

Christmas 2023
The Reality Of Christ

The Christmas story, as it's given to us here in the scriptures, is a simple one, and we have heard it many, many times. But it seems that too often, though many of us be seasoned Christians, as we get about the rush of the holiday season, the buying of gifts, the family gatherings, the traveling to and fro, these precious truths get moved to the background in favor of some of the other more demanding activities.

But for us today, we'll pause and move this precious story back to the foreground where it should be and we'll remember, all over again, the real reason that we celebrate Christmas. Listen with me as I read these blessed words from the Book of Luke chapter 1, beginning in verse 26,

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

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

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

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon 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 ³⁷For nothing is impossible with God."

³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." (Luke 1:26-38)

And then in Luke chapter 2, beginning in verse 1,

¹And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed ³And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of

David:) ⁵To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. ⁶And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. ⁷And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

As I read these words about the birth of the Baby Jesus, and I think about the reality of what His birth really means, I can't help but have pangs of grief for the loss that our modern culture is suffering as they allow these simple, but profound truths to be pushed aside in favor of the more easily believable stories about Christmas.

These simple words found here in these scriptures do sound quite impossible, unbelievable, even fable-like . . . an angel coming to speak to a young virgin girl about having a baby, and telling her that it is God Himself who will cause her to conceive the child?

And as we know, the media voices that we hear daily across our airways at this time of year go to a great extent to further our doubts. They don't often openly deny the birth of Christ, but they do insert cleverly devised words and thoughts that suggest alternatives.

And in the end, this precious story of the birth of the Lord Jesus seems to get lost within all the other Christmas stories being told, like the ones about Santa Claus and about elves and about Ebenezer Scrooge.

But in the midst of it all, you and I need to take warning and guard ourselves carefully so that we as believers are not led astray in our faith. Because the reality of all that is taking place is that all those efforts to distract us and to discredit and deny the truth given in these scriptures are not by accident. Those efforts are very purposeful and intentional, perhaps not consciously so, but still, all the same, very intentional.

Why? Why would it be so that men and women across our world would seek so determinedly to deny the truths that these words about Jesus bring to us? It is for a very simple reason! It is because, somehow, down deep inside, the Holy Spirit makes them to know that if they do accept the truth of just these few simple words about the birth of Jesus, then they will also have to accept the rest of what they read in this Bible, and they can't allow themselves to do that.

Because other words in this Bible tell them that they will be held responsible for all their many actions and behaviors, and no person seems to want to do that.

It's all a part of the great battle that the Apostle Paul spoke about in Romans chapter 7, a hard-fought battle within the soul and the spirit of a person, a battle to win us away from the salvation that Christ offers us, in favor of the destruction assured to those who do not accept it.

And it all begins here! If we can only believe these simple truths about this little baby, then a whole world of wonder opens up in front of us, a new and different form of reality.

Most of us have become so accustomed to the kind of reality that we live in, one with such turmoil and strife, distrust and disagreement, that we think that this is real life, but folks, it isn't. This dark and difficult daily lifestyle is only a counterfeit that satan supplies us with each day.

Real reality is what God promises to us, and that is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control. And all of it can be ours, but only if and to the degree that we by faith accept and believe these truths. And belief begins here, with simple words like these about the birth of the Lord Jesus.

But as we know, belief, even simple belief is not an easy assignment. God is not logical as you and I perceive logic to be. And the way that He does things is not often logical. This account of an angel visiting Mary, and Mary conceiving a child while still being a virgin, is not logical to us.

We want so badly for God to fit Himself into our more natural sense of rationale. But He won't. He can't because He is not natural! He is supernatural!

I'm sure that you have heard the many explanations offered by the secular media at this time of year, attempting to explain the occurrences of the virgin birth of Jesus with natural and logical sounding explanations. But it can't happen folks.

And you and I must never try to bring who God is and what He does down to our own level of thinking. We must accept this truth as it is given to us.

But let me warn both you and me that that can be done only through faith and not by intellectual effort. Faith is the one and only special equipping that God gives to you and me to enable us to truly comprehend the impossible, unbelievable supernatural things that He does. Simple faith! Simply believing!

And it all begins with the virgin birth of Jesus, an impossible, incomprehensible, supernatural thing.

Notice that these verses clearly state that Mary is a virgin? Is it important that Mary be a virgin? Yes, yes it is so very, very important for many reasons, two of them being, one, that there can be no doubt that God the Father is the Father of this baby Jesus. And secondly, Mary needed to be a virgin so that there could be no possibility that the sin nature could be passed on to Jesus through the seed of a common man.

That folks is important beyond measure. Christ was the spotless Lamb of God, without stain, wrinkle or blemish, utterly perfect in every way. And it was because He was perfect that he was able to be our acceptable sacrifice. Had He of had a sin nature, He could not have done that.

Mary was truly a virgin. And though that question is debated regularly, even within some of our seminaries today, please, don't ever let anyone debate that question with you, or give you cause to wonder, because as verse 37 assures us "nothing is impossible with God."

All of this truly is a mystery and for one excellent reason, and that is because mystery demands faith. And yes, as you and I are bombarded daily with secular denial that Jesus Christ is who He says He is, you and I need to hold fast to our faith.

This little baby child whose birth is being celebrated now truly did grow to be the Savior of all mankind.

And He began it all as a little baby there in that stable 2000 years ago.

Again, as we read these blessed truths, our "faith" is so very, very important? Faith is the only avenue through which these truths can flow into our heart and soul and can become the reality of our daily lives. As these scriptures tell us, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God".

And so, as we look at this mystery of the birth of Christ, let's remember and truly appreciate that our simple faith is the key that will open the doors to this mystery.

Listen again carefully to these words.

²⁶In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:26-28)

I love the way that the Holy Spirit gives these truths to us. Notice here, that these words immediately presume that we who read these words have faith, that we truly believe that there truly is a God and that He is personally involved in the things that are taking place, that He is carrying forward a plan that will result in the salvation of the souls of untold millions of people. And this portion of the plan involves an angel and a simple virgin girl.

Again, it requires faith in God to believe that there is even such a thing as angels. But here, the angel Gabriel brings the most important message that mankind could ever receive. Verse 30,

³⁰ . . . the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. ³²He 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, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

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

³⁵The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon 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. (Luke 1:30-35)

And in these same moments in time, an angel also appeared to Joseph, the man that Mary was pledged to, and said to him,

"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." (Matthew 1:20-21)

Folks, these are some of the most profoundly wonderful truths that have ever been spoken to mankind, truths that define the ageless eternity that we will enjoy . This baby Jesus would grow to be, as these words tell us, the “One who would save us from our sins”.

And that truth is now a reality for you and for me. and the only part of this wonderful plan that God requires of you and me is that we join with the Lord Jesus in the salvation He has brought into this world. In the Book of John, chapter 1, we read,

¹² . . . to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— (John 1:12)

These are simple words about Jesus, but they do have a requirement within them. To have the eternal salvation that Jesus brought with Him, we must believe in Him and we must receive Him as our Savior.

And in Acts chapter 4, regarding the Lord Jesus, we are told that,
¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

And in 1 John chapter 5, the Lord tells us,

¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:11-12)

Folks, praise be to God, this is the real story, the real reality of Christmas. The little baby that was born there in that stable would grow and He would become the Savior to all of us who call upon His Name. Praise be to God!

Now . . . As we pause and give our hearts over to a time of Communion with our Lord, may I ask each of us to examine our hearts carefully and make sure that we have truly done this, that we truly have received the Lord Jesus as our Savior and Lord!

May we pray!