heart.

Asking questions vs a questioning spirit: Like me not like me

"Zechariah refused point blank to believe the angel. His question is identical with that asked by Abraham centuries before, but it is asked in a different spirit. It amounts to a demand for a sign." Leon Morris

Anselm one of the early church fathers described Christianity as "faith seeking understanding"

Mary's default position is: Trust God. Like me not like me

Even after Mary has asked her question do you think she understands everything? On receiving the news she asks, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel replies,

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you;”

Sometimes trusting God means relinquishing your right to understand. Otherwise its like saying “God you can do whatever you like- so long as you clear it with me first.

Mary relinquishes her right to understand. Like me not like me

Mary gets security from knowing the father not the all the facts.

Like me not like me

Security in life doesn't come from having all the facts - security comes from knowing the one you travel through life with.

Mary's position is “when in doubt - believe God.” The opposite is “I'll believe it when it happens.”

What's your default position?

Mary - teenage girl and Zechariah - older man.

Danger is the older we get the more sceptical we become. Sometimes it's the youth who'll be faster to respond to God.

We have to be so careful that we're older and wiser not older and more cautious. Danger of thinking, “I know how God works - he works in this kind of way.”

Mary had faith for the supernatural (unlike Zechariah).

Like me not like me

But the good news is we don't have to become increasingly sceptical. We're also being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

2. Mary trusts God with her future.

Mary lets God write the script for her life. Like me not like me

Mary is betrothed to Joseph. This was a legally binding arrangement - required a divorce to break it. Between the betrothal and the wedding feast was a period usually lasting six months to a year.

This was probably the most exciting time in her short life.

The angel asks an unknown teenage girl to take part in something that is so shocking that it's almost unbelievable.

Gone are the happy dreams of a beautiful wedding.

Mary willingly lays down her reputation, what others think of her.

Like me not like me

Mary is willing to be misunderstood by others.

Like me not like me

Most of us have a life-plan mapped out - how we want our lives to look. And then we ask God to bless our life-plan.

The responsibility resting on this young girl's shoulders is hard to imagine.

Who writes the script for your life?

Mary allows God to re-write the script for her life.

Like me not like me

The question is not whether God broke into the universe as a king. He did. The question is: What kind of king is he? What difference would his kingship make for you?
John Piper

4 words in this text to answer that question, and they all imply that your joy will be best served by submitting to this kingship.

i) Holy: Luke 1:35, "the child to be born will be called holy."

ii) Son of God: Luke 1:35, "the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." And Luke 1:32b, "He will be . . . called the Son of the Most High."

iii) Jesus. Luke 1:31, you shall call his name Jesus." Jesus transliterates the Greek Iēsous which corresponds to the Hebrew name Joshua and means saviour. Therefore, the king of the universe is given the name saviour. Not saviour of the righteous. But saviour of sinners.

C.S. Lewis has said with penetrating insight, "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God"

iv) Forever. Luke 1:33, "He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

For further study:

Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright (available on the bookstall)

John Piper: www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/23/1764