

A-Z CHRISTMAS

A is for ANGELS and AMONG

And in the sixth month the **angel** Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou **among** women. (Luke 1:26-28)

Gabriel is one of the few angels actually named in Holy Scripture. He is an archangel, sent from the throne room of God with a message, that a Jewish virgin, engaged to be married, would be the mother of God's anointed one, or Messiah. She was highly favoured and blessed among women, but not above women.

B is for BABE and BETHLEHEM

And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the **babe** wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:12)

But thou, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)

The prophet Micah wrote around 750 years before the birth of Jesus that Bethlehem Ephrathah, would be the birth place of the babe that would be the Messiah who was from everlasting.

C is for CONCEIVED and CHRIST

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt **conceive** in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (Luke 1:30-31)

Now the birth of Jesus **Christ** was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:18)

The virgin birth is essential to the Christmas story, for a Saviour sent to save men from sin, must be Himself born without sin. Man's original sin nature passed through the seed of man was not passed to Jesus as He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Ghost).

D is for DREAM and DAVID

But while [Joseph] thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a **dream**, saying, Joseph, thou son of **David**, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 1:20)

God communicated through His prophets (e.g., Moses, David, Isaiah, Micah, Daniel and Jeremiah) in the form of the Holy Scriptures. He also communicated through dreams to Joseph and the wise men, and through an encounter with angels He communicated His message. To fulfill prophecy, the Messiah was to be born of the ancestral line of Judah, of Jesse and of David.

E is for ESPOUSED and EMMANUEL

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) To be taxed with Mary his **espoused** wife, being great with child. (Luke 2:4-5)

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name **Emmanuel**, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:23)

Mary was not yet married as we understand marriage today, but was espoused or engaged to Joseph. The engagement contract could not be broken, except by Joseph divorcing her. She would give birth to a son, called Emmanuel, literally, "God with us".

F is for FULFILLED and FAVOUR

Now all this was done, that it might be **fulfilled** which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying. (Matthew 1:22)

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found **favour** with God. (Luke 1:30)

Everything that happened was before announced by the prophetic counsel of God and recorded in Holy Scripture as signs, like sign posts for direction. Everything that happened was therefore the fulfillment of what was announced. Mary was chosen for this task, not because she was fearless or was a beauty queen, but because she had found great favour with God through her life and actions.

G is for GOD and GOOD WILL

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty **God**, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, **good will** toward men. (Luke 2:13-14)

Isaiah wrote around 730 BC that the Promised One to be born would be a male child, a son. He would be, among other things, the Mighty God, and at the same time the Father from all of eternity. His purpose in coming was proclaimed by the angels to declare peace and goodwill toward men.

H is for HOLY and HANDMAID

And the angel answered and said unto her, The **Holy** Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that **holy** thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

And Mary said, Behold the **handmaid** of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

The Holy Ghost was the agent of conception. Without any physical union, God implanted within Mary, a “holy thing” so that she would give birth to “the Son of God”. In true humility, she submitted to the will of the Lord as His handmaid.

I is for INN and ISRAEL

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the **inn**. (Luke 2:7)

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people **Israel**. (Matthew 2:5-6)

Though Jesus was the King of Israel, there was no place for Him in the Inn. His rule over Israel is still future. The Jews await their Messiah, but when He comes to them it will be for the second time as they did not accept Him the first time when He came as a babe.

J is for JOSEPH and JUDAH

And **Joseph** also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David). (Luke 2:4)

The sceptre shall not depart from **Judah**, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (Genesis 49:10)

Joseph the foster father of Jesus was a just man and a carpenter who lived in Nazareth. He was of the lineage of King David, of the tribe of Judah. Jacob prophesied around 1890 BC that Israel's royal ruler would come from one of his sons, namely Judah.

K is for KING and KINGDOM

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born **King** of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:1-3)

He [Jesus] shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his **kingdom** there shall be no end. (Luke 1:32-33)

The angel declared to Mary that Jesus would be called the Son of the Highest, a son of King David, He would receive David's throne and initiate a rule that would never end. King Herod, who was not a Jew, called himself the King of the Jews. The statement from the wise men that they had come in search of a newly born King of the Jews troubled him deeply. Herod could stand no rivals to his throne and had been responsible for the death of a number of his own sons, his favourite wife and many loyal subjects. Caesar was once quoted as saying that “it would be safer to be one of Herod's pigs than one of Herod's sons.”

L is for LAID and LORD

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and **laid** him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the **Lord**. (Luke 2:11)

Jesus was Mary's firstborn son. She had at least six other children (see Mark 6:3). Jesus was laid in a manger, an animal feeding trough. Though He was God's chosen Saviour, the Messiah or Christ and also Lord, He entered the world in the most humble of circumstances. He laid aside His glory, but not His Deity, in order to become a vulnerable man.

M is for MARY and MOTHER

Then said **Mary** unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? (Luke 1:34)

When [Joseph] arose, he took the young child and his **mother** by night, and departed into Egypt: (Matthew 2:14)

Central to God's plan was a willing woman named Mary, who was not only pious and humble, she was the natural mother of the infant Jesus. Mary confessed to the angel that she is a virgin and "knows not a man", meaning that she had not consummated her union with Joseph. She was a chosen vessel of God, a submissive instrument used for God's purposes to be fulfilled. The child was holy, however, Mary admitted that she still needed a Saviour from sin herself (see Luke 1:47). Although Mary had questions and she did not fully understand how a virgin birth was possible, she did consent to God's will, to which the angel replied "For with God nothing shall be impossible." (Luke 1:37)

N is for NAME and NAMED

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his **name** JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so **named** of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. (Luke 2:21)

Both Joseph and Mary were told separately by the angel that the child's name would be Jesus (which literally means Jehovah saves). Joseph officially gave him his name in Jerusalem at the temple during his circumcision, eight days after He was born, as required by the Mosaic Law. The name is highly important, as Peter later declared "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

O is for Opened and Only

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had **opened** their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the **only** begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The wise men came from the East to worship the King of the Jews, then opened to Him their treasures. The eternal God took upon Himself temporal flesh and left His heavenly treasures, the only begotten of the Father. Very God of very God became fashioned as a man and dwelt among us as a representation of His Father, so that when we see Him we have seen the Father (see John 14:7-11).

P is for PRIVILY and PEACE

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away **privily**. (Matthew 1:19) Then Herod, when he had **privily** called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. (Matthew 2:7)

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace**, good will toward men. (Luke 2:13-14)

Although both Joseph and Herod sought to act privily (privately) and discreetly, both had different motives. Joseph wanted to hide the shame of a pregnancy outside of marriage, potentially resulting in Mary's death by stoning. Herod wanted information so as to discover and destroy this new potential rival to his throne. God did not want this good news to be kept private; He sent a multitude of angels, a multitude of an host or an heavenly army, praising God and declaring peace and good will toward all men, the opposite of Herod's declaration.

Q is for QUESTIONS and QUEST

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (Matthew 2:2)

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. (Matthew 2:9)

Although there are no 'q' words in any of the 'Christmas' verses, we do see a number of questions from Zachariah, Mary, Joseph, the wise men, the shepherds and Herod. most of the questions were answered by angels or through dreams, except for Herod's question regarding the location of the child. The wise men's quest was to find the King of the Jews. They had travelled a great distance in order to bring Him gifts, led by a supernatural sign, a star which led the wise men hundreds of miles. Jesus said of Himself, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (Revelation 22:16b)

R is for RAISED and ROUND

Then Joseph being **raised** from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:24-25)

And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone **round** about them: and they were sore afraid. (Luke 2:9)

Joseph's question regarding divorcing Mary privately was answered by the angel through a dream. Joseph responded promptly in obedience to the dream and married Mary so as to protect her from stoning, but had no intimacy with her until after she had given birth to Jesus. When the angel also appeared physically to the shepherds, they all saw him and were greatly or sore afraid.

S is for SHEPHERDS and SAVIOUR

And there were in the same country **shepherds** abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. (Luke 2:8)

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a **Saviour**, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

One night these shepherds were keeping watch over their flock and were entertained by a heavenly choir. One angel proclaimed that the birth was personally for them ("for unto you is born"), because He came as a personal Saviour, Christ the Lord. God knew we could never be good enough to save ourselves. He needed to intervene in the affairs of man to save us from the consequences of our sins. One sin is all that is needed to make a sinner in need of a Saviour (see Romans 3; James 2:10).

T is for TAXED and TIDINGS

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be **taxed**. ... And all went to be **taxed**, every one into his own city. (Luke 2:1, 3)

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good **tidings** of great joy, which shall be to all people. (Luke 2:10)

God used a Roman emperor's need or greed for money (taxes) in order to make Mary and Joseph move. Jesus would have been born in Nazareth if the decree had not been issued and Joseph had not married Mary. This decree forced Mary to endure a difficult three day journey, while heavy with child, south to Bethlehem in order to fulfill eight specific Biblical prophecies regarding the timing and place of the birth of Messiah. The birth brought news of great joy to all people, not just to the shepherds, nor just to the Jews, but for all people who call upon the name of the Lord for their salvation.

U is for UPON and US

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come **upon** thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let **us** now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. (Luke 2:15)

The Holy Ghost came upon Mary, overshadowing her in a supernatural way. She did not conceive by natural means, yet the birth was natural. We are also called to be born again, not “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:13) By natural means, repentance and confession, we enter into a new birth by believing like the shepherds did.

The shepherds understood the message. The message that the Lord made known “unto us”, His personal message that was proclaimed to them, was one of great joy to all, for they did not keep the message to themselves.

V is for VIRGIN and VOICE

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a **virgin** shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a **voice** heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. (Matthew 2:17-18)

The Lord Himself gave through the prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz a sign some 730 years before it happened. God would become flesh, conceived and born of a virgin.

King Herod, not to be outsmarted by the wise men, who did not return to him with the news of the location of the child as he had requested, killed all the male children in the Bethlehem area that were two years old and under in order to eliminate his rival. The voices of many grieving mothers were heard. God foresaw this as well.

W is for WISE MEN and WORSHIPPED

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came **wise men** from the east to Jerusalem, ... And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped** him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1, 11)

The number of the wise men is not given, but their gifts numbered three. Gold was for a King, and provision for the time that Mary and Joseph would spend in Egypt fleeing Herod’s jealous wrath. Frankincense was an expensive incense used in the temple worship, and myrrh another expensive incense sometimes associated with burials. Jesus is worshipped as the Son of God on numerous occasions in the Gospels (for example, see Matthew 8:1-3; 9:18-19; 14:33; 15:21-28; 20:20-23; 28:9-10, 16-20).

X is for EXCEEDING Great Joy and EXCEEDING Wrath

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with **exceeding great joy**. (Matthew 2:9-10)

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was **exceeding wrath**, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. (Matthew 2:16)

There are no 'x' words in the entire King James Version of the Holy Bible, so 'ex' words have been used for the purpose of retaining the alphabetical sequence. The wise men demonstrated exceeding great joy when they saw the star resulting in worship, whereas Herod demonstrated exceeding wrath once the wise men, who were warned of God in a dream, did not return to Herod. The town that had experienced great joy, now suffered profound great grief as Herod eliminated his potential rival.

Y is for YOU and YOUNG

And this shall be a sign unto **you**; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (Luke 2:12)

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the **young** child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. (Matthew 2:8)

A personal sign was given to the shepherds ("unto you") which would help them to believe that they were not hallucinating. The fragile Babe, the Saviour, would be wrapped in swaddling clothes, not royal robes, but rags. The verses in Matthew indicate a passage of time had transpired from the time of the birth to the time of the arrival of the wise men, even up to a period of two years, for He was then a young child and now living in a house.

Z is for ZECHARIAH (ZACHARIAS) and ZEAL

And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of **Zacharias**, and saluted Elisabeth ... and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. (Luke 1:39-42)

Of the increase of his [Jesus'] government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The **zeal** of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:7)

Zechariah (Zacharias) was the husband of Elisabeth. Elisabeth was the cousin of Mary, and the mother of John the Baptist. Zechariah was also visited by the angel Gabriel. Elisabeth conceived following the angel's announcement even though she was well past child bearing age; it was a personal miracle. She was greeted by Mary and gave the salutation, "Blessed art thou among women." It was the zeal of the LORD of hosts who brought to pass the salvation of mankind through the foretold miraculous birth of Jesus. He was born with the sole mission of dying for the sins of the world and rising from the dead on the third day in fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures, to be our Saviour, and He offers the free gift of eternal life to all who recognise their need for salvation from their sin and call upon Him to save them.