



## Overshadowing the Seas of Chaos

By Pastor Anthony Howarth

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, ‘Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.’ ‘How will this be,’ Mary asked the angel, ‘since I am a virgin?’ The angel answered, ‘The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.’ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled.’ Then the angel left her.”

Luke 1:26-38 NIVUK

<https://bible.com/bible/113/luk.1.26-38.NIVUK>

“Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people – where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses’ right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.”

Isaiah 63:11-14 NIVUK

<https://bible.com/bible/113/isa.63.11-14.NIVUK>

“The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”

Romans 8:6 NIVUK

<https://bible.com/bible/113/rom.8.6.NIVUK>

The Angel Gabriel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would ‘Overshadow’ her. The declaration by Gabriel opens up the whole story of the Bible and how the Holy Spirit has been with God’s people from the beginning, working out God’s grand plan of salvation that finds its fulfilment in Jesus.

Matthew opens his gospel with the Greek word ‘Genesis’<sup>1</sup> as he lists the ancestors of Jesus. This is a deliberate connection. Matthew wants us to pay attention to the whole story of God’s salvation, beginning in the beginning, that will find its completion in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is always the prime mover. He is always the first in on the action because his action is the beginning of everything. In Genesis the Holy Spirit was overshadowing the chaotic waters of creation.<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit was overshadowing the chaos ready to act to calm the chaos and bring order and life and peace.

In the gospels we see Jesus doing the same. Just like the water of creation, the waters in the storm represent chaos and bring panic and disorder to the disciples. But Jesus speaks to the chaos and peace returns. In the gospels the storm is overshadowed by the presence of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the Exodus is another example of the chaos waters being parted.<sup>4</sup> Isaiah tells us that the Holy Spirit was with them.<sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit guided them through the chaos waters and continued to guide them, overshadowing them with a cloud by day and fire by night. As they passed through the waters the chaos raged on both sides but they were protected from the chaos by the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> Levison, Jack, ‘An Unconventional God’, Grand Rapids, 2020, pg.13

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:2

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 8:23-27

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 14:1-22

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 63:11-14

In the gospels we see the same thing in the life of Jesus. When Jesus walks on the sea towards the disciples on the boat, it is a reflection of the power of God over chaos represented by the raging sea. Jesus was in the centre of the storm but no chaos around him could affect him. When Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus he walked in the same peace as Jesus and the chaos didn't affect him, but when he took his eyes off Jesus his mind and heart were affected by the chaos and he began to be afraid.<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Spirit is at work throughout the story of the people of God, carrying them through the chaos waters to salvation and peace. Jesus demonstrated his status as God with us by showing us that he had come to conquer chaos and sin and disorder and bring life and peace and order and hope and salvation to all who put their trust in him. He said he would do this through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us and working through us.

Often, these chaos waters can represent our minds. Our minds are the intersection of spirit and soul. The Bible tells us that as a man thinks, so he is.<sup>7</sup> Paul tells us that the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.<sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit begins his work by 'overshadowing' our minds. Our minds must be continually renewed so that the chaotic waters of our thought life are always kept at peace by the Holy Spirit. God's promise to us is that we will have love, power and a sound mind.<sup>9</sup> The place of the mind is where chaos tries to overtake if we do not let the Holy Spirit control our thinking.

God has promised us that he will keep us at perfect peace if our minds are fixed on him.<sup>10</sup> We must take hold of these promises and invest in our peace by fixing our minds on what is good.<sup>11</sup> Our minds are precious and God has promised to protect our minds if we fix our thoughts on him. So if the chaos waters are raging in your mind today, there is a promise from the Holy Spirit that he will overshadow you, that if you allow him he will speak to the chaos and bring peace. If you allow him he will renew your thoughts and calm your fears. We are designed to be at peace. When our minds are not at peace our body, soul and spirit are all affected negatively. Today we have a promise of peace. Let's take God at his word and receive his peace.

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 14-22-33

<sup>7</sup> Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:6

<sup>9</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV)

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 26:3

<sup>11</sup> Philippians 4:8-9