

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
#2: Home Away From Home
December 9-11, 2006

³⁹At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!" ⁴⁶And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord ⁴⁷and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name. ⁵⁰His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. ⁵¹He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. ⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. ⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful ⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." ⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Luke 1:39-56 TNIV

Introduction: Like our own traditions and memories surrounding the celebration of Christmas, the story of Christ's birth is filled with references to "home." As we view the nativity through this lens, we can see that God always has a home for his people and his plans. When confronted with a challenge unthinkable to Mary, God provided her with a "home away from home" where she could come to grips with her new reality according to God's plans.

- I. Who Was Mary?
 - A. We know little about Mary prior to the birth of Jesus, and varying traditions ascribe her birthplace as Jerusalem (to Joachim & Ann), Sepphoris, Nazareth.

- B. Mary was likely a common Jewish girl growing up in the staunchly Jewish village of Nazareth near an important trade route from Egypt to Mesopotamia.
 - C. The customary age of betrothal for a girl in a Galilean Jewish home was between thirteen and fifteen years old, so Mary was quite young when the angel told her that she would give birth to the Christ child.

- II. What Was the News?

- A. When the angel brought news of Mary's pregnancy by the Holy Spirit, Mary was not immediately thrilled: she was confuse, frightened, and obedient.

²⁹Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. ³¹You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. . . ³⁴"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" ^{35a}The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. . ." ³⁸"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me according to your word." Then the angel left her. *Luke 1:29-35a, 38 TNIV*

- B. It took time for Mary to accommodate her life to God's will and finally exult in being chosen as the mother of Immanuel, "God at Home With Us."

- III. Where Was Home?

- A. We can only surmise that Nazareth became a rather uncomfortable place for Mary and Joseph, who were likely shunned by the entire village.
 - B. The angel told Mary that her elder cousin, Elizabeth, was also pregnant and connected to God's plan.
 - C. God provided a "home away from home" for Mary at Elizabeth's house in the hill country of Judea.
 - D. It was there that Mary was able to discover the joy of fulfilling God's will and sing the famous Magnificat.
 - E. Mary's "home" was where God's heart was.

Conclusion: Often, believers need "homes away from home" where they can accommodate their lives to God's plans among other true believers. When we follow God, He provides a home for the fulfillment of His will. Thus we see again that home is always wherever God's heart is.