

CHRISTMAS

STABLE CONVERSATION

Prologue: On a calm and clear night, long ago in Bethlehem, an amazing miracle transpired that would affect the entire world for all eternity. God announced the long-awaited birth of His Only Son whom He sent as Savior of the world. To ensure no doubt of His intention to gift mankind with a path to redemption and reconciliation unto Himself, God foretold the Messiah's coming through Hebrew prophets thousands of years before it came to pass. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, prophets like Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, and Micah in succeeding generations spoke of the coming Messiah, Savior of the world. The Bible confirms fulfillment of detailed prophecies in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Only Jesus (in Hebrew Yeshua meaning Savior) fulfilled hundreds of prophecies on the most wondrous of nights. Looking in on this incredible scene marvel again at the story retold in an imaginary stable conversation.

Donkey: Hello, little Lamb! Welcome to our stable. How is it you have come from the fields with these shepherds?

Lamb: Oh, Mr. Donkey, we saw an incredible vision of an angel in the sky who pronounced the birth of a king in Bethlehem and the shepherds clamored to come and see this miracle baby! I was scared, but the angel said, *"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."* And then the whole sky filled as a heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."* Luke 2:9 – 14

Donkey: You are truly blessed, little Lamb! For when I carried Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem, she and Joseph excitedly shared about their coming baby. All along the way they reflected on how they hurriedly married after an angel told Mary she would be the virgin mother of the promised Messiah. Joseph retold



again and again his vision of an angel who reassured him not to fear marrying Mary and that her child was of the Holy Spirit. As ordinary Jews from humble families, they wondered how they could possibly raise the Son of God. They so wanted to honor God's will as they came to Bethlehem to register in their ancestral home according to Caesar Augusta's census decree.

Lamb: Wow, it must have been really something to share in their intimate conversation along the journey. Did you meet others on the way?

Donkey: Yes, many from all over Israel were coming and going to ancestral homes so it was a well-traveled road, indeed! In fact, we camped one night with other travelers and I spoke with another donkey whose master was a Priest. He told me that the Priest was very put out about having to travel to Bethlehem when he had so many duties at the Temple in Jerusalem. As they traveled, the Priest recited the prophecies of the promised Messiah who would be a king. And I overheard others who are anxiously awaiting the Messiah because of the oppressive Roman occupation. Yet, no one mentioned a little baby born in a stable!

Lamb: The setting does seem contrary to the expectation for royalty! Here we are in a stable with the Savior of the world lying in a manger! Yet the heavenly host said to worship Yeshua. As we were coming from the fields, the shepherds were talking all at once about how astounding this night is. They also recalled all they learned in the synagogue from the books of Moses and Psalms of David and the prophets, yet did not comprehend how these prophecies could be happening on this very night!

Donkey: Mary and Joseph marveled at how God seemed to do things in unexpected ways all the time.

Mary said her cousin Elizabeth just had a baby in her old age whom they called John. And when her husband, Zechariah the priest, did not at first believe God would give him a son at his advanced age, he could not speak for months before the birth! Yet when John was born, he praised God and said John would live a life dedicated to God. While Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zechariah, she shared her own angelic visitation. Zechariah searched the scriptures to account for all these inexplicable things in prophecy. With anticipation, she and Joseph pondered the prophecies Zechariah had shared with her and Elizabeth:

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7: 14

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” Isaiah 53:7

Lamb: Wow, amazing! Isaiah predicted the virgin birth of a Savior and a King who is called Immanuel, God with us. No wonder the angels proclaimed this birth! No wonder God created this brilliant star to guide us here!

Donkey: Yes, and here we are witnessing this miracle of miracles. God has used the simple to confound the privileged. He has used the humble to eclipse the proud. And according to the prophecies Zechariah shared with Mary, He has used a Roman king's census decree to bring Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where Micah prophesied the Savior would arise. *“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Micah 5:2*

Lamb: It's disturbing that the prophet Isaiah called Messiah “a lamb to the slaughter.” How can it be?

Donkey: Mary and Joseph also were perturbed about this ominous foreshadowing and reflected on Zechariah's observation connecting the Messianic lamb with the Passover feast.

Lamb: My mother told me of this annual tradition when families take a little lamb into the home and he becomes a pet to all the children. Then that little lamb is sacrificed for the Passover feast.

Donkey: Yes, but as Zechariah said, it is done to carry away the people's sins, just as God carried the Hebrew people out of Egyptian bondage. God instructed Moses to have every home place the blood of a slain lamb on the door posts and lintel. Then as God passed over the land in the final plague, He killed all the Egyptian first born to gain Pharaoh's release of His people, yet spared the Israelites whose homes displayed the sign. While this inspired explanation moved them in their spirits, Mary and Joseph cannot fathom how their little baby, Yeshua, shall fulfill His role as the Lamb of God.

Lamb: Some of the mothers of spotless lambs are fearful their little ones will be chosen for Passover, but if the feast pictures God's plan to save the world, perhaps the chosen lamb without spot or blemish is a blessing, rather than a punishment.

Donkey: I do not think we can figure this all out tonight, little Lamb. Yet, we stand in the presence of God's Son, sleeping in a manger, who somehow will save all mankind. We are on hallowed ground. No wonder this stable glows with a light that is inexplicably bright!

Epilogue: So, the donkey and lamb looked on as Mary, Joseph and the shepherds gathered around the manger in awe of the miraculous birth. God would guide them in raising the holy child to fulfill His will for peace on earth good will to all men. Though mysterious, God always reveals His intention. He does not wish for any to be in the dark, but for all to know the true meaning of this miraculous stable birth. We celebrate Jesus' birth by giving seemingly insignificant gifts, for nothing can compare to God's matchless gift of grace.

Celebrate Christmas this year by receiving the most valuable gift of all, salvation through Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Once you possess this eternal gift, share the true meaning of Christmas with someone who may not know the reason for the season. As the stable animals recounted the story of baby Jesus, so we can share this amazing Christmas miracle.