

December - January 23-24

Glory Magazine

share good news

Merry
Christmas
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

IN THIS ISSUE

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DEPOY

FOREVER GOD
THREE IN ONE

THE UNDOCTRINATED
WITNESS

THE GIFT THAT
KEEPS GIVING

REVEALING
GOD'S GLORY

Now unto him

THAT IS ABLE TO
DO EXCEEDING
ABUNDANTLY ABOVE
ALL THAT WE ASK OR
THINK, ACCORDING
TO THE POWER THAT
WORKETH IN US,
**Unto him be
glory in the
church by Christ
Jesus** THROUGHOUT
ALL AGES, WORLD
WITHOUT END. AMEN.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (KJV)

WELCOME

WELCOME TO JASON DEPOY AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!

As we ascend into the Christmas season, we are pleased to announce that we have a new contributor, Jason DePoy, of DePoy Ministries International, joining our magazine team beginning with this issue.

Jason is a visionary leader and brings a wealth of experience to *Glory Magazine*. We are confident that his contributions will enhance the quality of content we deliver to our readers. We warmly welcome Jason and look forward to his valuable contributions to *Glory Magazine*!



Jason DePoy,
DePoy Ministries International

*Merry
Christmas*
& HAPPY NEW YEAR

We also want to express our sincere gratitude to all our supporters and readers who have helped us achieve another successful year. As the holiday season approaches, we wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. May this festive season be filled with joy, happiness, blessings, and prosperity for all. We are excited to continue providing you with relevant spiritual and prophetic content in the coming year.

We look forward to achieving more life-changing milestones together. From the entire team, Bob, Al, Jason, and Angela, we wish you a *Merry Christmas* and a *Happy New Year* filled with love, happiness, blessings, and prosperity. Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Blessings and honor,

Angela Errett

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*That I may publish with the voice
of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy
wondrous works. Psalm 26:7*

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ON THE COVER

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Lewis County, WV
Alan Tucker/Backyard Photography

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Content in each issue is inspired. We do not know what will be on the pages until it is completed.

by Bob Jacobus

Forever God

**Three In One:
Eternal, Immortal,
Invisible**

There were three unseen qualities in the manger that first Christmas morning. The baby was an eternal being, a person with no beginning and no end. The child, being mortal, would become immortal; that is, overcoming death in every form. Finally, his true identity was invisible to those without Abraham's faith. Messiah, Emmanuel, God with us.

*"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,"
Colossians 2:9 (NIV)*

By definition, a deity is a supernatural being worshiped by people who believe. This was the most common or generic definition found in a 2023 literary review of the subject. A caveat: not all belief systems have a defined deity or one that can be identified beyond a

thought or philosophy. Most agree there is no beginning or end to their deity. Most religions have a specified person or object central to their conviction. This paper unabashedly proclaims the Judeo-Christian God as the true and Holy One.

It is often said that God chose to reveal himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Maybe that choice was never made! Hear this idea out. If God is eternal, He was and always is. If He is unchangeable in His Being, He is and always will be. Could it be the Godhead or the Trinity has always been there since the "no beginning"? His very nature? Many things are abundantly clear: God is great, God is powerful, God is wondrous, and God is much more than what a mere man can think.

The Bible speaks of Jesus, this baby in the cradle.

*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end."
Isaiah 9:6-7 (NIV)*

A child was born, but the baby was unique; He was also The Son given to us. The declaration from Isaiah implies Jesus was a son before He was born. He is The Son in the eternal God from the "no beginning." He was called Mighty God in the human tongue 700 years before He was born. Jesus, being the only begotten son, is Deity...He is eternal.

FOR UNTO US *a child is born*

Now, then, it is essential for God to enter creation as a creature in order to be truly immortal. To be fully immortal implies that mortality came first since immortality is the notion of forever existence, even after death. Death is a mortal experience. God was able to experience mortality and is now immortal through the birth, death, and resurrection of The Son. The best Christmas gift God gave man was eternal life, immortality through the life of The Son who experienced resurrection and is willing to share that life event with any who believes.

*“Deep honor and bright glory
to the King of All Time— One
God, Immortal, Invisible, ever
and always. Oh, yes!”*

1 Timothy 1:17 (MSG)

People have an innate disposition to limit statements, be it something a parent says, a rule book for a game, or the Bible. This is often referred to as “putting it in a box.” It might be reasonable to apply that practice to temporal declarations; however, the Bible makes “all-time” statements, eternal statements, and, yes, invisible statements. The Bible is often supplemental. For instance, I close morning prayer with the aforementioned verse using *Eternal* inserted before *Immortal*, then *except for those who believe*, after *Invisible*. We should not limit the terms believe/believers to those who are born again or saved. Even those who acknowledge God but have not accepted God

see His works. They believe in God but are not fully fledged.

One cannot view the meaning of the Bible as an exclusive translation because of God’s Spirit; sometimes, an interpretation is needed. There is a safeguard: the Bible is big enough. It covers a significant amount of time in the human experience, so an understanding can be confirmed in other sub-narratives found in its scriptures. Isaiah said there would be a Son, and the angel Gabriel asserted that Jesus was The Son (Luke 1:31-32); Jesus replied, “I Am” when the high priest asked Him if He was The Son of God (Mark 14:61-62). Jesus was not just a baby in a manger on that first Christmas; He was Emmanuel, “God with us!”

Even today, the sublime identity of Jesus being God is invisible to those who have not heard how God came to earth as a creature. How wondrous it is that the Creator entered our physical world via creation. Jesus wasn’t fathered in the human sense but instead entered this world through a gateway... a mother’s womb. To do this, The Son emptied Himself of identity, knowledge, and power. Complete humility. However, one thing that could not be laid aside was God’s Glory. It was there at the cradle.

Colossians 2:9 clearly states that Christ was the full embodiment of God in a physical form. We could argue semantics. Just for the sake of clarity, consider Jesus, Christ, Messiah, and Son of God to be the same person. In the Old Testament, *The angel of the Lord* is often worshiped after an

appearance; many Bible scholars propose this was the pre-incarnate Christ. Loyal angels do not accept worship, so if the angel of the Lord does, then this being is royal, acknowledging personal deity. Hebrew and Greek are different languages. Hebrew has a special one-letter article connected before the angel, which has been translated as “the.” Thus, the angel of the Lord is a subtle, shall we say almost invisible title in the Kingdom?

In the New Testament New International Version, an angel of the Lord is referenced ten times, and the angel of the Lord is referenced once. The angel appears once not followed by “of the Lord.” The point is that to see God, one needs to be looking for God.

Jesus can look a person in the face and be invisible if that person’s heart is hard or was never told to look. The high priest who asked Jesus if He was The Son had a hard heart.

Abraham is called the father of faith. For God to be visible, that faith needs to be employed. Timothy’s scripture calls God invisible; is it not wondrous that God can be hidden yet seen? The shepherds around Bethlehem who were told Messiah had come decided to go to town and look for the sign that the angels gave as proof. They specifically looked for a baby lying in a manger wrapped in clothes. They found the manger and the baby...saw The Son and God’s Glory. This season, may you see The Son in the fullness of His Glory and allow others to do so with the faith you have to see.

by Angela Errett

The Undoctrinated *WITNESS*

Resurrector: R_Tavan/Bigstock.com

“AND ONE OF THE MALEFACTORS WHICH WERE HANGED RAILED ON HIM, SAYING, ***If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*** BUT THE OTHER ANSWERING REBUKED HIM, SAYING, DOST NOT THOU FEAR GOD, SEEING THOU ART IN THE SAME CONDEMNATION? AND WE INDEED JUSTLY; FOR WE RECEIVE THE DUE REWARD OF OUR DEEDS: ***but this man hath done nothing amiss.*** AND HE SAID UNTO JESUS, ***Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.*** AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, ***Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.***”

Luke 23:39-43 (KJV)

In Luke, chapter twenty-three, we find the story of the two thieves on the cross with Jesus. (It is also found in Matthew 27:38-44.) The two thieves on the cross were of opposite natures. One did not see his own condemnation and repent of it, but the other did. They were

both aware of Jesus, and their stories are found in Scripture after He was declared the King Of The Jews. In other words, there was no way they didn't know about Him and what had been spoken of Him. It is not stated if the two thieves were Jews or Gentiles, just that they were two robbers.

WHO WAS THE THIEF ON THE LEFT?

This criminal decided not to consider why he was being crucified in the first place. He was a thief, plain and simple. His acts were against God, yet he chose his perception of who Jesus was and did not believe He was willing to die for him, too. This malefactor just wanted to be saved from his verdict of death. He saw no evidence that Jesus would get him off the cross, mainly because Jesus was unable to remove Himself from it. This thief was focused on the world around him, not giving a second thought to the eternal, spiritual world to come. He was not only a thief in his community, but also a thief for not believing Jesus Christ was the Son of God and could provide everything ever needed. At the same time, in the land of the living, he stole the glory of God. He chose to only know of God, not having a relationship with Him or His Son, even though he was beside Him and in His presence.

Luke's account says this thief "railed" against Jesus (See Luke 23:39). That means he cursed, mocked, and profaned the sacred things of God, blaming Him for his situation. He wasn't taking responsibility for his own actions nor recognizing the free will God gave, which allows us to choose to love, honor, and revere Him. He questioned the purpose God

had sent His Son to earth for, especially since there was no "physical evidence" of his current predicament (they were all still nailed to their crosses). He was not able to see what Jesus offered was more real than the pain on the cross, but a spiritual life, everlasting, unlike the one he was currently experiencing. By loving Him, we offer our sacrifice, die on our own cross, and bestow the glory due Him because Jesus is the only way to eternal life with the Father.

Job questioned God and found out he had no answers for the questions God asked him (see Job 38) and that complaining and playing the blame game is dishonorable. The thief on the left found he, too, could not answer for his crimes or pay the price for his sin. God convinced Job of his ignorance, and he humbled himself and repented. God recompensed Job twice as much as he had and blessed him with a long life; however, the unrepentant thief discovered that God would turn His gaze away from those who mock Him with an unrepentant heart.

THE EYE THAT MOCKETH
AT HIS FATHER, AND
DESPISETH TO OBEY HIS
MOTHER, *the ravens of
the valley shall pick
it out*, AND THE YOUNG
EAGLES SHALL EAT IT.

Proverbs 30:17 (KJV)

WHO WAS THE THIEF ON THE RIGHT HAND?

Right in context is a metaphor for a place of honor; the hand that takes, and left is the opposite of right, or second best.

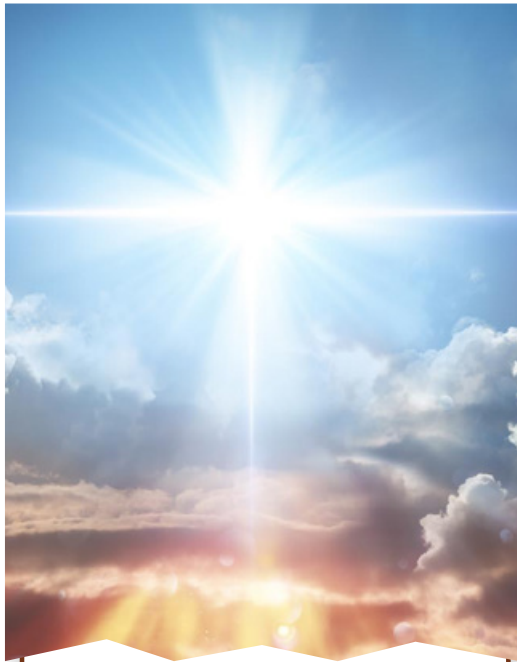
This thief rebuked the defamation of Jesus he was witnessing. He saw the people, the rulers, and soldiers deriding Jesus, and he heard the thief on the left mocking Him, questioning, "If you be Christ, save yourself and us." He chose to answer the question and admonished him. I'll paraphrase it. Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? You are on a cross for your crimes! We have been rightly judged and receive what is due for our deeds, but Jesus had done nothing improper.

And what is the next thing he does? He says to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

First, he recognized his sin and need for a savior. Then, he declares Jesus as Lord. Those words were a sign that he reconciled himself to not only needing a savior, but Jesus, as Savior, would also become his Master. He is the undoctrinated witness. The thief, on the right hand, had no formal instruction in Christianity. He was not asking anyone around him what he should think of Jesus, much less what to release in his words. He knew he had been a thief in the sight of God and man. He knew

THEN WILL I ALSO CONFESS
UNTO THEE THAT THINE OWN
right hand CAN SAVE THEE.
Job 40:14 (KJV)





DENOMINATION

There are basically two definitions for the word *denomination*.

1 The first describes a religious body with different beliefs than another group in the same faith.

2 The second definition assigns the official acceptable value of a coin or means to trade with.

his condemnation was just for his sins. He was given no Christian doctrine or denomination to follow. He did not jump off the cross, begging to be baptized in the river. He didn't think about how he hadn't attended last Sunday's service or hadn't had time to get his church membership card. I am not dismissing such things as frivolous. These actions can help those in need to stay on the narrow road, but what I am saying is making the traditions of man of more effect than the two requirements Jesus gave in Matthew 22:37-40 is precisely what the Pharisees did. Religion requires someone to jump through hoops when all God wants is your heart, fellowship with Him, and obedience to His chosen purpose for your life.

Jesus said unto him, THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:37-40 (KJV)

The thief on the left is described as "another on the left," however, the first thief is described as the "one on the right hand." (See Matthew 27:38; Luke 23:33) Notice carefully he is on the right HAND and the other is just "on the left." It is not implicitly declared on the left hand. Neither of the thieves would have been physically touching Jesus on

their own crosses. Yet, spiritually, the "one on the right hand" is portrayed in a position of authority and as one touching or on Jesus. Why? Because he accepted Christ, and Jesus confirmed it by telling him he would be in paradise soon after that. Jesus Christ, the perfect Spirit of Truth, the Word, the Seed of God, was planted in a fleshy, clay pot. He gave His body for the payment of sin for those who believe on Him so that the Spirit of a man is redeemed back to the Father and does not experience the second death. There is no other denomination able to do what Christ did.

Man's sin is reflected in the story of the two malefactors, the one on the right hand and the one on the left. All are guilty. None are without sin. How you choose to live and what you choose to believe in will have eternal consequences. Not because a pastor, commentator, or friend says so, but because the Bible, the Word of God, shares this truth with whoever will read it. And, when you accept Christ and are infilled with the Holy Ghost, He will lead you into all truth.

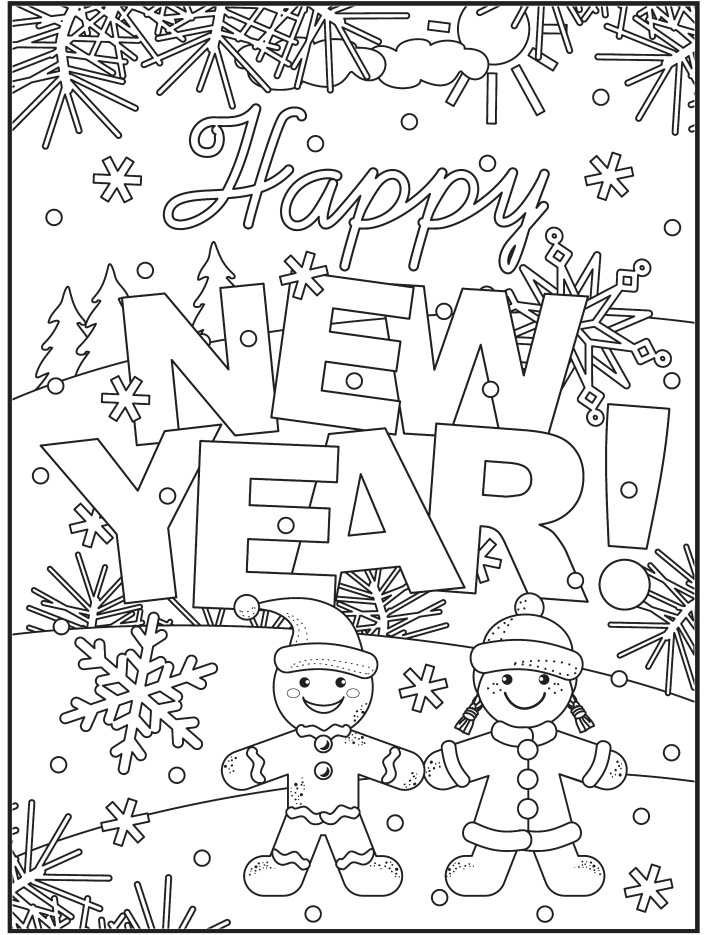
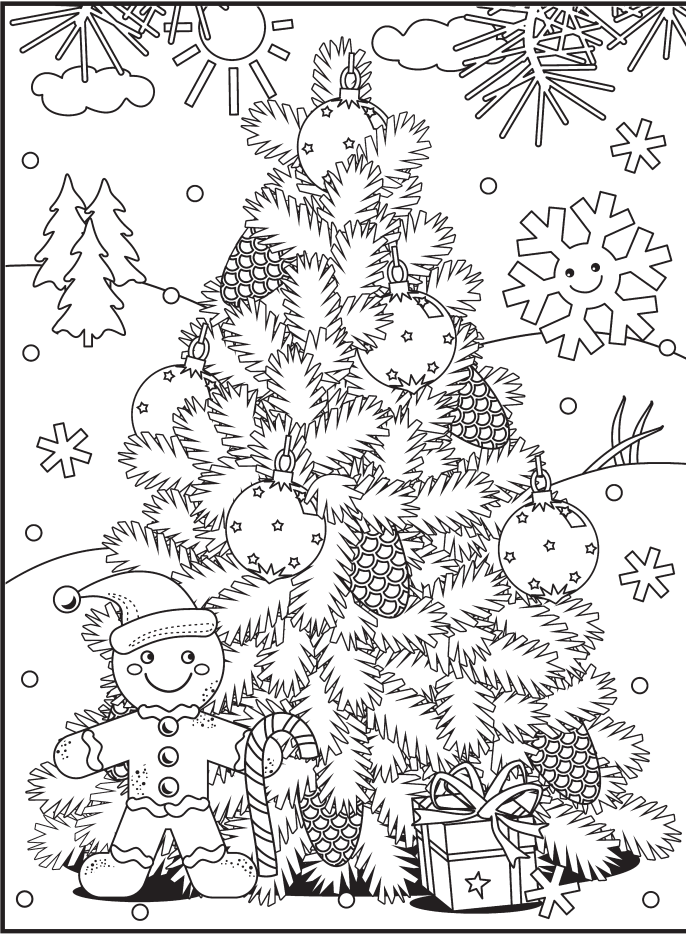
Jesus, the anointed one, fulfilled all the Law. He forgave the thieves before the one on the left even could revile Him. He forgave us before we even set foot on the earth. And, when we believe in His finished works, we partake of His inheritance.

The Lord calls to all who will hear Him, ***"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"*** (Matthew 11:28-30 NIV).



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MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Cheerful gingerbread man; Happy New Year : raiselmeister/Bigstock.com

Friendly snowman: AlexBanny4tv/Bigstock.com

by Jason DePoy

The Gift That Keeps On Giving

“FOR UNTO YOU
IS BORN THIS DAY
**in the city
of David, a
Saviour** WHICH
IS CHRIST THE LORD.”

Luke 2:11 (KJV)

*It didn't have to be
a Red Ryder; any BB
Gun would do. That's all I
wanted for Christmas that
year, and if I could get just
that one present – I'd be the
happiest 9-year-old around.*

I'm sure we've all prayed some prayer that would sound something similar. “God, if You'll just give me this ONE THING, I'll never ask You for anything ever again.” But that's not how our generous Heavenly Father operates. Ephesians 1:3 tells us that He has

blessed us (already) with EVERY spiritual blessing in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus. When He gave us Jesus, He gave us everything!

We see this demonstrated in the scriptures about the night Jesus was born. In Luke 2:10-11 (KJV), the angel declares to the shepherds, “*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*”

Isn't that beautiful and so poetic? If I'm ever not feeling in the “Christmas spirit,” all I have to do is read those two verses, and immediately, my mood changes.

AT KEEPS ON GIVING | THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING | THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING | THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING


 PRAYER

When we read that verse, we'd be making a tremendous mistake if we limit this perfect Gift of God to simply be our ticket to Heaven. Yes, because of Him, we can be reconciled with our Heavenly Father, allowing us to spend eternity with Him in Heaven. However, it's so much more than that!

That word *saviour* is the Greek word *soter* (pronounced so-tare'). For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Soter. That is a word of eternal value and unlimited power. Soter not only means *saviour*, but it also means *deliverer* and *preserver*. It comes from the root word *sozo*, meaning to *save, keep safe, and rescue from danger, suffering, or destruction*. It also means to *save from disease, make well, heal, make whole, and restore to health*. Wow, seeing how much is packed into that one word brings new meaning to all that God gave us through our Saviour, Jesus.

For unto YOU was born that day, in the city of David, a Saviour who will save, deliver, and preserve you. One that will keep you safe and rescue you from danger, suffering, and destruction. He will save you from sickness and disease, bring healing and wholeness to your life, and restore you to health and strength! Praise His Holy Name!

On that starry night, He didn't just give you one part of Himself; He gave you ALL of Himself. He didn't just give you one little gift; He gave you a gift that keeps on giving. However, just like every gift, it needs to be received. Today, will you receive the fullness of all He has given you? When we celebrate Christmas this year, let's remember and celebrate ALL that He gave us in Jesus, our Soter. Let's receive it ALL by faith and refuse to be denied the complete work of our salvation. They truly are GOOD TIDINGS of GREAT JOY to ALL PEOPLE!

“Father, thank You for my Soter, Jesus! Thank You for ALL that You have given me through His birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection. Help me to always remember the greatest Gift of all, my Saviour. By faith, I receive all the benefits of Your Gift, and I expect them to take place in my life in the Name of Jesus, Amen!”

If you've never asked Jesus to be your Lord and Saviour, you can receive the greatest Gift ever given to mankind. Pray this prayer and mean it from your heart:

“God, I'm in need of a Saviour. I believe that Jesus is Your Son, and He died on the cross to pay for my sins, rose again, and is alive today. Jesus, I ask You to come into my heart to be my Lord and my Saviour. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me follow You all the days of my life. Take my life and do something awesome with it for Your Glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.”

If you prayed that prayer, the Bible says you're now saved and a child of God. Find a good Bible-believing church that teaches the Word of God unapologetically. Begin learning all about God and His Son, Jesus, and all that you now have access to through His promises! Please let us know here at *Glory Magazine* – **we want to celebrate with you!**

“For indeed, as soon as the voice of your (Mary’s) greeting sounded in my (Elizabeth’s) ears, the babe (John the Baptist) leaped in my womb for joy.”

Luke 1:44 (NKJV)



I absolutely love the first two chapters of Luke. It describes the incredible love story of how God gave us the most wonderful gift He could ever give, His Son, His only Son, an infant with the most beautiful name, Jesus, so we could have everlasting life. I love the characters He uses. It begins with an unsuspecting elderly couple, Zacharias, a priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who was barren, being visited by an angel, and not any angel. It was Gabriel, “who stands in the presence of God,” and was sent by Him to tell Zacharias that Elizabeth would have a son in her old age, and he would be called John. Gabriel would leave Zacharias mute until after the baby was born because he couldn’t believe what he was hearing. I would have a little trouble believing that, too. I also love how Gabriel explained that John would be filled with the Holy Spirit even in the womb and be Jesus’ forerunner. Poor Zacharias possessed an amazing story and couldn’t share it with anyone. Can you imagine how excited he must have been when Elizabeth conceived not long after that? It confirmed that he didn’t just dream of Gabriel’s visit; he spoke to him face to face, and the events occurred just as Gabriel foretold.

Photo: © Backyard Photography, Alan Tucker



By Al Tucker

REVEALING God's Glory

left: Widdecombe Church window, England



left: Oglebay Park Nativity Scene, Ohio County; below: Phillippi Nativity Scene, Barbour County

**“For with God nothing will be impossible.
(Spoken by Gabriel.)” Luke 1:37 (NKJV)**

Six months later, Gabriel is on another mission for God in Nazareth in Galilee. This time, he visits another unsuspecting couple, Mary and Joseph, who are betrothed to be married. He first sees the virgin bride-to-be. Gabriel was not throwing darts in selecting Elizabeth and Zacharias and then Joseph and Mary to visit. We now understand that this was a part of God’s plan all along and had been prophesied about centuries before: *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel,”* (Isaiah 7:14 NKJV). While Joseph was of the House of David and Elizabeth’s lineage can be traced back to Aaron, Mary’s is not quite as clear. But she does come from the line of Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob (Luke 3:32-38). I find it not to be a coincidence that Mary was related to Elizabeth when Gabriel explained that Elizabeth, “her relative,” was with child for five months and how helpful that must have been to Mary to accept that she *“had found favor with God,”*

she will *“bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus,”* and *“He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”* Try to imagine such a scene. It hardly seems possible. In today’s world, I can see a reaction of “What! Who are you again, and what are you trying to sell me? You’ve got to be kidding me! Not Mary!”

She asked some clarifying questions and then believed Gabriel when he said, *“For no word from God will ever Fail!”* (Luke 1:37 NIV) Mary humbly responded, *“Let it be to me according to your*



Photos: © Backyard Photography, Alan Tucker; Christmas decorative art: tatanad/Bigstock.com



Tangier Island Cross, Virginia

word” (Luke 1:38 NKJV). We could learn a lot from Mary. God would be pleased if we would similarly respond when He communicates to us to do something. We may not ever be blessed with a visit from Gabriel, but I do know God speaks to us. One of the best ways to hear Him is by reading the Bible, and the key is *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says...”* (Revelation 2:7 NKJV). I love how He nudges me in my Bible study. Those times are so helpful in my walk with Jesus.

It is not surprising that Mary made a beeline to Elizabeth, often considered a cousin, to find out her situation and compare their visits with Gabriel. Imagine this divine scene; it had to be one of the most glorious moments in human history. It is the first time God’s presence in human form came in contact with another person filled with the Holy Spirit. What happened? Baby John leaps for joy in Elizabeth’s womb. What an unbelievable moment of excitement for Elizabeth and Mary, leading Elizabeth to shout, *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb”* (Luke 1:42 NKJV). I can see God and Gabriel watching and smiling from above as Mary and Elizabeth excitedly recounted each other’s visits from God’s messenger.

We learned at this point that one of Mary’s many gifts was being a songwriter as she spoke what is now known as “Mary’s Song,” which glorifies God for what He had done since the days of Abraham and was going to do for all generations through her son Jesus. She closes the song with “just as He promised our ancestors,” recognizing

God had kept His promise to Abraham as described in the book of Genesis (22:16-18). This part of the story may sound interesting, and it is, but more importantly, for me, it reinforces the need for us to glorify God in what He does for us. This morning at church, I heard a testimony of a young woman’s journey where God rescued her from drug and alcohol addiction and then gave her an incredible new life serving Him. She lit up the room and expressed gratitude for God’s faithfulness in changing her life. In some sense, it reminded me of “Mary’s Song” in that she emotionally recounted not only what God has done for her but also how she looks forward to what He is going to do. The lesson here is if we commit to His word, He has great things in store for us.

Mary would stay with Elizabeth for about three months, and that would have been a great help, especially as Zacharias had his priestly duties and couldn’t communicate because he was mute. The story then turns to the birth of John (the Baptist). His name appears controversial as it was expected in those times that he would be named after his father, Zacharias. Remembering Gabriel’s directions, Elizabeth said, “No, he shall be called John.” Oh, the murmurs, how shocking, you can’t name him that. There are no Johns in your extended family. Turning to the mute Zacharias quizzically, those with Elizabeth tried to get his take. On a tablet, he wrote the name John, and with that, he started talking.

Wow, what happened? That got everyone’s attention; many were fearful and wondered, “What kind of child will this be?” What strikes me about this passage is Zacharias’ response. Throughout this silence, he must have been confident about what would happen. It appears he never doubted, and he was much like Mary in her response to Gabriel, “Let it be according to your word.” How do we know this? Because after what must have been almost a year of being mute, his first words were a song of praise and prophesy of the coming Messiah. I can’t even imagine the joy and excitement of Zacharias knowing that his son had been chosen for one of the most essential missions up to that time: to prepare the way for Jesus! I love how God uses seemingly insignificant people to perform His work. The common bond seems to be those who are faithful to His word and glorify Him.

Our story now moves to Judea, where Mary and Joseph had traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to their hometown of birth, Bethlehem. This had to be an arduous journey on foot or a donkey. Try to imagine if, when our census time comes around, we all had to travel to our places of birth. Talk about clogged highways eliciting road rage and crowded airports fueling short tempers. Tired and,



Photo: © Backyard Photography/Alan Tucker

Flock of sheep, the Hillsides of Snowdonia, Wales



I'm sure, stressed, Joseph and Mary, who were nearing childbirth, arrived at this overcrowded tiny village and were unable to find a place to stay. There were no Holiday Inns nor Marriotts, just a solitary inn that was full. The innkeeper must have felt compassion for the weary travelers and offered rest in his stable. I don't think the nativity scene that would take place was anything like we see on today's Christmas cards. I've seen European stables. They are dark, dank, and smelly, and I'm sure the Mid-East ones of the day were no cleaner. Yet God chose these humble surroundings in this nondescript town as prophesied in Micah for the King of kings to be born. As the Messiah, He came to bring light and hope into a dark world, not to live in luxury and as royalty, but to be a lowly servant and eventually become our Lord and Savior. What better place for the Christ child to be born!

My favorite Christmas carol has always been "Away in a Manger." As a child, I loved it when my mum would sing it softly to me. That memory warms my heart whenever I hear those beautiful words: "Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,

The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay." As an older man, it is still my favorite as it not only humbly captures the most significant event in history that Luke describes in chapter two, verses 4-7, but it reminds me of God the Father's love for us by sending His Son to give us eternal life. How great is His faithfulness! I would love to hear my mum softly singing the words one more time. But I think of her each time I listen to it every Christmas. That is such a blessing to relive so frequently. I hope each of you has a similar Christmas blessing from your youth that you cherish and reminds you of God's faithfulness.

I love how Luke describes the next scene in the nativity story. It is another favorite piece of scripture that never grows old to me. It elaborates on God's joy at the momentous occasion that has just taken place with the birth of His Son. Fathers take great pleasure in announcing their children, especially sons. Until recently, you always knew a proud dad when you saw one. He would be carrying a box of cigars and giving them away with such pride on his face. Today, fathers flood their cell phones and Facebook with photos of moms with their newborns. True to form, God used personal messengers (angels) to "*bring the good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people.*" Also, true to form, he entrusted the greatest news not to the influential and powerful people of that day but to some



Free range sheep on Dartmoor, Southwest England

of the lowest members of society at that time. He sent His angel (we don't know if it was Gabriel) not to the Sanhedrin, not to the elders of the Jewish faith, nor to other important religious people of the day, but rather to lowly "shepherds living out in the fields." It might seem odd that He would use such a motley crew rather than those of the faith who knew that God would send them a Savior one day. But God knew the hearts of the religious leaders of the day, and he knew their pride. He chose humble, less educated people he knew could accept this greatest of truth and be willing to tell others. Earlier, I highlighted "all" as I believe it includes even us: *"For there is born to you (us) this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."* This Christmas season, as in every generation, God still looks for humble people willing to share the Good News of Jesus' birth, His death, and resurrection.

Returning to the scene, the shepherds were watching their flock like any other night. Some may have been dozing, some huddled around a warm fire, drinking something warm, and sharing stories, while others were checking to ensure their sheep were safe from predators. But this wasn't any other night! "And behold," suddenly, this stranger is standing among them with amazing light shining all around him. What a startling sight that must

have been! You can imagine their expressions of fear: "Where'd he come from? What is that bright light? Who are you? What do you want?" Luke documented their dread: "They were greatly afraid." But the angel reassured them, and they readily accepted their mission to find the "Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." I never knew what swaddling clothes were until later in life. It was ordinary infant clothing that consisted of cloth wrapped around the baby and tied together by strips of fabric to keep

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:14 (KJV)

babies warm and ensure their legs grew straight. This amazing hillside scene closed with the most magnificent concert ever, with a "multitude of angels singing."

What a birth announcement God orchestrated. One never seen like that before or since! It confirms Gabriel's earlier reassurance to Mary: *"For with God nothing will be impossible"* (Luke 1:37 KJV). Not surprisingly, it had the intended impact as the shepherds *"went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying*

in the manger” (Luke 2:16 RSV). Can’t you imagine how excited they must have been, rushing from the hillsides after what they had experienced? I can see the townspeople observing the shepherds, who were overflowing with joy as they ran to see the baby Jesus, and the onlookers shaking their heads in disapproval, thinking, crazy drunken shepherds in town again. Oh, if only cell phones could have captured the shepherds’ expressions as they approached the manger. It must have been one of complete awe and wonder as they reflected on the angel’s words that they would find “a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” It makes me tear up just contemplating that humble yet majestic scene. God’s Son had stepped out of heaven and was lying there as a helpless infant for them and all mankind.

While Jesus is the Good Shepherd, these local Bethlehem shepherds were good in their own right as they did exactly as God had wanted them to do. They then humbly spread the word that a Savior had been born, “and all those who heard it marveled” at what the shepherds told them. In His infinite wisdom, God knew what He was doing when He chose them for such an important mission; He knew their heart and humility

and that they would be willing to accept His word and be obedient. God expects that of us all. But He leaves the choice up to us. Whom do you choose to serve?

This is not the end of the story of how God loves the world. It is only the end of the beginning of what had been prophesied so many times before Jesus’ birth. We have heard this story so many times before. Even though it was enjoyable, I must admit it became a little boring before being saved. It was always, let’s get on with the real reason for Christmas: an opportunity for time off from work, the parties and festivities, the music, football bowl games, basketball season starting, gift-giving, and throwing in an extra church service on Christmas Eve. Then, on December 26, let’s get the tree and decorations down. They’ve been up forever, and it’s time for New Year’s and all its fun. Except for the occasional sweet memory of my mum singing “Away in a Manger,” Jesus, and choosing to serve Him, got little thought. Thankfully, God didn’t give up on me, and as explained in previous testimonies, I gave my life to Him.

Wow, how Christmas changed for me now that I know Him as my Lord and Savior. His Christmas story took on a whole new meaning, filling me with awe and wonder



top: Christ's Crucifixion, Gloucester Cathedral, England;
left: The Holy Family, Gloucester Cathedral, England

Look for *We Have Snow: A Christmas Miracle* on
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PERFECT FOR
CHRISTMAS!



every time I read it. I hope I have captured how much I love Luke's story of Jesus' birth. (See below) It is covered in his first and second chapters. The second chapter has more on Jesus' early life that I haven't covered here as I wanted to focus only on His birth. Luke doesn't cover the story of the Three Wise Men. Those events are described in the Gospel of Matthew. The Magi's incredible journey took place sometime after the events of the Nativity.

Well, folks, I hope you felt my joy in sharing Luke's story of the most remarkable event in history. I hope it fills you with renewed excitement for the holidays and the coming year. I wish you a *Merry Christmas* that allows you to enjoy all traditions of the season while you glorify God the Father for sending His son into the world to be a Savior for all.

Until next year, Godspeed.

There is so much we can take from the Nativity story. We learn so many things that can be useful in our walk with Jesus. They include:

- Knowing that God keeps His promises.
- As this story illuminates: "For with God nothing is impossible."
- Accept where God has put you and be obedient. Elizabeth and Zacharias named their son John, as Gabriel directed, even though it didn't follow Jewish tradition. Mary: "Let it be according to His word." Joseph accepted his role in the story even though it could bring him shame. The shepherds listened and did as the angel directed. Each of these were humble people living their lives in the time they existed. God chose to use them; they trusted Him and subsequently were obedient. Similarly, today, we are to live a faithful life, be knowledgeable of His word, and be obedient.
- Serving God is a choice each of us must make. Jesus would one day say, "Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually against me" Matthew 12:30 NKJV
- Because of God's faithfulness, we should show and share our joy. We may not be songwriters like Mary and Zacharias. Still, we all have the ability to glorify God, and we should make haste to do so whenever we have the opportunity.

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Merry Christmas

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



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