

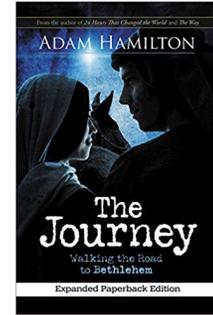


St. Mary's Church
Stone Harbor, New Jersey
 We Welcome You to Join Us
 For the Adult Forum and
 Worship
 All Year Long (well, almost)!



Schedule	Sunday	Chapter
November 18	Pentecost 26	Mary of Nazareth
November 25	Last Pentecost	Joseph of Bethlehem
December 2	Advent 1	Mary's Visit to Elizabeth
December 9	Advent 2	From Nazareth to Bethlehem
December 16	Advent 3	The Manger
December 23	Advent 4	to be decided

Adam Hamilton's *The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem*



Below are a few citations from the chapter entitled "Mary of Nazareth":

Nazareth compared to Sepphoris (p.15)

Nazareth's spring: living water (p.16)

Place of the Annunciation (Orthodox compared to Roman Catholic) (p. 17)

Cave living (p.18)

Nazareth: "shoot" (p.19)

Stump of Jesse (Jesse tree) meaning hope (pp. 19-20)

Why Nazareth? (p.21)

Gabriel: an ordinary man (p.22)

Full of grace: *kecharitomene* without sin (Roman Catholic) (pp. 22-23)

Grace: goodness that we do not deserve (p.24)

Yeshua: common name.... God delivers (p.25)

The importance of the article "the" (pp.25,28)

virgin birth: not a sexual meaning (p.26)

incarnate: enfleshment (p.27)

virgin birth...not hard to believe today (p.28)

did Mary want to be Mary? (pp. 29-31)



A few questions based on this chapter....

What was – and continues to be – the significance of the name Nazareth? If the town name means branch or shoot, how does that illuminate God’s choice of Nazareth as the home of the one who was to bear the Prince of Peace? (pp. 19-20).



Adam Hamilton points out that the angel said to Mary to be “full of grace,” then goes on to say that this phrase may have given rise to the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception – the belief that Mary was conceived without the taint of sin. (pp. 22-24)

- What else might be meant by the phrase “full of grace”?
- Who or what is the source of grace?
- What do Episcopalians believe about the Immaculate Conception?

Immaculate Conception: This dogma of the Roman Catholic Church is that the Virgin Mary was kept free from original sin from the first moment of her conception. Mary is understood to be kept free from original sin by the grace of God and the merits of Christ.

This dogma was defined in the edict *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pope Pius IX on Dec. 8, 1854. Belief in the Immaculate Conception was defined by the Pope in the same proclamation as being infallible and binding on all faithful Roman Catholics.

The Final Report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) recorded the disagreement of Anglicans, although some individuals may hold it as a pious, optional belief.

This statement noted that Anglicans question the scriptural basis for such claims.

The papal proclamation of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption as dogmas binding on the faithful has prompted many Anglicans to question the teaching authority of the Bishop of Rome.

Article XV of the Articles of Religion holds that Christ alone was without sin (BCP, p. 870).

The Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception remains a stumbling block in Anglican-Roman Catholic ecumenical relations.

In this chapter, the author offers his own view of the veracity of the virgin birth. (p. 28)

Question: What is your response to his ‘assuring’ comment?

With December 25 approaching, the secular media are sure to turn their interest once again to the virgin birth. So, let’s deal with this subject again.

Despite the lack of scientific or historical evidence, and despite the doubts of Biblical scholars, America is so pious that not only do *91 percent of Christians* say they believe in the Virgin Birth, but so do an astonishing *47 percent of U.S. non-Christians!*

As Nicholas Kristof wrote in the New York Times (8/15/2003) “The faith in the Virgin Birth reflects the way American Christianity is becoming less intellectual and more mystical over time.”

Questions:

- Are we facing a polarization in our society: the scholarly vs. the religious?

Kristof concludes his article with this statement:

“The heart is a wonderful organ, but so is the brain.”

- We may have discussed this before, in any event, has your mind changed about the Virgin Birth?

Archaeologists have excavated a house in Nazareth, Jesus' home town, that dates back to the first century.

Local Christians have long believed it was Jesus' childhood home, but scientists say that's impossible to know for sure. But we can be certain that the home dates to the time when Jesus is said to have been born.

It offers us a window on the past, and a glimpse of what Jewish villages were like under the Roman Empire. What the house reveals about life during Jesus' childhood, however, is fascinating.

The house itself, pictured on the right, was built into the limestone face of a hillside, its stone walls and courtyard jutting out into what would have probably been a lively street. It had several rooms with chalk floors, and archaeologists have also found the remains of a stairway. Inside the home, they found limestone dishware along with other household items. (*Biblical Archeology Review* March 3, 2015)



Questions:

- Have you ever re-visited the home where you grew up?
- Have you re-visited the community where you grew up?
- What memories do you strive to keep...strive to overcome?

Before we leave the Nazareth of Jesus' childhood, you may want to recall how his hometown played a role in his more mature years.

Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of NAZARETH?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." (John 1:46)

When he came to NAZARETH, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way. (Luke 4:16-30)

He came to HIS HOMETOWN and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?" And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor except in their own country and in their own house." And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief. (Matthew 13:53-58)