

Anne Graham Lotz: Here's the Real Christmas Miracle You Need

At this time last year, I was undergoing chemotherapy. Because I was confined for days to my bed or a chair due to severe side effects, I found myself watching television Christmas movies. So many of them referenced either what they called the "magic of Christmas" or the "Christmas miracle." But none of them accurately explained the real miracle of Christmas, which is so much more than even reconciliation in a family, falling in love or finding your heart's desire under the Christmas tree.

The real Christmas miracle is this: Anyone and everyone can come into a right relationship with God. Anyone and everyone can be restored to fellowship with God. Anyone and everyone can be born again. We can start over. And best of all, anyone and everyone can enjoy the presence of Jesus living within. Even you. Even me.

This astounding, supernatural miracle is illustrated by the experience of the virgin Mary. She was a young girl, living in the small mountain village of Nazareth. We assume she was like any other girl in her town—poor, somewhat uneducated, yet with the small hopes and dreams of all teenage girls in her village to one day be a wife with a home and children of her own. But she also must have been unlike others in her innocence, purity, godliness and desire for the things of God. She may even have clung to a deep desire for the Messiah to come in her lifetime. While she knew from the familiar prophecy of Micah 5:2 He would not come from Nazareth and therefore she would have had no expectation of her own involvement with Him, she could dream (John 1:46).

When she reached the marriageable age of approximately 13 or 14, she was betrothed to an upright man named Joseph. Once she entered into the betrothal, she was considered married to Joseph in every way except sexual intimacy. The betrothal would last for approximately one year, during which time they lived separately. Joseph would then use this time to prepare a home that they would share after the formal wedding ceremony. For years, for centuries, according to Jewish tradition, this had been the way of her people. Everything about Mary's betrothal was normal ... traditional ... customary ... until the angel came.

What was Mary doing on that history-splitting, life-altering day? Was she winnowing wheat? Harvesting grapes? Milking a cow? Making cheese? Baking bread? Drawing water? Was she just going about her everyday responsibilities when God invaded her life? I suspect Mary had never seen an angel before, yet it wasn't his appearance that troubled and frightened her. It was how he greeted her.

"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28-29, NIV). Seeing her expression, the angel immediately sought to put her at ease by telling her not to be afraid. But what he then revealed must have thrust her into the stratosphere of bewildered amazement: "Mary, 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 will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:30-33).

It is forever to Mary's credit that she didn't drop down in a dead faint nor run away in panic nor laugh hysterically at something so absurd. Instead, with great poise and sincerity, she inquired, "How will this be ... since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34).

Consider carefully the angel's response, because his explanation to Mary of what would happen to her physically parallels what happens to you and me spiritually when we receive Jesus Christ by faith. The angel answered her question in this way: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). "For nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37, ESV).

Mary knew:

–This would immediately turn her life upside down and inside out.

–She would face public humiliation.

–Joseph might reject her.

–The potential for the immediate destruction of all her own hopes, plans and dreams.

Despite all that, Mary immediately submitted to what she recognized as God's will for her when she responded, "I am the Lord's servant. ... May it happen to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38, GNB).

At that moment, Mary fully embraced what God had for her, which was radically different from anything she had ever thought of for herself. Her faith in God's word as it was told to her by the angel, and her submission to God's will as she let go of her life to embrace His, resulted in the miraculous conception of the physical life of Jesus within her.

And this is the similarity between Mary's experience and ours:

You and I place our faith in God's Word, which says:

–We are all sinners.

–Physical, spiritual and eternal death are the wages of sin.

—God sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross so that whoever places faith in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.

—The blood of Jesus is sufficient to atone for any sin and all sin.

—If we confess our sin, God will be faithful to cleanse us and forgive us.

When we place our faith in God's ways, this means:

—He will give us eternal life, which is not only heaven when we die but also a personal, right relationship with God now.

When we place our faith in God's Word, this means:

—We will have the right to become God's child, born supernaturally into His family, if we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and receive Him into our hearts.

When we place our faith in God's Word, this means:

—If we hear the word of truth—which is the gospel as I have just related—and believe it as it applies to us and if we claim Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord (grasping the Lamb of God with our own hands of faith, confessing our sin and guilt, believing that they are now transferred to Him and that we are cleansed with His blood), we conceive the life of Jesus within us spiritually in the person of the Holy Spirit. And that's a miracle! (Rom. 3:23, 6:23; John 3:16; Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:9; John 17:1-3, 1:12; Eph. 1:13-14; John 3:3-6).

This Christmas, experience the miracle for yourself. If you already have, then please tell others they can experience it, too! {eo}

Anne Graham Lotz, second child of Billy and Ruth Graham, is the founder of AnGeL Ministries and former chairman for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. She has authored 15 books,

including her new release, Jesus in Me: Experiencing the Holy Spirit as a Constant Companion, from which this article was adapted.

This article originally appeared at .