

# In Those Days

By Holli Worthington,

December 2019

*And in those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. Luke 1:39-40*

Luke tells us that *in those days* Mary went to Judah. “In those days” a short phrase that holds so much. What days were those? Those were days for Mary that were most likely surreal, filled with clarity and confusion, faith and fear because Mary had just received an astonishing message from God delivered by a stunning messenger none other than the angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God! Gabriel told Mary that she was to bear the Messiah. The one her people had been watching and waiting for.

This was marvelous, unbelievable news! But Mary *did* believe. She believed even though she was a virgin, but would conceive and bear a son. She believed even though she was poor, but would bear a king. She believed even though she was from despised Nazareth, but her son would be great and be called the Son of the Most High.

Every word Gabriel spoke must have been seared onto her mind. She must have clung to them, reminding herself that it really did happen, because, in these next few days she had to tell this unbelievable truth to her fiancé. And here is where we come to the little phrase, *in those days*. We’re given a clue of what those days held, when we see she went to Judah *with haste*—because telling Joseph the incredible story didn’t go so well. We know from Matthew’s account that Joseph was going to divorce her.

If I were God I might have prioritized a little differently: Send Gabriel to tell Mary. Same night give Joseph the dream. That would have been so much easier on both of them! But God prioritizes so much differently than I do. He's not after easy.

Confusion and fear must have come for Mary when she had to tell Joseph and he didn't believe her. We tend to think *did God forget this little detail?* This was God's plan, it was his will, so shouldn't everything fall in line? Why wasn't it working out? It was certainly in God's power to make everything work out easily!

So *in those days* of uncertainty about her future, Mary quickly traveled to see Elizabeth. And *in those days* who knows what sweet fellowship she had with God as she journeyed to Jerusalem. She had to trust and rely on God alone. When she arrived God gave her a wonderful confirmation through Elizabeth and the Holy Spirit — she was going to bear the long awaited Messiah! How incredibly encouraging it must have been for Elizabeth and Zechariah to have the mother of the Messiah there with them. And *in those days*, we can imagine the humiliation and stress Joseph must have been feeling and the conversations he had with God and things God may have been prying out of Joseph's hands to prepare him to be Jesus' earthly father.

Sometime during her stay there, in God's perfect timing he let Joseph know that what Mary said was true and that he- Joseph was part of God's grand plan. He was to be the earthly father of Jesus!

So Joseph took Mary as his wife, but things didn't go all that smoothly for him either. First there was the census. Joseph had to travel all the way to

Bethlehem, which was a few days journey from Nazareth, with a very pregnant wife and then once they got there he couldn't find anywhere for them to stay! I imagine that Joseph felt like a huge failure! God had given him the job of protecting and providing for the mother of the Messiah and he had already failed.

God could have kept a room reserved for them at the inn. He could have made things easy on Mary and Joseph, but God had profound and eternal reasons for having Jesus be born in a stable. He would be like no earthly king! His kingdom would be an upside down kingdom – the opposite of anything this world expected. In his kingdom servants would be great, and enemies would be loved. The stable was God's plan all along. It wasn't plan b, and it wasn't a failure on Joseph's part. Maybe God did things the hard way because they needed to know God more deeply. They needed to trust him more fully. There were hard times ahead and they would be raising the Son of God.

So it's good to remember at Christmas time that what we celebrate now as full of purpose and beauty, to Joseph and Mary probably looked like a chaotic mess. And it's the same with our lives. We want things to go smoothly, easily, and efficiently. But those aren't God's priorities. God has bigger plans than that. He wants our sanctification. He wants us to be more like Jesus. And even when things look random and messy he is always working a wonderfully redemptive plan in the lives of his children. We need to see our messy lives with eyes of faith that trust in God because he is trustworthy. He doesn't look away or forget us or abandon us to work out his plan on our own. We know that is true because He sent Jesus and all God's promises are yes in Jesus!