

— Christmas Through the Eyes of ... —

Mary

We've explored Herod and the Magi, and we've looked at the Shepherds...

Today, we turn to Mary...

Off Limits

We're going to look at the Advent of Christ through Mary's eyes, and we see it in a different way than to everyone so far.

You could be forgiven for thinking that Mary is going to be biased.

Luke 1:26-33

The Birth Announced

It's not unexpected that she knew the stories and traditions. She grew up hearing the story of the Exodus every Passover, the story of the giving of the Law every Pentecost, all the Jewish promises from Yahweh, His commitment to restoring the people of the world into an intimate relationship with Him.

This isn't the first time we've seen an angel show up and not the first time THIS angel has shown up.

Luke is trying to get our attention, to make us realise that something BIG is happening... Remember, if you were reading this for the first time, there's all this hope, there's all this expectation, there's bitter despair that all hope has been lost.

Baby announcements: Genesis 18, Isaiah 7.

Mary's Response

Mary asks a good question:

Luke 1:34

Mary is given a promise, and it's a challenge...

Luke 1:35-45

Mary is given a promise, and it's a challenge; and she receives the sign of Elisabeth's child as proof

The Promise is Bigger Than Mary

A look at the bigger picture

This is a political moment, this is a challenge to the status quo and the powerbrokers of the world.

Mary's revelation from God via Gabriel taps into the longer, ancient story.

Who will this baby be?

Mary's Song

Luke 1:46-56

Mary is given a promise, and it's a challenge... And she receives the sign of Elisabeth's child as proof, And her response is praise.

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

What is Your Promise?

Maybe you find yourself in the song Mary sings: maybe you are weak, broken, cast down, tossed by the circumstances of life and unrelenting harshness of our modern drive for possessions, power, prestige, position... Maybe your life is sitting squarely on top of you...

Maybe you are “the powerful”, maybe you are the rich, maybe you have opposed God and you are only here today under duress.

Today, “Christmas through Mary’s eyes” is an invitation to you to believe in the promise of God, as impossible as that might seem; that God will set you right, restore you to a place of purpose and identity.

Pray: Jesus, today I choose to recognise and accept your promise of life: salvation from eternal separation from you, deliverance from my bondage today, and freedom to be who You created me to be. I turn from my own ways, either weak or strong, and acknowledge that I cannot save myself. I make you my Lord and Saviour today. I ask your forgiveness for my sins, where I have sinned against you and others, and I invite you to be Lord of my Life. Please come and fill me with your Holy Spirit today. Amen.

Resources used:

The Gospel of Luke by Joel B Green.

A Farewell to Mars by Brian Zahnd

Discussion Questions:

1. What promises do you have in your life? What has God spoken to you about who you are, what your life is about, and what His desire is for you?
2. How do you face challenges to what you feel God has promised for you life?
3. How would you handle a challenge like Mary received: that every part of her 'normal' life would be turned upside down? How would you respond? Would you even think it was God?
4. Mary received a promise, faced a challenge, but then received a sign which she didn't ask for. When faced with challenging circumstances, are you more like Mary, who asked for information but trusted, or are you like Zechariah, who asked for a sign because you struggled to trust?
5. What perspective do you have on the promises on your life in the context of the wider church community and God's redemptive plans?
6. Where do you find yourself this Christmas? Do you need God to come to you in your low state? Or are you like the proud, rich and oppressive rulers, who need to be reminded of those in need, and their own spiritual poverty?
7. Spend some time reflecting on Mary's Song, the *Magnificat*, and allow God to remind you of who He is. His plan at Christmas was to begin setting the world straight. Allow Him to start to set your own world straight again, so that you may be a faithful representative of Jesus this Christmas.