

## **GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES** (December 5, 2021)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

There is something very familiar about the Christmas story ... and yet very unfamiliar. The story of that first Christmas is well known. Most could recite the basics. Angels. A young pregnant girl. A long journey to Bethlehem. A first-born son named Jesus. More angels. Shepherds. Wise Men.

And yet it is so unfamiliar. None of us has experienced anything like it. What we believe happened that first Christmas is "other-worldly", miraculous, a one-time spectacular history-making, life-changing event. The appearance and message of the angel Gabriel. The fear and uncertainty of the young girl. The promise of a child without the normal means of conception. None of that is normal, routine, familiar. What took place that first Christmas is, let's admit it, impossible. I've never been visited by an angel (although I've met others who have). I've never heard of anyone pregnant apart from the usual means of conception (apart from a few wacky "National Inquirer worthy" stories). To not just hear the Christmas story ...but to believe it ... "For NOTHING will be impossible with God." That hasn't changed! The details of this impossible Christmas story reveal God's nature and heart. HE who has ALL POWER came to us in weakness. He chose Mary and Joseph not King X and Queen Y. HE who is ALL LOVE came and faced unspeakable evil. From His first cry to His last what He did He did for us. This is good news, GREAT NEWS. PEACE!

### **God of the Impossible** 2nd Sunday in Advent Peace (Luke 1:26-45)

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' <sup>29</sup>But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>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, <sup>33</sup>and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

<sup>34</sup>And Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be, since I am a virgin?'

<sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>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.<sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.'<sup>38</sup> 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.

<sup>39</sup>In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,<sup>40</sup> and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,<sup>42</sup> and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!' <sup>43</sup>And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?<sup>44</sup> For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.<sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."

### **What Does it Say?**

1. As you read the passage circle all the details included (names, locations, claims about Jesus ...)
2. What promises are included in this passage?
3. Underline everything in this passage that is miraculous.

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

4. What did the angel mean when he said to Mary, "You have found favor with God"? Why was Mary afraid?
5. How was Mary's question to Gabriel (verse 1:34) different from Zechariah's question to Gabriel (verse 1:18)?
6. How might Mary's encounter with her cousin Elizabeth encourage her as she faced her own pregnancy?

### **WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?**

7. How does this story affect you and your faith in God?
8. What does this story tell you about God's power and love?
9. How might the promise, "Nothing is impossible with God" help you when you encounter difficulties and trouble in your life?

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a moment or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to help you when you face what seems impossible. Ask God to help you experience the miracle of Christmas as if it was the first time you've heard the story. God loves you and He will help you.