

When Heaven and Earth Embraced

Text: Luke 1:19; Matthew 1:18

Every year at Christmas a cast of characters are brought to mind. These would be Zacharias, Elisabeth, John the Baptist, the shepherds, the wise men, Simeon, Anna, Caesar Augustus, Herod, and we presume an unnamed inn keeper. You have heard me refer to those places in the Earth when Heaven is so close to Earth and Earth is so close to Heaven that we refer to it, as the ancient Celts did, as a “thin place.” There were three personages that were involved when Earth and Heaven did more than touch--Heaven and Earth embraced. We would never do away with the words of the standard old carols that we have always sung, but recent songwriters have penned these lyrics to the tune of *The First Noel* that express my desire in this message to convey:

The first Noel, earth and heaven embraced,
As a virgin beheld her new born babe.
From realms on high to a manger on earth,
Salvation had dawned in a lowly birth.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.

I. GABRIEL, THE OBEDIENT MESSENGER

A. Gabriel ever stands in the presence of the Lord waiting for his assignments.

Luke 1:19: “And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.”

B. Gabriel was given the greatest news ever to be given in the Earth.

Luke 1:26, 27: “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.”

C. Gabriel has been around for a long time, and he gets around.

Five hundred thirty-eight years earlier, Gabriel gave the famous prophesy of the “Abomination of desolation” to Daniel (Daniel 9:21-27) while Daniel was in Babylon. Six months before he came to Mary, he gave the news to Zaharias that the forerunner, John the Baptist would be born (Luke 1:10-20). It appears that it was Gabriel who also came to Joseph and informed him that Mary was with child miraculously and “...thou shalt call His name Jesus” (Matthew 1:20, 21).

D. Gabriel gave the message to the shepherds and then led the Heavenly choir in praise and adoration.

Hebrews 1:6, 7: “And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.”

And this is exactly what happened in Luke 2:8-15. It appears that Gabriel made the announcement to the shepherds and soon the heavenly host joined in the praise and adoration. In the Bible, a host signified a great number and a group like an army who operate with great precision and skill. So, it is easy to visualize

this magnificent host operating like a heavenly choir, each singing their part in praise to the newborn King.

II. MARY, THE VIRGIN MAIDEN

A. Mary was a recipient of grace.

Luke 1:28 "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

B. Mary was a young lady of impeccable purity.

Luke 1:34 "Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?"

C. Mary brought glory to God in spirit and body.

I Corinthians 6:19, 20: "What? know not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

D. Mary had full trust in the Lord and His Word.

Luke 1:38: "And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her."

III. JOSEPH, THE QUIET MAN

A. Joseph loved unconditionally.

Matthew 1:19: "Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily."

B. Joseph was informed of Mary's miraculous conception.

Matthew 1:20: "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

C. Joseph understood Christ's mission, trusting God without reservation.

Matthew 1:21: "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:25: "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus."

D. Joseph was apprised of the fulfilment of prophecy.

Matthew 1:22, 23: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

E. Joseph received and accepted the assignment to protect our Lord and Mary.

Matthew 2:13-15. "And when they [the Wise Men] were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:13).

F. God deemed the carpenter's shop the best training ground for His Son.

Matthew 13:55: "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?"

Mark 6:3: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him."

Our Lord was certainly not bereft of Bible knowledge, for he stumped the religious leaders of His day when He was only twelve. This brings to our imagination, that as our Lord is working alongside of Joseph, great thoughts and ideas were being discussed between Jesus and Joseph.

There is an old saying: "Still waters run deep." Although we don't hear a lot about Joseph or from Joseph, we believe this quiet man of Christmas meant the world to Mary and our Lord. The will of God was most unusual for Joseph, but we see "...a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work"
" (II Timothy 2:21b).

Conclusion:

God blesses obedience. The one common thing the angel Gabriel, Mary and Joseph had in common was undying loyalty to the Lord and a willingness to do exactly what He said.

-Pastor Pope-