

Christmas Story (pt. 4) Joseph

7 December 2016 Wed – Matthew 1:18-25 – Christmas16 – Scott Childs

Introduction: I would guess that Joseph had been counting the days until his marriage to Mary. It appears that the date was very close. Mary had just returned from a three-month trip to the south of Israel to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Suddenly he dreams were shattered with the shocking news that Mary was expecting a baby. This was so unlike his beloved godly Mary. How could she do such a thing? To make things worse she claimed that she had seen an angel and that the Holy Spirit put the baby within her. What was he to do now?

Transition: This evening we are going to focus on three events that took place in Joseph's life once he found out that Mary was expecting a baby.

1. Joseph's Disbelief (v.18-19)

a. His relationship to Mary

- 1) They were espoused (engaged). By Jewish law, she was his wife though the marriage was not yet finalized. Jewish engagements were very serious and binding. They only thing that could break the engagement was a divorce.
- 2) A.T. Robertson states, "Betrothal with the Jews was a serious matter, not lightly entered into and not lightly broken. The man who betrothed a maiden was legally husband (Gen 29:21; Deut 22:23) and "an informal cancelling of betrothal was impossible" (McNeile). Though they did not live together as husband and wife till actual marriage, breach of faithfulness on the part of the betrothed was treated as adultery and punished with death."
- 3) They were not yet living together.
- 4) They had not yet come together sexually. Mary was still a virgin.

b. His reaction to Mary's pregnancy

- 1) He was a just or upright man. He was determined to live God's way and to obey God's law. This meant that he could not ignore Mary's *seeming* unfaithfulness.
- 2) And yet he was not willing to make her a public example.

prepared to accept her divine child as his own.

- 4) Did they face shame and ridicule? I am sure they did! Perhaps that is why Joseph hesitated to return to Nazareth after their trip to Egypt (Mat 2:22-23). Years later, the comments of Jesus' enemies may have been a jab at his conception. (John 8:41) "*Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*"

✞ *Joseph obeyed God even though it was difficult and caused others to speak evil of him. We too need to obey God no matter what.*

b. He preserved integrity

- 1) Joseph "knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son." This means that though they lived in the same house together, they did not have a physical relationship until after Jesus was born.
- 2) We do not know whether this was Joseph's idea or whether God told him to do this, but God had Matthew record this fact so there would be absolutely no question as to the divine conception of baby Jesus.
- 3) After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had a normal marital relationship and they had several children together. When Jesus preached in His own country [near Nazareth] the locals acknowledged that he had siblings. (Mark 6:3) "*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*" The false teaching of the Catholic Church that Mary remained a virgin till death is not true.

Conclusion: Let's think back over Joseph's story and ask God to help us learn from the principles we have found.

He did not want to shame her or to sentence her to death for being immoral (Deu 22:23-24).

- 3) Thus, he was minded to put her away privately. He purposed in his heart to divorce her without making a public accusation against her.
- 4) In the N.T. the only time divorce is allowed is during the engagement period. Once a marriage is finalized, divorce is not an option. The “exception” clause is only found in Matthew because Matthew wrote his letter to the Jews who had this strong binding engagement. Every NT scripture on the subject outside of Matthew says that divorce is not permitted.
- 5) Though he felt that he could not marry an immoral woman, Joseph loved Mary and did not want to shame her or hurt her in any way.

📖 *This is an important reminder to young people to keep yourself pure.*

2. Joseph’s Dream (v.20-23)

a. The details

- 1) It took place while he was thought on Mary’s claim. The words “*thought on*” mean 1. to bring to mind, revolve in mind, ponder 2. to think, to deliberate. Joseph was troubled over this disturbing news. He knew that he was not the father of Mary’s child, yet he found the claim incredible that the baby was from the Holy Spirit. He did not think Mary would lie to him, yet if her story was true, it would be the only time in the history of the world that a child would be conceived without a human father. It is not difficult to see why Joseph was so troubled.
- 2) An angel *of the Lord* appeared to him in a dream. God made it clear to us that the angel was one of HIS angels and not one of Satan’s angels.
- 3) The angel called him “the son of David.” Perhaps this was to remind him of his heritage and to support the fact that the Messiah would be of the house of David.

b. The angel’s message

- 1) Joseph feared to finalize his marriage with Mary now that

he assumed she had been immoral. If he should take Mary in her condition, everyone would assume that he was the father of the child. Both he and Mary would face the humiliating shame of fornication. The angel told Joseph not to fear to take Mary his wife. Mary was his wife by law but not yet my final reception. The words “*take unto thee*” translate a word that means to take to one’s self.

- 2) The angel assured him that the child conceived in Mary is from the Holy Spirit. She was telling him the truth. She was still a virgin. The child was the God/man.
- 3) He said she will bring forth a son and you will call his name Jesus.
 - a) Jesus means Jehovah is salvation.
 - b) He would save his people from their sin. Before Christ was born, we learn that His mission was to save the lost from their sin.

c. The Scripture’s assurance

- 1) Matthew inserts that this angelic visit to Joseph was in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.
- 2) He then quotes (Isa 7:14) “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*”
- 3) Matthew adds that the name Immanuel means God with us.

3. Joseph’s Delight (v.24-25)

a. He did not delay his marriage any longer

- 1) By the wording of the text we can assume that as soon as Joseph woke up in the morning, he immediately went to see Mary’s father about finalizing their marriage.
- 2) This assurance from the angel calmed Joseph’s fears and cheered his heart. He obeyed the command of the angel that God had sent to him.
- 3) He took Mary to himself in marriage. By finalizing their marriage as he did, Joseph accepted the shame and ridicule that accompanied a premarital pregnancy. He protected and supported Mary. He loved her and