

The Christmas Story

According to the Gospel narratives of Matthew & Luke

One day, God sent an angel named Gabriel to a young girl named Mary, who was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph. Gabriel told Mary, "Greetings, God's favor is upon you, and he is with you." She was startled by the angel's words, and she wondered what he meant. But Gabriel told her, "Do not be afraid! You have found favor with God so he has a special mission for you. You will have a baby and give him the name Jesus. He will be called great and the Son of the Most High, and he will establish an everlasting kingdom."

Mary replied, "How can I have a baby? I'm a virgin, and I'm not even married." The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit of God will cover you with his power, and your baby will be the Son of God." Mary replied, "I am God's servant, and I'm ready for this to happen just as you said to me!" Then Gabriel left her.

When Mary's fiancé, Joseph, found out she was pregnant, he was upset because they weren't yet married. He was planning to break off the marriage quietly, but an angel appeared to him and told him, "Joseph, don't be afraid to make Mary your wife. The baby conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. When he is born, give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." So Joseph took Mary to be his wife.

In those days, the Roman Empire controlled most of the world. The emperor, Caesar Augustus, commanded that everyone should register in their hometown so he could count all of his subjects by conducting a census. Joseph was from the family of King David, so he and Mary had to travel from Nazareth in Galilee, where they lived, to his family's hometown of Bethlehem in Judea.

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby, and she gave birth to a boy. They gave him the name Jesus, and Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him down to sleep in a manger — a feeding trough for animals — because Bethlehem was so crowded there was nowhere else for the baby to stay.

In the fields outside of the town there were shepherds keeping watch over their flocks at night. Suddenly, an angel from God appeared to them, and God's glory blazed

around them and lit up the sky. They were terrified! But the angel said, "Don't be afraid! I am here to announce that today in Bethlehem, the town of David, a Savior has been born. This baby is the Messiah — the one God has been promising since the very beginning. He is the Lord, come for us. Go and find him. You'll know it's him when you see a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." All at once, the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir, declaring God's praises, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all his people!"

So the shepherds immediately went and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby, just as the angels had said they would. They went back to their flocks excited, thanking and praising God in their hearts for all they got to see, and they told everybody about what had happened!

After Jesus was born, a special star appeared in the sky over Bethlehem. Some wise men from Assyria in the east saw the star, and they knew it meant something special had happened. They traveled to the big city of Jerusalem to ask the leaders there, "Where is the baby who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star rise in the sky and we have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard this, he was very upset. So he gathered all of the priests and the leaders of Israel, and he asked them where the Messiah God had promised to Israel was supposed to be born. They told him the prophet Micah had written that the Messiah would be born in the little town of Bethlehem.

So Herod called the wise men in and asked them how long the star had been in the sky, and then he sent them off to Bethlehem to find the baby. He told them, "When you find him, please come report back to me where to find him so that I may also go and worship him." And the wise men went on their way, continuing to follow the star until it stood directly over the place where the young child was. They were overjoyed when they found him, and they knelt down and worshipped him, presenting him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And Mary saw all of these things and treasured them in her heart.