

Christ's Coming Revealed to the Wise - Christmas (2019)

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[0 : 00] In the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw 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 assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet, And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child. And when you have found him, bring me word that I too may come and worship him.

[1 : 04] After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother. And they fell down and worshipped him.

Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

The magi, the wise men, were not the only ones who worshipped Jesus.

Or who worshipped at all. This morning I'd like to just take a few... This morning, I caught it at least, right? This evening I'd like to just take a few moments and reflect on another act of worship that was done by Mary.

[2 : 17] Mary actually sang a song after she found out that she was pregnant. In Matthew's Christmas story, we're told of Jesus' birth as it is revealed to Joseph.

Luke gives us the story as it is told and revealed to Mary. Joseph's response was simple, quiet obedience. Mary's response was quite different.

She was much more outwardly expressive. Right after she hears the angel's message, she hurries to share her experience with her relative Elizabeth.

And their dialogue shows that they share an uncommon humility. And from that humility springs forth a song of overwhelming joy.

Mary's song. We'll find it in Luke chapter 1, verses 45 through 55. If you want to look at it yourself, it's in your pew Bible, page 856.

[3 : 29] Mary had heard that she's going to bear a child. Her first response was one of wonder. How can this be since I am a virgin? This is impossible.

The angel explains to her the Holy Spirit will come. Following that experience, she goes in haste to Elizabeth, about 80 or 90 miles away, three or four days' journey.

She's anxious to confirm what she's heard from the angel, that her relative Elizabeth, who was advanced in age, was also pregnant with child.

Luke describes it this way in Luke 1.39, In those days Mary rose and went with haste into the hill country to a town in Judah. And she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she exclaimed with a loud cry, Blessed are you among women!

[4 : 34] Blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby

in my womb leaped for joy.

That's John the Baptist, by the way. Already set in a trend. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.

So Mary, from that point, sang a song. If you read in your Bibles, it's indented, it's poetry, it's like a psalm.

In fact, it's filled with psalms. I counted. There are over 20 references to the psalms in her psalm. There's also references to Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Micah, Zechariah, Zephaniah. This woman knew her scriptures.

[5 : 38] And remember, she was most likely still a teenager. I see two themes in Mary's song. Let me read it for you.

Luke 1, beginning of verse 46. After Elizabeth greets her and tells her she's blessed, Mary said, my soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

For he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, now all generations will call me blessed. For he who is mighty has done great things for me.

And holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud and the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate. He has filled the hungry with good things. The rich he has sent away empty.

[6 : 42] He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his offspring forever.

Sings Mary. Let me point out just two things that I saw in this psalm. We first see Mary's worship of the Lord, her Savior. She magnifies the Lord, she says.

My soul magnifies, which means to enlarge. You know, you magnify things that get larger. She wanted to enlarge God. She wanted to make him even bigger if she could. She wanted to exalt him and honor him.

I think it's interesting to consider in Mary's words, what was her view of God? What does she understand of him at her young age? Well, she calls him Savior.

She calls him mighty one, holy. She calls him merciful to the lowly, to those who fear him. Holy is his name, she says.

[7 : 49] That's his reputation. His name is his reputation. He's holy. He's distinct in his character. And he alone is holy without sin.

Holy means to be separate, to be removed from what is common, to be exalted above creation, completely free of sin.

No sin, in fact, comes into his presence. God's God's God's God's name. Holy is his name, and then she says, his mercy is for those who fear him.

How does she put holy and mercy together? How can God be holy, without sin, free of sin, and merciful to sinners?

How can he do that? There's a tension. If he's holy, he must punish sin. He must justly deal with sin.

[8 : 53] Yet he's also merciful, so how can he do that? How can he reconcile that character in him?

He has a plan. He sends his son, a holy child, to take on flesh, and walk this earth, and fulfill the law, and then die on a cross, not for his sins, but for the sins of men.

This is how God answers that question. And it's interesting, what Mary extols about God is, it's his inclination, it's his tendency to exalt the humble, and to bring down the proud.

She goes, as I already read in 51, he has shown his strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud, and the thoughts of their hearts.

He brought down the mighty from their thrones, but he exalts those of humble estate. He fills the hungry with good things, but the rich sends away empty.

He seems to have a bias, doesn't he? He seems to have a bias toward the humble. He helps his child Israel.

[10 : 16] How is that? By remembering in his mercy what he promised to the fathers, to Abraham, and to others. From Genesis through Malachi, depending if you're Italian or not, how you pronounce Malachi, Malachi, God has promised that he would send one.

That there would be one from the line of Abraham, from the line of Judah, from the line of David, all the way down to Joseph and Mary, both who can trace their line biblically to David.

David. He fulfills his promise by sending a Savior, a Redeemer, to set free the captives of sin and all who believe in Jesus Christ are God's children.

There's a second thing I see is not only how Mary worships, but she has a view of herself in that worship that is interesting, as a recipient of the mercy of God.

Why does Mary rejoice in God? She says, my soul magnifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Why? For he has looked on the humiliation of his servant.

[11:46] Behold, now all generations will call me blessed. He who is mighty has done great things for me. This is Mary's response.

This is why she rejoices. She's an unknown. She's a nobody. She's just a teenager in Israel. She's engaged to a man, not yet married, very young, just a maiden.

Mary reveals an uncommon humility, a sense of unworthiness. She does not deserve God's attention. Humility is lowliness.

It's the opposite of pride and arrogance. There's no sense of entitlement in one who is humble.

Mary is amazed that God would notice her.

He looked upon her. He noticed her. wouldn't that be overwhelming? Especially if you're a humble person. God took notice of me?

[12:54] Why? I'm not special. In fact, I'm so undeserving. Your view of God impacts your view of yourself, by the way. Who is God's mercy directed to?

Notice how she says it. His mercy is for those who fear him. His mercy is for those who fear him. It's to those who fear him.

The Greek word for fear here is phobia. You ever heard of phobia? Anybody have a phobia? You know what phobias do to you? There's a sense of dread.

If your phobia is snakes, which is not true for my daughter, if your phobia is snakes, you stay away from them.

Spiders, dark, high places, agoraphobia, going into the marketplace, crowded mall, different people, there's all kinds of different phobias.

[13:56] And you dread it, you don't want to go there. And scripture is saying that God is merciful to those who fear him. Dread him.

But what does that mean? What does that mean? Well, it depends on your perspective. if you're his child, it means one thing. If you're not his child, it means another thing. What is true fear of God?

It's reverence and awe. Bottom line, it means to take God seriously. To treat him with awe. To fear God is to have a clear recognition of who he is.

In other words, I don't get to make up my own idea of who God is. I like a God that's this way. Well, great, but is that who God is? I don't believe in a God that's that way.

Well, okay, but there is one God and he is who he is. A clear recognition of who he is. He's holy. He's just. He's merciful. He's abounding in loving kindness.

[15:00] He forgives even the most wicked of sins. to fear him. I think as a Christian, to fear him is to have a wholesome dread of displeasing him.

Not because he's scary, but because he's my father, whom I love, who has blessed me, who has given me something I do not deserve.

And he keeps giving me things that I do not deserve. I don't want to displease him. to fear God is like Mary, to believe what he has done.

Elizabeth said, blessed are you who believed what God has revealed to you. To fear God is to believe what he has done, that he has mercy on the humble, that he is sending a savior.

It's to accept his mercy. Jesus came preaching good news, which is what the gospel means.

Gospel means good news. But he only came preaching good news to sinners.

[16:13] He said, I did not come for the healthy, I didn't come for the righteous. I got no good news for the righteous people. people. I only got good news for sinful people, for unworthy people, for the broken, for the undeserving sinner.

Let me ask you a last question. Do you believe what God has done? God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him, will not perish, but have everlasting life.

Do you believe? Let's keep singing. Thank you.