

Called to be a Vessel

Key Verse: “*Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*”
—**Luke 1:38**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 1:26-38

ONCE AGAIN THE ANGEL

Gabriel is used as a messenger from God to proclaim the means by which the Father’s will would be carried out respecting mankind. He appears to Mary, who was “a virgin espoused” (to take as a wife; married, *Webster’s Dictionary*) to Joseph. (Luke 1:27) In the Jewish custom, the espousal is the real marriage, accompanied by a definite contract which then became absolutely binding. When Mary received Gabriel’s salutation, “Hail, . . . the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (vs. 28), she was unsure of what it meant. He would reassure her saying, “Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive, . . . and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.” (vss. 30,31) Jesus signifies Savior, or Liberator, “For he shall save his people from their sins.”—Matt 1:21

Mary was again troubled, and inquired of Gabriel how this could be so, “seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1:34) He would go on to explain that this child was to be specially begotten by Divine power, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, . . . therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (vs. 35) Mary was a sharer with Joseph when Jesus was born, though not when he was conceived. The

life principle by which Jesus was conceived came directly from the Heavenly Father. The fact that Mary was honored by the Lord above all other women in that she was chosen to be the mother of Jesus according to the flesh, would prove her wonderful character and good heart condition. Mary was then full of the joy of the Lord, and an instrument in carrying out his plan.

Gabriel then tells Mary the wonderful news about her cousin Elisabeth who, as we recall, was “barren.” (vs. 7) She was now in her sixth month. This is an important fact because we will read later in the account that John was six months older than our Lord, and would begin to preach six months before our Lord became of age and would begin his own ministry. Before departing, the angel would then make a wonderful statement to Mary that certainly must have been a source of strength and encouragement to her. “With God nothing shall be impossible.” (vs. 37) The Lord Jesus used similar words in speaking to his disciples in the parable concerning the kingdom of God and the rich man. “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”—Matt. 19:23-26

We can further appreciate the character of Mary from the words of acceptance concerning God’s will for her in our Key Verse, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.’ She refers to herself as a handmaid, which shows that she was humbling herself before God, and desired to be used in his service. Look also at the expression of submission to God as spoken by David, “O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid.” (Ps. 116:16) Christ Jesus is the promised seed from David’s house, and heir of his throne. A “chosen vessel” brings with it the thought of a person being the receiver, or repository, of some special favor or gift from God. (Acts 9:15) This is so evident in the account of the proclamation concerning the means by which the Son of God would come into the world, and Mary’s total acceptance of it. ■