

The Great I AM

By: Stephanie Loomis

Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. (Luke 2:19).

"Mary, did you know?" The lyrics, inspired by a monologue written by Mark Lowry in 1984, plays over and over during the Christmas season. It may be so overplayed that we've lost the impact of those lyrics; the baby had walked where angels trod, yet grew in his mother's womb from embryo to infant, and ultimately to adulthood where he would give his life as a ransom for many. Of course Mary knew that this baby in her arms was the Messiah. The question for today is, do we still ponder the wonder of the Incarnation?



Illustration by author using Night Cafe Studios AI and Photoshop

Every year at Christmastime I read Madeleine L'Engle's book, *Bright Evening Star*. I own a hard copy, a Kindle edition, and an audiobook. While L'Engle's theology has a universalist bent, her insistence on pondering the wonder of God's love never ceases to inspire my own adoration of Jesus. Like the Lowry song, L'Engle considers the paradox of the Incarnation. This baby was God, in human flesh. The Creator of all things visible and invisible acquiesced to becoming part of his creation, not as a king, but as a baby born into poverty.

L'Engle put it this way:

Power. Greater power than we can imagine, abandoned, as the Word knew the powerlessness of the unborn child, still unformed, taking up almost no space in the great ocean of amniotic fluid, unseeing, unhearing, unknowing, Slowly growing, as any human embryo grows, arms and legs and a head, eyes, mouth, nose, slowly swimming into life until the ocean in the womb is no longer large enough, and it is time for birth (p 19).

We may or may not all be mothers, but we've all seen expectant women walking with one hand on their aching backs while their swollen bellies lead their ways. That was Mary, once upon a time. We've seen new mothers and fathers in church, their eyes betraying a lack of sleep. That was Mary and Joseph. We've seen their newborns, crinkled, red, and bald, looking peaceful for a moment before

letting out a squeal that lets the world know they need something. That was Jesus. The great I AM wrapped in tiny human flesh.

Isaiah wrote, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:2, 6). We live in a dark world where deception and division reign. But we, too, have a great light upon which to gaze: the Light of the World, himself, Jesus (John 8:12). Mary knew that passage, too. She waited for the Messiah with the rest of her people. Imagine her initial thoughts when the angel came to her to tell her that she would give birth to the King of Heaven? Imagine how she pondered the paradox and the mystery as her belly grew and her baby kicked within her womb?

Mary knew the Psalms, too. "Oh magnify the LORD with me" (Psalm 34:3) and "We your people...from generation to generation we will recount your praise" (Psalm 79:13) resonate in her song of praise in Luke 1. She knew the history of her people, including Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 1) and the many ways the LORD had shown his steadfast love through the ages. Which of the Psalms did she think about in her sixth month or her seventh? As the shepherds came, and then the Magi, did she recall the 23rd Psalm or Abraham's tithe to Melchizedek (Genesis 14)? We don't know. We do know that Mary's heart and mind were filled with the word, even as she carried the Word (John 1).

L'Engle calls the Incarnation a demonstration of "the scandalously particular love of God which sometimes we forget" (p. 71). Isn't that a marvelous turn of phrase? It's worth pondering, especially at this time of year. We need to rejoice in the Lord as Mary did. We need to sing and proclaim his goodness. And we need to sit in awe and wonder at the paradox of the tiny little baby born in Bethlehem being the great I AM. Mary knew. Do you?

Reflect:

- What aspect of Jesus as fully God and fully man causes you to stop and ponder?
- How will you create space for wonder this season?

Dig a little deeper:

- Read Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46-55.
- Read Zechariah's prophecy in Luke 1:68-79

How do these passages refocus your mind and set your heart on Jesus?

Prayer:

Lord of Heaven, there are no words to express the wonder and awe of your great love for us. Thank you for Jesus. Thank you for reminding me every year that you came to the earth that you created to become part of our humanity. Thank you for loving us enough to become the great I AM in flesh. Let me walk in awe of your love and let me be a reflection of you wherever I go. Amen.

Resources: English Standard Version Bible (2008) Crossway Bibles

L'Engle, Madeleine. *Bright Evening Star: Mystery of the Incarnation*. Wheaton Literary Series, Shaw Books, 2001.

[Mary, Did You Know - Voctave feat. Mark Lowry](#)

['Mary Did You Know' writer Mark Lowry good-natured over song's controversy](#)