

## Come Quickly, Lord Jesus: Advent 2020

*Week 4 Text: Luke 1:26-38*

### Background

#### *Bible Translations*

*KJV*: While there were other versions of the Bible in English before the King James Authorized Version, this was the most enduring of the Reformation era. It owes much of its language to the work of William Tyndale. While there have been many advances in Biblical scholarship and the study of translation in 400 years, the language of the KJV is still familiar and powerful to many.

*David Bentley Hart*: This is one of the very newest English translations (2017). David Bentley Hart is a theologian and writer, and he describes his translation as “pitilessly literal”. It makes no attempts to capture colloquial English, which has the effect of reminding the reader with every line that they are reading a translation.

#### *Saying “yes” to God*

Angels always seems to start their speeches in the Bible with “Fear not”, and I have to wonder if maybe they should work on being less initially terrifying. “Greetings, favored one!” says the messenger of God as he appears inside your house. I don’t know, Gabriel, maybe try knocking on the door first? But Mary, the soon to be mother of Jesus, seems to take it all in stride. Such trust in God!

This week’s passage, often called the Annunciation, is one of the most memorable and powerful in the entire powerful story of Jesus’ life. In this story, Mary, who was probably quite young because she was unmarried, is visited by the angel Gabriel. He tells her that she is favored by God and is going to give birth to the son of God. Though obviously confused and afraid, Mary says “let it be done”, giving her willful consent to the most earth-changing miracle imaginable: God incarnate in a human infant.

As we are coming to the completion of the season of Advent, let us consider the devotion, the courage, and the trust that Mary shows us with her unequivocal “yes” to God. We don’t know what would have happened had Mary been too afraid or unsure to accept God’s plan. But we do know that by accepting God’s plan, Jesus was born and God brought salvation to the entire world through the Incarnation.

#### *Some historical context*

*One important date*: 165 BC/E The success of the Maccabean rebellion in Jerusalem

- Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a Greek ruler, profaned the Jerusalem temple.
- When the Maccabees recaptured the temple, they rededicated it to God, making 1 day’s worth of sanctified oil last 8 days (the miracle of Hanukkah)

*One academic term*: Second Temple Judaism

- The period after the return from Babylon and rebuilding the Jerusalem temple
- Ends in 70 CE/AD with the destruction of the temple by the Roman empire.
- The land of Israel/Palestine was controlled by various empires during this time: Persian, Greek, and finally, during the time of Jesus, the Roman Empire.

*One baby name fact*: The name “Mary” possibly has its origins in a word meaning “rebellious”. Mary (or, in Aramaic, Maryam) was a very common name at the time. Why were so many parents naming their daughter “rebellious”? Perhaps as a symbolic act of rebellion against the tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes, or as a nod to the woman Miriam who was martyred with her seven sons during the Maccabean rebellion.

## Questions

1. On a first read of the passage from Luke what stuck out at you? Was there anything surprising? What did you notice this time that you might not have noticed if you read this last year?

2. How do you think the original readers of Luke would have understood this passage? What is different between 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish Palestine and 21<sup>st</sup> century America? What is the same?

3. Where do you see God in this passage? Who might God's messengers be today?

4. How are we "saying yes" to God today? What does assenting to God's word mean for you? What might we be afraid of? What might a holy rebellion look like? What might God be calling you to do?

### **Luke 1:26-38 King James Version**

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, 27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. 30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. 31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. 32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: 33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34 Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? 35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. 36 And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38 And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

### **Luke 26-38 David Bentley Hart**

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee whose name was Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And going in to her he said, "Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you."

<sup>29</sup>And she was greatly distressed at his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

<sup>30</sup>And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And see: You will conceive in your womb and will bear a son, and you shall declare his name to be Jesus.

<sup>32</sup>This man will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, <sup>33</sup>And he will reign over the house of Jacob throughout the ages, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

<sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, as I have intimacy with no man?" <sup>35</sup>And in reply the angel told her, "A Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence the offspring will be called holy also, a Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And look at your kinswoman Elizabeth: She also conceived a son, in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who had been called barren; <sup>37</sup>Because nothing, of all the things I have said, is impossible with God."

<sup>38</sup>And Mary said, "See: the slave of the Lord; may it happen to me as you have said." And the angel departed from her.