**MARY, JOSEPH and the ANGEL**

The stories in scripture surrounding Jesus’ birth are filled with wonderful Christmas accounts of Angels in the Field, Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, the wise men, the shepherds and most of all Jesus as the baby in the manger.

Let’s look and listen to the passages about Jesus’ birth through the words of Mary, Joseph and the angel.

**Mary –** The mother of Jesus. She was likely a16y.o. teenage girl from Nazareth whose lineage was from the line of David. She is described by the angel as “highly favored” (Luke 1:28).

**Joseph** – Her husband. A carpenter who was also from the town of Nazareth, and from the lineage of David as well. He is described as an “honorable man” (Matt 1:19)

**The Angel** - The angel Gabriel is the messenger who was entrusted to deliver the important message of Jesus’ birth to Mary. It is believed by many that he is the same angel who spoke to Joseph in a dream, and the shepherds in the fields at night.

**Luke 1**

1-4**“**Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, **2**just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. **3**With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, **4**so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

### The Birth of Jesus Foretold

**26-38“**In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27**to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. **28**The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”

**29**Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30**But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31**You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32**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, **33**and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”

**34**“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?”

**35**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. **36**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. **37**For no word from God will ever fail.”

**38**“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.

**Matt 1**

**Matt 1:18-24** “This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19**Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yetdid not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

**20**But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

**22**All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: **23**“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

**24**When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

**Luke 1:39-56**

**“**At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, **40**where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. **41**When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. **42**In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! **43**But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44**As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. **45**Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

**46**And Mary said:

“My soul glorifies the Lord
**47**    and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
**48**for he has been mindful
    of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
**49**    for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
    holy is his name.
**50**His mercy extends to those who fear him,
    from generation to generation.
**51**He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
    he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
**52**He has brought down rulers from their thrones
    but has lifted up the humble.
**53**He has filled the hungry with good things
    but has sent the rich away empty.
**54**He has helped his servant Israel,
    remembering to be merciful
**55**to Abraham and his descendants forever,
    just as he promised our ancestors.”

**56**Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.”

**Luke 2:1-19**

**“**In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. **2**(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) **3**And everyone went to their own town to register.

***4 “****So I, Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because I belonged to the house and line of David.****5****I went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to me and was expecting a child.****6****While we were there, the time came for the baby to be born,****7****and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for us.”*

**8**And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. **9**An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10**But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. **11**Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. **12**This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

**13**Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

**14**“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
    and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**15**When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

**16**So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. **17**When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, **18**and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ***19****But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.***”**

After everything that took place leading up to and during the birth of Jesus, Luke ends with…

 *“Mary* ***treasured up*** *all these things and* ***pondered them*** *in her heart.” (*Luke 2:19)

***“Treasure Up****” – that means to save up, value and protect your precious memories*

***“Ponder****” – That means, bring them up and think about them thoroughly, enjoying every single part of each experience.*

Mary had witnessed so many extraordinary and miraculous things in the last 9 months, that she must have been completely overwhelmed.

From the moment the Angel Gabriel came to her back in Nazareth with *“the annunciation”,* the shocking announcement that she would be the virgin mother of “Jesus” God’s own son, she has been on a whirlwind of a journey that included:

1. She became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit
2. She went to Judea and personally saw the pregnancy of her *much older* relative Elizabeth.
3. She witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit come upon Elizabeth’s pre-born baby and even Elizabeth herself at her arrival.
4. She revealed to her fiancé’ Joseph, that she was pregnant and was told that he would “put her away secretly”.
5. She was soon told by Joseph that he had a dream, where an angel told him “do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21**She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name **Jesus.**
6. She immediately got married. (Matt 1:24)
7. She was told that while she was pregnant they need to temporarily move away from her hometown of Nazareth to her & Joseph’s ancestral village of Bethlehem (about a 90-mile, four-day journey), because of a Roman census.
8. When they got there, she was ready to give birth, but there was no room at “the Inn”.
9. Then it happened….**she gave birth to Jesus!….**
10. Because they did not have a room or home to stay in, she wrapped her newborn baby boy in strips of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough.
11. While she and Joseph were dwelling there in the darkness of a cave or stable, marveling at this brand-new baby whom God had given them to care for, they were suddenly interrupted by a group of uninvited strangers from a nearby field.
12. These strangers were the shepherds, who reported that they had been visited by angels who told them the good news of great joy that The Messiah was born tonight and he’s in Bethlehem, wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a feeding trough.Then they left and *“returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”*

Now the angels and shepherds were gone, and once again Mary and Joseph were alone with the baby…

***and “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”***

All this happened in 9 short months.

Before that, Mary was just a teenager from Nazareth who was engaged to be married to a local carpenter. Now she did not know where their journey would take them next.

* Where would they live?
* How would they raise this boy?
* Will the Angels who visited the shepherds come to her and Joseph as well?
* Will they help them, guide them? Protect them? Provide for them?

Those questions would have to be addressed and answered someday, but not now…

Now was time to watch, and think, and remember all that had just happened.

It was time to be *in the moment* and not miss it.

What just took place was the greatest moment in the history of mankind.

***So “Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”***

Soon everything would change.

* The shepherds told everyone about the baby, so now they were instantly famous.
* They would soon take him to the temple, and have his identity as Messiah affirmed by a devout man named Simeon, and a prophetess named Anna.
* They would soon move into a house where a glowing star would rest right above it in the sky.
* Soon after they would be visited by Magi, from the East who would follow that star, come and worship Jesus and bring him expensive gifts..
* After that they would escape Herod’s massacre and move to Egypt, then eventually back to Nazareth.
* But everything was different in the world now, because Jesus was on the scene.
* He would grow up under their care. Serving as a faithful son, and carpenter with Joseph in his hometown of Nazareth.
* One day he would meet his cousin John down by the Jordan river at Qasr El Yehud.
* That day he would be baptized, the heaven was opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon on him, the Father would affirm Him with words of love as a voice from the heavens, and He would begin His ministry.

He left his home and spent three and a half years traveling throughout Israel;

* He would teach with authority that had not been seen before.
* He would do miracles that astounded thousands who followed him closely.
* He fulfilled the prophecies of Messiah which got the attention of the Pharisees.
* He made claims about being God’s Son, the Messiah, and “one with God” that provoked the Chief Priests to plan His execution for blasphemy.
* He was beaten, tortured, humiliated and crucified upon a cross.
* He came to die. His death, is the only reason we have life

“He came to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45)

*(He was also raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father.)*

But here he is as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, with His mother Mary treasuring and pondering all that has happened and what is yet to be.

I often say that for Jesus, the manger was as much a sacrifice as the cross.

He was already glorified *before* he became flesh.

He had already lived in the eternal paradise with the Father before he came to earth as a human being.

**John 17:4****“**I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. **5**And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

He went from the eternal paradise in the presence and glory of God, with extreme happiness, goodness, love and endless joy to the cesspool of hate, violence, death, sin and evil called earth.

Not only that, but he would come here not as a King or Ruler and person of comfort and privilege, but as a poor helpless child from an oppressed people group who lie under three layers of brutal and corrupt political and religious tyranny.

And His whole life’s journey pointed to Golgotha. He knew that it would all come to an excruciating humiliating painful death on a criminal’s cross.

He did that, for us, so that we can have eternal life.

**1st Peter 2:24** “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live.”

Without the cross, we would be eternally damned in punishment and separation from God.

This Christmas let’s be grateful for the Good Tidings of great joy”, that “God is with us”, and “unto us is born a Savior”.

Let’s rejoice at;

* the news of the Angels in the field,
* Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, and
* most of all “Jesus the *baby in the manger”*,

…but let’s not forget the sacrifice and significance of; “Jesus, *the man on the cross.”*