

**December 24, 2009**

**Christmas Eve**

## **THE GOSPEL'S ACCOUNT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you shall conceive in your womb and bring forth a son and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God; for with God nothing will be impossible!"

Then Mary said, "Behold thy maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

***"<sup>39</sup> Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, <sup>40</sup> and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. <sup>42</sup> Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! <sup>43</sup> But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup> For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded***

***in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. <sup>45</sup> Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.’ And Mary said: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, <sup>47</sup> and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. <sup>48</sup> For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. <sup>49</sup> For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. <sup>50</sup> And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. <sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. <sup>52</sup> He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. <sup>53</sup> He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. <sup>54</sup> He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, <sup>55</sup> as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.’ <sup>56</sup> And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.” (Luke 1:39-56)***

Now...Mary who was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins!” So all this was done to fulfill the prophecies, “Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel! Which is translated, “God with us!”

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her first son, and he called His name Jesus.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city.

Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen *Him*, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard *it* marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered *them* in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying, "Where is He who was born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with

him. And he gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea." Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also."

When they heard the king, they departed and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts of, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Then being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way.

Now when they departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring your word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him."