

Clay Hooper  
Sermon Delivered: December 25, 2011  
Golden Gate Church of Christ

## **Jesus, Birth of the Savior – What is Your Response to God?**

Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-21

Good Morning! Happy Sunday! **Merry Christmas!**

This morning we could debate what that means: “**Merry Christmas**”. We could debate the Catholic influence of “**Mass**” – in **Christ Mass**. We could spend our time talking about Christmas **commercialism or consumerism**. We could debate the **date of Christ’s birth**. Some may even feel it’s their obligation to be so **anti-Christmas**, that discussion of Christ’s birth at this time of the year is essentially forbidden. It’s my opinion that all these are basically **a waste of time**. None of these topics can be squared away in the scriptures. But I wouldn’t turn someone away that wanted to talk about Christ. Paul believed that if people were talking about Jesus, regardless of their motive, it was a good thing – for at least they were talking about Him – see **Philippians 1:12-18**.

This morning we will look at the **responses to God** among the **principle parties** involved in the **birth of our Savior**, Jesus Christ.

When you consider the **history** of the Jews, they were always looking for a Savior, a Great Leader, someone who would save them from their difficult lives. They looked for a Savior because they were told for centuries one was coming – and they had memories of prior **savior-like heros** when in difficult times.

- They remembered **Noah** when God saved the **seed of mankind**.
- They remembered **Joseph** when God saved their family, their nation, from **famine**.
- They remembered **Moses** when God saved them from the bonds of Egyptian **slavery**.
- They remembered the **Judges**, the **Prophets**, and the **Kings** when God saved them over and over again from their **enemies**.

We must remember that by the time of Jesus’ birth, the Jews had survived the **Babylonian captivity**. Afterward there followed **400 years of silence** from God – from the close of the Old Testament to the Gospels. During these “*Years of Silence*”, as they’re often called, the Jews had been conquered and ruled by the **Persians**, the **Greeks**, the **Egyptians**, and the **Syrians**. They enjoyed a brief period

of **Maccabean revolt** and **independence** and then, **once again**, were conquered and ruled by the **Roman Empire**.

In addition to the **political and social turmoil** of constantly fighting for the freedom of self-rule, there were also **religious changes** occurring in the Jewish nation during the *Years of Silence*. It was during these **Inter-Testament years** the **Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians** rose to power and the **Synagogue**, the **Scribes**, and the **Sanhedrin** were established and empowered. You don't read about these in the Old Testament, but by the time of Jesus they were all well ingrained in the Jewish fabric of daily life.

These are the times in which Jesus was born. By knowing the history, we can understand why so many people were looking for a Savior – one that would become a ruling power on earth, one that would save them from their difficult political, social, and religious lives. We can understand why Herod, the reigning King of the Jews, felt threatened when he heard of a new King coming.

Thus, what is **truly interesting**, what is **most inspiring** – when God spoke – when God finally broke the silence – was the **responses of the principle players** in the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior! What was **Mary's** response to God? What was **Joseph's**? What was the response of the **Common Man** – the **Shepherds** – when God **gave the greatest gift**, His only Son?

**I.** First, let's consider **Mary's Response** to the call of God.

Let's review again our text. Reading from **Luke 1:26-38** (read text).

You'll notice Mary's first response, in verse 29, was that she was "**greatly troubled**" by Gabriel's statement. Not that she was troubled at being visited by an angel sent by God (which might have troubled you or me), but she was **troubled by his statement**: "*Hail favored one! The Lord is with you.*"

She pondered **what kind of greeting**, or salutation, this might be. Remember, God had been **silent for 400 years** and here comes an **angel from God** telling her she is both **favored by God** and that **God is with her!** If an angel appeared before me and began giving me a message from God I might have been wondering about more than just the greeting ... how about you?

Gabriel goes on to tell her that she will be impregnated by the Holy Spirit and will carry "**the Son of the Most High**". Mary's next

response is to ask the angel “*How can this be, since I am a virgin?*” Seems like a reasonable question! Gabriel tells her how it will happen and then goes on to tell her that her relative, Elizabeth – an older woman that has been barren – will also have a child.

Then Gabriel delivers his **most powerful statement**: “*For nothing will be impossible with God.*” Mary needs no further convincing. What’s her response? Her response is “*Behold the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.*” How many of us have that kind of faith – to turn our lives over completely to the will of God? She knew being pregnant before marriage may give rise to gossip, slander, shunning, and even possible stoning. Yet, **she committed herself** to God. Amazing!

Mary’s example would have us consider asking ourselves – **are we fully committed** to God?

- II.** Second, let’s consider **Joseph’s Response** to the expectations of God. Let’s turn to **Matthew 1:18-25** and review our text (read text), and **Luke 2:1-7** (read text).

You might think Joseph got a little short changed on the delivery of the message. After all, he didn’t have an angel appear in person to him and carry on a conversation as had happened to Mary; rather, Matthew 1:20 says “*an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream*”. Well, I guess that’s not all bad, there was a great precedent – Joseph of old (the grandson of Abraham – possibly even the one this Joseph was named after) had a message from God through a dream – and the people were eventually saved – twice – once from famine and again from bondage.

Part of this Joseph’s message was **not to be afraid** to take Mary as his wife. Perhaps he was to disregard his fears of social appearances and anxieties, or whatever had been troubling him after he found out his betrothed was pregnant. Even with all the social connotations of taking a pregnant woman to be his wife, it seems like the issue to **really be concerned about** was the second part of the message – that he would **raise the Son of God!**

But, what was Joseph’s response? Verse 24 says “*he arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took*

*her as his wife, and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.*” Joseph did not put her away, but instead **lived up to his promise** – and married her. What’s more and often overlooked, he allowed the words from God, as spoken through the Prophet in **Isaiah 7:14** to be fulfilled. He **kept his wife a virgin** until after Jesus was born.

Joseph’s next response, as noted in Luke 2 was to **obey** the law. Everyone was ordered to report for a census and so he took his new wife, heavy with child, to the home of his ancestors – Bethlehem.

Joseph’s response is summed up in the phrase “*he ... did as the angel of the Lord commanded him,*” – Joseph was **obedient**.

Joseph’s example would make us wonder, **how often** do we know what God expects of us and we pass up the opportunity to be **obedient**?

**III.** Third, let’s consider the **Common Man’s Response** – the **Shepherds** – to the good news.

Let’s turn now to **Luke 2:8-20** (read text).

Can you imagine being one of these shepherds? You’re on the overnight shift. Making sure no wolves attack. You may not even own the sheep – perhaps they belong to your father or you’re just the hired guy keeping watch – guarding the flock. When **all of a sudden** an **angel of God** is standing before you – and the “*glory of the Lord*” is shining all around! Remember, God had been **silent for 400 years** and now there is an angel before you! Naturally they were “*terribly frightened*”. Seems like an **understatement**!

The angel delivers the **message of Hope** – **the Savior has been born!** And, **again suddenly**, there is a “*multitude of the heavenly host praising God*” – certainly confirms the angel’s message!

The shepherd’s immediate response was probably what most people would do, they **went “in haste”** to check out the story, examine the evidence. Although it’s interesting they **did not doubt** what they had heard was a true message from God Almighty!

Once they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby, **they told everyone** what they had been told. Afterwards they returned to their fields *“glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.”*

The response of the Common Man – the shepherds – was to first be **frightened**, and then they rushed to see for themselves. Perhaps the happiest response was that they **shared the message** and went away **praising God!**

Their example causes us to consider whether or not we **share the message** with others and whether or not we **glorify God and praise Him?**

**IV.** Our final consideration this morning is – what is **Your Response** to the call of God?

This morning we’ve recognized Mary’s response to God was one of total, **unconditional commitment** – *“be it done to me”*; Joseph’s response was to **fulfill his obligations** – to be **obedient**; and the Common Man, the shepherd’s response was to **share the message and praise God.**

The question this morning is: **what is your response to God?** The birth of Christ is **only the beginning** of the story. As we know, Jesus lived a perfect life. He lived and died under the Mosaic Law. What makes Jesus our Savior is that **conquered death** – He rose from the grave! **Our entire faith rests on this one point!**

If you have not responded to God by **putting on Christ through baptism**, won’t you do so this morning?

If you’ve **lost your first Love** of God, your **unconditional “be it done to me” commitment** to God, if you’ve lost your **obedience** to God – God is waiting for you to return to Him!

Won’t you **come this morning** and let us help you back to God? If so, **come now** as we stand and sing!