

Fourth Sunday in Advent

OLD TESTAMENT – 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Now when the king lived in his house and the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, 2 the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” 3 And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.” 4 But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, 5 “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. 7 In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’ 8 Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. 9 And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’”

7:1–29 God’s great promise to David (see Introduction: Contents and Theme). Although it is not expressly called a covenant here, it is elsewhere (23:5; Ps 89:3, 28, 34, 39; cf. Ps 132:11), and David responds with language suggesting his recognition that a covenant had been made (see notes on vv. 20, 28). (CSB)

7:1 *when the king lived in his house.* This was an expression referring to his permanent abode after having attended to all the external affairs of the kingdom. (Kretzmann)

For so much of his life David had been caught up in the business of war and fighting. A courageous warrior, he had carried out some of the most successful military campaigns in Israel’s history. But now he found himself in a unique situation, at least as far as his life was concerned. David experienced a time of rest and peace. (PBC)

and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies. Chronologically the victories noted in 8:1–14 probably preceded the events of this chapter. The arrangement of material is topical—ch. 6 records the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem; ch. 7 tells of David’s desire to build a temple in Jerusalem in which to house the ark. (CSB)

All those nations which still felt strong enough to dispute the growing power of Israel having been vanquished. (Kretzmann)

7:2 *Nathan.* The first reference to this prophet (see 12:1–14; 1Ki 1). (CSB)

David regarded Nathan highly as a confidential adviser. (Kretzmann)

tent. See v. 6; 6:17. Now that he himself had a royal palace (symbolic of his established kingship), a tent did not seem to David to be an appropriate place for the throne of Israel's divine King (see note on 6:2; see also Ps 132:2–5; Ac 7:46). He wanted to build Israel's heavenly King a royal house in the capital city of his kingdom. (CSB)

As David relaxed and enjoyed his beautiful new palace, truly fit for a king, something struck him as being terribly wrong. It didn't seem right that he should be living in such splendor, in a palace whose walls were lined with beautiful cedar, while the ark of the Lord was kept in a tent. (PBC)

David wanted to build a temple for the Lord. (TLSB)

7:3 *Nathan said.* In consulting a prophet, David sought God's will, but Nathan boldly voiced approval of David's plans in the Lord's name before he had received a revelation from the Lord. (CSB)

This approval of David's purpose, however, came out of Nathan's own mind, not by divine revelation. (CSB)

By consulting Nathan the prophet, David was seeking God's will. Nathan readily agreed with David's plans without first consulting the Lord. (TLSB)

7:5 *would you build.* David's desire was commendable (1Ki 8:18–19), but his gift and mission were to fight the Lord's battles until Israel was securely at rest in the promised land (see v. 10; 1Ki 5:3). (CSB)

7:6 *have moved with* - literally, "I was a wanderer in tent and dwelling-place"; for even after the children of Israel had reached Canaan, the tent had been moved from Gilgal to Shiloh, and then to the hill between Gibeah and Gibeon. The Tabernacle, the structure as built by Moses, Ex. 35, 11, had been Jehovah's dwelling-place. (Kretzmann)

7:7 *did I speak ...* "Why have you not built me a house ... ?" David misunderstood the Lord's priorities. He reflected the pagan notion that the gods were interested in human beings only as builders and maintainers of their temples and as practitioners of their cult. Instead, the Lord had raised up rulers in Israel only to shepherd his people (that is also why he had brought David "from the pasture," v. 8). (CSB)

The Lord had never commanded such a dwelling to be built, so David's predecessors had not acted wrongly by not building one. (TLSB)

Neither during the desert journey, nor during the entire period of the Judges, when the leadership passed from one tribe of the more important ones to another, had the Lord ever commanded the children of Israel to build Him a permanent and costly sanctuary, worthy of His glory. (Kretzmann)

7:8 *say to my servant David* – It wasn't that God was punishing David for something in his past. It was just that it was not God's plan that David build a temple for him. God had other plans for David to do. (PBC)

7:9 *I have cut off all your enemies.* David had always been sure of the merciful presence of Jehovah, even during the years when Saul persecuted him. David's victories had brought him into prominent attention in all the surrounding nations. Of so much concerning his outward success Nathan was to remind David first, of the fact that he owed his position and all his success to the Lord alone. (Kretzmann)

7:10 *I will appoint a place for my people Israel.* It is for this purpose that the Lord has made David king, and through David he will do it. (CSB)

7:11 *judges.* During the period of the judges. (CSB)

I will also give you rest from all your enemies. See vv. 1, 9. David's victories over threatening powers will be complete, so that the rest already enjoyed will be assured for the future. (CSB)

the LORD himself will make a house for you. Compare this statement with the rhetorical question of v. 5. In a beautiful play on words God says that David is not to build him a house (temple); rather, God will build David a house (royal dynasty) that will last forever (v. 16). God has been building Israel ever since the days of Abraham, and now he commits himself to build David's royal house so that the promise to Israel may be fulfilled—rest in the promised land. It is God's building that effects his kingdom. This covenant with David is unconditional, like those with Noah, Abram and Phinehas (see note on Ge 9:9; see also chart on "Major Covenants in the OT"), grounded only in God's firm and gracious purpose. It finds its ultimate fulfillment in the kingship of Christ, who was born of the tribe of Judah and the house of David (see Ps 89:30–38; Isa 9:1–7; Mt 1:1; Lk 1:32–33, 69; Ac 2:30; 13:23; Ro 1:2–3; 2Ti 2:8; Rev 3:7; 22:16). (CSB)

A dynasty. Even Solomon's temple served only as a temporary house of God. It would give way to that offspring of David who dwelt (tabernacled) among people and in whom "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" bodily (Col 1:19). Cf Jn 1:14; Col 2:9. (TLSB)

7:16 *your kingdom shall be made sure forever.* The promise of an everlasting kingdom for the house of David became the focal point for many later prophecies and powerfully influenced the development of the Messianic hope in Israel. (CSB)

The constant repetition of the phrase "forever, for eternity," again forces the conclusion that we must look beyond Solomon, to the eternal existence of the Son here concerned, to One who is Himself possessor of eternal life and of a kingdom which shall never have an end. This, of course, may rightly be said only of Christ, for it was in His case alone that there was so complete an identification with the sons of men as to make the expression possible: "He was made sin for us," 2 Cor. 5, 21. (Kretzmann)

That's the wonderful thing about God's "No's." Though at first they may appear to be depriving us of some joy, in reality they are designed to give us more. How wrong ever to think we know better than God. How foolish of us every to second-guess the Lord. (PBC)

EPISTLE – Romans 16:25-27

25 Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages 26 but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— 27 to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.

16:25-27 It is fitting that the apostle should conclude this letter with its rich content in such a flow of ardor and fullness of thought. The Holy Ghost, who has spoken through Paul, once more lifts the writer's heart and mind to God. After the apostle in this letter, as in no other, has presented the whole plan of God's salvation, and to Christ Jesus, the perfect mediator, praises and thanks Him in advance for His

saving work which He will surely perform in the readers of the letter. The closing doxology corresponds especially to the introit of the letter. (Stoekhardt)

Preceding our text we find Paul's final instructions to his readers. He advises them to avoid divisive people who undermine the clear teachings of Christianity. After clearly presenting the essential and systematic teachings of Christianity—all of which flow from justification by grace through faith—Paul directs our praise to the author of such teaching, God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

In the Nestle-Aland XXVI Greek text verses 25-27 are enclosed in single square brackets. This means that the editors consider these verses of doubtful authenticity though the apparatus assumes in principle that this reading is part of the text. What causes difficulty is that these verses are not found in the same place in all original documents. The apparatus informs us that some omit these words altogether; some add them after 14:23; some add them after 15:33; some add them after 14:23 and 15:23; some add them here and after 14:23. The most reliable texts add them here only. KJV adds them here because the Textus Receptus adds them here. All of our current versions have these words here only. No sane minded scholar considers these words spurious. (Buls)

Comments by commentators on these verses are interesting.

Franzmann: Paul began the body of his letter with the proclamation of the power of God at work in his Gospel, 1:16. What wondrous things that power can do and does, his whole letter has set forth in unparalleled fullness. Paul closes with a hymn in praise of God who has power; He is a God at hand, able to sustain the Romans in their conspicuous and responsible place, able to strengthen them for the greater tasks that Paul's coming will open to them. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Paul closes the letter with such a remarkable doxology, a veritable effusion of glowing thoughts, interwoven with a beautiful eulogy of the Gospel. He gives all glory to God, to Him that is able to make the Christians firm and constant in faith and holy life. (Buls)

Bengel: A doxology closes the whole epistle, as one closed the doctrinal part of it, 11:36. So 2 Peter 3:18 and Jude verse 25. The last words of this epistle correspond exactly to the first, 1:1-5. Especially on the power of God, the Gospel, Jesus Christ, the Scriptures, obedience of faith, all nations. (Buls)

Sanday-Headlam: The Epistle concludes in a manner unusual in St Paul with a doxology or ascription of praise, in which incidentally all the great thoughts of the Epistle are summed up. Although doxologies are not uncommon in these Epistles (Galatians 1:5; Romans 11:36), they are not usually so long or so heavily weighted; but Ephesians 3:21; Philippians 4:20; 1 Timothy 1:17 offer quite sufficient parallels. Ascriptions of praise at the conclusion of other Epistles are common, Hebrews 13:20-21; Jude 24-25. (Buls)

This doxology is the grandest hymn of praise in the New Testament. It has often been said that the Epistle to the Romans is a grand summary of all the Christian Doctrine. This doxology is fitting for such a great book. (Buls)

Verses 25-27 comprise one sentence. Grammatically speaking verse 27 is the main clause. NKJV translates: "to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." Verses 25-26 stand in apposition to "only wise God" in verse 27. The majority of our versions begin this verse with "now." It indicates the conclusion of the Epistle. (Buls)

"Glory and praise" belong to God. "Is able" is present tense. He is constantly able. "Establish" means "to make firm, to make stable." RSV renders it "to strengthen." AAT has "to make strong." It covers both justification and sanctification, faith and living, in the life of the Christian. JB evidently wants to make sure that we do not omit Christian living here: "Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News, etc." (Buls)

We have three "by" or "according to" phrases in this text: two in verse 25 and one in 26. The translations of the three are interesting in the versions: KJV, NKJV, RSV, and NASB have "according, according, according." TEV has "according, according, by;" AAT has "by, by, as;" and NIV reads "by, according, by." The commentators ask whether these three phrases denote correspondence or cause. As becomes clear in verse 26, the very purpose and cause of the Gospel is to give me true faith in Christ and obedient living in keeping therewith. (Buls)

In verse 26 the Gospel is called "good news, proclamation, revelation of mystery." These three terms are synonymous and embellish each other. Note that the first two are articular and that the third is likewise definite because it is modified by a genitive. The Gospel is THE good news, THE proclamation, and THE revelation of the mystery, *par excellence*. Even unbelievers are made aware of this. And, by virtue of the fact that it is THE revelation of God's mystery, all synergism is eliminated. Man's reason is incapable of originating such a plan and he is not even able to believe it of his own strength. (Buls)

16:25 now to him – The purpose of Paul's intended visit to Rome was to strengthen the Roman Christians. (1:11) That was also the purpose of this letter. However, God alone has the power to strengthen and establish the Christians in their estate. (Stoekhardt)

is able – Form of word translated "power" in 1:16. (TLSB)

my gospel. Not a gospel different from that preached by others, but a gospel Paul received by direct revelation (see Gal 1:12). (CSB)

Why does Paul call it "my" Gospel? Three versions make it a subjective genitive, and we think that is correct. TEV and JB have "the Good News I preach." AAT reads "by the good news I bring." "Jesus Christ" is plainly objective genitive: "the proclamation about Jesus Christ." The proclamation is nothing more and nothing less than Jesus Christ. (Buls)

"For long ages past" is variously translated "since the world began, for long ages, for endless ages." (Buls)

Lenski: During all those past ages no public proclamation in the world. (Buls)

Kretzmann: It had been hidden, kept secret, unknown and undiscoverable by human reason, from ancient times, from eternity. The counsel of God for the redemption of mankind had been hid in God, Ephesians 3:9, and it had not been made known in its fullness and glory for several millenniums after the creation of the world. (Buls)

Franzmann: Christ is the disclosure of the 'mystery' of God, the revelation of His long counsels of salvation that worked in strange and secret ways for long ages, all through the dark and inconspicuous history of His little people Israel. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: The eternal times extend from eternity through the eons of the pre-Christian era until the time designated by 'now' . . . Already the children of the Old Covenant hoped in Christ. Nevertheless, the

mystery of eternity could with right be designated as something secret because the Savior had not yet appeared, because complete understanding of prophecy was lacking, because the report concerning Christ was limited to a small area and hidden to the world at large. The preaching of the Gospel is in this present era until the end of the world the greatest and most important work on earth. (Buls)

Bengel: The TIMES are pointed out, which at their very beginning, as it were, touched upon previous ETERNITY, and as it were, mingled with it. Not eternity itself, of which the TIMES are, as it were, streams In the prophets the calling of the Gentiles had been predicted, but the Jews did not understand it.(Buls)

Sanday-Headlam: God who rules over all the aeons or periods in time is working out an eternal purpose in the world. For ages it was a mystery, now in these last days it has been revealed. (Buls)

Cranfield: The manifestation, which has taken place in the Gospel events and their subsequent proclamation, and is contrasted with the hiddenness of the mystery in the past, is a manifestation which is properly understood in its true significance only in the light of its Old Testament foreshadowing and attestation. It is when the manifestation of the mystery is understood as the fulfillment of God's promise made in the Old Testament, (compare 1:2) as attested, interpreted, clarified, by the Old Testament that it is truly understood as the Gospel of God for all mankind. (Buls)

preaching of Jesus Christ. A description of the gospel; it is about Jesus Christ, who is its content. (CSB)

Synonymous terms; the former emphasizes the content, while the latter refers to the active proclamation. (TLSB)

Here at the end Paul appeals to his Gospel, to the Gospel which was entrusted him by the Lord. Its content is nothing else than the preaching of Jesus Christ. Thus in 1:1 ff., it was directly called “the gospel...concerning his Son Jesus Christ.” (Stoekhardt)

“My gospel” is not different from “the preaching of Jesus Christ.” It is consistent with and refers to the true Gospel. “The preaching of Jesus Christ” is the same as that referred to in Heb 1:1–2. The disclosed mystery is a perfect prelude to Christmas. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

mystery. The OT did not make all things clear. In the NT, the mystery is now revealed. God in Christ has united Jew and Gentile together in one Body (cf Eph. 3:4-6). (TLSB)

for long ages. From eternity past (see 1Co 2:6–10). (CSB)

16:26 *now been disclosed and made known through the prophetic writings.* See 1:2. (CSB)

According to the context the mystery is the mystery of Christ and the salvation in Him. The same was hidden in eternity, has now, however, been revealed. According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, rather: in eternal times. The eternal times extend from eternity through the eons of the pre-Christian era until the time designated by “now.” Already in eternity God has resolved to redeem the human race through Christ. This resolution was first hidden in God, Eph 3:9, and was from the beginning of the world kept secret from the children of men. Now, however, since Jesus Christ has come and has carried out God’s saving counsel, the secret of eternity has been revealed, in that God revealed it to holy apostles, who in turn proclaimed it to the world. (Stoekhardt)

The proclamation of the Gospel was mediated through prophetic Scriptures, since the apostles according to the example of Christ connected their teaching and preaching to the Scriptures of the OT. "Scriptures of the prophets" points back to OT time and economy. Already in prophetic Scriptures God had noted His eternal plan of salvation through the Spirit. In the beginning it was stated that God had promised the Gospel of His Son by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures (1:2). So already the children of the Old Covenant hoped in Christ. Nevertheless, the mystery of eternity could with right be designated as something secret because the Savior had not yet appeared, because complete understanding of prophecy was lacking, because the report concerning Christ was limited to a small area and hidden to the world at large. Now, however, the apostles have drawn the prophetic Scriptures out of their relative secrecy, have fully revealed prophecy and have shown not only to Israel, but also to all the Gentiles that all prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (Stoeckhardt)

The mystery is revealed not only by the incarnate Word, but also by the written Word. Jesus' teachings and the apostles' teachings are not disconnected from the Old Testament prophetic writings (Eph 3:4–5). "Obedience of faith" does not refer to sanctification but refers to the subjective appropriation of God's objective gift of grace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

all nations. The universality of the gospel (see Mt 28:19). (CSB)

The eternal God, who decrees beyond time and eternity, has granted this last ere of the world the preaching of Jesus Christ. He gave the apostles, the NT preachers in general, the express mandate to reveal the secret of eternity to all peoples of the earth. The preaching of the Gospel is in this present ere until the end of the world the greatest and most important work on earth. It serves to the salvation of souls. The purpose of the preaching of the Gospel is to establish among all Gentiles the obedience of faith, which alone makes men righteous before God and saves them. (Stoeckhardt)

eternal God. God is without beginning or end. (TLSB)

to bring about the obedience of faith – The mystery which at first was kept secret, has now been made manifest and has been made known. "Through" denotes agency. It denotes the Old Testament prophetic writings. Then the cause or means, "by the command of God." (Buls)

"So that all might believe and obey," or literally "for the purpose of the obedience of faith." It is not easy to classify "believe" as a genitive. it could be appositional: faith is obedience. It might be called adjectival: the obedience of a Christ is of a certain type, faith obedience. Or perhaps subjective: faith causes obedience. (Buls)

Arndt: . . . the obedience of faith, that is, simply faith. (Buls)

Most versions take the second part of the phrase with "to make known," "made known to all the nations." Thus KJV, NKJV, NASB, TEV, NEB, AAT, and JB. But, notice, NIV takes it differently: "so that all nations might believe and obey him." Our versions translate "nations." Lenski understands it as "Gentiles." Perhaps JB likewise: "broadcast to pagans everywhere." (Buls)

Lenski: 'The publication' means a making manifest plus a making known. It began when Jesus sent the apostles into all the world to make it resound with the Gospel. . . . 'Writings' differentiates this means from the 'kerygma' which is oral, the voice of the heralds, Christ's Apostles. But the apostles preached Christ not apart from or as different from, the Old Testament prophets . . . Paul's Epistle constantly quotes the prophets. Now the fulfillment had come, and now at last the prophetic writings became a means for reaching the whole world. (Buls)

Kretzmann: Through the preaching of the Gospel the very writings of the prophets are made clear and are shown to contain glorious Gospel truths. (Buls)

Franzmann: All nations now shall know the God who hid Himself so long in Israel. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: The Gospel brings along with it that they who have come to faith also persevere in faith. (Buls)

Sanday-Headlam: In this passage still carrying on the explanation of 'kerygma,' four main ideas of the Apostolic preaching are touched upon -- the continuity of the Gospel, the Apostolic commission, salvation through faith, the preaching to the Gentiles. (Buls)

Like Lenski, they understand "Gentiles." Think for a moment: What is the greatest proclamation of New Testament times? Democracy? No. Communism? No. Islam? No. Science? No. It is what Revelation 14:6 calls "the everlasting Gospel." (Buls)

The connection of this whole description of the Gospel is now clear. According to this Gospel God can and will strengthen the Christians. The Gospel, which is appointed by God to accomplish the obedience of faith, brings along with it that they who have come to faith also persevere in faith. The God, who works faith through the preaching of Jesus Christ, can and will through this same preaching strengthen and keep the believers in saving faith unto the end. (Stoeckhardt)

16:27 *only wise* – God is all-knowing, but also all-wise in providing for our salvation. (TLSB)

The versions have difficulty with the two adjectives. KJV: "to God only wise."; NKJV: "to God alone wise"; RSV, NIV, AAT, NASB: "to the only wise God"; TEV: "to the only God, who alone is all wise"; JB: "He alone is wisdom"; (Buls)

Lenski: No one who could also be called wise can be placed beside him. (Buls)

Arndt: Here the apostle calls God the only wise one. (Buls)

to ... God be glory. The ultimate purpose of all things. (CSB)

Bengel: God's wisdom is glorified by the gospel in the Church, Ephesians 3:10. 'That is of power' (verse 25) and 'wise' are joined here, as 1 Corinthians 1:24, where Christ is called 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' who through Christ appears as wise alone. (Buls)

"Through Jesus Christ" denotes Christ as Mediator between God and man. We would never have known God as the only wise one unless Christ has reconciled us to God and made this known in the Gospel. (Buls)

Sanday-Headlam: The doxology sums up all the great ideas of the Epistle: The power of the Gospel which St. Paul was commissioned to preach; the revelation in it of the eternal purpose of God; its contents, faith; its sphere, all the nations of the earth; its author, the one wise God, whose wisdom is thus vindicated -- all these thoughts had been continually dwelt on. (Buls)

In Jesus Christ, the salvation of the world, in the eternal counsel of God's love, now fulfilled and revealed, in the preaching of Jesus Christ which goes through all lands from one people to another and

everywhere works some fruit unto eternal life, the fruit of the obedience of faith, God's incomparable wisdom, which surpasses all human thought and understanding, has glorified itself. To this only wise God, who will certainly complete His saving counsel also in the readers of the letter, the apostle, in the name of the readers of the letter, gives praise and glory through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of salvation. He also gives praise and glory to Jesus Christ. He wishes to consider Jesus Christ, the Mediator of salvation, as the "coordinated Cause of salvation," as in the introduction of the letter (1:7). He coordinates the Father and Son, who is of the same essence, of equal power and glory with the Father. (Stoeckhardt)

The doxology is directed to God the Father, and not Jesus Christ. However, any access to God—even in praise—occurs through Christ alone. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 1)

16:25–27 Paul's closing words encompass the entire good news of God, from the prophetic OT writings to the proclamation of Jesus Christ being made known to all nations. God's eternal being, His wisdom, knowledge, and power, are all far beyond ours. He calls those of faith to respond in obedience to His will. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was entrusted to Paul and faithfully proclaimed among the nations in accordance with God's will. • At the bottom of his music, Johann Sebastian Bach wrote "S.D.G" (Lat *Soli Deo Gloria*), "to God alone the glory." Paul ends his marvelous expression of Law and Gospel in Rm on the same note. He then adds that this is all in and through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory. Amen! (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

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1:26–35 This section speaks clearly of the virginal conception of Jesus (vv. 27, 34–35; see Mt 1:18–25). The conception was the work of the Holy Spirit; the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, while remaining God, also “became flesh” (Jn 1:14). From conception he was fully God and fully man. (CSB)

1:26 *In the sixth month.* That is, from the time of John’s conception. (CSB)

This is the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, not the sixth month of the Roman calendar year. Luke characteristically dates events within the narrative, and the length of time here suggests a total of around four hundred ninety days between Elizabeth’s conception and Jesus’ presentation in the temple. (CC)

That is, of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. “The angel Gabriel”: see Dan 8:16; 9:21. Along with Michael, Gabriel is one of two angels named in canonical Scripture. Raphael gets mention also in the Apocrypha in Tobit. “Nazareth”: Not mentioned in the Old Testament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Like any good historian, Luke carefully notes time and place. He maintains the close linkage between John and Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

Gabriel was sent from God – ἀπεσταλάν...ἀπο τοῦ Θεοῦ. The verb makes clear that the angel is sent at the command and with the authority of someone else; the prepositional phrase expressly states that it is from God. Gabriel is last seen and heard in Daniel 9:20-27. This may be prophetically significant. In the vision of Daniel, Gabriel decrees “seventy sevens” for the fulfillment of God’s promise and the atonement of sin. From the time of Gabriel’s appearance to Zechariah at the incense altar to announce the conception of John until the time Jesus is presented at the temple 40 days after his birth is 490 days (counted in 30 day lunar months). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

Nazareth. Never mentioned in the OT. Jesus’ hometown is obscure and insignificant. (TLSB)

Galilee is called “Galilee of the Gentiles” in Is. 9:1, and the Hebrew phrase could also mean that it is a territory in which a “circle of nations” come together. It is the place where the light of salvation first dawns (Is. 9:2). Nazareth is not mentioned in the OT. The town was close to several main trading routes on the outskirts of Zebulun in lower Galilee. Its independence and aloofness gave rise to proverbial scorn on the part of the Jews of Judea. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:27 *to virgin* – An unmarried woman. Mary was probably between 16 and 18 years old at the time. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

See Is 7:14, which the LXX clearly understood to refer to one who had never known intercourse. “Of the house of David”: Assuming that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke reflect the differing family trees of Joseph and of Mary, it appears that both are of the house of David, but descended from different sons of David. “The virgin’s name was Mary”: A remarkably common name at the time in Judaism, and indeed, ever since! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

pledged to be married. Jewish betrothal was binding in ways that modern engagements are not. Betrothal usually preceded marriage by at least nine months to assure that the bride was not pregnant. The young man would give the bride’s family a gift. The fathers of the families would sign a marriage document (Hbr *kethubah*). (TLSB)

house of David – ἐξ οἴκου Δαβὶδ—Jesus’ Davidic ancestry is a key theme in the infancy narrative (Lk 1:32, 69; 2:4, 11), is affirmed in the genealogy (3:31), is declared publicly by a blind beggar who desires his sight (18:38–39), and is a source of controversy during Jesus’ Jerusalem teaching (20:41–44). Cf. Acts 13:34. (CC)

1:28 *Greetings.* *Ave* in the Latin Vulgate (from which comes “Ave Maria”). (CSB)

χαῖρε—As a greeting, χαίρω, “rejoice,” is used either in the imperative (as here) or the infinitive. The infinitive greeting is a Greek expression: “salutations!” or “greetings!” (Acts 15:23; 23:26; James 1:1; 2 Jn 1:10–11). But the imperative greeting reflects Hebrew expressions. It occurs six times in the NT; five are singular, one is plural. Only here is the singular a sincere expression of goodwill and favor; the others are sarcastic (the mocking soldiers, Mt 27:29; Mk 15:18; Jn 19:3) or hypocritical (Judas, Mt 26:49). The plural, spoken by the risen Jesus, is also sincerely gracious (Mt 28:9). One of the most common Hebrew greetings is שָׁלוֹם , “peace,” reflected in εἰρήνη in Lk 10:5; 24:36, but the LXX never translates שָׁלוֹם , “peace,” by the imperative χαῖρε. J. McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus*, 38–39, notes, “The imperative form χαῖρε, far from being a conventional greeting, always refers to the joy attendant on the deliverance of Israel; wherever it occurs, it is a translation of a Hebrew verb meaning ‘Rejoice greatly!’” (CC)

(ESV). A generic translation, at best. Although the word could be used as a greeting, it is better to translate literally here: “Rejoice!” The angel greeting the Virgin with “Howdy” hardly seems to capture the intent. The very source of all joy is about to take on flesh. *kecharitōmenē*, “O favored one.” Traditionally, “full of grace.” For a fascinating take on the meaning of this phrase, see LW 43:40. *ho kurios meta sou*, “The Lord is with you.” Almost a pun—Immanuel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

favored one – κεχαριτωμένη—The perfect participle “has the strongest connotation of the present: ‘having been favored and as a result still being in this blessed condition’” (Lenski) – (CC)

the Lord is with you – The Lord is with Mary (1:28) in two senses. He will come upon her and overshadow her, and the presence of the Lord will be in her womb. The new era of salvation begins with the conception of Jesus in Mary. Luke contrasts this in step-parallel fashion to Zechariah and Elizabeth, whose son John the Baptist is born according to the old era with its laws and regulations. The new era of salvation comes through the baby to be conceived by the gracious action of God upon Mary, who finds favor with God—not due to any superiority over other women or any merit in God’s estimation, but simply because of God’s good pleasure (cf. 10:21). (CC)

1:29 *dietarachthē*, “greatly troubled.” The lowliness of the Virgin is accentuated. She did not think of herself as one who was highly favored; thus the challenge to grasp what the angel is saying. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:30 *mē phobou*, “Do not be afraid.” The standard angelic line when the messengers make themselves visible. See also Lk 1:13; 2:10. *charin para tōi theōi*, “favor with God.” See Gen 6:8. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:31-33 From 1:31b to 1:33, Mary is instructed by the angel concerning the child she will conceive and bear. This is her catechesis. Messianic designations abound: “Jesus” (1:31), “great” and “Son of the Most High” (1:32), “King” (1:32–33). For the hearer of Luke’s gospel, there should no longer be any doubt about the identity of the one who is the subject of the gospel. While Luke does not explain the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς), it is the Greek form of יְהוֹשֻׁעַ or יְהוֹשָׁע , “Joshua,” meaning “Yahweh is salvation” or “Yahweh saves.” Matthew sums up both the person and work of the Messiah: “He will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21). John the Baptist will be “great before the Lord” (Lk 1:15), but Jesus himself is great, the Son of the Most High (1:32). (CC)

Jesus is the culmination of the Davidic line. All the promises of God in the OT are now coming to fulfillment in Christ. The promise of an everlasting kingdom to the house of David (Is 9:6–7) is reflected

in the words “the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will be King over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Lk 1:32–33). The royal line of the kingdom of Judah, prophesied by Jacob in Gen 49:10ff., merges with the royal line of David that comes in 2 Sam 7:16: “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.” Despite David’s sin, and the sin of all those in his human royal succession, God’s redemptive plan will be accomplished through his Descendent. Jesus will reign over the house of David, for the royal messianic succession will continue forever in him. (CC)

1:31 *Jesus*. The phrase appears to be formulaic; see Gen 16:11; Judg 13:3; and especially Is 7:14, which the angel seems to be evoking. The given name Immanuel in 7:14 is replaced by the name Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.” That is, Yahweh Saves will be the one whom she conceives and bears. When Moses (the Law) couldn’t get the Israelites to the Promised Land, Yahweh Saves (Joshua!) did the job. The One who brings his people all the way into the land of promise is thus the One within her. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

1:32 *will be called* – This is not saying that he is “the Son of the Most High” in name only, but that his being called that confesses who he is. “The throne of his father David.” See today’s Old Testament Reading. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

the Son of the Most High. This title has two senses: (1) the divine Son of God and (2) the Messiah born in time. His Messiahship is clearly referred to in the following context (vv. 32b–33). (CSB)

Most High. A title frequently used of God in both the OT and NT (see vv. 35, 76; 6:35; 8:28; Ge 14:19 and note; 2Sa 22:14; Ps 7:10). (CSB)

In post-exilic Israel, it was the second most common name after Lord as a substitute for the divine name Yahweh. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

throne. Promised in the OT to the Messiah descended from David (2Sa 7:13, 16; Ps 2:6–7; 89:26–27; Isa 9:6–7). (CSB)

his father David. Mary was a descendant of David, as was Joseph (see Mt 1:16); so Jesus could rightly be called a “son” of David. (CSB)

1:33 *he will reign over* – βασιλεύσει—“He will be King” emphasizes the kingship of Jesus. This corresponds with the next phrase, which refers to the “kingdom” (βασιλείας). (CC)

Refers to Davidic covenant, wherein God promised the Messiah would descend from David and rule eternally (2Sm 7:16; Ps 2:6–7). Cf Lk 1:27; 2:4. (TLSB)

“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” The promise is that the Child conceived in her womb would be eternal; if his kingdom never ends, that means his life goes on forever! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

forever. See Ps 45:6; Rev 11:15. (CSB)

of his kingdom there will be no end. Although Christ’s role as mediator will one day be finished (see 1Co 15:24–28), the kingdom of the Father and Son, as one, will never end. (CSB)

The angel appears to be referring to a number of different prophecies concerning the Davidic throne. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:34 *How will this be ... ?* Mary did not ask in disbelief, as Zechariah did (v. 20). See v. 45. (CSB)

In contrast to Zechariah's skeptical question (v 18), Mary wonders in faith. Zechariah walked away unable to speak, but Mary burst forth into holy song (vv 46–55) after Gabriel's departure. (TLSB)

pōs estai touto, "How will this be?" Not "How *can* this be?" Mary does not dispute the angel's words in unbelief nor ask for a sign like Zechariah, but she does ask for more information. *epei andra ou ginōskō*, "since I am a virgin." Literally, "since I know not a man." The present tense here is interesting. One would have expected: "Since I *have not known* a man." Some of the Fathers see this as perhaps obliquely hinting at her intention to remain a virgin. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

Like Zechariah, Mary knows she is hearing something beyond her ken. It will take a miracle surpassing all that God has done before. But unlike Zechariah, her wondering is not laced with skepticism. It is a simple and honest question she poses: "How will this be, since a man I know not?" (CC)

Mary's question is contrasted with Zechariah's. Mary seeks further information, while Zechariah seeks a sign. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:35 *Holy Spirit* – Gabriel speaks of the Holy Spirit coming upon (ἐπελεύσεται) Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowing (ἐπισκιάσει) her. This same Spirit hovered over the waters and brought forth creation (Gen 1:2). During the exodus Yahweh's presence was over Israel as he led, protected, and fought for her in the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–31). The pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the tabernacle when Yahweh spoke with Moses (Ex 33:9–10). The presence of Yahweh in a cloud overshadowed (ἐπεσκίαζεν [LXX] the tabernacle, and the glory of Yahweh filled it (Ex 40:35). The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism (Lk 3:22), and a cloud overshadowed him at his transfiguration (9:34, where ἐπεσκίαζεν is also used). The same Spirit that overshadows Mary will also be promised to the disciples by Jesus just before his ascension: they will be "clothed with power from on high" (24:49). As the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary, she conceives Jesus as holy, the Son of God. This is the moment of the incarnation of our Lord (1:35). (CC)

Cf Is 32:15 describing the Spirit bringing fertility and life to the land. (TLSB)

"The Holy Spirit." As over the waters of the first creation, so now over the waters of Mary's womb the new creation begins with the Holy Spirit at work. "Holy." In other words, the child to be born will be the Holy One of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

overshadow. Used in LXX Ex 40:35 to describe God's presence in the tabernacle. Cf Gn 1:2. Accordingly, Gabriel's announcement implies that through Mary's pregnancy, God will be present among His people in a more wonderful way (cf Jn 1:14). (TLSB)

This denotes the advent of the Holy Spirit. A noteworthy use of episkiadzo in the LXX is Exodus 40:35, where the cloud of the Lord's presence overshadowed the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord fills the tabernacle. Now the creative Spirit overshadows the Virgin Mary, and she is filled with the glory of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

will be called holy. Jesus never sinned (2Co 5:21; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 1Pe 2:22; 1Jn 3:5). (CSB)

ἅγιον—This describes that which is begotten in Mary (τὸ γεννώμενον) and therefore applies to Jesus. It could either be part of the subject of κληθήσεται, modifying τὸ γεννώμενον, “the holy child to be born will be called. (CC)

Son of God. Title forcefully underscores Jesus’ divine nature. “The divine and human natures in Christ are personally united. So there are not two Christs, one the Son of God and the other the Son of Man. But one and the same person is the Son of God and Son of Man” (FC Ep VIII 5). (TLSB)

1:36 *Elizabeth your relative.* It is not known whether she was a cousin, aunt or other relation. (CSB)

The pregnancy of barren Elizabeth serves as a sign that the word of the angel is faithful. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:37 Echoes the question God asked Abraham while announcing that Sarah would bear Isaac in her old age. (TLSB)

nothing will be impossible with God – Ultimately this is a matter of trust, of taking God at his word. There is a possible allusion to Sarah (Gen 18:14). Jesus himself says the same thing regarding salvation (Mt 19:26). (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

“Nothing will be impossible with God.” This might be rendered, “Not possible for any word of God to fail” (*pan hrēma*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

ῥήμα—This denotes both a word and the event(s) the word promises. πᾶν ῥήμα with οὐκ means “nothing.” The reference here is to the conception of John in Elizabeth’s old age and especially to the miraculous conception of Jesus in the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. (CC)

1:38 *servant of the Lord* – ἡ δούλη—Mary describes herself as a female servant. This is the same expression used by Hannah in the LXX in 1 Sam 1:11. By her declaration, Mary shows her faith in and faithfulness to the word of God through the angel and the promise that is now present in her womb. As a servant of the Lord, she now replaces Israel, who is barren. (CC)

Demonstrating great humility and purpose, Mary identifies herself as a household slave. (TLSB)

“Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” This is Mary’s “fiat,” which is the response of faith to the gift of God. *genoito*, “Let it be.” A variation of “Thy will be done.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 1)

according to your word – *genoito moi kata to rama sou* which means according to your word. The NIV translation is considerably weaker and draws attention away from the Word to the angel. Mary trusts the word from God through the angel. Similarly, Simeon prays for his promised departure “according to your Word.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 1)

1:26–38 The angel Gabriel announces Jesus’ birth to Mary, who responds in faith. By announcing the Gospel, the Lord likewise calls us to faith and to bear Christ—not as our child—but as the Holy One of God, our Savior. • “O holy Child of Bethlehem, Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas angels The great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Immanuel!” Amen. (LSB 361:4). (TLSB)