

uncommon

THE HOLY ONE OF GOD IS COMING

LESSONS:

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Lesson 2 | He would be Compassionate and Holy (12/14)

Taking the lead from a book called *“Compassionate Creator: Becoming Human For Me”* by Bruce Morton, we are taking a look at the entrance of Jesus the King into the world in which He was born. As we have already said, Paul reminds us that **“at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly”** (Romans 6:6) and to the Galatians he wrote, **“when the fulness of time came, God sent His Son.”** (4:4). So, there is value in understanding, along with the written text, the events and the environment that led to God sending His Son into the world. This study will consider the amazing story of the incarnation (God made flesh) in a world, within the social, political and religious struggles of His own day.

The coming of Jesus was heralded in the first century. The most common definition of herald is “1. an official messenger bringing news. 2. a person or thing viewed as a sign that something is about to happen. “they considered the first primroses as the herald of spring?” The only notice of this word in the Old Testament occurs in Daniel 3:4. But our concern is its connection in the New. In the New Testament, Paul says he was “appointed a herald and apostle” (“preacher and Apostle” in other translations) [See also 2Tim 1:11; 2Peter 2:5].

So in the connection of the birth of Jesus, as the ones we will consider who heralded the good news, let’s make these observations:

1. The Greek noun, *euangélion* (rendered “gospel”), is derived from the verb, *euangelézo*, which means to tell good news, or to proclaim the gospel. In turn, the noun refers to *the message* of that salvation that was proclaimed first by Jesus and then by His Apostles and disciples.
2. The concept of the “gospel” has both Roman and Jewish roots.
 - a. Among Romans, the word was used to describe good news about events in the emperor’s life, such as his enthronement. The events were thought to affect the entire world. And so, especially in Mark’s use of *euangélion*, it is shown that Jesus’ ministry signaled the beginning of a new era, not just for Israel, but for everyone everywhere, the universe.
 - b. Jewish roots of the term are found in the Old Testament prophecy books, especially Isaiah (for example, 40:9; 52:7; 61:1). There the announcement of the future time of salvation is called “good tidings” and is set against a backdrop of joy. Consequently, a Jewish audience knew that the era Jesus ushered in was the prophesied time of salvation.
3. “Jesus” (Mark 1:1) is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name, Joshua, which means “Yahweh saves.” As well, “Messiah” (from the Hebrew) and “Christ” (from the Greek) both mean the “Anointed One.” When taken together, they indicate that the Father chose, appointed, and empowered His Son to save people from their sins (Matt 1:21; Luke 1:30–33) and that was *the announcement of good news* that was **heralded**.
 - a. The Son of God, in Mark 1:1, is the messianic title that the New Testament writers routinely applied to the Lord Jesus (for instance, Rom 1:4; Rev 2:18). The phrase emphasizes the special and intimate relationship that exists between the first and second persons of the Trinity (Matt 16:16; Luke 1:35). Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 quote Psalm 2:7 in connection with the Messiah being the Son of God. Most likely, the Israelites applied this verse to the descendants of David, whom they crowned king. However, Psalm 2:7 ultimately refers to the Messiah who would be King and Savior (see Acts 13:33).
 - b. Rome believed that they possessed justice and had an obligation to share it with the rest of the world. The Roman Emperor Augustus was hailed following the civil war as the bringer of peace, or “savior”, in gratitude for rescuing Rome from civil strife and their enemies. Throughout the ancient world, this message was proclaimed: on statues, in poetry, in song and speeches - and the announcement of this story of the emperor and his authority could be spoken of as ‘euangelion’ or ‘gospel’. But the message was announced and heralded at the birth of Jesus that He was King; He was Joy; and He was peace.

- c. So, Paul's preaching is actually a powerful and provocative statement. He repurposes this 'gospel', and it's almost like he's saying "let me tell you who the real king is". It's no wonder it got him into trouble!

One last observation. Heralds were commissioned to deliver the message of another. It was not their message – it was the message of the King. They knew the difference between *bearing* the news and *being* the news. They wanted people to walk away challenged by the King's message, not the herald's methods. And today, we should be reminded that, though we are not heralding the first tidings of good news, we should not share the good news in order to be a somebody. Because, the only somebody is the King, Lord Jesus.

So how was Jesus heralded?

The herald of Gabriel (Luke 1:26-38). The angel chosen by God to release the first announcement, which was to a woman, was Gabriel. The name Gabriel is of Hebrew origin and means "God Is My Strength" and first mentioned by name in Daniel 8:16. Daniel had many visions of the future. It was after one such vision that the angel Gabriel visited him and explained the meaning of the vision to Daniel. He returned at least once more, in Daniel 9, in response to Daniel's prayer, to give him "insight and understanding" (Daniel 9:22). In this encounter, Gabriel pointed ahead to the "Anointed One," a name for the Messiah, who would be Jesus.

In Luke, Gabriel says that the good news was the Son who would be her son (1:31) would be "the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of His father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." (1:32). His name will be Jesus (1:31). It was the royal birth announcement of the King – but it was more. It was the announcement of an age lasting kingdom and a kingdom which fulfills prophecy.

And importantly, The Son's Birth would be miraculous. He would be born of a virgin (1:34) – the same message that the Lord's Angel had given to Joseph (Matthew 1:20). God's Holy Spirit would be the One who guarantee this birth and this beginning (1:35). Yet, he will be a holy one (1:35). This is the announcement that this good news is about the Holy. The Holy One of God who is coming.

The herald of Mary (Luke 1:39-56). The mother chosen by God to carry, to birth and to nurture the Son was not what paintings, movie posters and art often convey about Mary. In fact, the gospels say nothing about the description of Mary. Gabriel calls her "favored one" (ESV) or "favored woman" (CSB) (Luke 1:28, 30). Favor with God finds nothing in the world to which we can compare. Yet, God does not describe Himself as beautiful – but He does His creation (Genesis 1) – and His worshippers will proclaim His beauty (Psalm 27:4). Yet every forward reaching prophecy of the coming Messiah is the revelation of God's beauty (see Isa 4:2; 28:5; 33:7; 52:7).

When Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth is "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:41) and proclaims Mary's belief in the message (1:45) and the inherent blessing that is – as well as the blessing that her child will be (1:42). Every woman would call her blessed. And Mary's response by reciting the Scripture shows her imminent knowledge of the Divine Word. Her words, that have been made into song, echo several biblical passages; the most pronounced allusions are to the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10).

1. She begins with praise for the Lord's greatness.
2. She praises the Lord for His favor.
3. She acknowledges His name is Holy.
4. His Deed will bless those who fear him; those who are hungry; and He will bless Israel and the descendants of Abraham.

The herald of the Angels (Luke 2:8-20). In Luke, Gabriel has already appeared to John's father, Zechariah, and to Jesus' mother, Mary. Now, "an angel of the Lord" (2:9) who was joined with a "Multitude of the heavenly host" (2:13) who were angels (2:15). And while we rightly amplify that the first public announcement were made to "lowly shepherds as they watched their flocks by night" and not to the powerful, there is something more here. Luke, more than any other New

Testament writer, portrays God/Jesus as blessing the poor. Salvation for Luke is a reversal of the social status quo. In Mary's prophecies concerning what God is going to do in Christ (using the past tense to describe the future), Mary said that 1) He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; 2) He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; and 3) He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (Luke 1:51-53). The announcement to the shepherds show, as a first sign, of this prophecy's fulfillment. It is not just in Jesus' adult ministry that God begins to redeem the marginalized and oppressed; it happens already in his birth, and thus is core to his very being. For Luke, Jesus' very existence and identity is one of turning tables on the inequality of the world.

The herald of Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25-38). God has used angels and shepherds to declare the coming of the Messiah. Now, in the temple complex, He uses a devout Jewish man and woman to do the same. But we learn that with tidings of comfort and joy come warnings of confrontation and rejection. Jesus is not who the Jews think He is -- He is much, much more. The narrative begins eight days after the birth of Jesus and the visit from the shepherds.

The baby has been named and circumcised — a rite that marks Jesus as Jewish, as part of the people that God has called (c.f. Genesis 17). Forty days after his birth, Jesus' parents take him to the temple in Jerusalem. Leviticus 12:1-8 lays out the instructions for a woman who has given birth. After 40 days she is to come to the temple with a sacrifice. Those who could not afford to bring a lamb could bring two turtledoves or pigeons, as Mary and Joseph do. Mary and Joseph are faithful Jews who are careful to do everything that the Law requires.

In what is almost an aside, Luke 2:23 explains that the firstborn male is set aside as holy. The quotation from Exodus 13:2, 12 takes the reader to the Exodus story. God delivered Israel from the stubborn clutches of Pharaoh after the death of all of the Egyptian firstborn males, but God spared the Israelite firstborns whose doorposts were covered by lamb's blood. This story is remembered in the sacrifice that Jewish parents make on behalf of their firstborn male children.

Jesus, like other firstborn males, is set apart for God as part of the special relationship that God solidified through his deliverance of Israel from slavery. However, this firstborn with the name Jesus, "God saves," opens up a new chapter in the relationship between the God who delivers and all of God's people — both Jews and Gentiles.

Simeon is described as one who the Holy Spirit rests upon, and it is by the Holy Spirit he prophesies just as John (1:15), Mary (1:35), Elizabeth (1:41) and Zechariah (1:67). Simeon is part of this unfolding work when he lifts up Jesus and makes an amazing declaration about the baby. Simeon now declares that Jesus is the salvation of the world — the rescuer from enemies, the source of knowledge about salvation. But immediately after this declaration of salvation, Simeon turns to Mary and tells her that this salvation will not come easy. Jesus will be the source of rising and falling for people in Israel. This reminds us of Mary's own song, in which she sang, "[God] has put down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree" (1:52).

Anna confirms the salvation message of Simeon by giving thanks to God and speaking about this child to all those who were looking for "the redemption of Jerusalem." This statement demonstrates that redemption is Messiah's work and that he will redeem Jerusalem – and any who will come.

As Redeemer and as King, He will be both compassionate and holy.

Next Lesson: 3. His Birth would Announce His Kingdom (12/21).

Read ahead: Luke 1:39-56, 2:1-15; John 1:45.

"Compassionate Creator: Becoming Human For Me" by Bruce Morton; Lesson 2
Sold on Amazon and 21st Century Christian or other Christian Bookstores.