

The Place

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Micah 5.2)

The mighty angel Gabriel had appeared to both Mary and Joseph. His appearance to Mary assured her that the child she would carry and bare would, in fact, be the only begotten Son of God. He would be the fulfillment of all the Old Testament’s prophecies concerning the advent of God in flesh - Immanuel, God with us.

Joseph, too, had been informed of the miraculous conception. Had he not been blessed with a supernatural encounter from this same angel, he would have done the right thing by the Law and have Mary put away. Because of his tenderness, this would be done in secret so that Mary would suffer no more public disdain than was absolutely necessary. He must have loved her - else, he would have had her stoned. However, the angel spoke to Joseph and he believed.

The Scriptures record that Joseph was a just man (Matthew 1.19) - a man who adhered to the Law - a man who was devout in his religion. It also records Mary’s song, the Magnificat, (Luke 1.46-55) showing us how deeply religious and learned was Mary.

They were an ideal couple making a home suitable for the birth of our Savior. We can safely assume that they began preparations for the arrival of Mary’s firstborn son. There in Nazareth, they began arrangements for the baby’s “space.” It seems, no matter what era, a newborn baby needs space - among other things.

Time for the baby’s arrival grew near, but something was wrong - terribly wrong. Micah had prophesied that the baby would be born in Bethlehem - they were still living in Nazareth. Since Micah was the only prophet to predict that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, could I be overreacting - after all, this is just a single, minor detail spoken by one “minor” prophet.

In order for God’s Word to be true and accurate, God used the entire Roman government - from Caesar Augustus to the census bureau to the local Governor. God controlled an entire nation - the world power - to accomplish a minor glitch in location. When you think of something so nearly impossible that it would take an act of Congress to get it done, well, here you have it.

From Joseph and Mary’s perspective, it would have taken more than a mere suggestion. Mary was “great with child” (Luke 2.5, at least in her last trimester) - Bethlehem was 80 miles away (through rough terrain) - and, the ambulance was a donkey. Awaiting them in Bethlehem was the unknown.

All of this that the Word of God would not be broken even in the least of matters.

Throughout history, God has done some remarkable things in order to accomplish His plan. He allowed the entire nation of Israel to fall so that Daniel could personally meet the king of Babylon and deliver to him and the world a message of the end times. He prepared a great fish to encourage a wayward prophet, Jonah, to preach to a city with more than 200,000 children. He sent some hornets ahead of His people into Canaan to inspire at least three nations to move out allowing Israel safe passage. (Exodus 23.28) He ordered His servant, Ezekiel, to preach in a graveyard (Ezekiel 37.4) to teach him of the blessed future prepared for God's chosen people. He sent His Son into a world of sinners to die as a substitute for our sins so that we would never need to taste His wrath.

So, what difficulty daunts your way? What troubles are you experiencing? Have you considered that God may be using incredible circumstances to move you into a position where He can bless you beyond your wildest imagination?

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