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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

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Angels Foretold the Birth of Jesus.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Marriage customs and traditions differ from culture to culture and may change in some ways over generations. The Jewish marriage customs of 2,000 years ago need to be studied to understand some of the aspects of the coming to earth of the Lord Jesus.

What makes a marriage in God's eyes? There is the aspect of the vows or promises that a man and woman make to each other. They promise to be faithful to each other for as long as they both shall live. The other part is the physical union of intimacy.

In many cultures when a man and woman agree to get married, they're called 'engaged'. If there are problems between the two before getting married, either one of them may break off the engagement.

In the Jewish culture of that time, when a young man chose a bride, there were differences. Firstly, he had to have enough money to pay for his bride. Sometimes marriages were arranged by parents but the bride had to agree to it. In front of two witnesses in the bride's house, the groom had to pay the asking price and make a covenant or agreement which included the marriage vows. This was formally sealed by the bride and groom drinking a cup of wine together. They were known then as betrothed and called 'husband and wife.'

After this ceremony, the bridegroom went back to his father's house to live. He then built a room or a house for his bride to the standard set by his father. Most betrothals lasted around a year. If anyone asked him when he was getting married, the bridegroom's response was: "No one knows the day or the hour, only my father." The bride too, didn't know when her husband was going to collect her and take her to his father's house. She had to be ready when she heard a shout that the bridegroom and his attendants were coming. This often happened at night and the burning torches showed the procession.

DRAMA - [The Bible In Living Sound](#).

Mary had an amazing visit from the angel Gabriel. Over the previous 400 years, God had been silent to the people of Israel. Then Gabriel was given two messages to deliver to Israelites within six months. The first was to an older man named Zechariah saying that his barren wife would have a son called John. He was to prepare the Israelite people for their Messiah. In his adult life he was known as 'John the Baptist.' The other was to a young virgin, Mary, telling her that she would conceive a son called Jesus directly from the Holy Spirit and not through her betrothed husband Joseph.

Some people don't believe that angels exist. Others take the opposite view and replace the Lord Jesus' position in the believer's life with that of a guardian angel. Old traditions say such angels are considered passive and human beings can give them orders, which they'll obey.

So we search the Scriptures for truth and find many references to angels. Jesus confirmed that angels exist and at His crucifixion, could have called down thousands to help Him. But that wasn't God's plan. Angels were created by God but not in His image. There are too many to be counted and their numbers do not increase or decrease.

Angels don't have children, nor do they die. Their knowledge, though greater than that of human beings, is limited. They don't have the all-knowing, all-seeing and everywhere-present qualities belonging to God. Michael, the only angel called the archangel, is the defender of Israel. The angel Gabriel was entrusted to deliver important messages from God to individuals such as Daniel, Zechariah and Mary.

When Gabriel delivered his message to Mary of Nazareth, in Galilee north of Samaria, Mary never assumed that he was giving her a long-term account of what would happen. She never thought that this baby she was going to have would come next year and not this year. Although she was betrothed to Joseph, she made the point that she didn't have a husband yet for getting pregnant.

While Mary was born a sinner just like the rest of us, how could the baby she carried be born sinless? Gabriel said she would become pregnant after the power of the Holy Spirit visited her and the child would be called 'holy' and the 'Son of God'. Mary accepted this unusual assignment graciously and Gabriel left her. Mary made preparations and went to visit her cousin Elizabeth in the hill country.

In Old Testament times God Himself spoke about His relationship with the Children of Israel. When Moses led the Jewish slaves out of Egypt to walk to the Promised Land, God guided them where they should go. When they arrived at Mount Sinai, God made a covenant or agreement with them. He was to be their God and they were to be His people. They were to obey His commands and keep themselves pure for Him only. This was like a marriage in its obligations. However, it wasn't too long before the people were looking to worship the gods of the pagan people living around them.

Many times God brought them back to Himself. Often God allowed them to suffer defeat at war with their enemies and lose their possessions. When they were utterly miserable, they repented of their evil ways and promised to remain true to Him. These promises never seemed to last more than a generation.

When the people were wilfully disobedient, God withheld His blessings. In the end, He separated Himself from them by casting them out of the land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Then the promises were deferred. This didn't make God unfaithful to the people because His promises to them were conditional, based on their obedience to Him.

In Ezekiel, Chapter 16, God described Israel as being like a beautiful woman, full of promise, who eagerly entered into marriage with Him, vowing to Him as she agreed to the covenant: "All that the LORD has said we will do and be obedient."

However, under the tests of life, Israel didn't behave like the faithful wife. Of all the family groups in world history, Israel alone was the one chosen by God to be His special people.

In the Minor Prophets section of the Old Testament, God called the prophet Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman and teach the Israelite people how God felt when they abandoned Him and went after false worthless gods. Israel had been out of the Promised Land for over 2,500 years and scattered among the nations of the earth.

Had God forgotten Israel? No! He promised to bring Israel back to the land, and this happened when Israel was declared an independent nation in 1948. Very many Jews still live comfortably in other countries and have no desire to return to the troubles of their Promised Land.

Do you ever ask yourself why did God bother to persevere with the Jewish people? Part of God's character is to love. For us humans, there's a natural kind of loving that loves lovely things and lovely people. That's logical. But there's another kind of loving that doesn't look for value in what it loves but that it 'creates' value in what it loves. God created value in sinful people and made it possible for them to turn to Him. It cost God His only Son Jesus but there is now a way of spiritual intimacy that people of any nation can have with God.

Let's go back now to the marriage customs of Jesus' time. After the wedding procession arrived at the bride's house, the bride and bridegroom walk back together to the bridegroom's father's house, where the wedding guests were assembled. The couple enter a room called the bridal chamber and there spend the next seven days as a honeymoon. After this time, the husband brings out his new wife to present her to the guests.

When the Lord Jesus was asked why His disciples didn't refrain from eating and drinking as a religious exercise like the Pharisees did, Jesus suggested that He was the bridegroom. He said that they wouldn't fast and mourn until the bridegroom was taken away.

This picture of the Lord Jesus being the bridegroom started when He left His Father's home in heaven to come to earth. He paid the bride price with His own life. Then He returned to His Father's home to prepare a place for all those who love and trust Him. One future day, escorted by the angels, Jesus will come back for his bride, the church of believers. They will meet together in the clouds and go back to heaven together. Then the greatly hoped for marriage supper of the Lamb will be held during the next seven years while the Tribulation rages on earth. The church, made up of all the true believers in Him, will be hidden during that terrible time. Then in the coming age, redeemed humans will be exalted above the angels and judge the fallen ones.

Will you be ready when Jesus comes? Now are the days for understanding what the Bible says, for confessing and repenting of all known sin, for asking the Lord Jesus to be King of your life, for making yourself ready by doing godly deeds. One day Jesus will come with a victorious shout. Are you ready for Him to come like a waiting Jewish bride?

MUSIC - [Integrity Music](#).

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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