

What Were Mary's Expectations?

International Bible Lesson

Luke 2:1-17

Sunday, December 22, 2013

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“And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12—KJV).

“This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12—NRSV).

The Bible does not reveal many of Mary's thoughts after the angel told her that she would be the mother of the Messiah. Because God had shown her favor as the mother of the one and only Son of God, she might have expected that her life would become easier; however, many events made her life more difficult, especially as the time of Jesus' birth drew near. Instead of relaxing at home and preparing for Jesus' miraculous birth, an emperor decreed that she had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Instead of God leading her to a comfortable palace where He could give His Son the best of everything, Joseph found no place for them in an inn. Instead of a bed of luxury fit for the mother of a newborn king, Mary had to rest on a bed of hay. The nearest thing available for Jesus' bed was a manger in a stable. Instead of rejoicing with their family at Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary probably celebrated alone in the company of curious animals. Reality may have contradicted all of Mary's expectations, and she may have wondered with Joseph, “What has gone wrong!” Unexpectedly, God reassured them with the arrival of some shepherds. They told Jesus' parents what the angel of the Lord had told them about their child, “To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (Luke 2:11). Those who commit themselves to serving God sometimes find their life more difficult, but God always finds ways to reassure them with His peace, power, and presence. —© Copyright 2013 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

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Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God used the decree of Emperor Augustus so Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem instead of just sending the angel Gabriel to tell them what to do?
2. What might Mary have expected when she went to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus? Do you think she left Nazareth expecting the King of kings to be born in a stable? Give a reason for your answers.
3. If Mary had concerns or questions about the humble location of Jesus' birth and what that might mean, how do you think God helped her answer her questions?
4. What three titles did the angel give Jesus? What do these three titles mean to you?
5. What kind of peace does Jesus give to those who trust in Him?