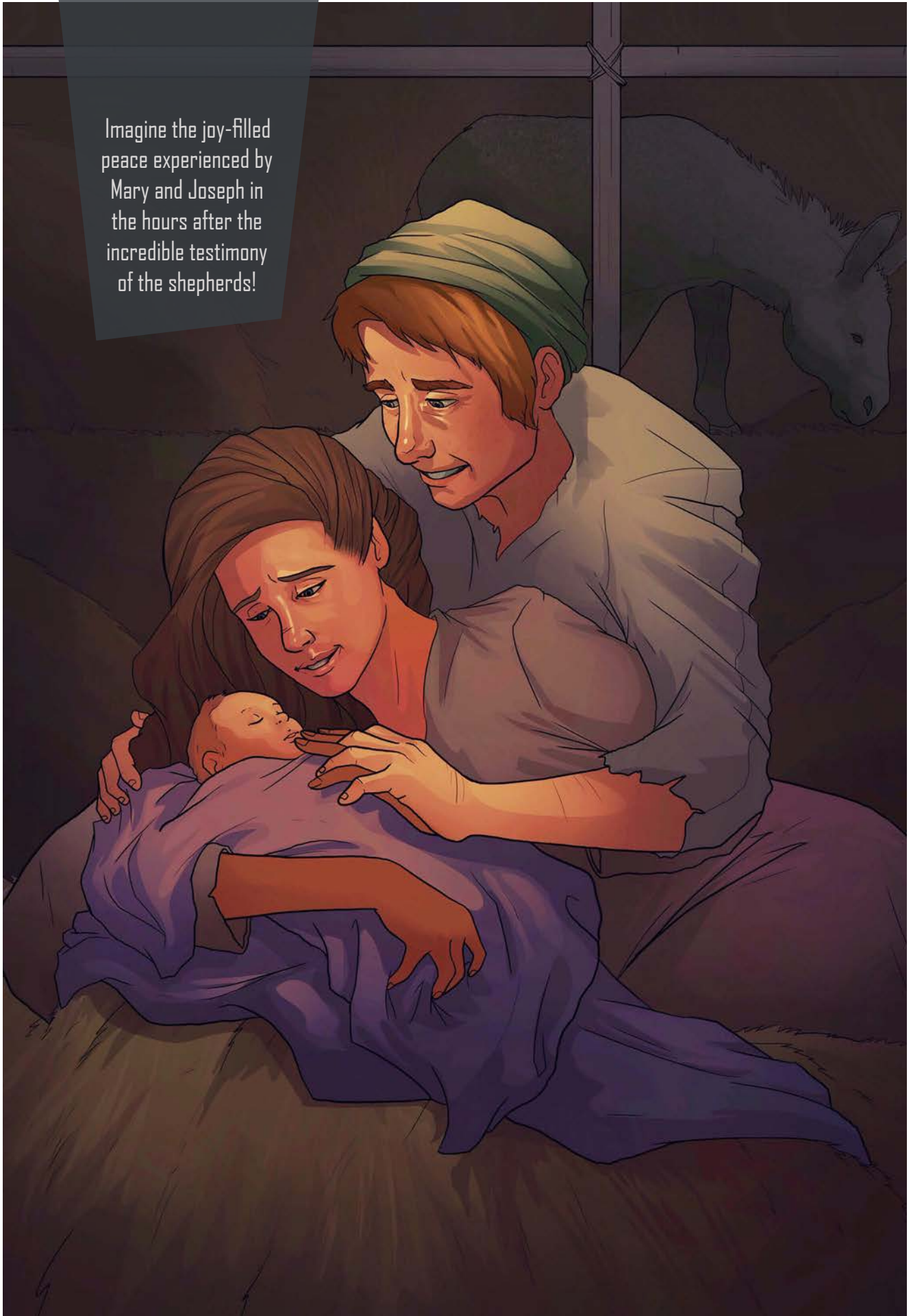


Imagine the joy-filled peace experienced by Mary and Joseph in the hours after the incredible testimony of the shepherds!



THE ANNOUNCEMENT AND BIRTH OF JESUS

(c. 5–4 B.C.)

In a fleeting moment, in the angel's presence, Mary had to decide whether she really trusted God.

It had been four thousand years since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Now, God's plan for the redemption of mankind was focused on Nazareth, a village about 75 miles north of Jerusalem.¹

There, an angel appeared to a Jewish maiden, a virgin engaged to a godly carpenter named Joseph.² The angel said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." He told her that she would bear a son, and to name him Jesus.

When Mary became pregnant, Joseph did not believe her when she explained that an angel told her that, by God's Holy Spirit, she would give birth to a son. Joseph was probably reeling from deep disappointment and other overwhelming feelings. Yes, he was betrothed to Mary, but her story was impossible, so he intended to quietly end their engagement.

Then in a dream, an angel assured him that Mary's news was true. From that moment, the burden of mistrust toward his beloved lifted, and Joseph took on the role of protector of both Mary and the Messiah in her womb. His obedience to God and his role as provider for Jesus was crucial.

Although Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David, the couple was of humble means. What set them apart was their trust in God.

In God's sovereign plan, Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem to be counted in a Roman census. The Bible does not say that Mary rode a donkey. Nor does it say that they arrived on the day of Jesus' birth. Nowhere does it say that a hotel manager turned them away or that there were any hotels at all.

It does say that while they were at Bethlehem the time came for Jesus to be born, and there was no room in the "inn." Now, many homes included space for animals on the ground level, and an upper room for guests, called a kataluma. This was the "inn." Extra guests often slept in the downstairs stable. It is likely that others, perhaps elderly relatives, were given the upper room. After all, many other relatives were also arriving at Bethlehem and Mary's farfetched pregnancy story was surely scoffed and disbelieved.

Luke 2 reveals that on the night Jesus was born, Mary wrapped him and laid him in a manger — a feeding trough.³

That same night,⁴ a group of shepherds was keeping watch over their sheep. First, they were visited by just one angel, who told of the birth of Jesus and that they would find Him wrapped in cloths, lying in a manger. Then a multitude of angels suddenly appeared, praising and giving glory to God! The shepherds were probably dirty, stinky, and disheveled, but they hurried to Bethlehem anyway.

At the place where Jesus was born, they found a Jewish maiden who had recently experienced the joy and pain of childbirth. They also found tiny Jesus wrapped and lying in a manger, just as the angel told them. However, the Bible does not mention a special star that night above where Jesus lay. No camels, glowing halos, or wise men on

1 Jerusalem to Nazareth via Samaria was about 75 miles. However, to avoid the peoples and mountainous roads of Samaria, the preferred route was to go east via Jericho, totaling about 100 miles each direction.

2 The Greek word *teuton* (*tektion*) is traditionally translated "carpenter" when referring to Joseph. It can mean any craftsman (including stone workers) but especially in wood, a carpenter. (Vine's Greek New Testament Dictionary).

3 Luke 2:7, 12, 16

4 "The angelic announcement of Christ's birth to the shepherds was at night, which means that Jesus was born at night. In [Luke 2:11](#) the angel told the shepherds, 'For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.' The Greek word translated as 'this day' is *σήμερον* (*sēmeron*) and it means 'the same day as the day of discourse' (i.e., today). Since the Jewish day began at sundown (roughly 6:00 p.m.), then the angelic use of *sēmeron* indicates that Christ was born at night since that day would have started at sundown." By Tim Chaffey, from "We Three Kings; Clearing Up Misconceptions," at <https://answersingenesis.org/holidays/christmas/we-three-kings/>.

that first night. It does not even say that the angels sang.⁵

But surely the excited shepherds encouraged Mary when they told her of the great company of angels. Then they went throughout Bethlehem and the countryside telling of the throng of angels, and the Savior that had been born!⁶

The excitement of their joyous report must have been a huge blessing to Mary and Joseph, and an amazing confirmation to their relatives and others that the girl everyone assumed to be unchaste, truly was the chosen virgin-mother of the long-awaited Messiah!

PRIMARY PASSAGES

Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 2

KEY VERSE

“. . . and she brought forth her son — the first-born, and wrapped him up, and laid him down in the manger, because there was not for them a place in the guest-chamber.” Luke 2:7 (YLT)⁷

WRAP UP

“Father, it is hard to imagine the joy and relief felt by Mary and Joseph on the night that Jesus was born. The angel’s promise of a boy-child had come true and both mother and baby were safe! Then, You sent an unexpected group of men; shepherds who joyously and probably boisterously told of being visited by a multitude of angels who confirmed that the child in the manger was the long-awaited Messiah. What a beautiful gift You gave the young couple, whose story regarding Mary’s supposed ‘virgin pregnancy’ was supernaturally confirmed.”

5 Did the angels sing, or speak their praises? See “Hark the Herald Angels Said?” by Tim Chaffey at <https://answersingenesis.org/holidays/christmas/hark-the-herald-angels-said/>.

6 Luke 2:17–18 — “abroad” in YLT and KJV, “widely known” in NKJV, “spread the word” in NIV, “publicized widely” in WEB.

7 Luke 2:7 in the New International Version ©2011 also references a guest room, not an inn. “There was no guest room available for them.” This is much closer to the literal translation of the Greek word *kataluma*.