

We Beheld His Glory!

Have you ever stopped to think about the scenes leading up  to Jesus' birth in their very human terms? We often wrap the Christmas story in a halo-like glow of wonder and the comfort of knowing the end of the story! But in between the awe of angelic visitation, the shining star and the rich gifts from the Magi, there was an impossible promise, wagging tongues of a scandalized community, a confused fiancée, heartbroken parents, a bony donkey's back and a very dirty stable. Mary's blessing came with a lot of contradictions!

God's promises are often like that. Abraham was promised nations when he and Sarah were well beyond the age or natural ability to bear children. Moses was sent to set God's people free from the most powerful nation on earth with a one-line memo and a stick.

Burning bush or not, when you think about it in those terms, we might have found ourselves stuttering when that message was delivered, too.

As we marvel at the miracle of Christmas, we thought it would be interesting to look at the story of Jesus' birth through the eyes of the participants. What does God's dream look like as it unfolds in the midst of the hard-press of

everyday life? We took the liberty to imagine in a series of vignettes from the perspective of Mary, Joseph and a lamb on the night Jesus was born. We all have had promises from the Lord. Whether it came as a still whisper, a prophetic word or an angelic visitation, your encounter planted a seed of God's dream that is for you and for future generations. We hope this vignette will encourage you as you celebrate Christmas and press through to carry His dreams to term in your life.

Magnificent!

Magnificent! The angel that came was magnificent. And when he said, "The Most High will overshadow you! You're going to have His Son!"... what was I to say? To do? What would you say but, "Yes Lord! However you plan it. Whatever you want! I want that, too! Here I am— your servant. Let it be with me just like you say!"

We were simple folk in Nazareth, and poor. Joseph was a carpenter and I was just a girl. Not even a woman yet, really. A virgin to this world in every way. Those had been days of happiness for me. Our betrothal period almost fulfilled. The blessings of the whole town were on us every day. The contract had been agreed on. And in a few weeks we would celebrate the wedding. I would be a wife!

Then the angel came with his pronouncement: "A child given! A son— born to us! One who would save His people from their sins!"

I was naive at first. I thought everyone would rejoice in wonder with me. They wondered all right. They wagged their heads and whispered and avoided me once the news was out. I was pregnant, and nobody believed the babe conceived in me was the child of God!

Even Joseph withdrew at first. And gossip ran like wildfire. Father was angry and mother just wept and turned away. Their good name was ruined right along with mine.

"Best you not be seen around here for a while," they decided. So they sent me to my cousins'.

Elizabeth and Zacharias were expecting, too. Their news had been received with joy by all. She had been barren her whole life until one day, while serving in the temple, another angel came. Zacharias couldn't believe it and the angel took his voice away. But only for a sign.

They took me in. My cousin clapped her hands and danced, embracing me like no one else had done. Zacharias could only grin from ear to ear and nod in hearty approval.

"Magnificent!" Elizabeth shouted, "This thing the Lord has done for us! Has done for you!"

I confess I shed a tear. "But they're all angry and confused at home," I said.

She skipped across the room, her pregnant belly bouncing, as she came and held me tight.

"Don't worry, child! One day you'll be famous for your virtue! Everyone will call you blessed!"

I was there when she brought forth their son and cousin Zacarias got his voice back. "John!" he named him. What a voice that boy had! He wailed as he took in his first few breaths of air as if he thought the whole Judean desert ought to listen.

My own tummy was "showing" by the time I got back to town. But Joseph was now accepting because he had had his own God encounter. Then, as if our troubles weren't enough, the governor called for a census. Joseph had to sign up in his hometown, Bethlehem. Its only claim to fame was what a prophet had once said: "A ruler will be born in you, O little town. He'll sit on David's throne and extend His kingdom around the world from sea to shining sea!"

There was not a single place for us to sit—or even lay our heads when we arrived. My heavy body ached and I was anxious as Joseph helped me off our donkey. All the while the child asleep inside me seemed not disturbed at all. Not even when the innkeeper threw up his hands and said, "Sorry folks, pregnant

or not, don't got a single spot where you can make your bed.
You can hole up in
the stable," he shrugged, "out there with the livestock if you
want, I guess."

So that's how a cave on a hillside became His birthing
chamber. A manger, where
animals fed, the cradle for the firstborn.

When the pains came and I drew close to my delivery, Joseph
paced and wrung his
hands. He tried to pray. And just when I thought I couldn't
give it one more
push the baby came.

We wrapped Him up and held Him close. My sorrow turned to joy.
Looking on His
sleeping brow I could not help but marvel. We beheld, it
seemed, the shining
face of God.

He reached out His hand.

And as His tiny fingers curled over mine, I felt that He was
lending me the
comfort and the strength that I had longed for. As if it were
me, not He, who
had been delivered.

Shepherds came. They told of angel armies hovering over the
fields where they
kept flocks. And kings traveled from a long way off, they
brought Him gifts fit
for a king. Before we knew it there was no more room even in
our tiny stable!
They all came to see Him. We all beheld His glory!

And I'm still bursting with God's good news; I'm dancing the
song of my Savior!

He took one good look at me, and look what happened—I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!

I won't forget what He has done. He alone is high and mighty! His mercy flows down in wave on wave to those in awe before Him.

He bares His arm and shows His strength. He scatters the bluffing braggarts. He knocks tyrants off their high horses, pulls victims out of the mud, and lays out a feast for the starving!

He is magnificent!

He cradled His child in His arms. And piled on mercies just like He promised us from Abraham and right up to now.

About the authors: Mahesh and Bonnie Chavda lead a worldwide apostolic ministry, Chavda Ministries International (). During their three decades of ministry, the Chavdas have led more than 1 million people to Christ while witnessing thousands of healings that have included documented recoveries from terminal diseases such as AIDS. They are the co-founders and senior pastors of All Nations Church () in Charlotte, N.C., and Atlanta, and authors of numerous books. For more information about their ministry, write to info@.