

The Nativity

From David Bentley Hart's Translation

THE ANNUNCIATION

Luke 1:26–38

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee whose name was Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, and the virgin's name was Mary. And going in to her he said, "Hail, favored one, the Lord is with you." And she was greatly distressed at his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And see: You will conceive in your womb and will bear a son, and you shall declare his name to be Jesus. This man will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob throughout the ages, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, as I have intimacy with no man?" And in reply the angel told her, "A Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence the offspring will be called holy also, a Son of God. And look at your kinswoman Elizabeth: She also conceived a son, in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who had been called barren; because nothing, of all the things I have said, is impossible with God." And Mary said, "See: the slave of the Lord; may it happen to me as you have said." And the angel departed from her.

MARY'S SONG

Luke 1:46–55

And Mary said, "My soul proclaims the Lord's greatness, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior, because he looked upon the low estate of his slave. For see: Henceforth all generations will bless me; because the Mighty One has done great things to me. And holy is his name, and his mercy is for generations and generations to those who fear him. He has worked power with his arm, he has scattered those who are arrogant in the thoughts of their hearts; he has pulled dynasts down from thrones and exalted the humble, he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has given aid to Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, just as he promised to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed, throughout the age."

JOSEPH'S DREAM

Matthew 1:18–25

Now the manner of the birth of Jesus the Anointed was this: His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph but, before they had been joined, she was discovered to be pregnant from a Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being an upright

man and not wishing to make a spectacle of her, resolved to divorce her in private. But look: As he was pondering these matters the Lord's angel appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to receive your wife Mary; for what has been begotten within her is from a Spirit, the Holy one. And she will bear a son, and you shall declare his name to be Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All of this has occurred in order that there might be fulfilled what the Lord spoke through the prophet, saying, "See: The virgin shall conceive in her womb and shall bear a son, and they shall declare his name to be Emmanuel"—which, being interpreted, means "God with us." And Joseph, having arisen from sleep, did as the Lord's angel had bidden him, and received his wife. But he had no intimacy with her until she bore a son. And he declared his name to be Jesus.

THE BIRTH

Luke 2:1–7

Now it happened that in those days an edict went out from Caesar Augustus that all the inhabited world should be enrolled in a census. This, the first enrollment, took place when Quirinius was governing Syria. And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And so Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, to Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, since he was from the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary, who was betrothed to him, and who was pregnant. And while they were there it came about that the days of her bearing reached their term, and she gave birth to her son, her firstborn, and she wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the lodge.

THE SHEPHERDS

Luke 2:8–20

And there were shepherds in the countryside there, dwelling out in the fields and keeping guard in the night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid, greatly afraid. And the angel said to them, "Do not fear; for see: I bring to you good tidings of a great joy, which will be for all the people, because today, in David's city, a savior was born to you who is the Anointed Lord. And this is a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." And suddenly there appeared with the angel a throng of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest places and peace on earth among men of good will."

And it happened that, as the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this story that has unfolded, which the Lord has made known to us." And hastening they went and found both Joseph and Mary, and the baby lying in the manger as well; and seeing them they revealed what they had been told concerning this little child. And everyone who heard was amazed at the things reported to them by the angels. But Mary kept all these things in her heart, pondering

them. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

THE MAGIANS

Matthew 2:1-12

Now, Jesus having been born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days when Herod was king, look: Magians arrived in Jerusalem from Eastern parts, saying, "Where is the newborn King of the Judaeans? For we saw his star at its rising, and came to make obeisance to him." And, hearing this, King Herod was perturbed, and so was all of Jerusalem along with him; and, having assembled all of the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Anointed is to be born. And they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judaea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah. For from you will come forth a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod, secretly summoning the Magians, ascertained from them the exact time of the star's appearance and, sending them to Bethlehem, said, "Go and inquire very precisely after the child; and when you find him send word to me, so that I too may come and make my obeisance to him." And, obeying the king, they departed. And look: The star, which they saw at its rising, preceded them until it came to the place where the child was and stood still above it. And, seeing the star, they were exultantly joyful. And, entering the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary and, falling down, made obeisance to him; and, opening their treasure caskets, they proffered him gifts: gold and frankincense and myrrh. Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, however, they departed for their own country by another path.

SIMEON'S RECOGNITION

Luke 2:25-32

And look: There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Symeon, and this was a man upright and pious, eagerly awaiting the consolation of Israel, and a Holy Spirit was upon him; and it had been made known to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he should see the Anointed of the Lord. And he came in the Spirit into the Temple; and as the parents brought in the little child Jesus, so that they could do for him what was customary according to the Law, he took him in his arms and blessed God and said, "Now you release your slave in peace, Master, in keeping with your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have made ready before the face of all peoples, a light for a revelation to the gentiles and a glory for your people Israel."
