

Bible Study: Mal 4:1-6 Luke 1:5-25

Give him the name Jesus

Question 1 – Precedents in the Old Testament

a) Gabriel

Read Daniel 9:20-27. Daniel, faced with exile has prayed a prayer of repentance and asked for mercy. While he is praying he has a visit from Gabriel who give a timetable (in apocalyptic terms) that leads to the final ending of evil. Why do you think that it is Gabriel who speaks to Zechariah and Mary?

b) God speaking to someone in the temple.

See Samuel 1 Sam 3:4-14,

Isaiah Isa 6:1-13

Do these visions have anything in common?

c) There are a few women in the OT who have babies beyond the usual age that women have babies.

See: Elkanah & Hannah (1 Sam 1:1-2),

Manoah & wife (Judges 13:2),

Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:11)

What is the significance of the ensuing children?

All these precedents apply to Zechariah, not Mary.

a) Mary is going about ordinary life. She is betrothed to Joseph – a descendent of King David. (Luke:1

b) Mary is spoken to by Gabriel but in the home.

c) Mary is young. She is a virgin and in the OT there is no precedent for a virgin bearing a baby but it is predicted in Isaiah 7:14. (PS arguing about what “virgin” means and how Jesus was a descendant of David when Joseph was not his biological father is interesting but at the moment stick to what Luke’s point is)

What is extraordinary about Mary?

Question 2 Message to Zechariah

John means “YHWH has been gracious.”

a) What was the mission of John the Baptist?

b) In what way was he to be great? (Luke 1:15 cf 1:76,77)

a. What role does the Holy Spirit have in his life?

Question 3 Message to Mary

Jesus means “YHWH saves”

a) What features of the promised child can you list in 1:31-33,35?

b) What is the mission of the promised child?

a. What role does the Spirit have in his life?

Why is the Spirit involved in John’s birth and in Jesus’ birth? (cf. Joel 2:28). What is his involvement indicative of?

Question 4 Reaction to Gabriel’s presence.

a) Fear is the reaction to the appearance of Gabriel by both Mary and Zechariah. I have no idea what Gabriel looked like but something about him was frightening. Google says that the command “fear not” or “do not be afraid” appears 58 times (eg Luke

2:10) in the Bible. It is the standard response of angels to fear at their appearance.

Why is there fear?

- a. Angels are scary
- b. The world is scary
- c. God is about to do something really big.
 - i. What would your reaction be to a message that God was going to do something big? Relief? Surprise? Fear? Something else?

Question 5 Reaction to the news.

Zechariah wants to know, "how he can be sure of this". (Luke 1:18)

Mary wants to know, "how this will be"? (Luke 1:34)

- a) Is this Mary showing more faith than Zechariah? (see 1:20 and 1:45)? Is Zechariah's silence simply an answer to his question ie. a sign that the message is true? Is Zechariah's reaction understandable? Zechariah and Elizabeth are described as "upright in the sight of God" (1:6). They were expecting God to do something – just not this. How unbelievable is Gabriel's message to Zechariah? Why?
- b) Are the two reactions meant to give us an example to avoid and an example to follow or just tell us what happened?

Question 6.

- a) What expectations do we have of God? Are we surprised by any fulfilling of those expectations?