

By Mark Jackson

Day 1

Gods Promise to Mary

“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

Luke 1:45–55

From all appearances, Mary was an ordinary girl living in a one-stoplight town—when an amazing moment revealed both her extraordinary character and her uncommon faith in her unseen and ever-faithful God. Believing the angel’s outrageous claim that she would give birth to God’s Son and completely trusting that the Almighty would enable her to walk that path, Mary yielded her life—her very body—to her Creator. Despite the cost to her, despite the public shame and her derailed dreams, Mary was a model of humble and willing submission to the Lord’s plans, and the world has celebrated her obedience to God for more than two thousand years.

Day 2

Unchanging God

What Christmas traditions do you enjoy? Maybe you always bake cookies, decorate the tree at a specific time, or read the Christmas story before you open gifts— and maybe you've been doing these things for years, if not generations. But maybe some traditions have changed with time. Healthier oatmeal bars have replaced the rich, buttery cookies Great-Grandma baked, or the tree gets decorated whenever a large group of family members is under the roof at the same time. Unlike some of our Christmas traditions, our God does not change from year to year, from generation to generation, or even from century to century. He who came as a Baby to the manger in Bethlehem still comes to us— as risen King—whatever our humble circumstances.

May we, in turn, go out to others in his name to share his love and grace. Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord endures forever.

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 117:1–2

Blessed be the name of the Lord From this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its going down The Lord's name is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens.

Psalm 113:2–4

Day 3

The Gift of Jesus the Messiah

The Son of God, eternal throughout time, infinite in every way, entered the confines of a twenty-four-hour day and the finiteness of a human body in order to dwell among us. And he would do more— far more—than visit and observe. Jesus left his Father's side, took on human flesh, and walked among us in order to die for us. And God had spoken through prophets to call people to watch for the coming Messiah. He sent angels to announce Jesus' birth, and Jesus revealed his identity through his signs and miracles and teaching—and his death and resurrection. Yet many people missed Him—and still miss him today. The night our Savior was born in Bethlehem was a night like many others before it— but unlike any night since. Would you have recognized its significance? And whom will you help recognize it even now, two thousand years later?

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

Colossians 1:15–18

Day 4

The Word Became Flesh

Have you ever received a one-of-a-kind gift? Something unique, completely unlike anything you had ever seen or even heard of? When the apostle John referred to Jesus as the “only begotten of the Father,” the original Greek means “unique” or “one-of-a-kind.” And as God’s gift to us, Jesus—who is both fully God and fully man—is indeed unique. Yet, as the Lamb of God who died on the cross on behalf of sinful humanity, Jesus is not a gift to be hoarded. What will you do to share your one-of-a-kind gift of Jesus with someone this season?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:1–5, 14

Day 5

Immanuel God With Us

She was favored; we are blessed. Mary yielded her life, her dreams, her very body to the Sovereign and his plan for all humanity. The holy God, who had been immeasurably far away since our first mother and father sinned in the garden, would come to earth through young Mary's holy womb and be Immanuel, "God with us." Some people will make their annual or semiannual visit to church in honor of this God who has come near. But if this Babe truly is God, does he not deserve more attention than Christmas eve and perhaps Easter Sunday? Jesus has come close for a reason. Actually, for several reasons. he wants his wandering sheep—sinful human beings—to recognize their sin, receive his forgiveness, and live with him, now and for eternity, as Lord of their lives. Jesus has come near to bless us with his grace, to guide us, to protect us, to provide for us, to free us from our sinful ways and their consequences, and to show us and tell us that he loves us. Receive Jesus' love if you haven't. Share his love if you have.

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Matthew 1:22–23