

Confirmation that Jesus is the Messiah

Lk 1:26-45 (text: 1:39-45)

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 13 December 2020, 16:30

(Put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)

Song before service: Organist to choose, please

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Often in this life even Christians doubt that Jesus is the Son of God who came in human flesh & soul to save us from sin. I even know of people who grew up in the Christian faith, then went to Israel, fell in love with Judaism, and ended up rejecting Jesus as the Messiah/Christ!

Well, in God's gracious loving kindness, He has given many places in the Bible which confirm for us that Jesus was/is who He claimed to be.

In fact, our text for *this* sermon is one of those passages that does that for you and me!

So, do you doubt, older people?

What about you, younger people, and you children?

Do you doubt that Jesus is the Son of God, the long-promised Messiah?

Well, then read again this account of Mary's visiting of Elizabeth!

You see, the Angel Gabriel had just visited Mary – had just given her the message from God that God had chosen her to become the mother of Jesus Christ; that she was going to expect the Son of God in human body & soul!

But that was not all (that) Gabriel had told her! No, he also gave her a *second* bit of news!

Yes, he also told Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth, too, despite her old age, was expecting a miracle baby!

Question...

Why did Gabriel tell Mary also this second bit of news – the news about her cousin's pregnancy?

My brother & sister, look, there may be several reasons why he told her that, but here is the most obvious one, i.e., to prompt Mary to go to Elizabeth and see for herself that Elizabeth, despite her age, was indeed expecting a child!

So, a very good reason why Gabriel told Mary about Elizabeth's pregnancy, was so that Mary would go to Elizabeth and have her faith confirmed – yes, that Mary would have confirmed for herself what Gabriel had just told her; yes, so that Mary would go and, as it were, “compare notes” with Elizabeth! “Elizabeth, this is what the angel of God told me!” “What did he tell you & your husband!?” “Wow, Elizabeth, and now I see for myself that you are already in your sixth month!” “O, Elizabeth, now I don't have a single doubt anymore!” “Now, it's confirmed for me that what the angel told me, will happen to me!” “O, Elizabeth, I'm so utterly happy & blessed!”

My brother & sister, see why Gabriel shared Elizabeth's news with Mary?

No wonder, Mary gladly and promptly undertook the long journey from Nazareth in the north to Hebron in the south¹ – a journey of 163km if you were to do it by car today!

¹ Granted, our text does not say that Elizabeth & Zechariah lived in Hebron – it only says (v.39), “***In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country.***” But, but by comparing the description of it here with Jos. 21:10, 11, it appears to be *Hebron*, for that is there said to be *in the hill-country of Judah*, and to belong to the priests, the sons of Aaron (cf. Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (pp. 1823–1824). Peabody: Hendrickson).

And so, I agree, there may be other messages in our text, but here is the main message for you & me: **Stop doubting that Jesus is who He claimed to be! Look at the evidence!** Yes, look at the confirmation given in our text – confirmation given to Mary, but also to you & me, that what the Angel Gabriel told her, was divine truth!

Well, our text allows for us the following three sermon points:

- Confirmation 1
- Confirmation 2
- Confirmation 3

Confirmation 1 – Leaping

Verse 41 tells us that *When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped² in her womb.*

My brother & sister, this same word used for “leaped” here – the Bible also used this very same word to describe the *struggling* that went on between Jacob & Esau in their mother’s womb.³ However, whereas Jacob & Esau were leaping in the womb because they were struggling for supremacy, foetus John the Baptist knew who was supreme!

Leaping!

Again, this same word is used in Ps 114:4 which tells us that, when Israel moved out of Egypt, the mountains & hills *skipped* for joy!⁴

Now, some might say, “Ah, what Elizabeth felt was just the ordinary kicking of a six-month old baby in the womb.”

But let’s not forget, first of all, that this baby, John, was – as the angel had promised – *filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb* (Lk 1:15 NASB).⁵

Secondly, let’s not forget that v. 41 also says, that, “*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,*” which means, through the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth understood the leaping of the baby inside of her as a leaping because little John, the six-month-old fetus in her womb, became aware of the nearby presence of the Messiah. After all, Mary’s pregnancy had already started, for Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, says to Mary (in v. 42), “...*blessed is the fruit of your womb.*” So, inside Mary’s womb, there was already the human beginnings of Christ! And it is because of this nearby presence of fetus Messiah that fetus John leaped for joy! This was all triggered when fetus John heard the voice of Mary; the voice of her who was already expecting the Messiah!

Well, does this not remind us of the words John the Baptist would some thirty years later say when he would introduce Christ to the people, “*The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice*”? (Jn 3:29).

So, what do we see here?

² ἐσκίρτησεν Aorist Active Indicative 3rd Person Singular of σκίρτάω: to leap or jump, as a possible expression of joy and happiness—‘to jump for joy, to leap for joy’ (Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 209). New York: United Bible Societies).

³ Cf. Gn 25:22f. *The children struggled together* (Septuagint: ἐσκίρτων) *within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So, she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ And the Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.”*

⁴ Ps 114:4 *The mountains skipped* (Septuagint: ἐσκίρτησαν) *like rams, the hills like lambs.*

⁵ Greek: ἔτι ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ (Literally: “...yet from the womb of his mother”). The Greek word ἐκ does have the meaning “since, from” i.e. including the time when he was in his mother’s womb.

Well, we see that the herald of Christ – yes, John – was, while he was still in his mother’s womb, already heralding the coming of Christ! He was already witnessing to (and pointing out) the identity of Jesus!

Thus, dear Mary, (dear brother & sister, young man/lady, boys & girls) do you need confirmation that what the Angel Gabriel told Mary is true – will be fulfilled?

Well, here you have it!

Through John’s *leaping* in Elizabeth’s womb, the Holy Spirit is saying to Mary (and to you & me), “Were you doubting my promise?” “Well, look!” “Here is confirmation for you that what I have told Mary is true!”

Well, so far point 1 – “Confirmation 1.”

Here is point 2...

Confirmation 2 – The Fruit of Your Womb!

My brother & sister, *before* Mary had the opportunity to share with Elizabeth what Gabriel had told her – yes, instantly, and already with Mary’s first “Hello!” – Elizabeth already knew! Yes, Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, already knew that Mary was in the early stages of expecting the Messiah!⁶

So, that’s why Elizabeth was able to prophesy the following words (v. 42), “***Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!***”⁷

What Confirmation!

Indeed, without Mary telling her, Elizabeth already knew!

Well, here are a few things to note:

Firstly, notice how Elizabeth is not saying, “Blessed are you above women...” No, although Mary was highly blessed, we should not place her *above* others, lest we worship her as do the Roman Catholics.

By the way, did you know that the words of the Roman Catholic song, *Ave Maria* (Greetings, Mary!), come from a selection of words from our passage? Yes, in 1825, the music composer, Franz Schubert,⁸ wrote the that beautiful melody which became the most popular melody for the Ave Maria.

And over many years, as I listened to that beautiful version of the Ave Maria, I was in two – I was joyful, and I was sad! Yes, I was joyful about this most beautiful melody, but sad that the words were words sung as a prayer in worship of Mary!⁹

⁶ For this understanding of events, cf. HENDRIKSEN, W. 2004. Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke (In: Hendriksen, W. ed. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books. p.94). I love Hendriksen’s summary of this scenario: “How had Elizabeth discovered this fact? Had Mary told her the news? We have seen that in all probability the ‘greeting’ as such does not necessarily imply this. Did the intra-uterine movement mentioned in verses 41 and 44 reveal this marvellous secret to Elizabeth? Yes, but not apart from the activity of the Holy Spirit, as Luke clearly indicates when he says, ‘The baby leaped within her womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and ... cried out,’ etc.” (Hendriksen, *ibid*:96).

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 1:42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

⁸ Cf. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ave_Maria_\(Schubert\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ave_Maria_(Schubert))

⁹ And it was only in the past week that I discovered, to my joy, that I could actually with clean conscience sing, as advent song, the first stanza in Latin – but just the first stanza, because the first stanza’s Latin words (not the English words sung by e.g. Celine Dion), are words that come straight from the Latin Bible – straight from our passage. Yes, some of the words which the Angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, as well as some of the words Elizabeth spoke to Mary, form the words of the first stanza/verse of the Ave Maria!

And if I translate them into English, this is what they say...

Greetings, Mary, O favored one, the Lord is with you! (Lk 1:28 – the words of Gabriel)

I want to repeat that Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, did not elevate Mary above other human beings – she did not say, “Blessed are you above women!”

No, Elizabeth’s words clearly say, “**Blessed are you among women!**”¹⁰

Why did Elizabeth place Mary not as *above*, but as *among* women?

Well, because Elizabeth’s next words explain that it is not all about *Mary*, but it’s all about the fruit of her womb! It’s about Jesus Christ! *He* should be revered!

Wow! Again, *confirmation!*

Elizabeth’s words are totally in sync with what Gabriel had told Mary – that the One Mary was about to conceive, would be Son of the Most High, ruling on the throne of His father David, and that His kingdom would have no end!¹¹

My brother & sister, see – see how Elizabeth confirms for Mary what Gabriel had said!? See, that it’s all about Him who would be born from Mary’s womb – not about Mary!?

Well, that was confirmation 2 – The Fruit of Your Womb!

Here is the last point...

Confirmation 3 – Mother of My Lord

My brother & sister, Mary & Elizabeth were cousins. So, they would have known one another, and they would have met on other occasions in their lifetimes, e.g., at great religious festivals.

But, this time, Elizabeth’s words show that she now saw more than a relative in Mary, for look how she calls her (v.43) – ***Mother of my Lord!***

So, what is she doing?

Blessed are you among many (v.28 again the words of Gabriel, and the Latin Vulgate has also these words as part of verse 28. Although our Bible versions don’t contain these words in verse 28, they do contain them in verse 42 as part of Elizabeth’s Holy-Spirit-inspired song).

And blessed is the fruit of your womb – Jesus! (Lk 1:42, the words of Elizabeth).

Thus, in stanza 1, translated here above, only the words “Mary” and “Jesus” have been inserted in the obvious places.

Here is the Latin, straight from the Vulgate:

Ave gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus (Lk1:28); *Benedicta tu inter mulieres, et benedictus fructus ventris tui* (Lk 1:42).

Here are the Lyrics (rewritten with repetition of some words so that they would fit the melody) of the first stanza of the song as they go with Schubert’s melody, and sung by Andrea Bocelli and Pavarotti and Mirusia (the young woman who sings with Andre Rieu). *Ave Maria gratia plena Maria, gratia plena Maria, gratia plena Ave, Ave! Dominus, Dominus tecum. Benedicta tu in mulieribus et benedictus, benedictus fructus, fructus ventris ventris tu, Jesus! Ave Maria!*

¹⁰ In Greek: ἐν γυναιξίν (literally: “in/among women”)

¹¹ “Mary, **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”** ([The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 1:31–33). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles).

Well, is she not doing the same as David once did when he prophesied the coming of Messiah? Remember, this was what David, once in the Spirit, said (Ps 110:1), “***The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool’***”?

Clearly, Elizabeth knew that, just as Gabriel had said, Mary was expecting *Messiah*! Jesus is that long-prophesied (and long-awaited) Messiah! Jesus is the Christ!

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, says, “...***the mother of my Lord...***” And may I remind you that the Bible says (in 1 Cor 12:3), “...***no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit!***”¹²

Well, this was exactly what Elizabeth did – and she did it by the Holy Spirit!

See?

Yet another confirmation – and a real strong one, too!

Confirmation for Mary – and for you & me in our moments of doubt!

Well, as said, the main purpose of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth was to have confirmed for Mary (and for you & me) that what Gabriel had said, was true!

Indeed, the main message of our text is, “Stop doubting that Jesus of Nazareth, Mary’s child, is who He claimed to be!” “Trust God who said that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour of God’s people – that He is the Son of God!”

Of course, my brother & sister, *our* text (Lk 1:39-45) is not the only passage in the Bible confirming Jesus’ identity! Here are a few such passages, as you will remember:

- Firstly, remember the time when Jesus forgave a paralytic his sins. And, when the critics queried whether Jesus had the authority to forgive sins – for only God can do that – Jesus then proved to them that He was also God. This, Jesus did by healing the paralytic in front of all eyes of the critics.¹³ *Confirmation!*
- Then there was the time when some people doubted that Jesus was the Son of God, so He said to them, “What would you say if one day you see the Son of Man ascend to where He came from!”¹⁴ Of course, then, eventually before the eyes of witnesses, Jesus, without rockets fastened to Him, *did ascend* to heaven! So, again, everyone there found *confirmation* that He was the Son of God!
- Not to forget what happened the moment He died on the cross – the symbolic tearing of the curtain in the temple between the Holy and the Holy of Holies – a curtain torn, not from the *bottom* where human hands could reach, but from the *top*, out of reach of human hands; this was accompanied by the opening of the graves of saints at that same time as well as by the Roman centurion’s exclamation, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”¹⁵ *Confirmation!*
- Of course, there was also resurrection Sunday, when He who was dead, rose alive and was seen by many & varied witnesses: Mary Magdalene;¹⁶ the

¹² 1 Cor 12:3 ***Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.***

¹³ Cf. e.g. Mk 2:1-12

¹⁴ Cf. Jn 6:61-62 (especially v 62), ***But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before?”***

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 27:51-54, ***And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. ⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”***

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. Mt 28:1ff.

Apostles;¹⁷ the two Emmaus travellers¹⁸ – and more than 500 people later on.¹⁹ Then the risen Christ appeared even to an enemy – yes, to Saul/Paul who was at first a persecutor of Christians!²⁰

My brother & sister, you get the picture: The Bible is full of incidents that confirm for us that Jesus really was/is the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God!

And our text, Lk 1:39-45, is one of those “pearls” in a “string” of confirming passages!

Well, all indications are: Mary already believed when Gabriel told her the good news. However, it's also clear that God, in His grace, granted Mary this visit to Elizabeth – a visit which confirmed for Mary (and you & me) the truth of what Gabriel had said!

Look! Is that not why Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, was able to conclude her song by saying to Mary (v.45), “...***blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord***”?

And so, my brother & sister, young man/lady, boys & girls, blessed are also you if you – in childlike faith – believe the Word from the Lord – also the word that, one day, this same Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead!

Will you be ready?

AMEN (2,174 words, excluding footnotes)

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Lk 24:36ff; Jn 20:1ff.

¹⁸ Cf. Lk 24:13-35

¹⁹ Cf. 1 Cor 15:6 ***Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.***

²⁰ Cf. e.g. 1 Cor 15:8-9, ***Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.***

Also of course: Acts 9:1ff. et al.