

The Christmas Story

Mary's obedience to God

Luke 1:26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And 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."

- Mary was "favored" by God
- Gabriel brings Mary big news that she will have a son who will be the Messiah
- Mary was likely between 16-20 when Gabriel came to her.

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

- Mary's response is simple, yet very important to the facts of the story. She obviously understood basic human biology and that it would be impossible for her to be pregnant.

35 And the angel answered her, "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. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

- Mary's obedient consent to what God was going to do is incredible when put into context of other concerns she could have had:
 - How will Joseph respond?
 - How will her parents believe her?
 - What will people in her town say about her? Etc.
- Despite these concerns she concedes her will and concerns to God's will.

Jospeh's obedience to God

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "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.

21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- Joseph had a reasonable response to learning Mary was pregnant.
- He obviously loved Mary deeply for wanting to treat her honorably and wanting to divorce her quietly.
 - In this time adultery could be punished by the death penalty
- Joseph like Mary believed God and acted in obedience to His will despite what it would cost him...
 - What would people say about his relationship with Mary?
 - Would his reputation be called into question?

Jesus is Born

Luke 2:1-7

1 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all went to be registered, each to his own town. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, 5 to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. 6 And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

- Think about this, Jesus, the savior of the world and creator of the universe, was born in a barn because there was no room for him in the inn.
 - This shows Jesus' humility and the extent of what He is willing to go through for us.

The Shepherds Worship Jesus

Luke 2:8-20

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. 17 And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

- Shepherds were part of the lowest social class of their day. They were typically poor, dirty, and uneducated.
 - God made it a point to specifically invite these people to visit Jesus first.

The Wise Men Worship Jesus

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

6 "And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. 8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." 9 After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. 11 And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. 12 And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

- The Wise men were outsiders who came to worship Jesus based on the little information they had.
 - They brought gifts fit for a king, showing the faith they had in what they knew about Jesus.
- They also displayed great obedience to God by choosing to go home another way and not give any more information to Herod.

Discussion Questions

- The Bible says that Mary was “favored” by God, what character traits do you think she had that God liked?
- Use your imagination, what difficulties do you think Mary faced being an unwed teenage mother?
- Thinking about the difficulties Mary might have faced, why do you think God calls us to do things that are difficult?
- Based on what we know about Joseph, what kind of guy do you think he was? What was his character like?
- Do you think Joseph believed Mary before the angel spoke to him? How would you react if you were in Joseph’s situation?
- What do you think people may have said about Mary and Joseph’s relationship?
 - Why do you think God calls people to do things that don’t make sense?.
- Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room for His family in the inn. With this being the way Jesus would be born, what kind of message do you think God is saying about what kind of savior Jesus would be?
- The shepherds are the first people outside of Mary and Joseph to learn about what God was doing. Why do you think it's significant that they were specifically told about the birth of Jesus?
- The wise men were from a foreign land far away from Jerusalem, why do you think the Bible includes the fact that outsiders came to worship Jesus?
- What lessons can we learn from the obedience Mary and Joseph showed?
- What can we learn about worship from the shepherds being invited to worship Jesus?
- How does the visit of the wise men give us insight into God’s concern for people who are different from us?