

PICTURES OF CHRISTMAS

Part Four: Portrait Of Mary's Wonder

Adapted from Bill Crowder's *Windows On Christmas*. Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2007; p.p. 34 – 47.

Text: Luke 1.26 - 38 (in pew Bible p. 1012 / in large print Bible p. 1575)

Intro: -Advent is a word which means "*arrival*."

- since earliest times, Advent has been associated with Jesus' incarnation.
- dates back to 4th century A.D. / discussed @ Council of Tours in France 567 A.D.

- Early Christians practiced a time of preparation leading up to Christmas Day.
- we too can benefit – rediscover the meaning, message, and impact of the Gospel.
- during Advent we will look at 4 Portraits of Christmas.
 - Exaltation of Angels, Worship of Shepherd, Obedience of Joseph, and Wonder of Mary.

-part 4 of series "*Pictures Of Christmas*."

- now we move to view the portrait of Mary's Wonder.
 - devaluation of language.
 - "awesome" = anything slightly above average.
 - "bad" = something good and entertaining.
 - "wonder" =
 - ❖ recording artist who flops after 1st recording is considered a "one-hit wonder".
 - ❖ one of the plainest breads is known as Wonder Bread.
 - ❖ we even have Wonder undergarments.
 - great need to redeem the essence of "wonder" = something that overwhelms the mind & reminds us that we are too small to understand or respond.
 - illust. Seven Wonders
 - Mary reacted in fear, confusion, and bewilderment to Gabriel (v.v. 29, 30)
 - "wonder" needs to be reserved for that which is beyond human explanation.
 - ❖ Why would God love me? / Why would Jesus die for me?

Take Home Point:

-ask God to help us to ponder and treasure the glorious birth of Jesus.

– illust. G. K. Chesterton

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1. WONDERFUL PRIVILEGE

-world is divided between the “haves” and the “*have nots.*”

- **illust.** Television Deprived Childhood

-wonder of becoming an insider / *one who is chosen.*

- **illust.** Positive Adoption

-Mary was amazed to learn that she had been selected *to give birth to the Christ child.*

Greetings favoured one! The Lord is with you (v. 28).

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will 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 of His kingdom there will be no end (v. v. 31 - 33).

- over the centuries, young Jewish women desired *to fulfill this special role.*
 - great hope of the “proto-gospel”:

And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel (Genesis 3.15).

-Mary was also deeply distressed by the angel’s message *and pondered its meaning.*

- this was beyond human explanation – *she was a virgin (PARTHANOS)!*
- while she pondered this, Gabriel tried to alleviate her confusion. (v.v. 30 – 33).
 - even the elderly, barren Elizabeth had become pregnant (v. 36).
 - the God of the impossible was able (v. 37).
 - **cf.** Sarah (Genesis 18.13, 14) & Hannah (1 Samuel 1.17, 18).

-awe and wonder melted into trust *and willingness of heart* (v. 38).

- total and unconditional surrender: “maidservant” / “*be it done unto me.*”
- imagine the wonder in her heart!
 - sense of unworthiness, her joy & amazement, *her questions.*
 - *beyond human explanation.*
 - why would God choose me? / How will I succeed in my call?

2. WONDERFUL CHILD

-only an imperial edict would make a woman nearing child-birth travel over 80 miles on the back of a donkey.

- **illust.** Grace On My Motor Cycle

-simplicity of the birth account:

While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (ch. 2.6, 7).

-on one level, Mary experienced every wonderful emotion felt by every new mother holding her child for the first time.

-on a deeper level, Mary must have been overwhelmed that her son was the Son of God.

- wondered at the thought of Jesus' mission to rescue a lost race from their sins, including her own sin.
- Jesus' name would be called "full of wonder" (Isaiah 9.6).
 - His ever expanding peaceful government will never end.
 - He will rule forever with fairness and justice from David's throne.
 - **cf.** v.v. 32, 33.

He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!"[Luke 1:33](#)

Conclusion:

1. Know what God wants.
 - ask God to help us to ponder and treasure the glorious birth of Jesus.
- learn from Mary's example of processing.

Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart (ch. 2.19).

- she had an interior dialogue trying to understand all that happened:
 - fulfillment of the proto-promise of the Messiah & Davidic Covenant.
 - the supernatural pregnancy.
 - the wonder of child birth.
 - the visit of the shepherds.

When Mary birthed Jesus, 'twas in a cows' stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven, a star's light did fall,
And the **promise of ages** it then did recall.

- there it is – the **promise of the ages** – the wonder of Christ – the wonder of it all!

2. Know how to do what God wants.

-**illust.** A. W. Tozer

-process the supernatural birth of Jesus and realize that nothing is too hard for God to do in your life.

- surrender to God's will: "*be it done unto me as you wish*" (v. 38).
- seek the holy contact of the Holy Spirit with His overshadowing power (v. 35).
 - **cf.** Elizabeth (v. v. 41, 42).

You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said (v. 45).

- **illust.** Rene' Descartes

-process the special mission of Jesus to save this world from sin and to establish us into His kingdom.

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son ...¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance (Ephesians 1.3 – 6, 18).

- **illust.** Stanley Hauerwas

-process the wonderful culmination of Jesus' second advent when God's kingdom is fully established.

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down" (Revelation 12.10). [Ephesians 1:6](#)

3. Know that you will do what God wants.

-**Closing Hymn:** In The Bleak Mid-Winter (4 verses).

Benediction:

"May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever. Amen"

Seven Wonders (*About.Com Geography* website)

The Original Seven Wonders of the World

- The Colossus of Rhodes
The Great Pyramid of Giza
The Hanging Gardens of Babylon
The Lighthouse of Alexandria
The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus
The Statue of Zeus at Olympia
The Temple of Artemis at Ephesus

The Seven Wonders of the Modern World

- Channel Tunnel
CN Tower
[Empire State Building](#)
Golden Gate Bridge
Itaipu Dam
[Netherlands North Sea Protection Works](#)
[Panama Canal](#)

Natural Wonders of the World

In 1997, CNN announced a listing of the **Seven Natural Wonders** of the World...

- Grand Canyon
The Great Barrier Reef
The Harbor at Rio de Janeiro
Mt. Everest
Northern Lights
Paricutin Volcano
Victoria Falls

The "New" Seven Wonders of the World

On July 7, 2007 an organization announced a "new" set of the **Seven Wonders of the World** based on online voting from around the world...

- Chichen Itza, Mexico - Mayan City
Christ Redeemer, Brazil - Large Statue
[The Great Wall, China](#)
Machu Picchu, Peru
Petra, Jordan - Ancient City
The Roman Coliseum, Italy
The Taj Mahal, India

G. K. Chesterton

(Roman Catholic British Writer 1874 – 1936)

The world is not lacking in wonders, but in a sense of wonder (Craig B. Larson and Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations That Connect*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, p. 14).

Positive Adoption

Bill Crowder wrote - some privileges are more than just a special treat or a membership card. They carry with them the sense of amazement that you have been selected above all the rest. I don't believe I ever understood this until I met Marlene, the young woman who later became my wife.

Marlene and I had been dating less than two weeks when, while eating dinner together, she said she needed to tell me something. The somber tone of her voice made me assume that I was about to hear about the boyfriend back home or the fiancé in the military, but that wasn't the case. She wanted to tell me that she was adopted.

After heaving a huge sigh of relief, I asked her to fill me in on the details. After listening to her explain how she had gone from ... [various homes in Virginia to North Carolina, where she was finally adopted] ... I asked her, "Have you ever wanted to find your birth parents?"

"These *are* my real parents," she said. "They had an entire orphanage full of kids needing a home – and they chose me. They could have chosen anyone, but they chose me. *Me.*"

For Marlene, privilege was the joy of being chosen! (Bill Crowder's *Windows On Christmas*. Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2007; p. 37).

A. W. Tozer

(American Preacher and Writer, 1897 – 1963)

We cover our deep ignorance with words, but we are ashamed to wonder, we are afraid to whisper mystery (Craig B. Larson and Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations That Connect*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, p. 158).

Rene' Descartes

(French Philosopher, Mathematician, Scientist, and Writer, 1596 – 1650)

There are only two ways to live your life. One is as if nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is (Craig B. Larson and Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations That Connect*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, p. 201).

Stanley Hauerwas

(American Theologian, Ethicist, and Professor of Law, 1940 -)

It's hard to remember that Jesus did not come to make us safe, but rather to make us disciples, citizens of God's new age, a kingdom of surprise (Craig B. Larson and Brian Lowery. *1001 Quotations That Connect*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009, p. 205).