

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Dec. 19: Christmas reminds us of the possibilities_120604

December 3, 2004

Posted: 12/03/04

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Christmas reminds us of the possibilities

Luke 1:26-38, 46-56

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Christmas is just around the corner. Everybody, Christian and nonChristian alike, is getting more and more excited as it gets closer. Christmas is a time for celebration, but not all of us know what to celebrate.

We know how to celebrate Christmas, but don't know why we celebrate. As a matter of fact, we can celebrate Christmas incorrectly if we don't know what to celebrate.

We may be very happy with all the parties, gifts and even church activities, but we may still miss the message of Christmas.

Every Christian knows Jesus is the reason for celebrating Christmas. It is the most joyous day in the year, for the Savior was born to us (Luke 2:10-11). Indeed, it is a very joyful event and deserves celebration.

But unless we truly understand how Mary, the unmarried mother of the child Jesus, had struggled when she heard the message the angel delivered to her, we don't really know how Christmas came to us. The message of Christmas keeps requiring a response from us as we are celebrating it.

An unthinkable greeting

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, an angel was sent to Mary with a message—a greeting from God to Mary. This greeting or message was totally outrageous to such a young lady like Mary. Even though she was pledged to be married to a man, the actual marriage had not taken place and she was still a virgin.

She was perhaps only 12 or 14 years old at the time. How could she not be afraid? The Bible only tells us that she seemed to be afraid or troubled at the word or the presence of the angel (vv. 29-30).

She fully understood the consequences of being a pregnant unmarried woman. First, she did not understand how this would happen to her since she was a virgin (v. 34). If it really happened to her, she would be condemned and might even be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

One commentator suggests that the response of Mary (v. 34) showed she did not express doubt, but was overwhelmed by the incomprehensible grandeur of the announcement. We can imagine that Mary truly believed what the angel told her about her “mission” of being an unmarried mother. That was extremely frightening to her, if it was really going to happen. But

after listening to the explanation of the angel, she accepted it and submitted to God's plan for her.

Nothing is impossible

Christmas became possible because of a submissive young girl who was willing to put her life in God's hands to fulfill his promise to all humanity.

Once Mary submitted herself to God, nothing was impossible (1:37). Christmas is the biggest miracle in the all of human history, for the Creator God became man and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). Since then, the impossible has become possible, and God has been reconciled to his people through Jesus.

We may think that it is impossible to bring Jesus to some of our family members, friends or colleagues. We may have the same feeling Mary did before she listened to the answer from the angel.

The angel reminded her she could not do anything about that. It was the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 35). Even a barren woman like Elizabeth could have a child, so there was nothing impossible with God (vv. 36-37).

How should we celebrate Christmas?

Christmas is the season of giving. It is the time for us to give Jesus to others. It also is the time for us to show our submission to God's plan for the year to come. Take this holiday as an opportunity to seek God's will to know what he wants you to do for him and the church in the next year.

He may ask you to give to support some specific ministries, lead certain people to Christ, or go on a mission trip. We may think we do not have the ability to do God's work and fulfill his plan. Listen to the Holy Spirit, for he will confirm there is nothing impossible with God.

The song of a submissive heart

After Mary submitted to God, she was filled with joy. She sang the most beautiful and majestic song to the Lord. She was sure the Mighty One would do great things for her (v. 49). People would be blessed through her (v. 48). Salvation would come to those humble and hungry for God's mercy (vv. 52-53). God would fulfill his promise to us.

Discussion questions

- What is your favorite Christmas tradition?
- How will you include Christ in your Christmas celebration this year?
- Do you believe that with your submission to him, God can accomplish impossible tasks through you in the coming year?
- With all the busy-ness that comes with the Christmas season, how will you make sure that you carve out a time for introspection and meditation on God's will for your life?

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