

The First Christmas

Approximately 747 years after the foundation of Rome, and about 2000 years ago, In the country of Judea, God sent the Angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a young virgin girl named Mary. The angel said "Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He shall be Great and shall be called the Son of the 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 his kingdom will never end."

Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but when Joseph discovered that she was with child, he sought to divorce her. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded and took Mary home as his wife.

The time of Jesus birth was to happen at the same time that Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census be taken of the entire Roman world. Everyone had to go to his home town to register. So Joseph took Mary and went up from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem, (the city of David), because he belonged to the house and line of David. While they were there, Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

Out in a nearby field, there lived shepherds, some of whom were keeping watch over their flocks at night. And the angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shown all around them, and they were very fearful. But the angel of the Lord said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign unto you: You will find the new born baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Then suddenly, there was with the angel a great number of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth, peace and good will toward men." The shepherds decided to go at once and so they hurried into Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in a manger.

The shepherds spread the word to as many as they could about what had happened; and all who heard were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Then the shepherds returned to their field glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which had happened just as they had been told by the angel.

And just as Mary and Joseph had been told to do by the angel, they named the baby, Jesus, which means Savior.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Thank you God for the gift of your son!