

Influence Ministries

WHO NEEDS CHRISTMAS?

LESSON 1

TITLE: THE WORLD NEEDED CHRISTMAS.

Luke 1:26-35 ERV

²⁶ During Elizabeth's sixth month of pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin girl who lived in Nazareth, a town in Galilee.

²⁷ She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph from the family of David. Her name was Mary.

²⁸ The angel came to her and said, "Greetings! The Lord is with you; you are very special to him."

²⁹ But Mary was very confused about what the angel said. She wondered, "What does this mean?"

³⁰ The angel said to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary, because God is very pleased with you.

³¹ Listen! You will become pregnant and have a baby boy. You will name him Jesus.

³² He will be great. People will call him the Son of the Most High God, and the Lord God will make him king like his ancestor David.

³³ He will rule over the people of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How will this happen? I am still a virgin."

³⁵ The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High God will cover you. The baby will be holy and will be called the Son of God.

One of the challenging things about the Christmas season and one of the challenging things about the Christmas story, is in fact, the Christmas story.

The Christmas stories that relate to the birth of Jesus.

Because there's so much miraculous. There's so much amazing.

There's so much that's unbelievable about it.

It's interesting because Matthew gives us a version of the birth of Christ. Luke does but Mark and John, they don't even mention it.

The whole resurrection is so amazing, and Christianity doesn't hinge on the truth or even the stories around the birth of Jesus, it really hinges on the resurrection of Jesus.

And, yet, as unbelievable as this birth narratives are and as unbelievable as the accounts are that we find in Matthew and Luke, when you get the back story, when you get the whole story, this unbelievable story becomes a remarkable story.

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The Christmas story begins with a couple.

It doesn't begin with a couple trying to figure out, "Where are we going to have this baby?" It begins with a couple that's pretty wanting to marry each other.

The back story of Christmas is what makes... this Christmas story so incredibly remarkable.

The 400 years of silence refers to the time between the Old Testament and New Testaments, during which God did not speak to the Jewish people.

Those 400 years began with the warning that closed the Old Testament: *"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse"* Malachi 4:5-6 and ended with the coming of John the Baptist, the Messiah's forerunner.

When things were just the way God wanted then, when everyone had lost hope, and no one was even beginning to dream that God would fulfill his unbelievable, incoherent, impossible promise.

When nobody was expecting it, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth.

A town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David.

And the virgin's name was... everybody in the world knows the virgin's name.

Today, in this month, all over the world, people are going to tell this story.

And they know who Mary is.

The angel came with the prophecy in Luke.

God was going to speak to His people again.

A new direction and new path.

The thing that makes the Christmas story so believable is the fact that the entire story is so remarkable.

No one would have made this up.

This stretched out over so many years that the thread was not always evident, and people lost track and people lost sight.

But during that entire period, God was behind the scenes working, getting the world ready for the thing that he ultimately decided to do once sin entered the world.

The Christmas story really did begin 2,000 years before the first Christmas.

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And the Christmas story continues to unfold 2,000 years after that first Christmas morning.

So, who needs Christmas?

Well, the answer to that question is simple. God decided the world needed Christmas.

And he would work out the story of Christmas on the world stage.

Involving some of the most significant people ever known in history.

Many of whom would become footnotes in the story of the birth of a Jewish carpenter that would ultimately change the world.

That through Jesus the Jewish God would be worshiped all over the world. That salvation would in fact come to every nation, every tribe, every people everywhere.

Through Christmas we are reminded in the most remarkable way imaginable that God is active even when it seems like he's not.

Even when God is silent, God is not still.

God doesn't think just in terms of nations, but God thinks in terms of individuals.

And it's a reminder that even when circumstances argue to the contrary that God can be trusted.

That even when circumstances are such that it seems like there's no way possible that God cares, that God's listening, that God will ever come through for me, we're reminded that He keeps His promises.

Because why? Because the world needed Christmas.

The world needed hope.

The world needed the light of the world.