

CHRISTMAS, SO WHAT ?

Hush. Hear the stillness of the night. Mary and Joseph are exhausted from their journey. Stressed amidst animals in a stable. Finally some quiet. Then birth pangs interrupt their weariness.

DECREE - They wouldn't be here, but a decree had gone out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered, so they could be taxed. Joseph had to travel nearly a hundred miles from Nazareth in Galilee, to Bethlehem in Judea, the city of David, since he was of the house and lineage of David, the king from a thousand years before. It's all recorded in Luke 2:1-20.

Joseph had to bring his betrothed, Mary, because she was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. In the stable, because there was no room for them in the inn. Soon the groans and cries of childbirth, blood and mess. And the baby, the beautiful baby boy, just as God had said. It all seemed so surreal, but now that He was born, they remembered.

NEWS - The angel Gabriel had appeared with amazing words: "*Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!*" She was greatly troubled, but he said, "*Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus. 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, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.*" Spectacular sayings!

But Mary had a practical question: "*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*" The angel said, "*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. For nothing will be impossible with God.*" Mary replied, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*"

SAVIOR - Likewise Joseph had an angelic visit (recorded in Matthew 1:18-25). He was betrothed to Mary, but before they were married, she was found to be with child. Joseph was a righteous man and did not want to put her to shame, so he resolved to divorce her quietly. But the angel came and said, "*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" Jesus means "Jehovah is salvation."

All this took place because God had prophesied hundreds of years before: "*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which means God with us.*" Joseph and Mary marveled at this new life in their arms. But then there were noises, people coming through the dark. Shepherds. Then more confusion and awkward interaction. They came to see the baby, they said, because angels of God had told them to. Amazing!

SIGN - Luke 2 records how the shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks by night. An angel of the Lord appeared, the glory of the Lord shone around, and they were filled with great fear. The angel said, "*Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign: you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.*"

Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased.*" The shepherds made haste to go to Bethlehem to see what the Lord had made known to them.

As they recounted this, everyone who heard them wondered at what the shepherds said. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

SO WHAT - The message is: *Fear not, God is with us.* Theologians say the incarnation is the greatest miracle, as Jesus the Christ is God come in the flesh. All our hopes and fears are met in Him. The bloody body of a baby boy, laid in a stone trough as a cradle foreshadowed His bloody body from the cross and laid in a stone tomb. But more miracles must follow. The Son of God had to be resurrected. Raised in a glorified body to reign in heaven, to return in power and great glory.

Are you ready? God says, put all your trust in Jesus the Christ, Lord, Savior. Be re-born and receive His new life. He has overcome sin and death forever. You will live for Him as He lives through you. Do not fear, put your faith in Jesus. That's the Good News you get to share! ☐