

# Fear Not — Nothing is Impossible

## I. ADVENT! The Arrival of the King

### A. Uniqueness of Incarnation Among World Religions

[John 1:1](#) In the Beginning was the Word ... [14](#) And the Word became flesh...

The Creator enters Creation... The Timeless One enters time. “Mild He lays His glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.”

Humility — [Phil 2.6](#) who, though he was in the form of God, ... , [7](#) **emptied himself**, by **taking the form of a servant**, being born in the likeness of men. [8](#) And being found in human form, he **humbled himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

God keeps His promises! — All the Promises find their Yes in Him  
The Messianic Expectancy — Fullness of Times

## II. Family — How the Miracle Came to Be

### A. Isaiah Saw A Child to be born

[Isa 9:6](#) For to us a **child** is born, to us a **son is given**; ...

### B. The Cast of Characters—

1. The old priest and wife
2. The Galilean girl
3. Joseph the dreamer
4. Eventually Augustus Caesar

### C. Zechariah and Elizabeth — Forgotten Prayers

**Luke 1:5** In the days of Herod, ... there was a **priest** named Zechariah,<sup>1</sup> ... And he had **a wife from the daughters of Aaron**, and her name was Elizabeth. **6** And they were **both righteous** ... walking blamelessly ... **7** they had no child, ... and both were advanced in years.

**9** ... he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. **11** And there **appeared to him an angel of the Lord** standing on the right side of the altar of incense. **12** Fear fell upon him.

**13** “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for **your prayer has been heard**, and your wife Elizabeth will **bear you a son**, and you shall call his name John. **18** How shall I know? I am an old man...

## D. Mary – Encounter and the Impossibilities

### 1. The Messenger and Mary

**Luke 1:26** In the **sixth** month the angel Gabriel was sent from 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. And the virgin’s name was Mary. **28** And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O **favored one**, the Lord is with you!”

**29** But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

**30** And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will **conceive** in your womb and **bear** a son, and you shall call his name **Jesus**. **32** He will be **great** and will be called the **Son of the Most High**. And the Lord God will give to 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**.”

Mary is blown away -

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<sup>1</sup> meaning “*the memory of the Lord*.”

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

35 And the angel answered her, “The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the **power** of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the **Son of God**. ...

37 For nothing will be impossible with God.”

38 And Mary said, “Behold, *I am the servant of the Lord*; let it *be to me according to your word*.” And the angel departed from her.

## 2. What this meant for Mary

In the Middle East, a person’s place in **the community is their primary source of identity**.

Different from our individualistic culture – we might introduce ourselves with our first name and what they do vocationally.

We might learn a Middle Eastern woman’s tribal affiliation, her oldest son’s name, and her placement within her entire extended family before we might learn her first name!

**Public reputation:** a person’s actions reflect on their **family & community**, bringing **honor** or **shame** to the people around them. Honor killings. <John 8 - woman in adultery>

Mary will soon face her entire family - and Joseph - explaining that **this child is the product of the Holy Spirit** – he will be **the Promised One!**

**A young poor girl from a small village, will be the mother of the Messiah?**

Who would believe her? If she is not stoned to death, she could be cast out of her community, divorced by Joseph, and scorned by all who knew her.

## 3. Why This is a Big Deal.

This is no small surrender.

For a modern Westerner, being thrown out of our family and community would be extremely painful, but **we could survive**. Our identity as an individual would make it possible to **move on, get a job, and forge a new life**.

For an **ancient girl** — Apart from her family, she would have no home, no income, no prospects. Apart from her people, she would hardly be considered a person.

When Mary says, **“I am the Lord’s servant. May your word to me be fulfilled,”** she is **surrendering** to God’s purposes, **trusting** in his vindication and his sustaining hand.

With humility she accepts both the **honor** God gives her and the **shame** that will come upon her.

When we met Jesus, family issues. “Holy roller! Wrong path.”

**Contrasts:** Zechariah was an older honorable man, a priest serving in the most honorable place on the planet: the temple.

**Mary** is a young girl of no status, a country bumpkin from Galilee.

**Elizabeth’s** pregnancy will restore her honor among her community.

**Luke 1:25** “Thus the Lord has done for me..., to **take away my reproach** among people.”

**Stories Intersect :** Mary arose and went with haste to visit

**Luke 1:41** And **when Elizabeth heard** the greeting of Mary, the **baby leaped<sup>2</sup> in her womb**. And Elizabeth was **filled with the Holy Spirit, 42** and she exclaimed with a loud cry, **“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43** And why is this granted to me that the **mother of my Lord** should come to me?

**45** And **blessed is she who believed** that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

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<sup>2</sup> σκιρτάω - to jump for joy

Mary's response to this blessing is worship.

**Luke 1:46** And Mary said, "My **soul** magnifies the Lord, **47** and my **spirit** rejoices in God my Savior. **[slide 1]**

**49** for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. **[slide 2]**

The proud are scattered; rulers are conquered,

The humble are exalted; the hungry are filled, the rich are starving.

Mary's song. – The MAGNIFICAT — Christ in her, the hope of Glory

## C. Joseph the Father - Pressures

### Joseph chosen to be a dad to WORD of God.

**Matt. 1:18** Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **[slide 3]**

**Matt. 1:19** And her husband Joseph, being a **just man** and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.<sup>3</sup>

Observations of JOSEPH:

1. He was a **righteous man**, yet **didn't want to shame Mary openly**.

Joseph was in a tough place. If he refused to expose MARY as an adulteress, then it would seem to everyone else that he must have been the one who got her pregnant in the first place. He would have **lost his reputation** as a righteous man.

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<sup>3</sup> lit. Secretly

What's more, in addition to publicly shaming Mary, *it was within Joseph's legal rights to impound her dowry and demand a refund for the bride price he had paid.* <sup>4</sup>

Joseph could have then gone on to find another wife, ...

**Matt. 1:20** But as he considered<sup>5</sup> these things, behold, **an angel of the Lord** appeared to him in a **dream**, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and **you** shall call his name **Jesus**, for **he will save his people from their sins.**" **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

**23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, **[slide 4]** and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

**24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

And *in the face of the ridicule he would receive, Joseph agreed to take Mary as his wife and **her son as his own child.***

Did he feel inadequate to be the father of IMMANUEL?

Later how did he take the 12 year old's question, "Didn't you all know I had to be in my Father's house?" Mary was treasuring these words in her heart.

Did it cut Joseph to the core? Was this yet another reminder to Joseph that he was indeed not the father?

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<sup>4</sup> Later Jewish law demanded a man charge his wife immediately if she was not a virgin. Roman law accused any man who failed to do so to be a pimp who was exploiting his wife as a prostitute.

<sup>5</sup> ἐνθυμέομαι – process (wrestle with) strong feelings and thoughts

2. Later Joseph is a dad who dreams and who saves his family by going to Egypt! (*reminds us of Joseph the patriarch— dreams and exile in Egypt also saved his family from famine and death.*)

*Did he worry about how, as a refugee, he was going to physically protect and spiritually nurture his family when they got to Egypt —so far from his own home and family support system?*

***I was terrified as a young dad. 3 jobs. 18 units. No money. No prospects.***

3. Joseph's **legacy** to his son:

For the sake of God's kingdom and the salvation of his people, Joseph, a righteous man, likely spent the rest of his days enduring the reputation of raising a bastard, a child born in sin.

***Joseph taught Jesus much more than woodworking.*** He **modeled** for his adopted son how, for the joy set before him, to despise the shame, and to embrace the cross.

What is exalted among men,... abomination

***God took away Jesus' shame by raising him from the dead,*** I cannot help but believe he will ***do the same for Joseph*** on the day of resurrection.

How awesome will it be when Jesus, the Lord of all, honors his adopted father, who suffered so much for him and yet **refused to deny his son** before men?

**Matt 10:32** So everyone who **acknowledges me before men**, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, **33** but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in Heaven.

Will Joseph break down in tears when his adopted son says to him before his heavenly Father and all humankind, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. Blessed are you whom people said all kinds of evil against because of me."

Maybe then Jesus will even add: **"You're the best dad, ever."**

### **III. Nothing is Impossible**

**Forgotten Dreams and Prayers**

**Over your head? Inadequate, Impossible**

**Advent and 2nd Coming**

**Still looking for heart**

**How well have you loved? – St. John of the Cross**