

20:20 Vision Ministries -- Devotions by Roger Browning
Week 50 (December 7-13, 2014)

This week's devotions will feature a young Jewish girl named Mary. Study this familiar text as though you have never read it before and allow God to minister to you.

Sunday, December 7 (Luke 1:26-28)

The angel Gabriel visits Mary during the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. This young Jewish girl lives in Nazareth, a town in Israel that gets very little respect from people of other localities (see John 1:46). Mary is engaged to Joseph, a young carpenter (v. 26-27). There are several points to be made here. First, note that **God sends** the angel to Mary. Angels are powerful beings created by Him, but they do not act on their own. Our Heavenly Father directs their every move. Next, note that Mary has chosen to remain pure in a town where Roman soldiers stay overnight on their journey from Rome to Jerusalem. Immorality is rampant! This choice, alone, qualifies her to be chosen by God for this awesome privilege. Finally, the angel calls her "highly favored" even before she hears and accepts His offer (v. 28). This sets the stage for God's wonderful miracle.

Monday, December 8 (Luke 1:29-33)

Mary is alarmed by this angelic visitation (v. 29), but Gabriel says to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God" (v. 30). (The 365 declarations in the Bible of "do not be afraid" are designed to hold us steady in our world of strife.) Mary is to bear a son whose name will be Jesus meaning "the Lord saves." His name is the **Greek** version of the Hebrew name, Joshua (v. 31), because He came to save the **world**, not just Israel. Pause a moment to digest v. 32. Last week, I pointed out that Zechariah and Elizabeth are "upright **in the sight of God**" (v. 6) and their son, John, will be "great **in the sight of the Lord**" (v. 15), but Jesus will be simply **great** because He **is** God in the flesh (v. 32). He is destined to rule throughout Eternity (see Isaiah 9:6-7)! Come and worship the King of all kings!

Tuesday, December 9 (Luke 1:34-38)

Liberal seminaries have taught young ministry students in recent years that Mary was a young girl, but not a virgin. These students are now leading churches into this gross error. It is not an option to believe or not to believe that Jesus was born of a virgin. He **had to** be fully God so that He could become the sacrifice for sins. He also **had to** be fully man so that he could be tempted to sin in every way, just like we are (see Hebrews 4:15). Mary states that she is a virgin (v. 34). The illegitimate son of Joseph could not save anyone! The bigger picture here involves our salvation. We must understand that there is nothing we can do to give birth to the Son of God except to give our permission for Him to enter. God wants us to know from the start that salvation is a gift, not by works, so that no one can boast (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

Wednesday, December 10 (Luke 1:34-38)

The incarnation is not something we can figure out with our finite minds. We must believe it by faith! Mary asks how this can take place (v. 34). God's answer through the angel in v. 35 is, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High **will overshadow you.**" Do not miss that! When God's Spirit overshadows your agenda, the Son of God is born in you. Every new truth you learn from that day forward will follow the same pattern. God's Spirit interrupts your plans and moves you into a deeper relationship. Jesus, who is resident, wants to be **President!** If you think this is not going to happen to you because of your age or spiritual maturity, take heart from v. 37, "For nothing is impossible with God." All He is waiting for is your permission and surrender (v. 38).

Thursday, December 11 (Luke 1:46-56)

Mary's response to her divine calling appears in today's text. She acknowledges God as her Savior and gives glory to Him (v. 46). She expresses humility as His servant and acknowledges that future generations will call **her** blessed (v. 48). Mary would be appalled to know that many people pray to her and even ask her to talk Jesus into doing something for them. She says "the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is **His name.**" She knows that there is nothing special about her except what He has done (v. 49). Mary needs the same mercy that He offers to us (v. 50). God will assist the weak and poor, but the proud and rich will not seek Him (v. 51-53). She ends her praise by declaring His protection for **Israel.** Our world is about to observe how God protects His people who are surrounded by their enemies!

Friday, December 12 (Matthew 1:18-23)

Matthew tells the story of the incarnation from Joseph's perspective. He confirms the virgin birth as taught by Dr. Luke (v. 18). Joseph does not want to have Mary stoned for adultery so he makes plans to divorce her privately (v. 19). Note that an engagement in those days was as binding as a marriage and required a legal divorce to end it. That is when God steps in. An angel comes to Joseph **in a dream** to inform him that the child within Mary's womb is from the Holy Spirit (v. 20). Can you imagine the faith it took to believe the reality of the dream? The angel tells him to name the child Jesus (the Lord saves), "because He will save His people from their sins" (v. 21). Thus, the Word of God is fulfilled (v. 22-23)!

Saturday, December 13 (Matthew 1:24-25)

These two simple verses are very important in the story of the incarnation. Joseph obeys the angelic visitation he received in the dream (v. 24). New knowledge **without** obedience is worthless (see James 2:17). In a real show of self-discipline and respect, he has no union with Mary until after Jesus is born (v. 25). The birth of our Lord comes without man's intervention! Joseph and Mary later have at least seven children (see Matthew 13:55-56), but Joseph respects God's plan enough to refrain from marital unity until after God's son is born. He also obeys the angel by naming his child Jesus, acknowledging that "**the Lord saves.**" Jesus can save the worst sinner alive today if only he/she will accept God's Gift!