

Part one - MARY



LUKE chapter 1 Verses 26-38 (NIVUK)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 favoured! 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 favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.' 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on 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. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

Questions

- 1) What does this particular passage tell us about Jesus?
- 2) Describe the emotions of Mary as seen in this passage.
- 3) Do you think Mary is being offered a choice? In what way?
- 4) What challenges does Mary face? What is your experience of the costs of serving God?



Part two - JOSEPH

MATTHEW chapter 1 verses 18 - 25 (NIVUK)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet 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 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. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Questions

- 1) What does this particular passage tell us about Mary, Joseph and their relationship with each other, and their relationship with God?
- 2) How do you think Joseph and Mary regarded "the law", and is our attitude any different? If so, how is it?
- 3) Matthew quotes here from Isaiah (Ch 7 v 14), he brings many more quotes from the prophets into his gospel narrative. Why might he have chosen to do this?
- 4) What might the message "God with us" mean for us today?
- 5) How will you welcome the Christ Child?

Closing prayer

Now is the time of watching and waiting
a time pregnant with hope
a time to watch and pray.

May we watch for the signs,
listen for the messengers,
wait for the good news to slip
into our world, our lives.

May sorrow take flight,
and your people sing a song of peace
and hope be born again.
Amen.

Extract from a prayer by Kate McIlhagga

Pictures

Annunciation by Henry Tanner (African American 1898)

The dream of St Joseph by Stefano Maria Legnani (Italian 1708)