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Mary Christmas

We say it so glibly. *“Merry Christmas!”* And well we should, for Christmas certainly gives us much to be merry about – even if we’re not feeling happy happy happy all the time.

Mary should know. She got the shock of her life when the angel Gabriel appeared. He had good news for mankind, but it seemed like bad news for Mary. Let’s listen to their conversation.

“Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” the angel said in Luke 1:28. This was a really big deal, because the Lord had not spoken personally to His people in some 400 years, since the prophet Malachi.

Angels are fearsome beings, even when they bring good news. This was Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God in heaven. He told Mary not to be afraid, for she had found favor with God. Wow!

But then he said words that most assuredly would make a godly young unmarried woman afraid. *“You will conceive in your womb and you will bear a son.”* Mary’s mind must have reeled with conflicting thoughts and emotions.

After all, she was *“betrothed”* to Joseph, a nice young man in her village of Nazareth. The rules were very strict. Betrothal was an unbreakable engagement. They were as good as married, and could not live together. They especially were expected to avoid even a hint of immorality. They were pure.

All of a sudden God tells righteous Mary she’s going to have a baby. Out of wedlock. This is supposed to be good news? Joseph, a righteous man, would most likely divorce her. She would live in shame the rest of her life, with little hope of ever getting married. Who would help such a single mother?

The angel was still speaking, *“and you shall call his name Jesus (“Jehovah saves”). He will be great and called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give to Him the throne of his forefather David, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”*

Mary recognized familiar words and promises from the Bible. Four thousand years her people had been waiting for God to fulfill His promise of a Savior, the coming Messiah who was to make everything right and glorify God for keeping all His promises.

Her mind raced with amazement and wonder. But wait, back to reality! *“How can this be,”* she said, *“since I am a virgin?”* Good question. Mary was not immoral. She had not known a man and did not intend to until her wedding night with Joseph. But the angel spoke with a sense of immediacy.

His answer was as puzzling as comforting. Somehow, the baby was to be conceived not by man but *“by the power of the Holy Spirit,”* because Mary was to bear the Son of God. Not only that, God provided another witness to His power for such things, because Mary’s much older cousin Elizabeth, who had been barren, was now with child.

“For nothing will be impossible with God,” the angel said. Amen! Faced with all this incredible news, what could Mary do or say? She had options. But against all odds, she chose to believe what God said, no matter what. How could she not trust God Himself?

“I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word,” she said. Some of the most beautiful words in any language! Words of faith and trust and submission to God’s grace. Words of receiving God’s gift of His son, Jesus.

The reason Christmas is merry is because Mary trusted in Christ. And this Christmas, I pray YOU will respond to Jesus the same way Mary did...! Mary Christmas!