

Mary's Dilemma

Have you ever had something happen that caused your whole life, past present and possible future, flash before your eyes? That is probably what happened to Mary when the angel told her she was going to have a child.

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

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" Luke 1:26b-34 (NIV)

Judging from the fact that no one else is mentioned, Mary must have been alone; and no doubt in her safe place – the home. Also we can assume that Gabriel is at least appearing as a man. This "man" has invaded Mary's safe place and if that is not alarming enough, a visit from an angel is no trivial matter. I am not sure that his greeting "Don't be afraid" was much comfort at this point. Her honor is at stake here. Shame and Honor are the currency of this culture.

I'm sure that hundreds of thoughts were racing through Mary's mind at that moment. Mary was betrothed; they were in the process of setting up their home. They had not yet consummated their marriage but were considered married in that culture. What was Joseph going to do? What would her father do? Would she be accused of adultery, which could carry the death penalty? How will her community react to her being pregnant too soon? Would Joseph divorce her and if so would she ever be able to have a husband? How would she support herself and the child? The unimaginable probabilities were endless.

Yet despite all of these possibilities and most unusual circumstances, Mary keeps her cool and only asks, "How can this be"? She must have been a spiritually strong woman because she believed that the angel was from God and her questioning the angel went much better than Zachariah's when an angel confronted him (a few verses earlier) and he asked why, in disbelief. [See Luke 1:11-20]

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. (and here is the angels proof) 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. **For no word from God will ever fail.**" (NIV) {**For with God nothing is ever impossible and no word from God shall be without power or impossible of fulfillment.** (Amplified Bible)}.

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Luke 1:35-38 (NIV)

In spite of all the things that could happen to her she is willing to live and trust in God. Her confidence must have been so strong that none of the negative probabilities for her future were of consequence to her.

Now at this time (Lit in these days) Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. Luke 1:39-40 (NASB)

In spite of what we see in the movies, Mary would not have travelled alone. It was not safe for anyone to travel alone in that society. She most likely traveled with a trusted family, because she would need to protect her honor and possibly her life. A woman traveling without a family male protector or a group of other women would be suspected of planning some illicit behavior.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! Luke 1:41-42 (NASB)

Mary has gone from a little girl, just barely into adulthood, in a nowhere town in Galilee called Nazareth to the Mother of the Savior of all mankind.

But her tests and trials have just begun.

How will Joseph take the news when she returns? What will be his dilemma?