



CHRISTMAS STORIES

Read Luke 1

(Let's put the whole Christmas Story into perspective – watch the Spirit at work!)

I want to backtrack, to take a look at the context for these Christmas stories. We find it in Luke 1. It's such an expansive chapter, with so much wind of the Spirit blowing through, preparing the scene for the coming of the Saviour.

Bear with me.

The backdrop to this chapter? Four hundred years of silence. Four hundred years of famine of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:11). During that time there have been no prophecies, no visions, no dreams, no revelation, no miracles, no angelic visitations. All visible activity of the Spirit seems to have ceased. There has been no one like Abraham or Moses, hearing the word of the Lord. No one like Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel, prophesying. No one like Elijah or Elisha, working wonders. No one like Daniel, dreaming dreams, conversing with angels.

Suddenly, the scene explodes with Holy Spirit revelatory activity. Zechariah is visited by the angel Gabriel. Mary is, too. John, in the womb, is filled with the Spirit, leaping for joy. Elizabeth, his mother, is filled, prophesying over Mary. Mary is filled with songs of praise, magnificently! Zechariah, too, once he regains his speech, prophesies. Something earth-shaking is happening. Something brand new in God's salvation work.

The winds of the Spirit are blowing.

And yet, it happens on such a small stage, with such ordinary people. Who would ever have heard of any of these players (Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary) otherwise? It's all so personal. Zechariah, alone in the Lord's sanctuary, receives individually-tuned communication from the angel, drawing him into salvation-history events, yet meeting him in his own very personal pain of childlessness.

Mary, in a small, out of the way town, all on her own, has a face to face encounter with the Lord's messenger and message – all human history will be transformed, but it starts simply with her, alone.

The first human greeting spoken to the Saviour on planet earth comes from the lips of a woman "*well along in years*". It's a very mundane meeting of cousins, but Elizabeth, filled with the Spirit, perceives the presence of Messiah and, in a loud voice, pronounces blessing and wonder.

The very air is alive with the crackle of divine revelation. The Spirit is on the move. Behold, he does a new thing!

And he does it with very ordinary people.

O Lord, your greatest intervention into human experience was preceded by spiritual drought. You put the spotlight on your activity by the sheer contrast, redeeming 400 years of silence. And you did it on such a human scale, drawing in an old man, an old woman, and a teenage girl. You saw them, you knew them, you met them, even as your eye was on all humanity.

I offer myself to you today in the midst of your ongoing work. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Like Mary, I say, "I am the Lord's servant – use me as you will."

And please, move by your Spirit in our day to accomplish your wonders. I joyfully watch to see your kingdom work. By the power of the Spirit, in the name of Messiah. Amen.

Pray:

Take one of the prayers from this passage and make it your own. Mary's, *"I am the Lord's servant – may it be to me as you have said"*, or Zechariah's, *"Praise be to the Lord ... because he has come and has redeemed his people."* Pray it now. Pray it from your own circumstance. Pray it during the rest of the day.