

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

In a small town called Nazareth lived a beautiful girl named Mary. She was humble in nature and very obedient to God and His Commandments. Mary had a huge heart for the poor and would often give all that she had so that the poor would survive. When Mary was 13 years old, according to custom she was to be given away in marriage. The thought of this made Mary sad. Not because she wouldn't love her husband to be but because she promised her whole life to God. Because she was obedient to God, she let Him decide who she would marry. A young handsome man named Joseph was chosen to be Mary's husband by God. Joseph was a carpenter making many things with wood: ladders, chairs even beds. Mary accepted God's choice for her and married Joseph. They lived in a very simple home in Nazareth. One night when Mary was praying to God, an angel named Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Dearest Mary, blessed you are among women. I bring you good news that you will have a baby boy. You must call him Jesus and he will be the Saviour of the whole world because he is the Son of God. Your cousin Elizabeth who is very old is also having a baby, she is in her 6th month."

Happy and a little confused at what the angel told Mary, she said, "But how can this be, I am still pure."

The angel replied to her and said, "God will place the child within you!"

With great joy Mary humbly said, "I accept what you have told me. Let it be done to me according to God's will."

The angel then left Mary's room and went to Joseph appearing in his dream saying; "Joseph, do not be afraid that Mary carries a baby within her because God has worked a miracle this day that she may have a Son which you shall call him Jesus, and he will be the Saviour of the whole world because he is the Son of God!" After the angel Gabriel left. Joseph woke up from his dream and went to Mary telling her what he heard from God and Mary too told Joseph what the angel told her. Being overjoyed they danced singing praises to God.

The next day Mary set off on a journey to see her cousin Elizabeth which the angel said was with child. When she arrived and Elizabeth heard her voice the baby in Elizabeth's tummy leapt for joy because Mary already had baby Jesus within her. After three months Mary returned home and rested so that baby Jesus could grow. Close to the time Mary was to have baby Jesus, a messenger from the palace of king Herod went all across the land to notify all the people to go to their native lands to be counted. Mary and Joseph packed up some belongings on their donkey and set out on the journey to a small town named Bethlehem, where Joseph was from to be counted. The journey took many days.

Meanwhile in the east, there were three great kings of orient called, Balthazar, Gasper and Melchior who loved reading the stars. They saw a great bright and shining star pointing to where baby Jesus would be born. In their books, stars like those meant that a great king would be born. Being happy and excited, the three kings packed up their camels and set out on a very, very long journey following the star to baby Jesus.

When Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem and got counted, they went to look for a place to stay but they couldn't find anywhere to rest from their journey, except for a small little stable where animals were kept. With great gratitude they thanked God for giving them somewhere to stay and went into the stable. That very same night baby Jesus was born. His mother Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes while Joseph lined some straw in a manger which was used to feed the animals for baby Jesus to sleep. On a hill not too far off from the stable, there were shepherds tending their sheep when they saw the angel Gabriel come down to them from the sky shining brightly. When the shepherds saw this, they were afraid but angel Gabriel told them they should not be afraid but happy, because the king of the whole world was born! Angel Gabriel also told them that baby Jesus would be in a small stable resting in a manger. After the Angel said this, a multitude of angels came down from the sky singing Praises to God, "HOSANNA, HOSANNA, HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!" they sang.

By the time the shepherds found the Baby Jesus, the three kings from the Orient had already reached Bethlehem but were called to have dinner with king Herod. While having the dinner that was prepared, the kings told king Herod that they were searching for a great King because they saw His star in the east. Herod being evil, grew very jealous. He did not want any to be king but himself. So he asked the three kings to find baby Jesus and when they do, to tell him, so he may go and see baby Jesus too. But this was not true, king Herod wanted to destroy baby Jesus.

After some searching the kings found baby Jesus sleeping in a manger and bowed down to worship Him. They gave Jesus three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Angel Gabriel warned the three kings in a dream not to go back to king Herod, so they went home by using another way. King Herod was very angry that the three kings did not come back to him with an answer, so he ordered his soldiers to destroy every child up to the age of 2 years old! King Herod did not destroy baby Jesus however, because an angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him to go to Egypt where they would be safe. When king Herod passed away, they returned to Nazareth safely where Jesus grew up.

The End

What did we Learn from The First Christmas?

We celebrate Christmas with lots of food, presents and decorations, but truly Christmas is about God bringing His only Son into the world to be our Savior. Jesus is the reason why we have Christmas. So instead, we should make Christmas about Him and not ourselves by giving to the poor and doing acts of kindness for others. Also honoring Him in every way! Think of it as celebrating His birthday. When you have your birthday it's all about you. So, His birthday should be all about Him!

QUIZ TIME!

1. What is the name of Jesus's Mother?
2. Where did Mary and Joseph stay?
3. What was baby Jesus wrapped in?
4. Where did baby Jesus sleep?
5. What is the name of the angel that came to Mary?
6. Who were the first persons to see Jesus?
7. What gifts did the three kings bring Jesus?
8. What are the names of the three kings?
9. What is the name off Mary's cousin?
10. Was king Herod good or evil?

ACTIVITIES!

1. *Swaddle baby Jesus.*

Take your favorite stuff animal or plush toy and a blanket. Proceed to then wrap the plush in the blanket, placing the baby Jesus in a box or a rock, to remember where Jesus was placed when being born.

2. *Create the nativity.*

On a piece of paper using whatever materials you have, draw the nativity and decorate it however you want. Then place it on your fridge or in a safe place to remember the day Jesus was born.

3. *Play "Put the Mary on the donkey".*

This one sounds weird but it's fun. You can either draw a donkey and a picture of Mary or print one, then play this game as you would play the traditional game "pin the tail on the donkey!"

4. *Bake a dessert.*

It can be jello, a muffin from the store or anything you choose. Take the item and then proceed to sing Happy Birthday to Jesus.