

# Journey to Bethlehem (Part 1)

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2:12 PM

Sony Pictures released a new movie about the birth of Christ this year entitled Journey to Bethlehem.

- Some of you have had the opportunity to see it
- We were privileged to see it a few months ago before it was released
- It's a musical look at the Christmas Story and while it isn't your traditional portrayal, it does focus significantly on the inner struggles that Mary and Joseph may have had carrying out this plan

The title, combined with the aspects of the movie that deal with the personal difficulties and struggles surrounding the Birth of our Savior has really stuck with me this Christmas season

- Most often when we think of "The Journey to Bethlehem" we relegate our thoughts to 1 of 2 physical journeys surrounding the Birth of Christ.
  - The Physical Journey that Mary and Joseph made - a journey of about 80 miles (most often portrayed with Mary riding a donkey - though nowhere in scripture does it say the Mary rode a donkey)

## Luke 2:1-5

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

- The Physical Journey of The Wise Men (Again always portrayed as being made on Camels - though we don't know for sure)

## Matthew 2:1-2

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

But what intrigues me about this title, and what the movie seems to focus on, broadens the idea of The Journey to Bethlehem beyond that of just a physical journey, to one that involves many various aspects of The Journey to Bethlehem. Yes, the physical is a part of it but there is a mental, emotional and spiritual journey that had to be made as well. And it is a journey that mimics our own.

- The Journey begins as we receive the invitation to be born again and have Jesus live within us
- It continues as we grow and mature as followers and disciples of Christ
- It culminates with our welcome into the presence of God for eternity

It's a journey that includes amazing promises, difficulties and struggles, ups and downs, mighty miracles, divine revelation and guidance, the peace, protection and provision of God and so much more

Today I want to look at three parts of the journey that Mary and Joseph had to face and see how that relates to the Journey we take in our Christian lives.

Luke 1:26-45

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God." 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 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, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

## Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

## Luke 2:1-7

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

### We may EXPERIENCE UNCERTAINTY about the plans of God

- Mary was troubled How can this be?
- I will divorce her
- But God will provide ongoing revelation, guidance and encouragement

### We CAN EXPECT HARD CHOICES and BEING MISUNDERSTOOD

- I can't imagine the difficult choices that Mary and Joseph had to make...
- Choices that isolated them from family and friends...
- Choices that changed their lives...
- Choices that cost them greatly...
- But God provides the comfort and assurance of others who are on the same journey
  - Elizabeth
  - Each other
  - Parent's and Family
  - Church Family
  - Mentors, Pastor's, Teachers and Leaders in the body of Christ
- And God Himself is with us on the Journey (He will never leave us nor forsake us)

### We will ENCOUNTER difficulties and struggles along the way

- But God protects and provides each step of the way