

Gabriel's Annunciation to Joseph, Matt 1:20-21; His Annunciation to Mary: Mary's Initial Confusion, Gabriel's Order to Relax, His Revelation of Her Impending Pregnancy, Naming the Messiah, & Declaration of the Hypostatic Union; Mary Offended by Insinuation She Is an Adulteress; Gabriel's Revelation of Divine Parthenogenesis; Mary's Commitment to Be God's Slave Woman, Luke 1:28-38

Matthew 1:20 - But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

v. 21 - "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

This is referred to as an Annunciation, i.e., the angel *announced* the news that Mary would give birth to the Messiah. *The Annunciation* is usually assigned to the angel's announcement to Mary of her impending pregnancy in Luke 1:28-36. The messenger is identified in Luke 1:26 as Gabriel, a seraph-rank, offer-of-arms archangel in the Angelic College of Herald, who is commissioned to communicate divine revelation to select individuals.

Gabriel's opening remark to Mary was an uplifting salutation:

Luke 1:28 - The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!"

NOTE: The King James Version adds the phrase, "Blessed art thou among women," a scribal addition and thus not found in the oldest manuscripts.¹

Two factors need to be observed. First, Jews were aware of angelic messengers' appearances to biblical personalities. Secondly, on several occasions these angelic heralds were bearers of impending divine wrath. To be approached by a seraph angel would obviously cause one to become startled. Mary is described as being confounded:

Luke 1:29 - But she was very perplexed [διαταράσσω, *diatarassō*] at this statement, and kept pondering [διαλογίζομαι, *dialogizomai*] what kind of salutation this might [εἰμί, *eimi*] be."

Diatarassō means to be confounded, i.e., confused, bewildered, and puzzled. She is said to ponder the meaning of this angelic encounter, *dialogizomai* means that Mary began to concentrate on what was said but the optative mood of *eimi* indicates that she has great doubt.

But Gabriel told her to relax by preceding his remarks with the mandate **Μὴ φοβοῦ (Mē phobou)**: "Do not be afraid!" He then gave her a detailed explanation but did not include information Mary considered vital:

Luke 1:30 - So the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid [Μὴ φοβοῦ, *Mē phobou*], Mary, for you have found favor with God!

v. 31 - Listen: you will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus [Ἰησοῦς, *Iēsous*: **Savior**].

¹ "Most manuscripts read here "blessed are you among women" which also appears in 1:42 (where it is textually certain). This has the earmarks of a scribal addition for balance; the shorter reading, attested by the most important witnesses and several others is thus preferred" (Michael H. Burer, W. Hall Harris III, and Daniel B. Wallace, "Additional Text-Critical Notes," in *New Testament: New English Translation*, Novum Testamentum Graece [Dallas: NET Bible Press, 2003; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001], 826).

v. 32 - He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

v. 33 - He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will never end [**Davidic Covenant; see 2 Samuel 7:16**].”

Luke 1:34 - Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?”

Mary has been happily involved in preparations for her wedding which was still nine months off. Now she is interrupted by Gabriel’s honorific introduction followed by what she interprets as an insult. It is incongruous to her that she would be assigned the duty of giving birth to Messiah since she retorts to Gabriel, “How will this be since I have not had sexual relations with a man?”

Gabriel quickly addresses her concern with the revelation of the divine plan to introduce the God of the universe into human history by means of hypostatic union:

Luke 1:35 - The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the Child to be born [**true humanity**] will be holy; He will be called the Son of God [**undiminished deity**].

v. 36 - “And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month!

v. 37 - “For nothing will be impossible with God.”

v. 38 - So Mary said, “Yes, I am a servant [**feminine singular of δούλη, *doulē*: slave woman**] of the Lord; let this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The miracle that occurred in Mary was executed by the Holy Spirit. Three words in verse 35 describe the miracle of the virgin pregnancy. The first phrase states that the “Holy Spirit will come upon”: **ἐπέρχομαι (*eperchomai*)**: “will rest,” plus the preposition **ἐπί (*epi*)**: “upon.”

This is followed by the source of the miracle, “the power of the Most High,” the noun **δύναμις (*dunamis*)**: “omnipotence,” plus the designation of the Third Person of the Trinity, the descriptive noun **Ἰψιστος (*Hupistos*)**: “Most High.”

Finally, the future active indicative of the verb **ἐπισκιάζω (*episkiazō*)**: “to envelop.” The future tense is predictive for an event that is expected to occur at a future time. The active voice stipulates that the Holy Spirit will produce the action of the verb. The indicative mood denotes this is a future event in the divine decree guaranteeing certain futurity.

Luke 1:35a - Seraph Gabriel replied, “The Holy Spirit will rest upon you, and the omnipotence of the Most High will envelop you.”

I choose *envelop* to translate *episkiazō* instead of *overshadow* based on the following definition:

Overshadow (Gk. *episkiazō*, to envelop in a shadow). From a vaporous cloud that casts a shadow the word is transferred to a shining cloud surrounding and enveloping persons with brightness (Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34).

Figurative. It is used of the Holy Spirit extending creative energy upon the womb of the Virgin Mary and impregnating it; a use of the word which seems to have been drawn from the familiar Old Testament idea of a cloud as symbolizing the immediate presence and power of God.²

The verse continues with Gabriel's statement that the "Child to be born will be holy." The word *holy* is, interestingly, the neuter singular of the noun ἅγιος (*hagios*) which means "set apart to the service of God," "sharing God's purity," "pure," or "without blemish."

Hagios is in agreement with the neuter singular present passive participle of the verb γεννάω (*gennaō*): "to be born."

² Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 815.