



The Prophecy of the Birth of Christ



The Prophecy Fulfilled

“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.”

Luke 1:26-27

Prophecies in the Bible are so numerous, and the amazing part of it is that as we are told they were going to happen so many years ago, they happened just as prophesied. We think often of angels flying around with wings on, but they are God's messengers, and they also prophecy things that will happen to many people in the Bible. The birth of Christ was told to priests and laymen, to man and woman, to young and old, to the mighty and the humble. Just as it is still alive for everyone today.

Shortly before the angel appeared to Mary, the angel Gabriel appeared to Zachariah an old man who worked as a priest. One day as he was working in the temple an angel appeared beside him and told him that his wife was going to have a son and his name would be John. But Zacharias knew that his wife Elisabeth was old and far past child bearing age, so he doubted. The angel Gabriel told him that he would not be able to speak until the baby was born. The baby's name would be John and his mission would be to prepare the way for Messiah. Imagine Zachariah's long nine months when he couldn't speak. He had great news to tell, but could tell no one. He couldn't even talk with his wife who was bearing a child at an old age. John was born and taken to the temple on the eighth day as was the custom. Elisabeth told the people his name would be John, but the people didn't understand. It wasn't a family name. Zachariah took a tablet and wrote "His name is John" Then his mouth was opened and he began to prophesy all that would happen.

Fast-forward 30+ years and this John who lived in the wilderness and fed on locust and honey had become known as John the Baptist. As John was preaching, people began to question him as to who he was because of his testimony. *“John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’”* John 1:23

That made them question even more and he told them *“I baptize with water,”* John replied, *‘but among you stands one you do not know. He is the*

one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” John 1:26-27

Luke tells us that even in his mother's womb John was filled with the Holy Spirit. And when Mary visited her cousin, Elisabeth, and told her about her upcoming birth, Elisabeth said to Mary *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!”* Ref. Luke 1

Today we say that Mary was blessed. We can only imagine how she must have questioned what was happening. Her only confirmation was the angel Gabriel who appeared to her and told her *“Greetings to you, Mary. O favored one!—the Lord be with you! Do not be afraid, Mary; God loves you dearly. You are going to be the mother of a son, and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and will be known as the Son of the most high. The Lord God will give him the throne of his forefather, David, and he will be king over the people of Jacob for ever. His reign shall never end.”* Luke 1:29-33

Researchers feel that Mary was a young teenage girl at this time. She questioned, as we all would. Would it help if you were told the Holy Spirit would make this happen? Mary doesn't tell Joseph immediately. According to Scripture she went to visit Elisabeth and returned after three months.

The law stated if an engaged woman had sexual relations with another man she should be stoned to death.

Joseph was in a quandary. Then an angel appeared to him and told him *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take your wife Mary home, for what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

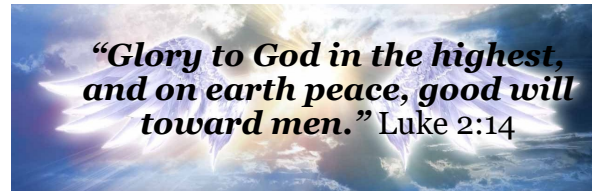
We know that Joseph accepted this explanation and together Mary and Joseph would have the responsibility and honor of rearing this child of God. We need to remember that because Christ was born of the Holy Spirit, he is fully human and fully divine. He is our Savior and our Lord, and not an ordinary individual. This is a very difficult concept for us to understand.

We have two amazing births. Elisabeth was old and well past child-bearing age and Mary was a virgin. In both cases, the men were told by Gabriel what names were to be given to the babies. Both men were visited by an angel and both were confused, but they were men of strong faith.

Some of the final words to Mary are ones that we need to remember each day. When Gabriel told her about her cousin Elisabeth’s pregnancy she also must have known the age of Elisabeth, but then Gabriel told Mary *“For with God nothing shall be impossible..”* Luke 1:37

Before the birth of Jesus, there were two other groups that appeared with a wonderful message. Some shepherds were just tending their sheep when an angel appeared to them. They were not very important people in our eyes, just laborers, but today we have finally come to

realize how very important they were and are. The angel told them *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”* We can assume that Mary and Joseph knew their history and knew that a Messiah would be born, but did the shepherds know the law of the prophets? We don’t know, but before they could doubt for very long or go to ask anyone, angels appeared to them praising God



This was the Messiah the people had waited for- that the prophets had foretold. The angel didn’t command them to go. The angel simply said *“you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”* The shepherds didn’t waste any time. They went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, with the baby in a manger. We have the first missionaries. The shepherds went out and told everyone who would listen. Scripture tells us *“And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”* We never hear anything more about the shepherds. They went back to their fields. Today we still wonder. Do we have a marvelous accepting wonder like them or a doubting wonder? The choice is ours.



Prayer: Father in Heaven, You came to this earth because we are sinners. You gave Your life so that we could inherit eternal life. Sometimes we don’t understand. Guide us Lord to accept with child-like faith the wonderful gift of salvation. Reign over us today and forever. Amen

1. Why is it so difficult for us to have child-like faith or the faith of the shepherds?
2. Can we pray with the man who took his sick child to Christ, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!”

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info@rgscripts.com