

FAR ABOVE RUBIES:

*Insights on living the Christian life
– from a female perspective*



The Journey

I love Nativity plays, particularly when things don't go quite according to plan! I heard of a young boy who wanted to be Joseph in the play and objected very loudly when he was cast as the innkeeper. Still feeling very grumpy on the night of the presentation, when Mary and Joseph asked him if he had any room, he replied "Yes, sure, lots of room. Come on in!" Admittedly he did get a great response from the audience! When children are involved, you can be sure your plans will go out the window!

As we look at Mary's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, we see things weren't quite what she had planned. In Luke 1:27 we read that Mary, a virgin, was betrothed to Joseph. Plans would have been made for her wedding day when the angel Gabriel visited her saying "And behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you shall call His name Jesus." (Luke 1:31) What an announcement! Mary knew exactly what it meant to have a baby out of wedlock. She could be rejected by Joseph, scorned by her community, and possibly stoned to death in accordance with Jewish law. What a turnaround from all the dreams and plans she had made.

In Luke 1:38 we read Mary's **response** "...let it be to me according to your word." Mary was willing to sacrifice all that she had, including Joseph, to fulfil the will of God. In Matthew 1:25 we see that God always honours obedience, as Joseph took Mary as his wife, but "knew her not until she had borne a son, and she called His name Jesus." I believe that Mary's journey actually began when she responded to God.

In Luke 2 we see that Mary's plans are being turned around again. Now nine months pregnant, Mary would have made arrangements in Nazareth regarding Jesus' birth, when Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that the world should be enrolled (Luke 2:1). This involved travelling to the place of your birth which, in Joseph's case, was Bethlehem. Now Mary was not required to

go to Bethlehem with Joseph, so what **reason** did she have to face such a gruelling journey? I'm sure Mary wanted Joseph present at the birth, as he was the only one in Nazareth who truly understood her situation. Mary would also have been concerned at the prospect of giving birth alone as she would still be under the suspicion and scorn of her community. When you step out in faith for God not everyone will understand. As A.W. Tozer once said *"Not everyone will understand your journey. That's okay. You're here to live your life, not to make everyone understand."*

In Micah 5:2 we see that the **reason** for Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was the fulfilment of prophecy: *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days."* This was all part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind.

When we read of Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, we can overlook the fact that the **route** covered over 90 miles, was mostly uphill, and would probably have taken them more than a week. It is possible that Mary may have travelled on a wee donkey but there is no mention of this in any of the Gospels. Either way the journey would have been very difficult and uncomfortable at best. The Christian life isn't always easy and we, too, may be called to travel a road we hadn't planned for. Someone once said that *"Jesus never promised His faithful followers an easy journey through life, but rather promised them a safe arrival in Heaven."* Wherever our journey takes us we can rest assured that God is always working for our good and will never leave us nor forsake us (Deut. 31:8).

In Luke 2:7 we see the **result** of Mary's journey as Jesus is born in Bethlehem - *"And she brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."* Here is an exhausted young mother, far away from home who has just given birth to her son in a stable. Mary couldn't hear the myriads of angels singing and rejoicing over Jesus' birth, nor see the Magi following the star, but she knew by faith exactly who her Son was. He was Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Sadly, today many still do not recognise or understand who Jesus really is and how much He loves them, so we need to tell them. When Jesus entered this world, He came to sacrifice His life on a cross, that we might receive forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life, if we put our trust in Him.

This Christmas may we take the opportunity to share the good news of Jesus' birth as the angel did in Luke 2:10-11 *"...for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."*