

## Prophets & Angels Preparing 2005

*“An artist was painting a winter scene. As he began to paint, the scene that unfolded on the canvas was of snow covered ground and pine trees. The artist’s hand brought the day to a close and night fell on the canvas, and the entire scene was covered with semi-darkness. A grim log cabin was barely visible in the shadows. Then the artist dipped his brush into the yellow paint of his pallet, and with a few strokes placed in one of the cabin windows the warm glow of a lamp. As he finished the painting the gold rays of the lamp reflected happily on the fresh snow. The lonely light totally changed the tone of the picture, replacing the gloomy chilled night with a warm and secure homestead.”* **DAILY BREAD**

What happened on that canvas, happened 2000 years ago on the world’s canvas, when a tiny baby came into a cold dark world, shining light across the barren landscape and offering to everyone the hope of eternal warmth and security.

Since the beginning, God had been preparing His people, Israel, through His prophets and angels for a tiny deliverer’s arrival. With Israel finding itself repeatedly in captivity by Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Rome, the prospect of a coming deliverer was the hope that gave all Israel strength to endure.

**Orison Marden** *“There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something better tomorrow.”*

Over the next 4 weeks we’ll be looking at Matthew and Luke’s accounts of Christ’s birth. Matthew’s account highlights 5 prophecies and 5 angelic visitations. Luke, although more subtle, parallels numerous prophecies and angelic visitations, as well.

Today we will take a look at how God used prophets and angels to prepare **two very important people** for the messiah’s bright arrival into our grim dark world.

**Luke 1:26-27** says, *“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by 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. The virgin’s name was Mary.”*

The first person we are looking at today is ...

### I. **MARY**

*And with that in mind let’s look at...*

### A. **The Angelic Announcement God used**

**Verse 28-29** *“ And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” 29 But when she saw him, **she was troubled at his saying, and considered** [cast in her mind] what manner of greeting this was.”*

She was less troubled by his presence than his words. “Cast” = “thrown for a loop.”

*“Rejoice.”* Equivalent to Peace be with you, or Joy be with you; he was expressing joy at meeting her.

Why did he think this was a reason for greeting that spoke of rejoicing? The angels had long awaited for this day too. *Look what Peter had to say in,*

**1 Peter 1:10-12**, *“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, 11 searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — **things which angels desire to look into.**”*

**Returning to Luke 1 verse 30** *“Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”*

Highly Favored One. God has seen your faith and graciously granted you favor by making you the mother of the long-expected Messiah and Redeemer.

His coming was an object of intense desire. Every Jewish woman dreamed of one day being the mother of Israel’s deliverer. The possibility of a life without hardship and being a woman favored by all Israel is what fueled their dreams.

And now the individual designated to be His mother was Mary, a poor virgin from Nazareth. And the...

*“Lord is with you,” in a way that no other person will ever experience. **How?***

**Verse 31** says, *“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.”*

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. After the Exile Joshua assumed the form Jehoshua or Jeshua, and meant (Jehovah salvation). It was given to our Lord to denote the object of his mission, to save.

**Matthew 1:21 says it this way,**

*"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*

**ILLUSTRATION:** *"If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior."* **Progress, Dec. 1992/Jan. 1993, p. 27**

**Verse 32-33 says,** *"He will be great, and will be called the **Son of the Highest**; and the Lord God will give 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."*

*Undoubtedly a reference to Isaiah 9:6-7, spoken 740 years before the birth of Jesus.*

### **B. The Prophetic Announcements God used**

**Isaiah 9:6-7** *"For unto us a Child is **born**, unto us a **Son is given**; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, **upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever.** The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."*

He is the "**Son of the Highest**," Born a **child** to Mary but He was a **Son** given by God.

**John 3:16** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,"*

*Not Just a Prophet. That was John the Baptist's distinct title (see 1:76).*

This Son is Wonderful, as Isaiah prophesied. Have you found Jesus to be as **Wonderful** as He truly is; as He is to Me?

**Jesus the Counselor** ever present with us through His Holy Spirit the Counselor. Giving us insight into His very mind and heart.

**John 16:14-15** *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."*

**Mighty God, Everlasting Father, (Prince) of Peace.** Coupling God with Prince.

Upon the **Throne of David.** A kingdom with no end, that goes beyond Jacob even.

**Daniel the prophesied 7:27**

*"... His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him."*

**He will order it and establish it with judgment and justice.** (a process is in mind here verses instant.)

**No End, Even Forever.** He shall reign until the end of time, and be our king forever. His is the only kingdom that shall never end; all other Kings die and lay aside their earthly crowns and robes. He is the only King that can deliver and defend us from all our enemies, sustain us in death, and reward us in eternity. O how important it is to be a subject in his kingdom!

**Mary is perplexed by the idea of conceiving such a One, in verses 34-35,**

*"Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man? And the angel answered and said to her, "The **Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.**"*

This means that the body of Jesus was created by the direct power of God. It was not by ordinary regeneration. The Messiah came to redeem sinners and to make atonement for others, and not for himself—so it was necessary that his human nature be pure and free from the corruption of sin. God therefore prepared him an outward human body to cover His non human divinity.

**Colossians 2:9** "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form"

**Hebrews 10:5** "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me."

"That holy one, thing, that holy progeny or child is the **Son of the Highest**

**Verse 37** "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

**Job knew this of God, Job 42:2** "I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You."

These are similar to the words spoken to Sarah, when the Lord foretold the birth of Isaac, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"

No doubt Mary recognized the allusion to this promise of Isaac that had established her people to begin with. Oh how this must have strengthened her faith as she reflected on God's power to keep His word.

### C. Mary's Response

Gabriel's announcement and explanations coupled with Mary's knowledge of the Prophetic Word is what stirred her faithful response.

"Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me **according to your word.**"

Mary's reply is an expression of entire submission to the divine will.

Though she could have, she makes no boast of being the Mother of God the Son. Instead she humbles herself before God as a servant. *To be the hand-maid of the Lord is to be submissive and obedient, perfectly ready to obey all His commands.*

**This is the real proof of mature faith**, when we restrain our minds from questioning His word or His will. When we argue, over the details, *we give place to unbelief.*

**Verse 38.** "Let it be to me according to your word."

### II. JOSEPH (Turn to Matthew 1:18-25)

**Verse 18** "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, **she was found with child** of the Holy Spirit."

"Was found with child," The story picks up here shortly after Luke's account.

**Espoused.** or engaged to be married. There was commonly an interval of 10-12 months, among the Jews, between the contract of marriage and the celebration of the nuptials, but the nature of this engagement was such that unfaithfulness to each other was considered adultery.

**Verse 19** "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly."

**A just man.** It means that he was kind, tender, and merciful; so attached to Mary, that he was not willing that she be exposed to public shame. He sought to secretly dissolve the connection without the punishment commonly inflicted on adultery.

This punishment was inflicted whether the person was married or betrothed. In this case the regular punishment would have been death by stoning of both the woman and the offending man (Deuteronomy 22:23 24).

*But because it says "of the Holy Ghost,"* no offending man would have been found.

**Verse 20a** *He thought on these things.*

He did not act hastily. He didn't automatically take the course which the law permitted him to take.

God will guide those who patiently and graciously take time to consider their course of action in similar situations; an important lesson for us.

**Psalm 25:9**

*"The humble He guides in justice, And the humble He teaches His way."*

Then we come to the actual...

### A. Angelic Announcement God Used

**Verses 20-21** "But while he thought about these things, **behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son**

of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

*"behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream"*

**In a dream.** This was a common way of making known the will of God to the ancient prophets and people of God.

**"Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife."**

Oh the fear that infidelity causes. *I'm sure in Joseph's mind;* infidelity meant that he was marrying a woman (prearranged since childhood) who didn't love him.

He may have loved her, but she was in love with someone else. And her love was so strong that she betrayed her vows to him. If he married her now, he could expect the same behavior to continue. It was a frightful thought. You can almost imagine what his parents were saying to him.

Oh, sure she denies it. Some incredible story about a visiting angel and divine conception from the Holy Ghost; come on give us a break!

It is no wonder that an angel of the Lord had to appear to him too. If he had not heard the story for himself, he would never have believed Mary.

What the skeptical hearer should know is - this was no fancy explanation dreamed up at the last moment by Mary and Joseph. This was...

## **B. Prophetic Fulfillment** *Matthew adds this in*

**Verses 22-23** "So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and **they** shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

This is nearly a direct quote from...

### **Isaiah 7:14**

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name **Immanuel**."

*"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:"*

**Question:** Didn't God take into account how messy an affair this would be? He must have known what kind of condemnation a pregnant single girl would receive.

Why not just plop His Son down on earth fully formed somewhere?

Just a few thoughts of why I believe God chose this method:

1. When God prepared a body for Jesus He did it in a way that conformed to the laws He had set up.

By doing it this way, through signs and prophecies that would identify Him, He helped Israel easily identify and accept Him for who He claimed to be. Being born to certain Jews who belonged to certain tribes they were prepared to accept Him as rightful heir to the throne and office of priest.

2. By being born of a virgin; conceived by God Himself, the Spiritual could reign in Physical form unstained by human sinfulness.
3. But they overlooked something very important. *What was the use of an Eternal Kingdom if there were no eternal subjects?*

God had set up a system for them to obtain forgiveness from sin which required the sacrifice or death of an innocent victim (animal). These were substitutionary sacrifices that were accepted in place of the punishment meant for the individual offering them.

These were only temporal solutions, though, for a temporal realm. An eternal kingdom would require a permanent solution.

**Hebrews 9:11-15** "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

The only way His blood could cleanse us is if He died, and the only way He could die was if He had a human body, and the only way His blood would be pure enough is if He was sinless, and the only way He could be sinless is if He was God.

To do all this, He had to be born of a virgin. There was no other way. And by the prophecy He had given, He intended to prepare mankind for this arrive.

*“My hopes of a future life are all founded on the Gospel of Christ.”*

**John Quincy Adams**

**Verses 22-23** *“So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and **they** shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”*

This is precisely why He was called Immanuel; God with us, or united to us; which can't apply to a man who is not God.

Which brings us back to the words of Isaiah: **“Mighty God, Everlasting Father, (Prince) of Peace.”** Coupling God with *Prince*.

### **C. Joseph's Response**

**Verses 24-25** *“Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And **he** called His name JESUS..”*

He was obedient.

*But he had **no union with her*** or he had no intercourse with her. It is understandable that Joseph had had no sexual relationship with his wife before she had given birth to her divine child. He would not defile the perfection of Christ with his own corrupted seed. But it would be wrong to conclude that they never had a relationship of this kind, the scripture mention that Jesus had brothers and sisters (Matt 12:46; 13:55-56 and John 7:3).

*“And **he** called His name JESUS.”*

According to the account of John the Baptist in Luke 1, children received family names. And we can only imagine the joy Joseph would have had in giving to him his name.

*Each of our children have names that are significant in meaning. But one of the greatest joys I had in naming Caleb was experienced when I saw the joy it gave to my ailing Grandfather to know Caleb had been named in honor of him.*

I'm sure that Joseph received a far greater joy that day when He named His son in honor to God and the great purpose He would accomplish by saving mankind from sin and making a way for all to become subjects of the long awaited eternal kingdom.

It is a Kingdom where He now rules not as a little child but **“Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”**

*“On November 29, 1947, the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into separate Jewish and Palestinian states. The following day, Swissair flight 442 left Lydda Airport in Tel Aviv for Paris. On board that airplane were two unsuspecting men who were oblivious to the other's presence. Captain Abdul-Aziz Kerine was on a mission for the Syrian government to purchase weapons for an anticipated war with the Jews. Just a few rows away, Ehud Avriel was contemplating a similar mission as David Ben-Gurion had sent him to buy weapons for an expected conflict with the Arabs. After landing in Paris, both men took different routes but ended up at the same place, the Zbrojovka Brno company in Prague, Czechoslovakia. In an irony of ironies, these two men, representing opposing people, flew on the same plane to buy weapons from the same company. Weapons of death and destruction are always purchased from the same vendor, and lasting peace can only be found through the only Eternal Prince of Peace (John 10:9-10).”*

**O' Jerusalem, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, 1972**

Have you accepted the word of the prophets and angels who God had sent to prepare hearts to receive His Son?

God so loved you that He gave you His only begotten Son so that if you would believe in Him (as Savior from your sin) you would not perish but have everlasting life. Accept Him today. If you already have. Rest assured in your faith and obey Him as Mary and Joseph did 2000 years ago.