

PRE-CHRISTMAS LIGHT FOR MARY

[Luke 1:35](#) “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”

The “Christmas rush” seems to come earlier from year to year. Even worldlings fuss and fret as they become possessed by what they call “the Christmas spirit.” Amid the tinkle and tinsel the cash register accompanies the singing of Christmas carols. The increased activity in the Church during the pre-Christmas season is (or ought to be!) of an entirely different nature. Advent is a time of preparation. The four weeks are a holy season reminding us of the four millenniums during which the Savior-God set the stage for the most important event in the history of man.

The Lord Himself made special preparations for that first Christmas by prophesying in the Old Testament of the Messiah who was to come into the world to save sinners.

When the “fullness of the time” was drawing nearer God sent the angel Gabriel to Zacharias with the wonderful message that the forerunner of the Messiah was to be born from him and his wife Elizabeth.

Six months later the same angel was sent to the Virgin Mary to prepare her also for the coming of the Redeemer. Gabriel came to tell Mary about the nearness of His birth and to enlighten her as to her part in God’s plan to provide a Savior for all men.

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1. LIGHT FROM THE WORD

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden the Lord came to them in love with the first revelation of His plan of salvation. The “Seed of the woman” was to crush the serpent’s head and in so doing the “Seed” would be severely bruised. Through woman sin was brought into the world, and through another woman the Lord was going to bring His Savior into this world.

The Lord further clarified His plan of salvation in [Isaiah 7:14](#). “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” The Messiah was to be born of a woman only, a virgin woman. This is amazing, but the most amazing part is this, He is to be “Immanuel,” עִמָּנוּאֵל ; ‘immânû’êl] which means “God with us,” The virgin mentioned by Isaiah was to have a unique son, the coming Messiah, true God, would be born of a woman only. Add the first prophecy of God’s plan of salvation to the one in Isaiah and we have these promises; God is going to come into the world

by being born of a virgin and He will crush the serpent's head thereby destroying the works of the devil.

Mary was not in the dark as to God's plan of salvation for she knew these prophecies of the Old Testament and they gave her some light. She was an Israelite who was thoroughly instructed in the Word of God, and the Jews of old; memorized many important passages of the Bible as we do. The hope of salvation and the advent of the Savior was the chief concern in life of every true Israelite, and certainly that can also be said of the Virgin Mary. However, to her compete surprise, she was chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah, she was to be the "virgin" spoken of by Isaiah. This was the reason why Gabriel came to enlighten her with some of the details of God's plan.

2. LIGHT FROM THE ANGEL

Gabriel gave added light to Mary with these words, "Blessed art thou among women." As the Lord called Moses and David from the flocks of sheep to perform wonderful feats in His name; as God chose John the Baptist before he was born to be the great forerunner of the Messiah; as Paul was called from the ranks of the enemies to be the most famous missionary of all times; so Mary, meek and humble Mary, was given one of the highest honors, the Savior of the world was to be born from her. Eve brought sin into the world and Mary will bring the Savior from sin into the world.



Mary was troubled about the meaning of the angel's words, especially as to how she was to have a child without being married. Gabriel enlightened her and explained that the Holy Ghost would perform the miracle of conception by overshadowing her. Further light was given her that because of the unique manner of His birth the Messiah would be a "holy thing" without original sin. All other humans are "flesh born of flesh" but the Savior is to be the only exception. Gabriel also clarified the meaning of "Immanuel." God would dwell among us, be with us be one of us, because the child is to be

the "Son of God." Since He is the son of Mary and the Son of God, He is the God-man. Luther beautifully expresses these thoughts in his explanation to the second article of the Apostle's Creed, "Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord."

This was the pre-Christmas light for Mary, given by an angel of light sent by the God of light. Little wonder that she said later on, "For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Truly she was a blessed virgin, chosen by the Lord to be the mother of the Redeemer. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, felt this same amazement and was overwhelmed by the visit of Mary, and she cried out, "Whence is this to me that the mother of *my* Lord should come to me?" Of course, the real blessing of Mary was not only that she had the most blessed of all sons, but that she also accepted Him as her own Savior and Lord.

Although Mary was highly elated at the marvelous grace of God, she at the same time must have known that, for a time at least, she would have to bear the scornful looks of people who would consider her an unfaithful woman, and not a virgin.

These thoughts did not trouble her very much for she was willing to leave everything in the hands of the Lord. Even facing Joseph she would not falter, but would wait with patience for the Lord to clarify all matters. Mary's simple child-like faith and trust excites our utmost admiration.

We all need this pre-Christmas light which Mary received. If we would realize the full extent of our sins and the urgent need of a Savior from sins, we would be much more concerned at Christmas time with the thoughts of God's love and grace in permitting His Son to come down on this earth to be our substitute and redeemer. We often get so involved in Christmas preparations that we are in danger of forgetting the real purpose and meaning of the great holiday, the birthday of the Son of God in the flesh for us and our sins.

Now that we have received more enlightenment from God's Word, may this Christmas season find us all with the spirit of Mary who could hardly find words to express her wonder and amazement at "the grace of God which bringeth salvation" to all men. Like Mary, let us keep our eyes upon that little "Immanuel" resting in her arms. We can all very well repeat after her, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior." AMEN

PRAYER. O God of love, by the same Holy Spirit which caused the conception of our Savior in the blessed Virgin, grant us enlightenment to receive Thy dear Son with a pure and untainted joy in our salvation. O

heavenly Father, we stand in awe and wonder at Thy marvelous Christmas gift to man. May we, like Mary, believe these things with all our hearts. Glory be to Thee, O Father, Son, and Spirit.
AMEN.