

In a Moment

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¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[d]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[e] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. (Matt 2-NIV)

In a moment, my world of health changed when I landed at the airport in Wichita returning from Nepal.

When I was in the mountains of Nepal, I was fortunate to stay healthy. Tired yes, sick no. Exhausted yes, but no stomach bug. Jet lag yes, but no altitude sickness.

How quickly my world changed... and within a matter of, what seemed to be moments of arriving in Wichita the **change of season sickness** jumped all over me.

Sniffles.

Congestion.

Swollen head not from altitude sickness but from Kansas sickness.

Halls throat lozenges kept me from coughing all night. Allegra D broke up the allergy and congestion. And lots of sleep that does not require a prescription and has no side effects except creases across the face and drool down the shirt.

In A Moment, my world of health changed from Kathmandu to Kansas.

The word of God is filled with, **In A Moment**, your world can change themes.

A Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus announces a census, a pregnant mom and soon-to-be-dad are on their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. (Luke 2-NIV)

The word of God is filled with **In A Moment** your world can change themes.

In the book of Luke, an Innkeeper tells a pregnant mom and anxious dad the only place to find lodging and comfort is an animal stall in the back of the Inn. The son of God born in a barn? Born in a stable? How unstable the life of Joseph and Mary seemed to be as they unpacked their meager belongings that night in Bethlehem some 2000 years ago.

⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. (Luke 2-NIV)

The word of God is filled with **In A Moment** your world can change themes.

In A Moment, the ancient world changed as a star shone bright in the night, inspiring some kings to go on a journey to find a King. And still today so many go on a journey, even in this worship service some of you are on that journey to find a king. And imagine the Magi's amazement when they arrived at the home of Mary and Joseph to find a child king.

Having moved out of the Inn and now living with some family or friends in Bethlehem we read in Matt 2, *when they saw the star they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

Let's turn the pages of time and think about how In A Moment your world can change. Moving from the ancient times to contemporary times, moving from the Holy Land to Kansasland.

You don't have to think long and hard before you see the theme, In A Moment, in the news media and even in your own life.

In A Moment, our world can change...

How quickly a war in the middle east has changed the feel of the entire world. In A Moment Hamas terrorists broke through the gates dividing Israel and Gaza. Swarming into Nahal Oz and other unsuspecting Israeli communities they brutally burned, tortured, raped and beheaded over 1200 Israeli before the day was over.

In A Moment on Oct 7, 2023, scores of Jews, Arabs, 39 US citizens were kidnapped by terrorists who took nearly 250 hostages from over 20 nations. At times, this type of horror is hard to stomach and when we are talking about Christmas which is filled with joy, presents, children laughing it is hard to mix pain and pleasure. And yet, the first Christ as told by Matthew and Luke carried similar events producing pain and pleasure.

The Christmas story is filled with many examples of the theme, "In A Moment."

Gifts were given by Magi. Shepherds worshipped in nearby fields. King Herod, the evil dictator of the day was fearful and paranoid leading to a baby genocide leaving God's people stunned as a massacre is spelled out in the pages of God's word that first Christmas.

In a moment how quickly everyone's life would change, because of the birth of Jesus.

Mary-How quickly the world would change for Mary who was now carrying the Savior of the world.

Joseph-How quickly the world would change for Joseph caught up in an out-of-wedlock marital scandal.

In a moment (did you get that?) we will look at Mary and Joseph up close and provide some clarity as to how God worked in each of them and how he desires to work in each of us.

And most important. The first Christmas everyone's life would be changed, In A Moment, because heaven's Savior arrived in a stable.

And who can forget this biblical moment?

Who could forget this, in a moment, how quickly your life will change text?

52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (1 Cor 15-NIV)

51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. The verse before sets this up. *Mysterion* simply means something that was not previously known. Here is new information that has not been mentioned in the OT, but I am telling you now.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In A Moment. There is the mystery, some believers in Jesus will never die. They will be raptured or (harpazo)-caught away violently is the Greek word. The transformation includes the dead and living **In The Same moment.**

Our perishable bodies must take on an imperishable form, **In A Moment.** You cannot take what you have as a body today, into tomorrow's heaven.

This is really good news. I don't want to look like this in heaven. Imagine an old worn out human, wandering the streets of gold where God and perfection reigns and rules. That would be like putting a run-down car in a showroom filled with Mercedes, BMW and Audis.

In a flash-NIV.

It happened in a moment-NLT In a moment-ESV

It happened suddenly-CEV

52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. Paul takes us into the world the nano-second. Into the world of numbers that are so small they are indivisible. Let me define moment, in a moment, twinkling of an eye.

Moment is our English word, **atom**. It is something that cannot be divided. It is the shortest length of time.

Paul goes on further and describes an event that will be instantaneous as in the twinkling of an eye. What is a **twinkling of an eye?** That is about 1/30 of a second. That is fast! The twinkling of an eye is the time it takes light to go from the iris to the retina. And that has been calculated as 1/6 of a nano second. Not a second. Not a split second. Not a nano second, but a 1/6 of a nano second. In indivisible time you will be changed.

You not only get a supernatural body as we will see, but the exchange takes place in a supernatural timeframe. In less than a moment of time. Paul is using metrics of time to convey one message-

...this transformation or metamorphosis will not be a long-drawn-out time.

In a moment in time those who are dead will be raised up and those who are alive will be caught up to be with the Lord forever.

Now, let's move to the main characters of our narrative. Mary and Joseph. And I want to provide the biblical text which goes along with their In A Moment experience...Ok, look at your notes and follow along.

First Joseph and then Mary.

God asked Joseph in a moment to be the recipient of an assignment that would *grow on him*.

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^[a] (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matt 2-NIV)

God asked Mary in a moment to be the recipient of a miracle that would *grow in her*.

³⁴ "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ 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^[b] the Son of God. (Luke 1-NIV)

The back story setting for Mary and Joseph is the virgin birth of Jesus.

Can I provide a little biblical explanation for this, In A Moment encounter with God.

The virgin birth shows up in Matthew and Luke. And a few places in the OT-The virgin birth is implied in the Old Testament as early as Genesis 3:15, which promised that *"the seed of woman"* would be the victor over Satan and sin.

It is expressly predicted in Isaiah 7:14: *"Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel"* (NASB).

Matthew and Luke were well aware that in their pagan world of the day, many told stories of virgin births. There were stories of Alexander the Great being virgin born. Ceasar Augustus and many gods and demigods who were born a virgin. Even in our own generation, the virgin born Anakin Skywalker in Star Wars continues this theme.

Now, Judaism did not have stories like this, so Mary conceiving by a virgin born conception was a difficult to imagine story to tell. First Joseph and Elizabeth had to decide the validity. And eventually Mary's greater family.

Now, the normal retort to such a story was Mary was maritally unfaithful. And this is the dilemma that Jesus has to figure out. And this is exactly what the enemies of Christianity went on to say about Jesus' birth.

And what made the story more believable was the reality that God has already been up to something unusual in the form a genealogy that leads up to Jesus birth that seems a little suspect.

In Matthews genealogies we see a list of strange births that pointed to Jesus the Messiah.

In that sequence we find the relationship of David and Bathsheba. Perhaps this is God's way of saying, I can do what I please, and when I please to accomplish even unusual birth.

While they are natural, they are still unusual as they point to Jesus. In Matt 1:5, we meet Rahab the prostitute how provided cover for the spies as they searched out the promise land.

Then we read...⁶ *and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,* ⁷ *Solomon the father of Rehoboam,*

Since God provided a supernatural resurrection of Jesus and a once and for atoning death for my sins, should I not accept that fact that perhaps God has done other miraculous events even prior to this. Such as i.e., virgin birth. Mary providing the egg. The Holy Spirit providing the conception.

And to take it even a step further, Jesus nursing at Mary's breast, yet Jesus is the one that created Mary.

God cooing in the cold. And yet Jesus fully the second member of the trinity.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. (Col 1:6-NIV)

So, mark this in your notes. It is critical to your faith. Not that you fully understand it, but that you fully believe it by faith.

If the virgin birth and resurrection had not happened, Christianity would never have existed.

And since they did, then as scripture shows us, the Christmas narrative is filled with many other supernatural events. A star guiding wise men. A supernatural protection of Jesus from a mad man named Herod. Shepherds who are visited by angels. If you look closely at Matthew and Lukes account you don't just see one miracle the virgin birth, in fact you see many.

Because was at work in the world putting in motion a redemption plan that would culminate with Jesus' atoning death on the cross.

In a moment, how quickly your world can change? It did for Mary and Joseph. For the Magi and Shepherds. For YOU and ME.

So, what is the key take away?

What is the prevailing truth God wants us to know.

What is the BIG Experience?

It is simple that In YOUR, In A Moment experience of life God Is With YOU! Immanuel, which means God with Us.

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). (Matt 1:23-NIV)

In a moment, I will be done...(well maybe my moment is not so momentary, ha! Ha!)

When we accept that God can In A Moment do supernatural works even in the lives of imperfect servants like Joseph, Mary, YOU, and Me, I can't help but think of a better reason Jesus descended...

....Jesus descended so you could give up your one-and-only-life for God's purpose in Christmas and beyond. Can you?

Can you think of a better reason to allow the king of the universe to work out, even **In A Moment**, all of God's good purposes according to his eternal cosmic plan in your life? God's plan for your life?

How many of you want this? Ooooh, many, many of you.

How do we pull this off? Good question. Let me show you.

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Rom 8:28-NLT)

WE KNOW: Our confidence is in God's eternal and unshakeable Word. Our confidence is not in the role of the dice or wishing upon a star. Our confidence is based on God's eternal word.

THAT GOD CAUSES: God is in control! US economics do not determine your trust and future. You are not a random person floating directionless in the galaxy. The word's chance, luck and fate should be removed from your vocabulary and speech. White those words out of your dictionary, the minute you get home. God is in control.

Job: I know You can do everything; nothing You do can be foiled or frustrated. (Job 42:2-Voice)

God is in control of every aspect of your life. Nothing in the universe happens unless God plans it or causes it. Like the operating system running in the back of your computer, or iPhone, there is an eternal God-designed plan working for God's glory and your good.

EVERYTHING: God is at work in every aspect of your life.

He is involved in your debt and a loved one's death. God is at work in your relationships and recreation. God is a part of your sex life as well as your sin life. Nothing unfolds apart from his interest and involvement. He cares equally about your blessings and burdens, your bi-polar and bi-pass, and even your blisters and blemishes.

And on the cross Jesus showed us the depth of his love and care.

- **2 Corinthians 5:21:** *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"*
- **1 Peter 2:24:** *"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness"*

TO WORK TOGETHER: You and I cannot see how each event in my life fits together. It does!

There is one who does, and his name is Jehovah. Adonai. Jehovah Jirah. El Shaddai. God has looked down the tunnel of eternity and aligned all of the events of your life up to sequentially and interdependently fit together. No individual event in your life can stand alone. It fits into a larger plan.

...being frustrated at work, leads to finding a good church.

...being notified of cancer, results in a heart surrendered to Christ.

...an incurable disease leads to a restored relationship.

...an auto accident is a wakeup call about procrastination, distraction, and lack of focus.

...a missed turn, a smashed thumb, or a flat tire can be difficult events that works together for your good.

FOR THE GOOD: This does not say that everything is good. It says God can extract good from any event in life.

And God does that with Joseph and Mary, In A Moment. Mary, you will be out of wedlock pregnant. In A Moment, Joseph you will be a dad and the stand-in father for Jesus Christ.

So, let me invite you to pray with me. Because In A Moment of prayer, God can radically change anything in your life, if you just believe...

²⁸ And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. (Rom 8:28-NLT)

God announces he was at the side of Mary and Joseph as he was born. God will be at your side as you are burdened. God himself who took away the sins of the world is here at your side.

Sin put you in prison. Sin has locked you behind the bars of guilt and shame, deception and fear. Then Jesus came and paid your bail. He served your time.

Jesus satisfied the penalty for sin with his death as a payment to set you free.

Jesus died for you and when you cast your lot with him the old nature dies too.

One day you will die. If God's heaven-sent substitute has died for you (and he has) and you have trusted Jesus Christ, your death will really mean your resurrection. Bang-bang. It happens in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Jesus death on the cross, means the claim that sin has on your life is broken. You are free. Let me show you truth spelled out by Paul.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self^[a] was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. (Rom 6-ESV)

Father,

Help me accept the truth, that IN A MOMENT I can see and surrender to your plan and to your payment for my sins. If the virgin birth and resurrection had not happened, eternal life in Jesus Christ would never be available to me a sinner saved by grace.

Speak to me so that in my dark and difficult places your light will shine down on me, so I can follow you. Today I accept the reality, IN A MOMENT my world can change.

It changed for Joseph and Mary.

It changed for the Magi and some Shepherds.

And it changes for ME.

In Jesus Name, Amen.