

# When faith becomes logical

Luke 1:26-38

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Now that we live in the YouTube era of history, you can go online and see many things that are just illogical. The selfies on the edge of a cliff, the daredevil stunts that are almost life-threatening, and countless other attention getting videos to get more likes or more followers.

There is even more illogical behavior in our society at large. But, at the same time, we as Christians are often viewed as illogical as well. At Christmas we believe in fulfilled prophecies, the virgin birth, angels, and the star above Bethlehem. To the non-believer it is faith that seems to be illogical. However, as we look at the characters of scripture, in their lives God was the most real and logical one in all the world.

Let us now take a moment to look at the Christmas story and see when faith becomes logical. We begin in Luke 1:26-27:

***<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.***

In the previous verses in Luke 1, we read that Zechariah a priest, and Elizabeth his wife, were up in years and had no children. In God's timing, miraculously, Elizabeth became pregnant. Their son would grow up to be John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ. Elizabeth was the older cousin of Mary. The story that begins here, in verse 26, occurred when Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant.

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth to speak with a young girl named Mary.

This was not the first time scripture had told of the angel Gabriel. He is mentioned several times in the book of Daniel, chapters 8 and 9. He now was sent on a direct mission from God to go to Nazareth to speak with Mary.

It says that Nazareth was a city, but in reality it was a town of a couple of thousand people, at most. Nazareth was not a busy crossroads of commerce or a city of political significance. It was 88 kilometers north of Jerusalem, in the middle of nowhere. In the story of John 1:46 we see the disdain that most Jews held for Nazareth.

John 1:45-46 says, *“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’<sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’”*

This reminds us that God works in surprising ways. He did not follow the logic of man, but instead had Jesus come from a place that the world would consider insignificant.

In many ways the choice of Mary was unexpected as well. Mary’s name was the Greek form of Miriam, which meant “exalted one”. She was a virgin who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, who was a descendant of King David. At this time, parents often betrothed their daughters to their future husband while still teenagers. The young man would pay a dowry to the girl’s father, and an official agreement would be made for the young lady to become his future wife. This betrothal period would last as long as it took the young man to prepare the home for his future bride. This “home” was usually a room that was added to the house of his parents.”

Now in regard to significance, Mary was at the bottom of the list. Men were more important than women. And amongst women, Mary was not married, was not a mother, and was only in her teens. In their society one could not get much less important than Mary. To make matters worse, she was from the insignificant town of Nazareth.

How illogical is it that the holy, sovereign God of the universe would send His messenger to meet with this young Jewish girl in Nazareth? From the logic of man it was nonsense, but in the logic of God it was perfect. Just because God’s ways are higher than our ways and his thoughts higher than our thoughts does not make them illogical. God does not favor the rich over the poor, the well over the sick, the strong over the weak, the famous over the unknown. No, the economy of God goes against the current of the ways of the world, but it won’t make sense unless we are viewing this world from the logic of God.

The story continues:

*<sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”<sup>29</sup> But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

Mary, a young teenage girl, was favored by God. Though God could have chosen any other young Jewish girl, He chose Mary of Nazareth. It was not just that she was favored, but God was with her. In the midst of the difficulties that she was sure to pass through, the presence of God would be her strength. She would never be alone.

That was quite a greeting and left Mary confused. What was the meaning of it all?

*<sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”*

Gabriel starts out by addressing Mary’s fear with the fact that she has found favor with God. Mary was to know that God was not her adversary, He was with her and she was not alone. It is much like a child who is lost and then found. Such peace is found in a parent’s arms. At times many Christians struggle with this same question. Is God for me or against me? If we are His children, He is always for us. At times He may need to discipline us as a father disciplines a son, but there will never be a moment when God is not for us. We are His children.

Gabriel then told Mary that she would conceive and bear a son, and that His name would be called *“Jesus”*, which means *“the Lord Saves”*. This was stated even more clearly in Matthew 1:21, when the angel told Joseph that, *“You shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”*

Mary was told that her son, Jesus, would be great and called the Son of the Most High God. That *“the Lord God would give to him the throne of his father David, and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there would be no end.”* Gabriel’s message was the fulfillment of the prophecy that was found in Isaiah 9:6-7, written over 700 years before.

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”* (Isaiah 9:6-7)

This must have been so overwhelming for Mary’s little mind. Could this truly be happening? It is likely she knew the prophecies.

*<sup>34</sup> And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

We must note here that even at her young age Mary asked a question, but it was not out of unbelief. It was not like Zechariah or Gideon, who at first had not believed the angels’ messages. It was just an innocent inquiry of how:

*<sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

This was also prophesied by the prophet Isaiah.

***“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)***

The virgin birth was not just God displaying His supernatural power. The virgin birth was necessary. This made Jesus different than all other human beings since Adam and Eve. He was born as the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and this kept the sin nature of man from being passed to Him. This is how Jesus can be holy, even at his birth. Yes, He was fully human, but He did not possess the sin nature that enslaves all mankind. He was the Son of God. He would grow to be the exact representation of the Father (Hebrews 1:3).

The angel Gabriel continued by telling Mary that her relative Elizabeth, who was barren, was now pregnant, even in her old age, ***“for nothing will be impossible for God”***. Mary would most certainly need to cling to this truth in the days to come. But don't we all? Here we see the power of testimony. It strengthens the hearts of others when we testify to what God has done in our lives. The unthinkable now becomes possible. The insurmountable now becomes doable.

Mary likely knew the miraculous deeds that God had done throughout the ages, but now she was in the center of the greatest one of all. In the following verse we see Mary's response of faith:

***<sup>38</sup> 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.***

There must have been many concerns that surely came up in the mind of young Mary as she heard the words of the Angel Gabriel. “How will I tell Joseph, my parents and my friends? How do you raise the Son of God?” But in the midst of the questions, one thought prevailed: ***“I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me as you have said.”*** I believe you. I receive it. I will do it.

I read a commentator's thoughts on this verse this week, and even with all his theological training this commentator still could not believe in the virgin birth. But yet here, a simple teenage girl, with no formal training, was willing to completely put her life in the hands of God and receive His will, whatever that meant for her life.

If we had been there and seen this event, what might we have said to Mary, after Gabriel left? Maybe something like this, “Mary, I know it was an angel, but you can't believe what he said. Virgins don't get pregnant. You can't believe Him, it's not logical.”

How many times have we walked away from or ignored God's promises or direction, because from our limited perspective, or because of our personal desires, we didn't think God was logical? God says to forgive, and we say, “No. God, you don't understand how bad they hurt me!” He says to help others in need, and we say, “No. God, how can you expect me to help with all the needs that I have?” God says to wait, and we say, “No. God, I know what is best, and if you aren't going to make it happen, then I will take it into my own hands and do it myself.” God says, be thankful, and we say, “No. I am a good Christian, and so many others still have more than I have, how can I be thankful?” God says, be pure and faithful, and instead we allow our thoughts, our eyes and hearts

to go to an impure place. God says, be honest, and instead we are deceitful so that we can gain an advantage over another. God says, do not judge, but pull the log out of your own eye before pulling the speck out of the eye of another person, but instead we point the finger of guilt and act as if we are innocent.

When we do these types of things, what we are really saying is, "God, your ways don't work in the real world. They don't make sense. God, I do not believe that you know what is best for me. Your ways are not logical." But how does one determine if something is logical?

A simple definition of logical is, "An expected outcome based on what has gone before."

If one is new in the faith, then most of what has gone before is based on their life experience without God. Because of this, their logic is usually still greatly affected by their godless past. They think like the world thinks because that is all they have known. For a new believer that is understandable, that is why we are to disciple them. But for a person who has been a follower of Christ for a while, or maybe even for years, this should not be so.

As we walk forward in our faith we begin to build a legacy of faith. A history of faith. Times where we followed God's promises and they showed themselves to be true. Times we believed God's Word and lived accordingly and found that God was right. The longer we walk with God, the more we gain a new way of thinking, a new logic, that we usually call faith.

That is what Mary had. She trusted God enough to believe it, receive it and do it: ***"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."*** God had worked in her a new logic . . . of faith.

When the young shepherd boy, David, faced the giant warrior, Goliath, what was logical? Based on David's past experience with God, it was more logical to trust God than to fear Goliath. God had already delivered David from a bear and a lion as he had protected his sheep. Would God not do the same with the giant? It was the logic of faith.

We see it in Moses' life as well. In Exodus 14, the Israelites are cornered by mountains, the Red Sea and the Egyptian army. It seemed to be a hopeless situation. In response, God told Moses, ***"Tell the people of Israel to go forward. Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground"*** (Exodus 14:15-16).

Most people would have collapsed under all the pressure, but not Moses. Why? Because his legacy of faith with God was long. Moses had seen the burning bush and all of the awe-inspiring works that God had done in Egypt. To Moses it was more logical to believe that God could divide the sea than it was to believe that Pharaoh would destroy them. So, in obedience Moses, ***"stretched out his hand over the sea . . . and the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground"*** (Exodus 14:21-22).

You see it in the lives of Mary and Martha when their brother Lazarus had died. Martha said to Jesus, ***"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that"***

*whatever you ask from God, God will give you*" (John 11:21-22). Martha had seen Jesus' miracles, felt His love, watched His teaching, and heard His prayers. Based on what she had experienced with Jesus, it was more logical to believe that Lazarus would live than that Lazarus would stay in the tomb.

In Mark 9:24, we see a picture of a Father pleading with Jesus to heal his son, who is possessed by an evil spirit. Jesus asks the man if he believes, and the father responds, *"I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief."* This is our story as well. We believe, but there is still so much room for more faith in our lives.

Is your logic based more on the Word, character and promises of God, or the logic of man? Some of you have a long legacy of faith that God has brought you through. Others of you have a very short legacy of faith. So, how do we get from where we are to where God wants us to be in regards to this logic of faith?

First of all, we must realize that faith is not something that we can conjure up ourselves. Faith is from God. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of faith. Rom. 12:3 says, *"... God has allotted to each a measure of faith."* Rom. 10:17 says, *"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."* Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that faith is a gift of God for which we cannot boast.

At the same time we are called to live out our faith. So, is growing in faith God's responsibility or ours?

We can think of faith like a dance. God leads, and we follow. He grants faith, and we step out in obedience and experience His faithfulness. As we continue to submit to Him He then grants more faith, and once again we step out in obedience. As we continue we build a legacy of faith, a greater history of faith, and a greater logic of faith. In time our understanding of how the world works becomes more dominated by the ways of God, and less and less by the ways of the world.

God's ways become more and more logical to us, because of the way that He continues to work in our lives.

In your life today, what doubts remain? In what areas are you still trusting more in the logic of man than the logic of God? What parts of your life are not yet surrendered to the Lordship of Christ? What steps of obedience do you still refuse to take?

Is it about your future, your finances, your health, your children, or your mate? There will be many doubts and many fears in this life. They can be used for good if we allow them to usher us into a deeper dependence on Jesus Christ. Will we surrender our struggles and doubts to God and begin to move towards Him one step at a time? As we obey, God will open new doors of faith to us that were never accessible before. In this we will gain a fuller understanding of who He is and His perspective of the situations around us.

We are each at different places in our spiritual journey. This is often seen in marriage. One claims faith, the other begs for logic. At times, that is a source of disagreement. Sometimes it is a

difference in personality or background, at other times it is that you are speaking out of different spiritual experiences. Be patient with each other. Usher each other into new experiences of faith and watch God change your faith into a new logical way to live.

With this in mind, consider the following steps to take towards faith:

- Pray for faith like the disciples did in Luke 17:5.
- Familiarize yourself with Christ's character and His ways as you read the Bible. Especially the Gospels.
- Make right anything in your life that may be hindering you from intimacy with Christ in this moment.
- Remember the past ways God has worked in your life and the life of others (journal, biographies, share God stories).
- Organize your life in such a way that you can better hear, know, and respond to God.
- In those moments when the logic of the world conflicts with the logic of God and His Word, take small steps of faith trusting that God will honor your belief as He gradually helps your unbelief.

Because of Mary's response of faith, she was able to become part of one of the most important events of all time. She believed and surrendered. In a different way, each of us also have an opportunity to be part of this same great story that God is working in our world.

This week, may we be sensitive to the Spirit's leading, and take the small steps of obedience that together will form a spiritual legacy that will make faith and obedience the centerpiece of the logical way that we view our lives.