

THE Christmas Story

*For a child will be born
to us, a son will be given
to us; And the government
will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be
called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting
Father, Prince of Peace.*



The **THE WONDERFULLY** familiar Christmas story took place 2000 years ago, but it was many more centuries in the making. In speaking through the ancient prophets, God foretold how He would bring His beloved Son into the world.

THE BIRTH of Jesus took place in an historical setting that the prophets foretold. The underlying story of His genealogy, in itself, was a Divine masterpiece of intrigue, suspense, and prophetic fulfillment. But the quiet events of that first Christmas morning, so long ago, have become commonplace in our modern traditions. Wise men and shepherds are familiar Christmas symbols as they gather around the tender baby who lies in a manger, while a chorus of angels proclaims the Lord's good will to mankind. But how did the prophets envision this story? What hopes had they formed in the hearts of men, and what is the hope to which we look?

LET THE story unfold afresh between the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament writers.





The Advent of Hope

IN THE fullness of time, God sent the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, a humble Levite priest, who ministered before God at the temple in Jerusalem. Appearing in a vision, the angel foretold the birth of John the Baptist who would be sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. And with the coming of His forerunner the first stirring of the Messiah's own coming was announced:

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”—LUKE 1:17

THIS STATEMENT echoed a prophecy from 460 years earlier:

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD...” —MALACHI 4:5

AND ALSO “. . . The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness: *“Prepare ye the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” —ISAIAH 40:3*

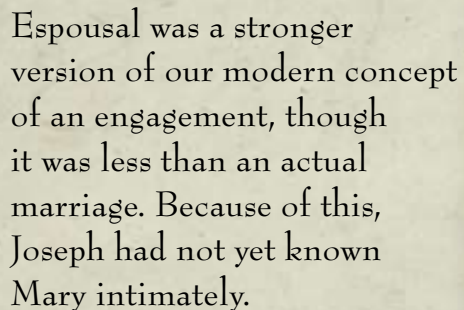
FOR MANY centuries, the promise of the Messiah had tarried. But now that ancient hope was renewed and a sense of anticipation awakened. For the

opening steps had begun, the Messiah was coming at last, and the world would be forever changed. Prophecies long dormant were springing to life before their eyes.

IN THE sixth month the angel was sent again, this time to a young virgin named Mary, who was espoused to Joseph of the house of David. And in greeting her, he spoke of the favor she had found with God:

“Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!”

—LUKE 1:28



Espousal was a stronger version of our modern concept of an engagement, though it was less than an actual marriage. Because of this, Joseph had not yet known Mary intimately.

IN MARY'S genealogy the seed of David had been preserved, and through her espoused husband Joseph, the claim to David's kingdom, which had fallen long ago. And in the child she would bear, the two parts of God's ancient covenant would come together again in one person at last.

OLD TESTAMENT scriptures are in red.
NEW TESTAMENT scriptures are in brown.

*“I have made a covenant with
My chosen, I have sworn unto
David My servant, ‘Thy seed will
I establish for ever, and build
up thy throne to all generations.*

—PSALM 89:3–4



O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

THE ANGEL told how the child would inherit the throne of David, his earthly forefather:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end.” —LUKE 1:32–33

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government will be upon His shoulder: and His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” —ISAIAH 9:6–7

BUT MARY was confused by his proclamation. How could the angel speak of her giving birth, when she was still a virgin? “How shall this be?” She asked. So the angel foretold the virgin birth to her:

“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore,