

Who is This Person the Angel Predicts?

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[0 : 00] Appreciate once again the invite.

We enjoy coming up. It's kind of odd to say that. It's always in a not so good circumstance for the stories. But, well, it's a blessing to be here.

In any case, this morning we are looking at this person that was predicted, this person, the angel predicts. From Luke chapter 1, verses 26 through 38.

And I'm going to start it off, but then we're going to work through it. It's a little different than the way I normally approach a message. But I'd like to call out of this, you know, pull as much of what is said so that we can be fully immersed in what happened back then.

This still impacts us today. So I'll start with verse 26 of chapter 1 in Luke. Luke. Luke. Luke. Luke. Luke.

[1 : 21] Luke. Luke. Luke. 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.

And 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.

But when she saw him, she was troubled. That is saying, and considered what matter of greeting this was. 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. And 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. Our Lord God, may by your spirit grant us understanding and full knowledge of this passage.

[2 : 34] Not that we might merely know about the history of what happened. But that it would strike our very hearts as to who Jesus was predicted to be and who Jesus is.

And thank you for this event. Thank you that we have been celebrating it for hundreds of years. And thank you that we have occasion again this season to be able to do that.

Amen. Amen. Well, it wasn't a city. Nazareth. It's a little tiny village, actually. And I don't think Luke got it wrong.

He just used the word that he used. And sometimes it's translated city. But little Nazareth. Nazareth. It was a very small, very poor village of about 400 or 500 people.

So even this town is bigger than that, right? Nazareth was itsy-bitty. Rome occupied the land. Herod was the king.

[3 : 43] And he wasn't fully Jewish. But he was the king. And Herod's son, Herod Antipas, basically urbanized Galilee.

He wanted to make it a big city, you know, primarily to bolster his reputation and to be in favor with Rome. And so he brought in quite a few merchants and quite a few people who were builders and craftsmen to build all these different places.

Galilee was on the shoreline of the lake. And he built Greek and Roman-style buildings in the towns of Sephiroth and Tiberias.

And so he employed quite a few people. And there were those who were local who lived there and those who were from out of town. Those who were Jewish, of course. But quite a few people from different places around the country who were Greek or Roman or, you know, whatever their background might have been.

It was somewhat of a thriving area. But still, Nazareth was a little village, a small village. There were farmers and journeymen and fishermen in that area.

[4 : 54] They owned so little that they didn't have the time to do much else than to own very little. It was simple.

It was crude. It was rough. And they were considered backwoods people because their dialect was odd to most of the rest of Israel. Their Hebrew and Aramaic language sounded odd, much like the deep woods folk from Kentucky.

You know, they were hillbillies. And anybody from that town would have been scoffed at and laughed at because they were so backwards. You know, could anything possible come out of a place like Nazareth?

That was the running joke. Even though they were aware of the prophecy, many were aware of the prophecy, that Nazareth would have a key place in the history of redemption.

It was a peasant village. It was barely even known in the day around the area. The houses were made of field stones stacked and packed with mud and clay or manure mixed with straw.

[6 : 06] Some of the homes in the different places, you know, were hewn. They were dug out of the rock. And so they were like little caves in hills and in the sides of the area.

Thatched roofs were put on wooden beams. Most of the houses had underground bell-shaped cisterns to store the water and put the grain.

So they had, you know, holes dug out. Very, very simple. Very basic. They had several communal kilns or ovens in which they made their pottery.

They had a few wine presses. And it was all shared, shared alike. Nobody had a microwave or even an oven or a stove or anything. They had to go out and make things together.

You know, it definitely took a village to do what they did. They worked long and hard. They had groves of olives and figs and pomegranates. They grew a type of wheat and barley and millet.

[7 : 12] And their main diet was olives and bread and olive oil and wine. So, you know, you'd have olive cereal for breakfast. And you would have bread for lunch.

And you would have olive and bread with wine for supper. Real exciting. Nothing that they could order from, you know, the local restaurant or Wendy's or anything like that.

They would be shocked if they were transported here and now to our time and place. Because, you know, we live like kings. You know, the things that we do and take for granted far exceeds the kings' diets and lifestyle that they had back then.

Their main diet also sometimes would consist of lentil soup or bean soup. Sometimes vegetables when they were in season.

They ate pita bread. And if they could get a hold of nuts or fruit or cheese and yogurt, that was extra. Meat was rare. They hardly ever had meat.

[8 : 17] And they did eat salted fish whenever they could get salted fish. So, it was, it wasn't exciting. You know, we always picture this wonderful romantic place.

You know, we always think of the Nazareth and the place, a little town of Bethlehem. And all those places, you know, we picture it as awesome. And it really wasn't. In fact, the people that the archaeologists and others have dug up and discovered in that area were found to have severe cases of arthritis.

So, nearly everybody that was buried was shown to have arthritis of some sort. It wasn't just a mild case. It was really, really bad, crippling arthritis. And a bad cold or flu or an abscessed tooth could kill you.

It was, you know, it was so rough. The average lifespan was around 30. So, if you got to 30, you kind of made it, you have arrived. If you made it to 50 or 60, that was a miracle.

And it was rare to see that. Life was local. Travel didn't happen much. They stayed in their locality. And if they did have to go someplace to a bigger village or to a festival or someplace else or even to Jerusalem, they would go as practically as the whole village.

[9 : 45] And they would hire guards to protect them because it was a dangerous route to go on foot. They didn't have cars, obviously, or wagons. You know, they had donkeys, not horses.

So, it was very rough. Talk about camping. You know, it was a camping life. Miriam was her name. We call her Mary. And she was around 13 or 14 years old, which was a common age for a girl to get married.

Usually when puberty struck, that's when she was ready. And they had already pre-planned it. And the parents had arranged it. And Mary was going to be married to Joseph.

The average age for a man was around 20, 25. And so, there was this disparity of about 10 years between the boy and the man and the woman.

He was a journeyman, which meant in that time he was kind of an all-purpose craftsman. He was a handyman who was hired. He could be a roofer, a stonemason, a rough carpenter.

[10 : 52] And maybe he even made furniture. Usually, the sons followed in the footsteps of the father. So, when Jesus was referred to as a carpenter, that's the kind of thing he did.

It didn't mean that he built only furniture. He probably built houses or other things that were of need or had gone in and carved away the rock, the limestone, where people would move into it and live.

He would do all kinds of things as a so-called carpenter. And yet, in this rough, tiny little village, we find the entrance of God's kingdom.

He didn't pick Jerusalem. He didn't pick Rome. He didn't pick, you know, the best of the best. He picked the poorest and the lowest of the lowest. Because in his mind, it doesn't matter.

Even though in ours, it does. Out of this comes a king and the savior of the world. Really? So, when Jesus comes and he's declaring the kingdom of God has arrived, you say, where is this guy from?

[12 : 01] Nazareth? Are you serious? What good could ever come out of Nazareth? He probably had a hillbilly accent. And so, in Luke 1, 26, it was the sixth month.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a village, a town of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin and a betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David.

And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and he said, greetings, O favored one. The Lord is with you. But she was greatly troubled.

She was troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Most of us know that story quite well. How did the angel appear? We don't know. Did he walk up to her? Did he find her at the kiln?

[13 : 02] Was she busy out in the field? Was she doing the laundry? We don't know. Those circumstances are irrelevant. The fact that an angel came from God, came from above and appeared on her and sought her out, is what is important and rather unique.

This angel Gabriel, by the way, was the same messenger that went to Daniel. That's how important Mary was. And notice, he doesn't go to Joseph first.

He goes to Mary, just as God said. And he's a special visitor. And he gives Mary the greatest reason for not being afraid. God's grace was with her.

And you have been chosen. Which is how grace works. And we don't choose God. God chooses us. Not only in our lives and not only in salvation, but also in the things to which he calls us.

And it's by grace. It's not earning it. Grace is always found. It's never earned. So Mary found this favor.

[14 : 09] In fact, we understand, God, that she found favor even before she was born. Sometime in eternity past. That's how God is going to play it out.

This was his book that he's writing. And now it's coming to fruition. Mary found favor long ago. And that's a part of the good news message.

Is that it is God who finds and gives to us grace and favor. You know, it's so contrary to the message that we hear today.

And, you know, Santa better be good. Better watch out. Yeah. God finds and gives to us favor because of his grace.

Not because we're good and not because some elf on the shelf is tattled on us or not tattled. By the way, we don't do the elf on the shelf.

[15 : 07] But we do have a little Christmas tree for our guy. It's his tree. He decorates it. It has been moved all over the house with lights on and lights off. It's been taken in half and put in different places.

You know, he even put a stuffed cat in a tree. And I'm figuring, okay, cats and Christmas trees do go together. But how did he know this? It's like, what?

So we've had fun with that. But grace and election is always to something. God doesn't choose us and call us and give us grace for nothing.

It's always to something. It's to salvation. It's to do good works. Ephesians 2, 8, 9, and 10. You know, it's always for something. And here we find something.

He gives grace to her because she is going to give birth to the Savior. Now, at first, she's kind of stunned. One thing you don't do is a woman doesn't talk to a man without the father around.

[16 : 13] Or, you know, that was the culture of the day. Women talk to women. Men rarely talk to women unless it was arranged. And here, this strange man, no indication that it was an angel at that moment.

Strange man comes to her and gives her this announcement. It's like, what? It's like, what's his name? McMahon coming to your door. You know, you have won the million dollar prize.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you're going to call his name Jesus. Well, that's really no big deal except, you know, because Jesus was a very popular name.

There were quite a few Jesus in that day. We call him Jesus in Jewish or Aramaic. It was Yahshua. Joshua.

Yahshua. Savior. God saves. He's supposed to be named after his father, Joseph.

[17 : 21] But he's named by God himself, the father in heaven. He died once, sins once for all the righteous, for the righteous in order to bring us to God, 1 Peter 3 says.

And the angel goes on, and he will be great, and he will be called the son of the most high. And the Lord God will give him, give to him the throne of his father David.

That's rather remarkable. Because everybody in Israel knew that David's throne would come back, and someone would rule again, all of Israel, and bring the glory back, the glorious days of David and Solomon.

Little did they understand the totality of it. And he shall be called the son of the most high. Most high is a title that refers to God in his supreme majesty.

People understood that he is the child, the son of God, the majestic God, the king of kings. So not only is he going to be on the throne of David that's going to come again, but he is the son from God himself.

[18 : 38] Yeah, Mary's perplexed. So why are you coming to me? I don't think she had much to, she had no time to ponder it in the moment.

She had to wait and think about it. In fact, later on it says that Mary pondered these things in her heart all her life. In the throne of David, you know, Isaiah 22 says, And I will clothe him with your robe and bind your sash on him and commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David, and he shall open, and none shall shut it. And he shall shut, and none shall open it. That's who the promised one was going to be.

Jeremiah 30 verse 9 says, But they shall serve the Lord our God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. See, it was a promise.

And this, in fact, this promise given by Gabriel, the angel, is the last prophecy that we find in the Bible. Except for the book of Revelation to the end time.

[19 : 55] It's the last of the Old Testament prophecies. And he says, And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

And that was Israel's hope. Wow. We'll get some Messiah to come, and they will get rid of this Rome, and we will take over, and we will be rulers of the world, and God will bring peace, universal, and everything's going to be great.

Now, mind you, here she is, yet a girl, and she's still a kid, as we think of kids, 13, 14.

She's a tween. And yet she's, Gabriel's downloading all this information to her. And yet, here we have Israel's hope through her.

2 Samuel 7 is another prophecy that God gave us. For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring. And I will make his kingdom strong, and he is the one who will build the house, a temple for my name.

[21 : 10] And I will secure his royal throne forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. If he sins, I will correct and discipline him with the rod, like the father would do. But my favor will not be taken from him, as I took from Saul, whom I removed from your sight.

Your house and your kingdom will continue before me for all time, and your throne will be secure forever. Now, obviously, he's talking about the immediate Solomon, because he's telling this promise to David.

But there's a sense in which this is going to be fulfilled in a greater way in the future, and certainly it is, with the father's son, Jesus. God is going to give his own divine son the promise of the throne of David to rule God's kingdom.

And when it says the house of Jacob, it means all those who are of true faith, those who are spiritually descended. God's kingdom, he's going to bring God's kingdom.

Yes. God's kingdom, he's going to bring God's kingdom. Not only do we find in the rest of the New Testament that Jesus is the king of the kingdom, but he is embodied in him, and who he is, he is the kingdom.

[22 : 23] But he brings the kingdom, and it starts when he arrives. This little baby is going to be born, and he is born a king who brings with him the kingdom.

And all the earthly things are just shadows of it, heavenly, you know, the corruptible doesn't do the incorruptible justice. You know, we can't even begin to imagine.

The opulence and the beauty and the splendor of Rome or Greece doesn't even begin to compare, in God's eyes, to what the kingdom of this king is going to be like.

That's why it didn't matter, whether it was a village of 400 people, you know, a backwoods, hillbilly, little, tiny village, or if it was the big city of Rome.

It didn't matter in the eyes of God, because neither one could compare with the beauty and the splendor of the king that he was sending, his own son, and the kingdom that came with him.

[23 : 26] Now, what kind of king here is found in Nazareth? Just, Jesus will tell us what kind of kingdom. You know, in his sermons on the mount, Matthew says the kingdom is about power and healing and life.

The book of John says it's about power and abundant life. Romans tells us the kingdom is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The sermon on the mount, Jesus says, in the kingdom we have comfort for mourning.

We inherit all the earth. You know, you're concerned about losing your property, not to worry.

At some point in the new heavens and earth, you get all the earth. The whole planet's going to be yours. We see God through Jesus. We find mercy. We live as God's children.

But we also have fruitful labor where the comfort, give comfort and mercy. Those who receive mercy, give mercy. We reflect his light. We rescue others.

[24 : 38] You know, that God's people receiving all the blessings of God's promise and presence is portrayed in the Lord's Supper. It's the table of the king's feast.

We partake of it. We take it in. And that's the hope that he brings. You know, all the world and all the people are ultimately in subjection to him as king.

You know, and that's something we have to bank on. Even now, today, is with the election. No matter who comes and becomes the president and who is in Congress, ultimately, Jesus is still the king of kings.

And while I might not like what's going on, and while you might not like what's going on, God has this.

He's got this. And Jesus never leaves his throne. So Mary said to the angels, How's this going to happen? You know, I'm a virgin.

[25 : 43] I'm a maiden. That's the literal term. Meaning she is not yet with child. She's never been pregnant before. She's not even been married. She's betrothed.

And back then, when you were betrothed like that, it takes a letter of divorce to unbetrothed. So you have part one is the betrothal, and part two is the marriage.

And then you have the consummation and the honeymoon and all that. So it was pretty important. She had not yet been with Joseph. She says, I've not known a man, you know.

And yet here, Isaiah 7, 14 predicted it. Therefore, the Lord himself will give you this sign. And a sign is a pointer, and a pointer to what God is doing. And this is one of the signs.

Behold, a virgin will conceive and bear a son, and his name will be God with us. All the promises that God had ever made, I will never leave you nor forsake you, is going to be resident in this person of Jesus, God with us.

[26 : 50] So the angel answered it. The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born shall be called holy, special, separate, set apart, the Son of God.

You see, it wasn't a miraculous birth. The birth was rather normal. It was a miraculous conception. She conceived in a miraculous way. The Jews later on, as Jesus grew up, you know, that was the story that Mary had told.

That was the story the angel told Joseph. And so when they got married, and, you know, as Jesus grew up, everybody suspected that Mary played hanky-panky with somebody.

And in fact, what the Jews did, because they had so much contempt for the Romans and the Greeks, they said, Jesus, that Mary and some Greek guy got together, and, you know, some blonde Greek guy.

In fact, that's what Josephus writes about Jesus, that he had blonde hair. And he wrote that because that was the rumor, that he was the child of a Greek man.

[28 : 08] They had to discredit what had been told to Mary. It was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. And in Jesus, we find Yeshua.

God saves. God is with us. And then he announces, and behold, your relative Elizabeth, cousin Elizabeth, in her old age.

Old age, was anybody 50 and older? You know, so some of us are ancient. Elizabeth, who's probably, maybe she was 40-ish, old age, 50, 60, also conceived a son.

And this is the sixth month with her. She who had been barren. No kids. All her life, and all of a sudden, she's going to give birth to the greatest and the last of the prophets, John the Baptizer.

Now that's a big sign. That's a big deal. And Mary didn't know that because she didn't go on Zoom and, you know, talk with her cousin. Elizabeth lived quite a distance, so she had no knowledge of this except that the angel told her.

[29 : 26] So when Mary got on, you know, got in the taxi and drove over to see her cousin Elizabeth, she found out it was true. This was a reassuring proof in the visible display to assure Mary that God's word is true always and forever.

And his work is always sure and his promises will always come through. It's like the Lord's Supper, you know.

We say it is a sign and a seal as Romans 4 reminds us because it's a pointer, isn't it? It points us to Jesus himself. The bread points us to the life that Jesus gives us.

And the drink points us to the fact that he is the fruit of the vine. He is the one who was crushed for us to give us the blessing of life. God's word is true in the Lord's Supper.

The work of the Lord is sure in the Lord's Supper and the promises that we have that he will come back displayed for us in the Lord's Supper will come true.

[30 : 39] And then he tells her nothing is impossible with God. And Mary said, behold, I'm a servant. I'll do whatever God says.

God says, let it be to me according to your word. And the angel left. Nothing has been done, nothing is, and nothing will be impossible with God.

Ever. Mary's heartfelt, whole-souled confession and commitment is right here. Look, listen, I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be as God wants.

That exhibits faith. God gives the grace. Our response is faith. And we receive and we say, God, let it be as you desire.

I am here and I shall be your servant. That's what a true confession really is. I am the servant of the Lord.

[31 : 45] And that's what a commitment really is. Let it be to me according to your word. It's a fascinating, remarkable, wonderful, miraculous story that is given to us.

And this is the meaning of Christmas. Christmas is about Joshua, Jesus, God saves.

Thank you, Father, that we are reminded what Christmas is. Thank you for this miraculous event that happened to Mary and has been written down for forever.

This is the truth that millions and millions of people have known, billions of people have read and known over the centuries and we continue to celebrate today. And thank you, Father, that you don't do things our way.

But your plan is remarkable and your miracles are amazing. And thank you for the sign. And Lord, even as we participate in the Lord's Supper, may we understand the meaning of the sign and what it portrays and what it paints and what it pictures.

[32 : 59] Jesus, the Savior, has come. You are the God who is with us even as we take the bread and the drink.

Thank you, Father, for your word. Amen. Amen.