

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS.
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE I. 26–33.

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that* are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

29 And when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

30 And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

WE have in these verses, the announcement of the most marvellous event that ever happened in this world,—the incarnation and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a passage which we should always read with mingled wonder, love and praise.

We should notice, in the first place, *the lowly and unassuming manner in which the Saviour of mankind came amongst us*. The angel who announced His advent, was sent to an obscure town of Galilee, named Nazareth. The woman who was honoured to be our Lord's mother, was evidently in a humble position of life. Both in her station and her dwelling-place, there was an utter absence of what the world calls "greatness."

We need not hesitate to conclude, that there was a wise providence in all this arrangement. The Almighty counsel, which orders all things in heaven and earth, could just as easily have appointed Jerusalem to be the place of Mary's residence as Nazareth, or could as easily have chosen the daughter of some rich scribe to be our Lord's mother, as a poor woman. But it seemed good that it should not be so. The first advent of Messiah was to be an advent of humiliation. That humiliation was to begin even from the time of His conception and birth.

Let us beware of despising poverty in others, and of being ashamed of it if God lays it upon ourselves. The condition of life which Jesus voluntarily chose, ought always to be regarded with holy reverence. The common tendency of the day to bow down before rich men, and make an idol of money, ought to be carefully resisted and discouraged. The example of our Lord is a sufficient answer to a thousand grovelling maxims about wealth, which pass current among men. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor." (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

Let us admire the amazing condescension of the Son of God. The Heir of all things not only took our nature upon Him, but took it in the most humbling form in which it could have been assumed. It would have been condescension to come on earth as a king and reign. It was a miracle of mercy

passing our comprehension to come on earth as a poor man, to be despised, and suffer, and die. Let His love constrain us to live not to ourselves, but to Him. Let His example daily bring home to our conscience the precept of Scripture: "Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate." (Rom. xii. 16.)

We should notice, in the second place, *the high privilege of the Virgin Mary*. The language which the angel Gabriel addresses to her is very remarkable. He calls her "highly favoured." He tells her that "the Lord is with her." He says to her, "Blessed art thou among women."

It is a well-known fact, that the Roman Catholic Church pays an honour to the Virgin Mary, hardly inferior to that which it pays to her blessed Son. She is formally declared by the Roman Catholic Church to have been "conceived without sin." She is held up to Roman Catholics as an object of worship, and prayed to as a mediator between God and man, no less powerful than Christ Himself. For all this, be it remembered, there is not the slightest warrant in Scripture. There is no warrant in the verses before us now. There is no warrant in any other part of God's word.

But while we say this, we must in fairness admit, that no woman was ever so highly honoured as the mother of our Lord. It is evident that one woman only out of the countless millions of the human race, could be the means whereby God could be "manifest in the flesh," and the Virgin Mary had the mighty privilege of being that one. By one woman, sin and death were brought into the world at the beginning. By the child-bearing of one woman, life and immortality were brought to light when Christ was born. No wonder that this one woman was called "highly favoured" and "blessed."

One thing in connection with this subject should never be forgotten by Christians. There is a relationship to Christ within reach of us all,—a relationship far nearer than that of flesh and blood,—a relationship which belongs to all who repent and believe. "Whosoever shall do the will of God," says Jesus, "the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."—"Blessed is the womb that bare thee," was the saying of a woman one day. But what was the reply? "Yea! rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." (Mark iii. 35; Luke xi. 27.)

We should notice, finally, in these verses, *the glorious account of our Lord Jesus Christ*, which the angel gives to Mary. Every part of the account is full of deep meaning, and deserves close attention.

Jesus "shall be great," says Gabriel. Of His greatness we know something already. He has brought in a great salvation. He has shown Himself a Prophet greater than Moses. He is a great High Priest. And He shall be greater still when He shall be owned as a King.

Jesus "shall be called the Son of the Highest," says Gabriel. He was so before He came into the world. Equal to the Father in all things, He was

from all eternity the Son of God. But He was to be known and acknowledged as such by the Church. The Messiah was to be recognized and worshipped as nothing less than very God.

“The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David,” says Gabriel, “and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever.” The literal fulfilment of this part of the promise is yet to come. Israel is yet to be gathered. The Jews are yet to be restored to their own land, and to look to Him whom they once pierced, as their King and their God. Though the accomplishment of this prediction tarry, we may confidently wait for it. It shall surely come one day and not tarry. (Hab. ii. 3.)

Finally, says Gabriel, “Of the kingdom of Jesus there shall be no end.” Before His glorious kingdom, the empires of this world shall one day go down and pass away. Like Nineveh, and Babylon, and Egypt, and Tyre, and Carthage, they shall all come to nothing one day, and the saints of the most high shall take the kingdom. Before Jesus every knee shall one day bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. His kingdom alone shall prove an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion that which shall not pass away. (Dan. vii. 14, 27.)

The true Christian should often dwell on this glorious promise and take comfort in its contents. He has no cause to be ashamed of his Master. Poor and despised as he may often be for the Gospel’s sake, he may feel assured that he is on the conquering side. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdoms of Christ. Yet a little time and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. (Heb. x. 37.) For that blessed day let us patiently wait, and watch, and pray. Now is the time for carrying the cross, and for fellowship with Christ’s sufferings. The day draws near when Christ shall take His great power and reign; and when all who have served Him faithfully shall exchange a cross for a crown.

NOTES. LUKE I. 26-33.

27.—[*A virgin espoused.*] Let us not fail to note the wise providence by which the mother of our Lord, though a virgin, was a virgin “espoused.” It screened her reputation from unseemly remarks. It provided a helper and protector for her in her time of weakness and need.

28.—[*Highly favoured.*] The Romanist translation of this word, “full of grace,” does not convey the meaning so well as our own translation, and is moreover liable to shameful perversion. In no way can the word bear the sense of one “full of grace to bestow on others.” The truest sense is that of our marginal reading, “one much graced,”—one who has been made the object of much grace, but not one who has much grace to give. The Romish prayer, to the Virgin, beginning “Ave Maria,” is a most unhappy perversion of Scripture. Bishop Hall remarks, “The angel salutes the virgin; he prays not to her. He salutes her, as a saint; he prays not to her as a goddess.

For us to salute her as he did were gross presumption, for neither are we as he was, neither is she as she was. If he that was a spirit, saluted her that was flesh and blood here

on earth, it is not for us that are flesh and blood to salute her which is a glorious spirit in heaven. For us to pray to her in the angel's salutation, were to abuse the virgin, the angel, and the salutation."

29.—[*troubled.*] The Greek word here is very strong and intensive, and nowhere used in the New Testament, excepting in this place.

32, 33.—[*Throne of David—Reign over the house of Jacob.*] Let us beware of spiritualizing away the full meaning of these words. The "house of Jacob" does not mean all Christians. The "throne of David" does not mean the office of a Saviour to all Gentile believers. The words will yet receive a literal fulfilment, when the Lord Jesus comes the second time, and the Jews are converted. The promise of Gabriel is parallel with Jeremiah xxx. 9. The kingdom of which he speaks, is the glorious kingdom foretold in Daniel vii. 27, before which all other kingdoms are finally to be overthrown at Christ's second coming.