

Jesus In

Christmas

Luke 1:31-32

He Shall Be Great

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FOCAL Read in Unison Luke 1:31-32 KJV¹ 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

Though we will read and study all around this focal passage today, this is the one text that we want to focus on. Let's look at those words, **He shall be great**, and consider the greatness of God as we enter into this holiday season.

The great preacher **Arthur W. Pink** wrote in his book *the Godhood of God*:

"When Christian theologians (?) accepted the Darwinian hypothesis, which excluded God from the realm of Creation, it was only to be expected that more and more God would be banished from the realm of human affairs. Thus it has proven. To the twentieth-century mind God is little more than an abstraction, an impersonal "First Cause," or if a Being at all, One far removed from this world and having little or nothing to do with mundane affairs. Man, forsooth, is a "god" unto himself. He is a "free agent" and therefore the regulator of his own life and the determiner of his own destiny. Such was the Devil's lie at the beginning - "Ye shall be as God" (Gen. 3:5). But from human speculation and Satanic insinuation we turn to Divine revelation."²

¹ all texts are King James Version, unless otherwise noted

² A.W. Pink, *Godhood of God*, ccel.org

The Bible is full of the *greatness of God*, but no where can we see the greatness of God, the pure **Godhood of God** more clearly than in the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every year we send our cards illustrated with the *Baby in the manger*. We sing songs about a little town called Bethlehem. We speak of the first Noel, and many churches light advent candles. Yet for all that, we can barely fathom the magnitude of what God did when He came down to be our Savior. The Bible tells us:

Galatians 4:4-5 But **when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, {5} To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.**

Here is the magnificence of God, the very Godhood of God. At *just the right time* we see that:

God sent forth His Son: Jesus was not *created*, but Jesus, God the Son, existed and has always existed in eternity within the Godhead.

The Bible says **God sent forth His Son**, not **God created His Son**.

Eternal God the Son was **sent forth**. God was going to form the *humanity* of Christ in a Virgin - a woman who had never known a man intimately. This *humanity of Christ* would be formed inside Mary. That humanity, God created in a virgin womb, would be completely

without sin. When we read these words:

FOCAL Luke 1:26-27 **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.**

we cannot possibly comprehend the *magnitude* of what God did in Mary. Jesus would be **sent forth** from eternity to inhabit a temporal human body. Each part of what we call *The Christmas Story* is precise, a perfect example of the Godhood of God, a perfect example of God's Love to us.

1. God Is Great !

FOCAL Luke 1:26-27 **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.**

As we mentioned last Wednesday, it was necessary for John the Baptist - the Lord's Herald - to be born just ahead of the humanity of Christ. So when we read **in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God ... to a virgin ... Mary**, we know that John the Baptist's fetus was already about 5 months old. The angel Gabriel came to Mary - actually, *Miriam* - and came to give her some wonderful news.

God was going to use her to bear the *humanity* of Christ.

Why was it necessary for Mary to be a *virgin*, untouched by man?

The simple answer is, *because God said so*. On the day - many thousands of years before - that Adam sinned and brought spiritual death into creation, God told the devil:

Genesis 3:15 And **I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

This was the *very first* prophecy of the virgin birth of Christ. The Lord told the devil that the **seed of the woman** would crush his head. God said **her seed ... shall bruise thy head**. It was Adam who brought spiritual death on all creation:

1 Corinthians 15:22 **For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.**

and again:

Romans 5:14-15 Nevertheless **death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression**, who is the figure of him

that was to come. {15} But not as the offense, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Man brought sin into the world, but God promised that the **seed of the woman** would crush Satan's head.

God further clarified this prophecy through **Isaiah**, who wrote some *five hundred years before*:

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore **the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

Jesus would be born of a virgin. Yet, Beloved, this is only part of the prophecy! Jesus would be born of a virgin, but He would be a direct descendant of King David. This is why **Mary and Joseph were chosen**. Both of these dear believers were *descendants of Abraham, of the Tribe of Judah* - and direct heirs to the *Throne of David*. God promised Abraham that

Genesis 18:18 ... **Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?**

This Baby, the Savior of all mankind, was not *just* to be born of a virgin. Though this is fantastic in itself, this was not the all of what God promised! The Savior must also enter mankind *through the line of Abraham*, so that God could keep His promise to that dear man. Further, the Holy Child *must* come through the line of King David. Why? Again, God promised:

Genesis 49:10 The **scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.**

This prophecy, given long before the birth of Christ, foretold that the Tribe of Judah would be God's ruling Tribe in Israel. Further, God promised that the Coming Savior would be born *of the Tribe of Judah*. I know that you have heard this passage quoted often this Holy-Day season:

Isaiah 9:6-7 For **unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (7) Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with**

judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Illustrate Jesus Christ, the Shiloh of God, *must* be born of a virgin, born of the line of Abraham, born of the Tribe of Judah, born as an heir of King David. Do you not see? Do you not see miracle upon miracle heaped on our Savior? Yet, do not look at the miracles of fulfilled prophecy and become enamored with them. Do not focus on the vivid colors of the painting and fail to see the *overall theme* that is rendered here. My aunt Dorothy - now in the arms of Jesus - was assistant curator of the North Carolina Museum of Art. There were many times when I went to the museum in Raleigh and saw beautiful paintings and wondrous scenes. Most of these paintings, when they were first rendered by the artist, seemed to have little value. Many of the artists did not become famous, nor were their works prized, until after their deaths. After their works were examined over the passing years people came to understand how priceless and valuable these paintings were. So it is with the birth of Christ!

So many people this holy-day season will think of Jesus in passing. They will glance at pictures on cards that show the Baby in the Manger. They will look at the *colors of Christmas*, but not at the overall picture. Look what God accomplished for you! Look at the promises, the amount of time that passed, the precise control that God used, the *love of God that passes all understanding*. When we see the Cross of Calvary we can understand the love of God. But unless we see and perceive *how much* God loved us, and how He *proved that love* in the virgin

birth, then we only see a part of the picture. God is Great! **He shall be great.** This does not mean that Christ shall *work His way* into greatness, but as God is great **He shall be great, for He is God.**

The prophecies that are fulfilled in the conception and in the birth of Christ show the greatness of God. These truths - written over a *fifteen hundred year period* and *fulfilled in Jesus* prove that God is not only faithful, but that He is in control.

The Bible says:

Numbers 23:19 **God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it?** or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

If a person asks me why I believe in God, I must say *because He has proved Himself faithful!* What He has said, He has always done. Jesus did not just *happen* to be born of a virgin. It was not by some *coincidence* that our Savior's humanity was created in Mary. God showed His power in Christ, in that virgin birth. God proved through His manifest power:

Isaiah 46:9-13^{HCSB} ... I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like

Me. (10) I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will. (11) I call a bird of prey from the east, a man for My purpose from a far country. Yes, I have spoken; so I will also bring it about. I have planned it; I will also do it. (12) Listen to me, you hardhearted, far removed from justice: (13) I am bringing My justice near; it is not far away, and **My salvation will not delay. I will put salvation in Zion, My splendor in Israel.**

God manifested His power and His control of all things through the virgin birth of Christ. Everything that God foretold came true *exactly as He said.* God is great. **He shall be great.**

2. God Is Great In Love!

God the Son had to come down from eternity and *take on humanity* to show His love for us. God had to come down from Heaven.

Immortality and mortality had to kiss in Christ, else we would be forever lost! **God the Son shall be great,** for He shall bring with Him *great grace.*

The angel told Mary:

FOCAL Luke 1:26-33 ... [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.**

God the Father would send God the Son to take on humanity in the womb of a virgin. This was not because Mary was *special*, but because **God decided to favor Mary.**

God sat His love on Mary, and invited her to participate in that Great Plan of Salvation, just as He has sat His love on you and invited you to participate in His Great Plan.

Listen Beloved, there is no *merit in Mary*, nothing

valuable in her that added to or removed from the perfection that is Jesus. There is a *religion* in this world today that speaks of Mary as the *co-regent* of Heaven. These dear but confused people teach that Mary was, in herself, special, that she was sinless, and that because of that she is co-ruler in Heaven with Jesus Christ. Yet such a doctrine is never taught by Scripture. It was God's great love that caused Him to choose Mary to be the vessel in which the humanity of Christ would be formed. Yet it was God Who formed the humanity of Christ. It was God the Father Who sent Christ to this earth, and God the Son Who came and took on humanity for us.

Jesus Christ's humanity was born of Mary. Not because Mary was best, but because God loved Mary. Jesus Christ's humanity was born of Mary. Not because we deserved His love, but because He first loved us. Jesus Christ was born of Mary. Not because either she or we were sinless, but because **God is faithful, and in His faithfulness wants to love us.**

Illustrate The Son of God *lowered Himself in love* to take on humanity to live and die for us. Look at the wonder of God's Love! In the realm of humanity a king is always born in a palace. The high born are born of high born. This is the way of man. The child of the king will be king, and that child will be waited on hand and foot by nannies and butlers, fed the finest of foods, given the greatest of care. The king's child will be taught, not in a common school, but with a special tutor, usually someone of great fame, a Plato or a Socrates. Not so with God! When the Son of God came to save the world, He was born of the Tribe of Judah, but Israel was under Roman bondage. He was not born to Herod, nor to Pilate,

nor to Caesar, but to Mary and Joseph. He was not born to riches and wealth, nor to degrees and decrees. Jesus Christ was born of an unknown virgin because of God's great love!

When Mary was told this wonderful thing she cried out,

FOCAL Luke 1:34-35 ... 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.**

God was at work in Mary, creating Himself a Body, perfect and pure, that He could inhabit so He could shed His Blood for our sins. When God tested Abraham, and asked him to sacrifice his only son Isaac on the mountain, Abraham gladly surrendered that son. When Isaac asked his father, "Where is the sacrifice that we will bring to God?", that dear parent replied:

Genesis 22:8 ... **God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering...**

Think on those words, **God will provide himself a lamb.** Abraham never had to sacrifice Isaac, for on that day God stopped him and provided a ram, trapped in the thorns and in the bushes. God provided the ram and Isaac

was saved. So it was with Mary. Mary was not special, not sinless, not perfect. But, just like the thorns that trapped the sacrifice that took Isaac's place, God used Mary to fulfill His purpose. In the prophetic words of Abraham,

God will provide Himself a lamb. God lowered Himself to become the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

The Bible says

Hebrews 10:4-10 For **[it is] not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. {5} Wherefore when [Jesus] cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: {6} In burnt offerings and [sacrifices] for sin thou hast had no pleasure. {7} Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. {8} Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and [offering] for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure [therein]; which are offered by the law; {9} Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. {10} By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once [for all].**

God is great in love! God placed His love on Mary, and overshadowed her. Having overshadowed Mary the Lord **provided Himself a lamb**. He set in motion not only the fulfillment of prophecy, but the salvation of all who will believe in Him. The Son of God lowered Himself, taking on humanity, so that He could pay for your sins. It is the **Blood of God** that took your place on the Cross. As a Pastor I am reminded that I am to:

Acts 20:28 ... feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

It was the **Blood of God** that purchased you, if purchased you are! It was the love of God that died for you!

Like Mary, you did not deserve nor earn what He has done. But because He took a body on Himself we can read these words:

Romans 5:8-10 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

If Jesus had not been virgin born, then you would not be saved. If Jesus had not taken on human flesh, then He could not shed His blood for you. If Jesus Christ had not agreed to make payment for your sinful nature, you would still be under the wrath of God.

But because Jesus lowered Himself to be born of a virgin, you have - if you have believed - eternal life in Him!

This is Love Personified, this Jesus Christ our Lord! Though born of a lowly virgin, He is nonetheless Eternal God. The Bible tells us:

Hebrews 1:6 ...when [God] bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

On the night that Christ was born, all the angels of God worshiped Him. Why? Because He is Eternal God. Yet as Eternal God, He came to die for us. **He shall be great.** God is Great in Love - see it's proof in Jesus. C.H. Spurgeon wrote:

"If I could speak as I would, I would make winds and waves my orators, and cause the whole universe to become one open mouth with which to tell out the praises of Emmanuel. If all eternity would speak, as though it, too, were but one tongue, yet it could not tell out all the charms of his love and the sureness of his faithfulness and his truth. We must leave off somewhere, but, truly, if it be the point of our

estimation of him we never can express our overwhelming sense of his honor, his excellence, his sweetness. Oh, that he were praised by every creature that has breath! Oh, that every minute placed another gem in his crown! Oh, that every soul that breathes did continue to breathe out nothing but hosannas and hallelujahs unto him, for he deserves all possible praises! Do you hear the crash of the multitudinous music of heaven? It is like many waters, and like the mighty waves of the sea, but it is all for him. Can you catch the charming notes of “harpers harping with their harps”? Their harplings are all for him. Can you conceive the unutterable joys of the glorified? Every felicity of eternity is a song to his honor. Heaven and earth shall yet be full of the out-shinings of his glory. Who can look the sun in the face in the height of his noontide? Who can tell the illimitable greatnesses of the Son of God? To him, even to him, let all praises be, for he has redeemed our souls with blood, and set the captives free: he has made us unto our God both lacings and priests, and we shall reign with him for ever and for ever. Truly, he is great, and shall be great eternally³.

3. God Is Great In Love To Us!

The great need of our day is to be loved. For all our technology, for all of our American advances, for all the things that we have, all the conveniences, we yet lack one thing. We lack the certain knowledge that we are loved. What does it say of a society when two people sit at a table, and one of those people ignores the other

while he or she talks on the phone? What does it say of a country when we sit down to eat and focus on the food and on the television, but not on one another?

As America has increased in wealth and in comforts, we have at the same time drawn away from the things that matter most. This season we call Christmas is not a season for consumerism, for "gimme this" and "gimme that". This season we call Christmas is a time to stop and reflect on the Greatness of God, and on the Greatness of His Love for you. God is great in love to me! Eternal God would take on humanity in a sweet, relatively unknown woman named Mary. Jesus would grow up in a place called *Nazareth*. I imagine as He grew that his earthly mother would think back on those words, **He shall be great**, every day of His life. Mary would watch this Holy Thing, this Jesus, grow up into manhood. Perhaps He would help Joseph, His stepfather, at his trade of carpentry. **He shall be great**. These words, like echoes, would come to Mary over and over until the day she looked up and saw her Baby hanging on that Cross. He was despised and rejected. Jesus was even raised up in Nazareth, according to prophecy:

Matthew 2:23 he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, **He shall be called a Nazarene.**

Jesus **shall be great** and *is now great*. Those of you who have believed in Him have been saved from a **great wrath from a great God**. If you have accepted Him as Savior and Lord you have a **great inheritance in yonder**

glory. If you have trusted in Him for salvation, then you are heirs of **a great adoption.** You are **sons of God,** and one day *you shall be great* because of His great love toward you - blessed be the name of the Lord!

Believe in Him, cling to Him, trust in Him. **He shall be great.** His love is great to you and to me.

