

Luke 1:26-33

Sermon: **Son of the Most High**

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GOD SENDS AN ANGEL

1. (Luke 1:26–27) “In the sixth month God sent an angel” – this most likely refers to the time when Elizabeth was six months pregnant. The same angel who appeared to Zechariah now appears to the virgin Mary. The word *virgin* did not mean to the author who wrote this, nor to the culture of that time, what it means to us today in the tradition in which we grew up.

Virgin in Greek is *parthenos*. The meaning of the word is: young girl or unmarried daughter. The word *virgin* here does not primarily refer to the sexual experience of the woman, but to her age.

1.1. Although the word clearly shows that Mary was a virgin – which indeed she was – the meaning in this context emphasizes that Mary was of marrying age. At that time, rabbis (teachers) set the minimum age for marriage at 12 years and above. Most women married at 15 or 16, and by the age of 17 you were already considered too old for marriage.

So here the word *parthenos* means „ready for marriage“, not necessarily to highlight our later theological belief: that Mary had to be a virgin – pure, without any sexual relation up to that moment – in order to give birth to the sinless Son, God the Father.

1.1. (Luke 1:26) God sends an angel to the Galilean town of Nazareth. Nazareth was a small place located north of Jerusalem. From Judea, one had to ascend upward to reach Galilee.

Six kilometers northwest of Nazareth was a place called Sepphoris. Archaeologists have found there a rich historical legacy that included Jewish, Roman, and Arab presence. In Sepphoris stood one of the many palaces owned by the Herodian kings.

Nazareth was surrounded by Sepphoris, and most likely the people of Nazareth were craftsmen who built those palaces and structures. We know that Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father, was a carpenter. I assume that Jesus also worked with his father on those palaces.

1.2. (Luke 1:27) Mary became the wife of a man from the house of David. Why is it important that Joseph was from the house of David? Later in the text we will see that the prophecy about Jesus is connected to the promise God gave to David – the promise that after him would come the Messiah,

the Son of God, who will reign forever.

That is why it is crucial that Joseph belonged to the house of David, because then Jesus had the legal right to David's throne. Someone may say: *"But Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus."* And that is true. I believe this is not about blood relation, but about ethnic belonging.

In the Old Testament, we see that if you wanted to belong to the Jewish people, you did not need to be of blood relation – you had to vow to follow the Law of Moses, to belong to their culture, to start living and behaving as a Jew. If we look more closely at Jesus' family tree, we see that among His ancestors were people from other nations, such as the Moabites and the Canaanites¹.

So yes, it is true that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, but this is not about blood relation. It is about legal right, by which Jesus – through Joseph – had the right to inherit David's throne. He was next in line to take that title.

2. (Luke 1:28) When the angel addresses Mary with the word *favorable one*, what does he mean?

In Luke 1:29, we see that Mary is confused by his statement. I believe the angel here is saying:

"Mary, you have received an incredible gift from God – you will give birth to the Messiah, the one the Jewish people have been waiting for so long!"

2.1. The angel then says that the Lord is with her. The word *Lord* in the Bible is used in two ways:

1. The Lord Yahweh – the Creator of all, the One who revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in the form of a burning bush.
2. The Lord as a man – the Messiah, the King, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

A Lord is someone to whom we owe our loyalty and whom we must serve. The Jews did not call God Yahweh, because they believed that name was too holy for their lips. Instead, they called Him Lord. In this context, I believe the angel is speaking of Yahweh. He is telling Mary that God is with her. And if God is with you, then He is not against you – logical.

In the Old Testament, when a prophet addressed Israel with the words: *"The Lord is with you,"* it meant: *"God has not forgotten you. He remembers the promises He gave you. He will fulfill them. He is still here."* Those were words of comfort and encouragement for the Jewish people: *"The Lord is with you, Israel. He has not abandoned you"*².

3. (Luke 1:29) As I already said, Mary still does not know why God has shown grace specifically to her.

THE TITLE "SON OF THE MOST HIGH"

4. (Luke 1:30–33) The angel tells Mary that the gift she will receive will be a child – the Son of the Most High – and that she will be His mother. Let us pause here for a moment. In our Christian tradition, at least for me personally, I understood that Jesus came from God the Father and that He was part of Him, just as we are part of our parents.

But the difference between us and Jesus is that He is not part of the created order as we are – nature, humans, animals, the universe, the world. He belongs to divinity. Flowing in Him is divine

¹ Matthew 1:3–6; Genesis 38; Joshua 2; Joshua 6:25; Book of Ruth 1:4; Book of Ruth 4:13–17; 2 Samuel 11:3–27.

² Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 1:8; Haggai 1:13; Zechariah 8:23.

blood – creative, eternal, unlimited. That is how I used to understand the title *Son of the Most High*. And I believe many Christians still see it that way today.

4.1. When we study the Bible, especially the Gospels, we see that the priests of the Sanhedrin kept questioning Jesus: *“Are you the Messiah? Are you the Son of God? Are you the Son of Man?”* Jesus used those very titles for Himself: *Son of God, Son of Man*. And I believe they carry the same meaning. To understand this, we need to go back to the Old Testament – to the time of King David. There God, through the prophet Nathan, gave David a promise: that He would raise up a descendant from his line who would reign over God’s kingdom forever.

(2 Samuel 7:12–14) God says: *“He will be my Son, and I will be his Father.”*

What does that mean? God is saying to David: *“I, the Creator of all, the King of the universe, am entrusting all My power and authority to one human being. He will rule in My name over Israel and over the rest of the world forever.”*

THE TIME OF POLYTHEISM

4.2. What kind of language is God using here? God is using an idea that David would understand. In the time of polytheism, it was believed that any non-Jewish king who ruled over his land represented his god in heaven. They believed that a god somehow manifested or localized himself in a human being and expressed his authority and power through that person. For example, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was the “son of the sun god Ra.” The king of Babylon was the “son of the god Marduk.” God uses this very idea (a theological belief of that time) and gives David a promise: that one day, as Yahweh, the King of the universe, the Creator of all, He would entrust all His authority to that one human being, who would be His representative on earth forever. God said: *“He will be My Son, and I will be His Father.”* From that moment on, the titles *Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah* – in Greek *Christos* – remained in Jewish language as names for the One who would eternally reign over God’s kingdom. The prophets, for example, used that term in their writings whenever they wanted to announce the coming of “the One.”

Examples:

(Daniel 7:13–14): *“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”*

(Jeremiah 23:3–6): *“I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord. “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just*

and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.”

4.3. So then, when the authors write that He will be the *Son of the Most High*, they are not primarily telling us readers that Jesus literally and metaphysically came from God the Father. What they want to emphasize is that now the long-promised Son has come onto the scene – the One who will reign forever over Israel’s kingdom and the rest of the world. Now comes the visible image (Jesus) of the invisible God (Yahweh).

5. **(Luke 1:32–33)** After the death of King David, the titles *Son of God*, *Son of Man*, *Messiah* were inherited by men who came from David’s line. But they never fulfilled the role that God had promised to David. Why? Because they were selfish, foolish, sinful human beings who pursued their own glory rather than God’s³. Still, they carried that title, which one day would be taken up by the Son with a capital S – Jesus Christ. He is the long-promised Messiah who will rule over Israel and the rest of the world forever. And Mary recognizes this in the angel’s statement, when he told her that she would be the mother of the Son with a capital S. Her Son would fulfill God’s promise to David: “*I will be his Father, and he will be My Son; he will reign over My kingdom forever.*”

5.1. Finally, in **(Luke 1:31)** we read: “**You shall call His name Jesus.**” The angel gives instructions, just as he did with Zechariah: “*When the child is born, Mary, you will give Him the name Jesus.*”

³ 1 Kings 11:4–6; 2 Kings 21:1–9; Jeremiah 22:13–17; 2 Chronicles 36:11–14.