



**Scripture Story:** Luke 1:26–2:20.

**Commentary:** *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 4.

## servant of the Lord



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

### flashlight

“Angels attend Joseph and Mary as they journey from their home in Nazareth to the city of David. . . . But in the city of their royal line, Joseph and Mary are unrecognized and unhonored. Weary and homeless, they traverse the entire length of the narrow street, from the gate of the city to the eastern extremity of the town, vainly seeking a resting place for the night. There is no room for them at the crowded inn. In a rude building where the beasts are sheltered, they at last find refuge, and here the Redeemer of the world is born” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 44).

### keytext

“‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’”

**(Luke 1:38, NIV)**

# what do you think?

If I were Mary and the angel came to me announcing I was

going to give birth to God's Son, my reaction would be:

- \_\_\_ "Thank You, Lord!"
- \_\_\_ "Are you crazy?"
- \_\_\_ "Am I crazy?"
- \_\_\_ "That is completely impossible."
- \_\_\_ "Wow. I must be pretty amazing!"

## did you know?

**M**any religious traditions at the time of Jesus (and later) had stories about miraculous births. In these stories, a god usually came to a woman and mated with her, often in the form of an animal. In Greek myths, for example, the god Zeus turned himself into a swan to mate with a woman named Leda; the child born of this union was the beautiful Helen of Troy. The women in these stories seemed to have little choice in what happened to them.

By contrast, the story of Jesus' birth contains no bizarre godlike animals, and Jesus' mother is not forced against her will.

Instead, an angel simply comes to Mary with news of the miraculous birth. Mary becomes a partner in bringing salvation to the world when she chooses to accept the angel's news, saying, "I am the Lord's servant."

## INTO THE STORY

"In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.'

"Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.' . . .

"'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.' . . .

"'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said.' Then the angel left her. . . .

"And Mary said: 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.'

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

(Luke 1:26-49; 2:4-7)



# OUT OF THE STORY

What thoughts might have gone through Mary's mind when she first heard the angel's announcement?

---

---

---

---

---

What does Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55 tell us about Mary and the kind of person she was?

---

---

---

---

---

When Mary was forced to give birth to Jesus in a stall where animals were kept, how do you think she felt about the angel's prophecy? Do you think she was still glad God had chosen her?

---

---

---

---

---

Why do you think God chose to come to earth as the child of a family so poor they didn't even have a place to stay? What does this tell us about God?

---

---

---

---

---

## punch lines

**"This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about:** His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

"But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit'" **(Matthew 1:18-20, NIV).**

**"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:** The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel" **(Isaiah 7:14, NIV).**

**"He grew up before him like a tender shoot,** and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" **(Isaiah 53:2, NIV).**

## other eyes

**"Mary is the lily in God's garden."**—Bridget of Sweden, 14th-century Swedish nun.

**"If I had been the Virgin Mary, I would have said 'No.'"**—Margaret Smith, current American comedian.

**"[Mary is the] highest woman and the noblest gem in Christianity after Christ. . . . She is nobility, wisdom, and holiness personified. We can never honor her enough. Still honor and praise must be given to her in such a way as to injure neither Christ nor the Scriptures."**—Martin Luther, 16th-century German reformer.

## Sabbath

The angel Gabriel's visit to Mary is traditionally known as the "Annunciation" (making an announcement). Go online, type "annunciation" into a search engine such as Google Images, and look at famous paintings from history in which different artists have tried to portray what that moment might have been like.

As you look at these pictures, how is Mary portrayed? \_\_\_\_\_

How is the angel shown? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there one picture that looks most like you imagine the scene? If you were to draw your own "Annunciation," what would you include? How would you show Mary and the angel? Either draw your picture or write a brief description of how you'd imagine the scene.

## Sunday

The *Did You Know?* section of the lesson points out that there are many other stories of miraculous births, even virgin births, in other world religions. Critics of Christianity sometimes claim that the Bible's story of Jesus' birth is just another example of this kind of myth or legend. (If you're curious to know more, do some online searches about virgin births and miraculous births. You'll find that miraculous births are described for the Egyptian god Horus, the Roman god Mithras, Buddha, even Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor.)

As you read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 1 and 2, think about what parts of the story might be different from the myths and legends of other religions? What aspects of this story convince you that it is true? What does the story tell us about the kind of God we worship?

## Monday

Read Mary's response to the angel in the *Key Text* for this week. Then read Margaret Smith's quote in the *Other Eyes* section.

What do you think *you* would have said to the angel? \_\_\_\_\_

Was saying "No" ever a real option for Mary? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think she might have considered saying "No"? \_\_\_\_\_

## Tuesday

The *Flashlight* section of the lesson describes Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem—poor, alone, unwanted, and with no place to go. What kinds of people in today's society might be able to relate to Mary and Joseph as they arrived in Bethlehem?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

For people living through these kinds of experiences, it's meaningful to know that Jesus was born into a family who were very much like refugees. God the Son did not choose to come to the world as a prince in a royal family (unlike most of the other "miraculous births" we looked at in Sunday's lesson). He is able to sympathize with people like His earthly parents—people who are desperate and have no place to go.

## Wednesday

The passage from Matthew 1 in the *Punch Lines* section of the lesson tells the story of Mary's miraculous pregnancy from Joseph's point of view. As you read it, put yourself in Joseph's place. Joseph had the right to publicly shame Mary and have her punished for what must have seemed to him like unfaithfulness. Even before he was visited by the angel, what does Joseph's

immediate reaction tell us about the kind of person he was?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What kind of qualities might be needed in the man who would be Jesus' earthly father?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Thursday

Mary took on a vital role in the story of salvation because she said "Yes," when God told her He had a special role for her. Although few of us will ever get miraculous visits from an angel, God has a special part in His plan for each one of us.

What is God asking you to say "Yes" to right now? What would it mean if you said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said"?

## Friday

How important is the story of Jesus' birth to your faith as a Christian? If these stories (Matthew 1; 2 and Luke 1; 2) weren't in the Bible, what difference would it make to your beliefs about God and Jesus? What do we learn about God through the stories of Jesus' birth?

\*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: [www.cornerstoneconnections.net](http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net).

## this week's reading\*

*The Desire of Ages*, chapter 4.

\*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.