

Sermon or Lesson: God's 2nd Message In The Christmas Story (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

PASSAGES (in sequential section order): Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25; Luke 2:8-18; Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12; Matthew 2:1-8,13

INTRO: Most of us are familiar with the Christmas story and its main message that God has sent His Son Jesus into the world to provide a way to save us from the consequences of our sins. Have you ever realized that there is a second message that God is simultaneously sending in the Christmas story events? God's second message in the Christmas story can be paraphrased as God saying, "I'm about to do something **extraordinary**. This is going to **interrupt** and change your life in a dramatic way. **Stop** what you're doing! **Go check it out** and get involved."

Let's look at several Scripture passages of the Christmas story to see how God repeatedly stated this second or additional message.

READ: Luke 1:26-38 - Mary

[Lesson Question: For the main characters in each of the Scripture passages, identify how God interrupted their lives, what extraordinary things He was doing, what He wanted each of them to do, and what their response was.]

SECTION POINT: When God indicated He wanted to do something extraordinary in Mary's life, she immediately responded agreeably and wholeheartedly.

- - God **interrupted** - Mary's marriage and family plans. (vv.27,31,35)
 - - God was about to do something **extraordinary** - Mary will miraculously become pregnant by the Holy Spirit (vv.31,35), and as a sign, her relative Elizabeth miraculously was "going to have a child in her old age". (v.36)
 - - God wanted Mary to **stop** - following her own plans for her future. (v.31)
 - - God wanted Mary to **go check it out** - so Mary hurried off to visit her relative Elizabeth, who was already several months along in her pregnancy. (vv.36,39ff)
 - - Mary's **response** - was agreeable, giving her permission for God to impregnate her, which was outside of marriage (v.38) and not by her fiancé (v.35), and committing herself to cooperate with what God was doing.
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READ: Matthew 1:18-21, 24-25 - Joseph

SECTION POINT: When Joseph learned that God wanted to do something extraordinary in his life, Joseph immediately changed his plans to align with God.

- - God **interrupted** - Joseph's marriage plans and preparations. (vv.18-19)
 - - God was about to do something **extraordinary** - Joseph's fiancée is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (v.18)
 - - God wanted Joseph to **stop** - the divorce. (vv.19-21)
 - - God wanted Joseph to **go check it out** - take the pregnant Mary as his wife. (v.20)
 - - Joseph's **response** - was to obey, and so he took Mary as his wife. (vv.24-25)
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READ: Luke 2:8-18 - The Shepherds

SECTION POINT: The shepherds responded to the extraordinary things God was doing by immediately "spreading the word" about what God was doing.

- - God **interrupted** - the job functions of the shepherds. (vv.8-9)
 - - God was about to do something **extraordinary** - implement the long-awaited arrival of the Messiah, Christ the Lord. (v.11)
 - - God wanted the shepherds to **stop** - tending their sheep for a little awhile. (vv.8,12)
 - - God wanted the shepherds to **go check it out** - and find the baby lying in a manger. (v.12)
 - - The shepherds' **response** - was they briefly discussed it and then in agreement they all hurried off, found the baby, and spread the news. (vv.15-17)
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READ: Matthew 2:1-2, 9-12 - Magi

SECTION POINT: The Magi traveled long distances at considerable expense in order to check out the extraordinary things God was doing.

- - God **interrupted** - the lives of the Magi, having them observe an unusual star and then consequently follow that star on a long trip in order to worship and give expensive gifts. (vv.1-2,11)
 - - God was about to do something **extraordinary** - to bring about the birth of the Christ, the King of the Jews. (vv.1-2,4)
 - - God wanted the Magi to **stop** - sitting around gazing at all the stars. (vv.1-2)
 - - God wanted the Magi to **go check it out** - get up, follow the star, and find the King of the Jews. (vv.1-2 with vv.9-10)
 - - The Magi's **response** - was they traveled to Jerusalem and then followed the star with joy to Bethlehem, where they found the Child, worshipped Him, give Him gifts, and then heeded the warning to return by a different route. (vv.1,8,9,11,12)
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READ: Matthew 2:1-8,13 - Herod and the people of Jerusalem

SECTION POINT: When Herod and the people of Jerusalem learned of the extraordinary things God was doing, they got disturbed, and then devised and implemented a plan to destroy what God was doing.

- - God **interrupted** - the comfort and security of Herod's reign as king, and the lives of the people of Jerusalem. (v.3)
- - God was about to do something **extraordinary** - implement the long-awaited arrival of the "Christ" (v.4), the ""ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel"" - i.e. the Messiah (v.6).
- - God wanted Herod and the people of Jerusalem to **stop** - sitting around in their comfort. (derived from v.8)
- - God wanted Herod and the people of Jerusalem to **go check it out** - go search, find, and worship the Child. (derived from v.8)

- - Their **response** - was that Herod and the people of Jerusalem were disturbed (v.3); Herod sent the Magi instead of going too (v.8); Herod felt threatened so he devised a scheme to find and kill the Child (v.13); and apparently no one from Jerusalem went out to find and worship the Child.

BIG IDEA: God wants to interrupt the direction in your life and do something extraordinary, if you will respond agreeably.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS:

This pattern of how God operates is a 2nd message in the Christmas story, and its dynamics are still utilized by God today:

- - God **interrupts** - your life and plans for the future.
- - God is about to do something **extraordinary** - working to make you into a believer and a disciple of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah.
- - God wants you to **stop** - following your own plans, preoccupations, and busyness of life.
- - God wants you to **go check it out** - start following God's plans and will for your life.

So what is your **response**?

- - Are you going to shrug your shoulders, ignore God's messages, and keep going with your life according to your plans?
 - Or -
 - - Are you going to **stop** what you are doing - your preoccupations and busyness of life?
 - - And then are you going to **go check it out** - take time to believe in Christ the King, worship Him, follow and serve in what He leads you, and let God change the direction of your life?
 - - Are you going to respond like Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi?
 - - Or are you going to respond like Herod and the people of Jerusalem?
 - - How are you going to respond right now?
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Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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