

Our Comfort: God Visited A Violent World

Written by Bill Perkins

Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel."

If you look at a Christmas card, you'll see peaceful images of a small shed with straw and animals. You'll see Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus.

The First Christmas

That scene doesn't accurately depict the world Jesus entered. In the U.S. today where each year a million teenage girls get pregnant out of wedlock, Mary's predicament has lost its force. In a closely knit Jewish community in the first century, the news the angel brought Mary may not have been entirely welcome. The law stated that an engaged woman who became pregnant was an adulteress and was subject to death by stoning.

Joseph agreed to divorce Mary privately rather than press charges, until an angel told him in a dream that the child Mary carried was the Son of God.

The Fate of the World

Think about it. The fate of the world rested on the response of two rural teenagers. How many times did Mary review the angels' words as she felt the baby kicking? How many times did Joseph wonder if the angels words were a dream?

They had nine months of awkward explanations. The lingering scent of scandal. It seemed God had arranged the most humiliating circumstances for the birth of His Son. In those days small towns didn't treat young boys fairly who grew up with questionable parentage.

Mary responded by saying, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." God's message to her brought joy and pain.

Long before Mary got pregnant, God told the prophet Isaiah that a virgin would be with child.

Micah 5:2, "But you, Bethlehem Epharathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

If you carefully examine the Christmas cards you received this month, you'll notice the scenes appear peaceful and idyllic. But that's not the world God visited.

The earliest events of Jesus' life give a menacing preview of the world at that time. I've never seen a Christmas card that depicts the massacre of children Herod had carried out in an effort to kill the newborn King.

God Visited Us

I write these words to remind us, while we live in a violent and evil world, that God visited such a world. And He lived and died to save such a world. As you reflect on what's happening around you, remember that Jesus came to bring JOY in the face of violence and sin. On the night of His birth Mary, Joseph and the shepherds rejoiced that God had visited them.

Let's make that joyful truth our focus on Christmas.