

## The Angel's Announcement to Joseph

### Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew 1:18-25 - *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*

*<sup>22</sup> So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

*<sup>24</sup> Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, <sup>25</sup> and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS."*

### Background Notes

The royal lineage of the coming Messiah and King was given in the first 17 verses of this chapter. Jesus of Nazareth met all the Old Testament qualifications and requirements to be the promised Messiah and King. By verse 18, Matthew's purpose in writing this Gospel was well underway. His purpose was to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah and the royal Son of David, the One who was promised in the Holy Scriptures. We've seen that verse 16 strongly indicates that Jesus was born of Mary while she was still a virgin, because the feminine singular in the Greek language was used here: *"And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ."*

The story of a virgin birth certainly needs some explanation, doesn't it? Well, that's exactly what we have in verses 18-25. An angel of the Lord revealed to Joseph that the baby Mary was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Thus, this child would be God and Man at the same time – fully God, because He was conceived supernaturally by God, and fully Man, because He was born naturally as the Son of Man by Mary. This was a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, the well known Messianic prophecy, which is repeated here in verse 23: *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."*

What a minute! I thought His name was to be Jesus? Well, it is! Verse 21: *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."* And verse 25: *"she... brought forth her firstborn Son."*

*And he called His name JESUS.* “Jesus” (Yeshua) means, “The Lord is salvation,” or “The Lord is Savior!” This very name implies that God Himself is with us to be our Savior - and that’s the meaning of Immanuel. In addition, the deity of Jesus Christ is emphasized through the name, “Immanuel” – God with us!

One more background note: Joseph made sure that Mary remained a virgin **until** she had brought forth her firstborn Son. This verse refutes the false teaching that Mary remained a perpetual virgin, not just before the birth of Christ. In fact, we read of the children of the Mary and Joseph in Matthew 13:55-56.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Joseph was righteous in his obedience to the Lord.

Joseph was “*a just man*” - a righteous man. This doesn’t mean that Joseph was perfect or sinless. It means that his life was characterized by consistently doing what was right before God. We too, should live righteous lives.

Joseph was not only a good, honest carpenter, but he exhibited outstanding moral qualities in every area of his life. We certainly see that in this chapter, as we look at Joseph’s faith and obedience to the Lord. Notice what the angel of the Lord said to Joseph: “...*an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for the child which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.”* Now look at Joseph’s obedience: “*Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took to him his wife...*”

Can you imagine all the questions that Joseph had in his mind? “How is this possible?” “There’s never been a virgin birth before in the history of the world!” “Why does it have to be **Mary**?” “How am I going to handle this situation? How can I protect my beloved Mary from gossip and scandal?” Notice, by the way, that the angel didn’t rebuke Joseph for his former conclusion that Mary had been unfaithful. Did you notice that? The Lord doesn’t hold us responsible to believe the incredible without divine revelation.

Once the truth was revealed to him, Joseph didn’t hesitate to obey the Word of the Lord. “*Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife...*” This was not partial obedience, and it was not delayed obedience - **this was full and immediate obedience!** We should ask ourselves, “What does my obedience look like? Do I delay to obey the Lord? Do I obey only partially? Do I obey only in the areas where it’s easy or more convenient to obey?”

For example, do we meet regularly with fellow believers, or do we go only when it’s convenient? Do we disobey, or partially obey, by doing our own selfish thing if we feel don’t “feel like” going to Bible studies or worship? Listen to Hebrews 10:24-25, “*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling*

*of ourselves together....” Meeting together with fellow believers just on and off, whenever it’s convenient or when we feel like it, is **partial obedience**.*

Failing to give money to the Lord is another example of partial obedience. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-13 we read, *“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written: “ He has dispersed abroad, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.” <sup>10</sup> Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, <sup>11</sup> while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. <sup>12</sup> For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, <sup>13</sup> while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men...”*

It’s easy to spend our money on ourselves, our homes, our families, our vacations - and it’s easy to rationalize our selfish financial decisions. It’s easy to **not** to give money to the Lord in a regular and sacrificial way! But **not** giving regularly and proportionally to the Lord’s work is **partial or delayed obedience** – or even outright **disobedience**.

Joseph practiced **full obedience**. We will see that Joseph, as a righteous man, continued to obey the Lord. In Matthew 2, he was told to take Mary and the child to Egypt. Not an easy journey, with a wife and a very young child! But Joseph obeyed - without delay, and without questions.

Joseph was righteous in his full and immediate obedience to the Lord.

## **2. Joseph was righteous in his treatment of Mary.**

Can you imagine how Joseph must have felt when he found out that his beloved fiancée was pregnant? How could she have betrayed him like this? And her explanation of the angel’s announcement about “conception by the Holy Spirit” was just way too unbelievable! There was no way he could buy that story!

Under Jewish law and in that culture, Mary could have been publicly exposed and put to death for adultery. Because she and Joseph were betrothed, they were considered already as husband and wife, even though they were not yet married and they were not yet living together. If Joseph had exposed Mary at this point, he could have saved his own reputation. However, if he didn’t denounce Mary, everyone would surely think Joseph was guilty, and was the baby’s father. But Joseph loved Mary, and in order to protect her from public disgrace, he decided to arrange for her to go away quietly and secretly. Maybe she could visit her cousin Elizabeth, where she could have the baby without public scandal.

It was at this point that the angel assured Joseph that Mary was telling the truth - and that he should marry Mary right away! Can you imagine Joseph's wonderful relief at hearing and believing this good news? And can you imagine the joyful reunion of Mary and Joseph, with all disappointments and misunderstandings cleared away?

Notice Joseph's righteous and loving attitude to Mary until the birth of Jesus. Once again, verse 25 -- Joseph "...*did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son...*" Abstaining from marital relations was not necessary to protect the Lord's divine and human natures, because Jesus had already been conceived before their marriage, and the angel had not commanded this. But perhaps righteous Joseph did this in view of the prophecy, "*A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.*" In any case, Joseph is a wonderful model in his loving treatment of Mary.

Joseph was righteous in his treatment of Mary.

## Practical Application

### Trust God when you're slandered.

Have you ever been in a situation in which you've been wrongly accused of wrongdoing, or slandered in some way? You know that you haven't done anything wrong. You know that you did the right thing - but your actions or words were misinterpreted. People talked behind your back and gossiped about you. They started false rumors about you. They slandered you.

What do you do in situations like this? **You trust God** for strength to bear up under this pressure. That's what Mary and Joseph did. You can imagine the scandalous talk in Nazareth, a very small town. Who would ever believe the incredible truth of their story? Would you have believed it?

Mary and Joseph were able to live under this pressure because they trusted in the Lord to give them strength. They even moved back to Nazareth to raise the child Jesus. The Lord gave them strength.

If you are falsely accused, or badmouthed, or people talk behind your back, the Lord will give you strength as well. Don't retaliate, or take revenge, or become bitter! Ask the Lord for patience and strength.

Continue to live righteously and in obedience to Him. Trust God when you're slandered.