

## The Big Reveal – Lk 1:26-56

Welcome visitors. Welcome West Campus via live stream.

We returned from our sabbatical last week, and continue to count ourselves blessed. Your love and reception have been nothing short of storybook. Thanks again for that.

➤ That said (**Intro**), I'm eager to open up God's Word with you.

We're starting a 4 week Christmas series this weekend, and I can't wait to see what God has for us. So turn with me in your Bibles to Lk 1:26-56. (Ushers)

Luke is writing, a close associate of the Apostle Paul's, and says in v26 . . .

*[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, [27] to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" [29] But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. [30] And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. [31] And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. [32] He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, [33] and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

➤ 700 years before Christ (**Is 40:9**), the prophet Isaiah said . . .

*[9] Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion [a label for the people of God at that time], herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"*

As in proclaim his presence! Point to his greatness! Speak of his coming.

And having done that to varying degrees in the subsequent centuries, Luke chapter 1 is the big reveal!

Like those parties parents have these days to they reveal the sex of their child. Or that they're having one in the first place. It's a big deal.

With balloons, streamers, social media, you name it.

How much more the coming of Jesus? After 700 years?

It's the big reveal! The biggest. With the angel Gabriel basically saying, "Behold your God!" That's the idea here. It's a reveal party.

➤ And within it, we find some implied prerequisites. Requirements if you will.

Things in our mind and heart that must be true, in order to behold him.

Things that are *essential* to see him. And *crucial* to know him.

The first of which has to do with the supernatural – the *unseen* aspect of our world.

### To behold God, you have to:

#### • Acknowledge the supernatural (**v26-27**)

You have to acknowledge the reality, that there's more to this world than meets the eye.

More than can be detected by our 5 senses. Or measured by a scientific instrument.

In order to behold *God*, in order to see him and experience him and know him, you have to acknowledge the existence of the supernatural in the first place.

Phenomena that can't be explained by natural laws alone. Things *above* nature. *Beyond* what we normally perceive. Hence the prefix "super." It's *super*-natural.

Now, does that mean you have to leave reason at the door? Or check your mind at the *coat rack* in order to behold God? Not at all!

But you do have to reject *naturalism* as the sole explanation of reality.

➤ Naturalism is the worldview that says, "What you see is what you get."

The worldview that says science is the sole basis for what can be known in this world, and the sole factor for determining what's real and what's imaginary.

It's the idea that our universe consists of nothing more than atoms and energy, put together in various combinations according to the laws of nature, and nothing more.

That's naturalism. And if you're going to behold *God*, you have to acknowledge the reality that there's more. That there's *super*-naturalism.

Things *beyond* what meets the eye. Things just as real as those that do.

Just b/c we can't fully explain the supernatural, doesn't make it any less real.

➤ We acknowledge it all the time with non-God aspects of our life.

Think about the attraction between a man and a woman who love each other.

Is that real? That attraction? That overwhelming magnetism? You bet it is. Even though we can't see it, touch it, taste it, smell it, hear it . . .

Or measure it with a scientific instrument.

But nobody on the face of the earth denies *it's* real.

And yet so many deny the reality of things far *more* powerful, and far more influential.

Like God and his angels. The very beings Luke identifies in v26.

He *starts* with the supernatural.

*[26] In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee.*

That's supernatural. And if you reject even the *possibility* of it, you'll *never* behold God. In fact, you'll forever miss him. And miss out. Forever.

To behold God, you have to acknowledge the supernatural.

2<sup>nd</sup>, you have to:

#### • Allow for the unlikely (**v28-33**)

Not that God *always* works in extra-ordinary ways, but often enough that in order to behold him fully, you have to allow for it. You have to allow for the unlikely.

For Mary, that meant allowing for the unlikelihood that an angel was actually *speaking* to her. And that God had chosen to *bless* her. Verses 28 and 30.

*Greetings, O favored one . . . You have found favor with God.*

Reject the grace of God to bless you, and keep you, and woo you, and use you – and you'll *never* behold him. You'll never know him.

Mary allowed for it, and we must too.

Just like she allowed for the unlikelihood that God was actually *with* her. *Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!* (28)

No wonder she was troubled (29). Instances of God's personal presence with people, was few and far between in the OT Scriptures. And yet she allowed for it.

Just like we must allow for the unlikelihood that the God of the universe would actually take up *residence* within us. With our bodies as his temple.

Never to leave us or forsake us.

She allowed for the unlikely. And so must we if we're going to behold God.

➤ But it's v31-33 that get *really* interesting here. B/c Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood that her son would be . . .

**(A) Savior (B) Great (C) God in the flesh (D) Fulfill prophecy (E) Rule forever.**

That's what Gabriel laid out in a virtual torrent.

Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood that her son would be a **savior**, b/c that's the implication of his name. V31 – “*You shall call his name Jesus.*” Meaning savior.

What *kind* of a savior she couldn't have known at that point. She just had to allow for the possibility.

And so do we. That out of all the religious figures in the world, only Jesus saves.

Only Jesus rescues us from the bondage and consequences of our sins.

No matter how unlikely, if you're going to behold him you have to allow for that.

**(B) Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood that he would be **great**.**

And we have to allow for the reality that he *is*.

Proven over and over in the miracles he did and the things he accomplished.

**(C) She had to allow for the unlikelihood that he would be **God in the flesh**.**

That's what Gabriel was saying in v32 – *He will be called the Son of the Most High.*

The Son of God. Which is 1<sup>st</sup> century verbiage for saying, “God in the flesh.”

B/c a son in those days was considered to have all the attributes of his father. In full. As was the Father, so was the Son. So if God the Father is divine, his Son is divine. Which makes Jesus, *the Son of the Most High*, God in the flesh.

That's what that phrase means in the Bible.

And while Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood of such a thing, we once again, have to allow for the reality.

B/c having lived a perfect life, died on the cross, risen from the dead, and ascended to heaven – Jesus has *proven* that he's God in the flesh.

**(D) While Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood that he would **fulfill prophecy** in order to behold him, we have to allow for the reality that he *did*. And still is.**

That's the idea of v32b – “*The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.*” Just like God told David he would, a thousand years earlier.

**2 Sam 7:12-16** – [12] *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. [13] He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. [14] I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son . . . [16] And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.*”

It's called the Davidic Covenant. The promise and prophecy that God would establish a rule and reign that lasts forever, with someone from David's lineage.

So when the angel told Mary that *the Lord God will give to [Jesus] the throne of his father David . . .*

He was saying that her son would be the *fulfillment* of the Davidic covenant. Able to do so, b/c he comes from the *line* of David, just like his *legal* father, Joseph.

The unlikelihood of fulfilled prophecy that Mary had to *allow* for, is the reality of what's happening right *now*. As Jesus builds his church one life at a time . . .

And reigns as Lord over it. Over those who have trusted him as their Savior.

It all fits. Unlikely or not.

**(E) Mary had to allow for the unlikelihood that her son would **rule forever**.** And once again, we do too if we're going to behold him.

V33 says – *He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*

The *house of Jacob*, on this side of the cross, is the church. Those who *believe* in Jesus, and *only* those who believe. It's no longer ethnic Israel, but spiritual Israel.

That's the kingdom over which Jesus reigns, and will forever.

And if you're going to *behold* him forever, you have to allow for that. (**Summary**)

You have to allow for the unlikely, b/c that's how God often works.

3<sup>rd</sup> to behold God, you have to . . .

• **Accept the miraculous (v34-38)**

As if the unlikely isn't enough, God also does the miraculous. And Mary accepted that too [34] *And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” [35] And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. [37] For nothing will be impossible with God.” [38] And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”* And the angel departed from her.

Mary accepted the miraculous. That's the idea of her response.

“I accept what you've said. At face value. That the Spirit of God will somehow cause me to get pregnant as a virgin, and I will give birth to God in the flesh. I accept it.”

If you're going to behold God, if you're going to experience him in your life, like Mary did in hers, you too have to accept the miraculous.

Like the fact that Jesus is fully God and fully man, by virtue of his conception.

And that he went on to rise again from the dead. And is able to forgive your sins. And will, if you ask him. It's miracle upon miracle with him.

From his death and resurrection to his guarantee of life.

But you'll never experience it, you'll never *have* life to the full and life forever, you'll never *behold* him, if you don't *accept* the miraculous.

Have you done that? Have you accepted him? If not, there's no better time than Christmas. No better time to accept the miraculous and experience it firsthand.

4<sup>th</sup>, is . . .

• **Believe the impossible (v39-45)**

[39] *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, [40] and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. [41] And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, [42] and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!* [43] And why is this granted to me

*that the mother of my Lord should come to me? [44] For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. [45] And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

Impossible as it all was, Mary *believed*. Including Gabriel’s statement in v37 that *nothing will be impossible with God*. She believed.

Not with a *mental* assent that changed *nothing* in her life, but with an eagerness to *see the impossible*. To experience it firsthand.

That’s why she got up and went to Elizabeth’s house in such a *hurry* (39).

It wasn’t like she wanted to see if it was really true. She wanted to experience what she *knew* was true.

And when she got there, she beheld even *more* of God.

Including Elizabeth’s expression of blessing and gratitude under the influence of God’s *Spirit* (42-44).

And the response of John the Baptist in Elizabeth’s womb, to Mary’s *presence*. And maybe even the presence of Jesus in her *own* womb already.

➤ The bottom line, is that to behold God, you have to believe what he says to the extent that you *look* for the result. Just like Mary.

No looking, no beholding. In fact, if you don’t look for the result of God’s work in this world, you probably don’t believe.

Like those who *say* they believe, but stay home on Sunday.

If they really believed, they’d break the doors down to catch a glimpse of God. They’d come with *haste* to join his work. *Nothing* would keep them away.

How about it? Do you believe? Really?

Or do you need to *repent* of your unbelief, and go all in?

If so, do it now. Waste no more time. Run no more risk.

➤ Acknowledge the supernatural. Allow for the unlikely. Accept the miraculous. Believe the impossible. And finally . . .

#### • **Declare his glory (vv46-55)**

That’s what it takes to *fully* behold God. Declare his glory.

It’s both a *prerequisite* to behold him, and a result.

IOW in declaring God’s glory, in worshipping his majesty, in praising his name – you’ll not only *behold* him more, you’ll want to *declare* him more.

And the more you declare him, the more you’ll behold him. And so it goes.

➤ That’s what Mary did. V46-55. The very passage Cody read earlier.

It’s traditionally called the “Magnificat.” A word that comes from the Latin for *magnifies*. Found in *early* translations of the Bible.

“*My soul magnifies the Lord*,” she said. Glorifies him. Makes much of him.

Do you make *much* of God in your heart of hearts? Mary did.

She worshipped him. She praised him. She exalted him.

And it overflowed in her *speech*, by declaring his glory.

Including the glory of his attention, his blessing, his holiness, and faithfulness.

V50 – His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

That’s faithfulness – *generation to generation*. Not to everyone mind you, but to those who *fear* the Lord.

Those who: *revere* his authority, stand in *awe* of his greatness, *tremble* at his power, and *submit* to his way.

Do you fear the Lord that way? With reverence, awe, trembling, and submission? If so, you know his faithfulness, and have much to declare.

➤ Mary goes on in v51 to declare the glory of God’s *power*.

*He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; [52] he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.* (51-52) That’s power. And she declared it.

In addition to the glory of his grace, justice, and mercy. V54.

*He has helped his servant Israel [his people], in remembrance of his mercy, [55] as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

She declared God’s glory. Not secretly or privately, but openly and publically. First to Elizabeth, and now to the world.

And she did it *joyfully*. *My spirit rejoices in God my Savior*, she said (47).

➤ If you want to behold God more and more in your life, if you want to experience him fully – declare his glory. Shout your praise. Proclaim your devotion.

Be *done* with timid worship. Get *past* your hesitations. Get *over* your embarrassment. And give God what he deserves. Declare his glory like you mean it.

And as you do, see if your whole life isn’t one great big reveal party, where you say to others, “Behold, your God!”

Pray – Lord, be glorified in our praise. Be magnified in our belief. Be exalted in our church and Lord of our lives. We love your rule. We love your reign. And we love your way – making possible the impossible.

So receive our tithes and offerings now, to declare your glory and behold your greatness, all the more.