

Battleground: Nativity

The War on Christmas and the Full Armor of God

SERMON STUDY GUIDE | PART 2: PLAN OF ATTACK | 11.19.17 | FOLLOW ON FB @PASTORERICHUFFMAN TW @ERICTHESTORY

YOUR MISSION

1. To forget everything you thought you knew about the Christmas story - all the sappy, sentimental fluff - and to revisit the biblical Christmas narrative with a fresh perspective.
2. To deepen your understanding of spiritual warfare by familiarizing yourself with the Enemy's tactics against you, assessing the damage he's already done, and taking stock of the spiritual weapons God has put at your disposal.
3. To better prepare you for the spiritual battles you're facing.

G.I. ~~JANE~~ MARY

Even among non-religious people, Mary's story - from her pregnancy to the cross - is well-known. Unfortunately, what we *think* we know about Mary - that she was mild-mannered and submissive - is completely untrue. From the moment she received her heavenly mission, Mary showed determination, wit, and courage uncommon for a person her age (13-14). The "Song of Mary" shows there's more to her than silent obedience; in God's coming assault against the Darkness, Mary will be the tip of the spear.

KEY TEXT: LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

What do we know about Mary, the mother of Jesus? How old was she when the angel came to her?

What do we know about Nazareth, her hometown?

Given what we know about who Mary was and where she came from, what particular challenges would Mary have encountered following the angel's pronouncement?

KEY TEXT: LUKE 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

BACKUP! WE NEED BACKUP!

Why do you think Mary felt compelled to travel on foot for nine days to see Elizabeth?

What does Elizabeth's encouragement do for her younger cousin? How have you experienced ENCOURAGEMENT as a weapon in the spiritual battles we're all facing?

Do you have an encourager like Elizabeth in your life? Are you an encourager to someone else?

KEY TEXT: LUKE 1:46-56

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

OO-RAH!

How was Mary's song a battle cry in this spiritual war between light and darkness?

KEY TEXT: EPHESIANS 6:10-14

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place...

What is righteousness? How can it be likened to a "breastplate" in our spiritual struggles?

How did Mary's righteousness serve her well as a warrior in God's army?

Have you ever felt like there was some unrighteousness in your life - something you're secretly ashamed or afraid of - that keeps you from going all-in with God? What is one way you can strive for more righteousness today?