

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 1 December 2024. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Gabriel's Gospel Message

Luke 1:26-38 & Matthew 1:1-25

In the Christmas of 1981, when I was five years old, my big sister made a special gift for me. With the little bit of money that she had, she bought a pre-made sewing kit, and sewed a little stuffed elephant for me. She was so proud of that little gift; and she was super excited to give it to me. (And I was super excited to *open* it!) For at least a week before Christmas, that mysterious present with my name on it kept staring up at me from underneath the tree; and the suspense was killing me! It seemed to be calling, “Open me! Open me!” I kept trying to gather intelligence as to what it might be; but everyone’s lips were sealed. I used my wiliest strategies to wheedle information out of my sister; but she wouldn’t tell me anything. Finally, on Christmas Eve, after everyone else was asleep, I got up and went down to the tree. I stared at the present for several minutes, with my heart pounding; and finally, I just went ahead and opened it. I didn’t exactly do a good job of concealing it, either: I just ripped it open! I put the elephant back into the wrapping paper, and tried to hide the huge rip that I had made; but it didn’t work. Needless to say, my mom was *not* happy with me that Christmas morning. (And there *were* consequences!) Yes, my friends, I was awful bad in those days—but apparently, not as bad as my mom was! I found out, years later, that my mom had, for a couple Christmases in her childhood, gone to the tree on Christmas Eve, opened up *all* her presents, and carefully wrapped them back up, without anyone’s ever suspecting! (Her present-wrapping skills were much more sophisticated than mine were!)

Probably everyone in this room can remember some gift that you could hardly wait to open; and you did everything in your power to find out what it was. Well, guess what? That’s the way it was with the Gift of salvation! The Bible says that Jesus Christ *is* the “**unspeakable gift.**” Jesus *is* salvation; and countless saints in Old Testament times did their best to discover when, where, and how He would come down from Heaven to bring us salvation. They longed to know when the Messiah would arrive, and exactly how He would take our sins away. Before his death, Jacob said *liyshuáthka qiwiythiy Jehowah*—“**I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.**” Jesus told His disciples that many prophets and righteous men had had desired to see and hear the things that *they* had seen and heard; and Jacob was just one of those many righteous men who had longed to see the Saviour’s face. In **1 Peter chapter 1**, the Apostle Peter said that the prophets of old diligently searched to find out “**what, or what manner of time**” the Saviour would come into the world; but they never got to see Him. Yet, as the centuries rolled on, God did reveal more and more information as to when the Messiah would arrive; what He would do; and how He would save us from our sins. Right up to the time of Christ’s birth, and in the days just after His birth, God continued to give, to certain individuals, clues as to how this holy Child would save us from our sins.

Throughout December, we will be examining these clues that God gave about His Son, in the months leading up to His birth, and just after his birth; and we will see how the **Gospel message** was revealed to people, piece by piece. Now, perhaps you’ve heard the word “Gospel,” but you don’t really know what it

means. If you *don't* know what the Gospel is, you are going to *find out* what it is; and it is my prayer that you will personally believe the Gospel message, and be saved. If you already know what the Gospel is, and you *have* placed your faith in it, it is my prayer that you will get a deeper, richer understanding of the Gospel over these next few weeks. The title of this message is ***Gabriel's Gospel Message***.

Read Luke 4:16-22.

From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He declared that He had come to preach "***the gospel***." Yet, what *is* the Gospel? Before we start examining the *pieces* of the Gospel message that God delivered before and around the time of Jesus' birth, let's start by looking at the *whole* picture. We are going to *define* "the Gospel"; and we will begin by looking at the declaration of Christ himself.

I. Christ's declaration of the Gospel message

In the **Luke** passage that we just read a minute ago, we looked in on a scene from the early days of Jesus' ministry. Jesus had just come back to his hometown of Nazareth after a preaching and healing tour; and as the guest of honour in the synagogue on that Sabbath day, He was asked to pick a passage of Scripture, read it to the congregation, and expound on it. And so, Jesus read from **Isaiah 61**. Why did He choose this passage? Because **Isaiah 61** contains a prophecy about the Messiah. Let's look at that passage of Scripture from **Isaiah**.

Read Isaiah 61:1-2.

Probably everyone in the synagogue that day was familiar with this passage of Scripture. They had heard it before; and they knew that it was a prophecy of the Messiah. That's why they were shocked when Jesus closed the book and said, "***This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.***" Jesus was claiming that *He* was the Messiah! He was saying, "I am the one who gave these words to Isaiah 700 years ago. I am the one who spoke those words about myself, through the pen of Isaiah. I am here to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." By the way, the Hebrew word for "acceptable year" (*shenath ratzon*) literally means "year of favour," or "year of goodwill." It was now the season of *grace*. God had sent His Son into the world so that He might provide the gracious gift of salvation for sinners.

Now, there was a particular word that we read in **Luke 4:18**, which I would like to point out. It is the word "***gospel***." What does "Gospel" mean? It literally means "good news"! (Our English word "gospel" is actually a shortening of the older English words "god spell," which mean "good news.") Let's look again at **Isaiah 61:1**, and see what Isaiah said about the "***good news***." (**Read Isaiah 61:1 again.**) In this verse, Isaiah says that the Messiah would preach "***good tidings***." But then, in **Luke 4**, where Jesus quotes this verse, He says that He had come

to preach “*the gospel.*” You don’t have to be a scholar to figure out that the word “Gospel” means “good news,” or “good tidings.”

So, what *is* the “good news”? Well, whatever the “good news” is, it is something that *sets people free*. Whatever the “good news” is, it is something that delivers captives, and opens prison doors to those who are bound. Whatever the “good news” is, it is something that heals and binds up the broken-hearted. Christ wasn’t talking about being freed from a literal prison: He was talking about being freed from the prison house of *sin*. He was talking about being *saved*. Jesus came into the world to save sinners from their sin.

Again and again throughout His ministry, Jesus proclaimed that He had come into the world to save sinners. Jesus said that “*the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” That is good news. My friends! Yet, this is only *part* of the good news. Jesus came to save sinners: but *how* would He save them? That is a part of the Gospel that we absolutely must know! Jesus made it very clear how He would save us from our sins.

Read Matthew 16:21.

My friends, *this* is the Gospel message. The Gospel is the message that Christ provided salvation for us by dying for our sins in our place, as our ransom, and by rising again from the grave. From the very beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed this message. He repeatedly claimed that He would soon to be put to death by crucifixion; that He would be buried; and that He would rise again three days later. He also made it clear that He would do this in order to provide forgiveness of sins for us. In **Matthew 20:28**, Jesus said that He had come “*not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*” On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples that He was about to shed His blood for many, “*for the remission of sins.*” *This* is the Gospel message that Jesus proclaimed.

For three years, Jesus preached the Gospel; and many people believed on Him, and were saved. Those who believed on Jesus knew that He was the Saviour, and that He had forgiven them of all their sins; but they didn’t yet understand *what Jesus was going to have to do* in order to make their salvation possible. They couldn’t grasp the fact that Jesus was going to die for their sins, and rise again (even though He had told them so over and over again). Shortly before Christ went to the cross, **Mary of Bethany** did seem to understand that Jesus was going to die; but aside from Mary of Bethany, no one else seemed to understand that Jesus had to die. However, *after* Christ arose from the grave, they understood it all perfectly. Years later, the Apostle Paul defined the “good news” in clear, precise, unmistakable words.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

What Paul was saying here was not his own idea. This isn't "Pauline theology": this is *Christ's* theology! As Paul pointed out, this truth was not his own: he had "**received**" it. And *from whom* had he received it? Had he received it from some other man? No! In **Galatians 1**, Paul says that he had received it from *Christ Himself*. Now, Paul wasn't yet a believer at the time of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection: it was about a year after Christ's return to Heaven that Paul became a Christian. However, after Paul got saved, Christ *personally* appeared to Paul on a number of occasions, and *personally taught* him the Gospel. Christ *personally* taught Paul the doctrine that His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection from the grave, is *all* that we need to be saved from our sin, and reconciled to God! My friends, *this* is the Gospel message! Salvation is a free gift, which has been provided for us by the Lord Jesus Christ, through His death, burial, and bodily resurrection from the grave. The message of Christmas is not simply that Christ was *born*, but that He came into this world to *die* for our sins, and rise again!

With this in mind, let's examine the first piece of the Gospel message that was delivered before Christ's birth!

II. Gabriel's delivery of the Gospel message

We've seen what the Gospel is. It is the message that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again in our place, so that we might be saved. Let's look now at the very first *formal* announcements of Christ's conception and birth. These two announcements were delivered by two angels, months before Christ's birth.

Read Luke 1:26-38.

The angel Gabriel gave the first piece of the Gospel message to a young woman named Mary, of the town of Nazareth. He announced that God had chosen her to give birth to the Son of God, and that His name was to be called "Jesus." In Hebrew, Jesus' name is pronounced *Yeshua*; and the name literally means "Jehovah saves." God's Son, Jesus Christ, *is* Jehovah God; and He came to earth to save us from our sins!

Now, the Gospel message that Gabriel gave to Mary wasn't extremely detailed. Gabriel didn't tell Mary that this miraculous Child would one day die on the cross, be buried, and rise again. However, Gabriel *did* tell Mary that **this Child would be the Saviour**. He said something else that is an extremely important part of the Gospel message, as well. He informed Mary that *she* would give birth to this child—even though she was a *virgin*! Can you imagine how stunned Mary have been? *She* was to have a baby? How? She was *betrothed* to Joseph; but she had never had a physical relationship with him. During the time of betrothal, a man and woman were *legally* married (on paper); but the man had not yet “taken the woman” into his house. This is why Mary asked, **“How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”** This was the Hebrew way of saying, “How can this be, when I’ve never had a physical relationship with a man?” Mary was morally chaste. She had kept herself pure. The word that is used here is the Greek word *parthenos*, which can *only* mean “virgin.” It doesn't mean merely “maiden” or “young woman”: it specifically means “virgin.” Mary had kept herself pure in mind and body; and because of this, God was able to use her for His wonderful purpose.

My friends, we live in a world in which the idea of remaining sexually pure before marriage is mocked and scorned. Sleeping with your girlfriend or boyfriend is considered normal. Moving in with a “partner,” and living together for years outside of the covenant of marriage, is considered normal. Dating around, and being intimate with multiple partners, is considered normal. But God still calls it sin, and wickedness! Young people, don't soak in the world's philosophy that fornication is somehow “O.K.”! Don't get as “close to the line” as possible, by kissing, or petting, or being in a situation where you are alone, and ripe for temptation. Don't defile your mind, by looking at moral filth on the telly or internet. Keep your mind, heart, and body clean and pure, so that God can use your life for his glory!

Now, let's return to the matter of Mary's virginity. Most religions that call themselves “Christian” have long since abandoned the belief that Jesus was miraculously conceived in the womb of a virgin. Some “Christian” religions still officially have the doctrine of the virgin birth on paper; but in actual practice, they ignore or deny it. However, such is not the case in this church! In this church, we unapologetically proclaim the virgin birth of our Saviour! We would not *be* a true church if we did not proclaim this message! There would be *no Gospel*—no “good news” of salvation—if Jesus Christ had *not* been born of a virgin. Jesus would *not be the Son of God* if He had not been born of a virgin. He would *not be the Saviour* if He had not been born of a virgin. If Jesus had had a human father, He would *not* have been the sinless God-Man; and He would not have been qualified to die in our place, for our sins. If Jesus had had a human father, He would have been a sinner, just like everyone else, because He would have inherited a sin nature from his human father. The Bible clearly teaches that the sin nature is passed down through the seed of the father. It all started with the first father of our race, Adam. **Romans 5:12** says, **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”**

My friends, Mary was a very special young woman; yet, she was a sinner, just as her father Adam was. She herself acknowledged this fact. In **Luke 1:46-47**, when Mary was rejoicing that God had given her the privilege of bearing the Son of God in her womb, she said, **“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”** Mary acknowledged that Jesus was *her* Saviour—which means that she acknowledged that she was a *sinner*. Only sinners need to be saved from their sin! How, then, did Jesus not receive a sin nature from *Mary*? Because sin is passed down through the man, not the woman. Jesus was a true descendant of Adam, because He received Adam’s *genetic material* through Mary; but the *male seed* that was planted in her womb was not provided by any human being. God miraculously created that seed in Mary’s womb; and that seed had no sin nature. Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph; He was (and is) the Son of God.

Jesus is the eternal God, who took on human flesh. He is the Son of God, *and* the Son of Man. He is 100% God, and 100% Man. If He were *not* the God-Man, but simply a man, we would have no hope of salvation, because Jesus would have been a sinner. A sinner cannot take the punishment for another sinner’s sin. Only a *sinless man* could take the punishment for our sin. In fact, being a sinless man was not enough. Not only did Jesus need to be a *sinless man* in order to be our Saviour; He needed to be both *God and Man*. Because Jesus is both God and Man, He is the only one who is qualified to be the *Mediator* between God and mankind. As God (the one who gave the Law), Jesus had the prerogative to come into our race, become one of us, and pay the price for our sin *which His own law demanded!* As Man, Jesus was uniquely qualified to die in our place, rise again, and to be our Advocate before God the Father; and as both God *and* Man, He is the only one who could be the “go-between” between us and God the Father. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”**

Now, let’s look at the Gospel message that was given to Joseph, during Mary’s pregnancy. This message was delivered by another angel, whose name we are not told.

Read Matthew 1:1-25.

There are a couple important things in this passage that I wish to point out. First of all, look at **verse 16. (Read verse 16 again.)** Did you notice how careful Matthew was with his wording? Up to this point in the genealogy, Matthew had said, “so-and-so begat so-and-so.” Each of the people in the genealogy was a *man*, who begat a son, who begat a son, and so on. But then, in **verse 16**, the “so-and-so begat so-and-so” statements stop. We are now told that Jacob begat Joseph, who was **“the husband of Mary.”** We are not told that Joseph *begat* Jesus: we are told that Joseph was the **“husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”** That pronoun “whom” is very important. Why? Because Matthew is using

the pronoun *hes*, which is *feminine*. This means that the word “whom” refers not to Joseph, but to *Mary*. Matthew is going out of his way to let us know that Jesus was *not* the son of Joseph. Jesus was the son of *Mary*, who was a virgin.

Throughout this passage, we are told, in different ways, that Mary was a virgin. Look again at **verse 18 and 19. (Matthew 1:18-19 again.)** Did you notice that the angel of the Lord said, “***fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife***”? Why did the angel say, “fear not to **take** unto thee Mary thy wife,” when Mary was already his wife? Because Mary already was Joseph’s wife *legally* (on paper); but he had not yet “taken” her into his home. They had not had intimate relations. That is why, when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he assumed that she had done something wrong. He knew that the baby wasn’t his. Thus, he was thinking of putting her away quietly. According to the Law of Moses, divorce was *not* allowed after the couple had consummated the marriage physically; but it *was* permitted during the betrothal period. That meant that Joseph still had the option of divorce; and he was seriously thinking about it.

But then, the angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph, and told him that something unique had taken place. A one-time-in-history miracle had occurred: a virgin had conceived a child! The angel told Joseph that the *Holy Ghost* had caused this miracle to occur in Mary’s womb. From that point onward, Joseph was not afraid. He believed God’s message, and took Mary for his wife. Now, Mary and Joseph *did* have children together. Contrary to what the Catholic Church teaches, Mary did *not* remain a virgin for the rest of her life. **Matthew 1:25** clearly teaches us that Mary and Joseph had intimate relations *after* Jesus was born; and **Matthew 13:55** tells us the names of Jesus’ half-brothers: **James, Joses, Simon, and Judah**. Mary and Joseph had children later (including at least two daughters); but until Christ was born, Mary remained a virgin. This was the *only* way that Christ could have entered into our race as the sinless God-Man.

The miracle of the virgin birth of Christ was foretold seven centuries before Christ’s birth, by the prophet Isaiah; and Matthew cited this prophecy in **verses 22 and 23**. Let’s read those verses again, and then go to Isaiah, and take a look at the verse that Matthew is quoting. **(Read Matthew 1:22-23.)**

Read Isaiah 7:10-14.

Jesus was born of a virgin so that He could be the sinless Saviour of mankind. *This* is the piece of the Gospel message that the angel of the LORD delivered to Joseph. The angel instructed Joseph to call His name “Jesus” (meaning “Saviour”) because “***he shall save his***

people from their sins.” Without the message that *God became flesh*, there would be no Gospel. In **1 Timothy 3:16** Paul wrote, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit* (raised back to life by the power of the Holy Spirit), *seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*” Because God was manifest in human flesh, He was able to die for our sins, rise again, and go back to Heaven victoriously, having conquered sin and death!

III. Your decision concerning the Gospel message

We’ve seen what the Gospel *is*; and we’ve seen that the Gospel would not have been possible without the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. However, there is one more thing that each of us must realise: the Gospel must be *received*. You and I have a responsibility to *believe* the Gospel—to place our full trust and confidence in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Son of God. Jesus Himself solemnly warned us that we *must* believe the Gospel if we would escape the penalty of sin (which is separation from God in hell), and enter the Kingdom!

Read Mark 1:14-15.

Jesus said that in order to enter into the Kingdom, you *must* do two things. These two things are inseparable: you cannot have one without the other. First, you must **repent**. To “repent” does not mean to try to clean up your life, or reform yourself in order to earn salvation. To “repent” means to turn in your heart, mind, and will to Jesus Christ, *from sin*. It means to turn your back on your sinful way of living, and to ask Christ to take your sin away, and be your Lord. Secondly, you must **believe** on Jesus Christ. To “believe” doesn’t simply mean to believe in your *head* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He died for you: it means to believe with your *heart*. It means to stop trusting in whatever false things you were trusting before (such as your own good works and religiosity), and to believe, with all your heart, that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is your only hope of salvation.

It is very possible that someone here today has never truly repented and believed on Christ (even though you *know* these truths from the Bible). Perhaps there has never been a time in *your* life when you humbled yourself, admitted that *you* are a sinner, acknowledged that you can’t save yourself, and placed your trust in Christ alone. And why not? Because of pride! The number one reason why *most* people end up in hell is that they were not willing to humble themselves. Remember what we read in **Isaiah 61** and **Luke 4**? We read that Jesus came to preach the Gospel to the “*poor*.” Jesus wasn’t talking about those who are *materially* poor, because we know, from Scripture, that there *are* some people in Heaven who were materially *wealthy* on earth. Likewise, there are many people in hell who were materially *poor* on earth.

Salvation isn't for a certain economic class of people: it is for those who are willing to become "**poor in spirit.**" It is for those for those who are willing to empty themselves of pride; humble themselves before the Saviour; and admit that they need *Him*. If you have never humbled your spirit before God, and placed your trust in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I urge you to do so today.

Conclusion: As we close this morning, I would, first of all, like to address those of you who know Christ as Saviour. You've placed your faith in the Gospel already; but you mustn't forget that your life does not belong to you any longer! Jesus didn't merely save you from the *penalty* of your sin, so that you could miss hell, and go to Heaven: He saved you **from the power of sin.** Christ saves sinners from going *their own way*, and enables them to live righteously. The Gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—results in a radical *change of life* in those who have received it. It results in a change of heart and mind. The Apostle Paul wrote, "***For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.***" (In other words, because we were all sinners, we were all dead to God.) Paul then goes on to say, "***And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.***" If you have forgotten this truth, Christian—if you are living parts of your life for yourself instead of for Christ—then I urge you to ask the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing, and let Him have full control of your life, as He ought to have.

If you do not know Christ as Saviour, I urge you to be saved today! "But how do I get saved, Pastor?" It's simple: just look to Jesus in faith! Look to the one who died for you, and rose again! Repent of your sin, and trust Him alone; and He *will* save you! You will then be able to understand and celebrate the *real* meaning of Christmas. You will enter into a new life, with Christ on the throne of your heart. If you have never let Jesus come into your heart, please let Him come in today! Jesus said, "***Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.***"