

# MATTHEW 1:18-25

Practical truths from the  
Christmas story from the  
perspective of Joseph



# Devoted followers of the Lord will encounter changes and surprises (1:18)

*<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.*

- *“When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph...”* – The betrothal period followed the marriage arrangement of the couple by the parents and lasted about a year
- *“before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit”* – before Joseph and Mary sexually consummated their marriage and moved in together, it became apparent to Joseph that Mary was pregnant
  - Joseph and Mary are devoted followers of God, striving to honor God with obedience
    - Luke 1:28 & 30
  - Mary’s infidelity is shocking and devastating to Joseph
    - He never expected this type of behavior from a godly girl like Mary
    - All the plans and preparations he had made with joyful anticipation were now destroyed
- Devoted followers of the Lord will encounter changes and surprises – Be prepared!

# Walking in truth with humility empowers kind reactions to hurt (1:19)

*<sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

- *“And her husband Joseph, being a just man”* – Joseph’s faith is put into practice by carefully keeping the law of God
- *“and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly”* – The Law of God taught that Joseph is required to terminate the betrothal because of adultery
  - As a law-abiding man, Joseph would be expected to uphold the law of God by having Mary condemned in court as an adulteress
  - But he was also permitted by law to write her a bill of divorce and have it witnessed by two or three others and sever the relationship privately
- The God-centeredness of Joseph is evident
  - He is not consumed with his reputation and the clearing of his name
  - He reacts with concern, not anger
  - He desires to be kind to her and spare her the depravation of being shunned

# God uses changes and hurt as pathways to good things (1:20-21)

- *“But as he considered these things,”* – Joseph, as a just man, did not just react; he thoughtfully and prayerfully evaluated his options
  - A person of thought and prayer in a highly emotional situation displays godliness
    - Proverbs 15:28
    - Proverbs 29:20
    - Romans 12:17
  - Even when change is hurtful, thoughtfully and prayerfully lift all your circumstances to God
- *“...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.’”*
  - Mary had not been unfaithful but had been chosen to bear the Messiah
    - In some ways, this information would be a relief
    - In other ways, we can only imagine how Joseph’s mind was racing now



# God uses changes and hurt as pathways to good things (1:20-21)

- *“She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*
  - By giving him a name, Joseph would be legally accepting Jesus as his own son and bringing Jesus into his lineage as a Son of David
  - *“Jesus”* – Yahweh is salvation
    - Jesus wasn’t coming because good people needed to know God identifies with their suffering and plight
    - Jesus came because the wrath of God against sinful men and women could only be appeased through a righteous sacrificial substitute
      - John 1:29
      - 1 Peter 2:24
  - God’s use of changes and hurt for Joseph became pathways to good things for him and many others

# Know and trust that God keeps His promises (1:22-23)

*<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).*

- God spoke over 700 years prior through the prophet Isaiah, predicting when He would come to save His people from their sins
  - Isaiah 7:14
  - What we see here is prophetic Scripture having an initial application at the time it was given to King Ahaz, but it has a more full and complete fulfillment in the future
  - This prophecy had an even greater fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ
- God is faithful to His word
  - “Jesus” – Yahweh is salvation, Jesus came to deliver God’s people from the just penalty of their sin
  - “Immanuel” – God with us, Jesus made the power, presence, and purity of God personal and meaningful

# Listen and obey the word of the Lord (1:24-25)

*<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

- Thank God for those who hear and affirm the truth, responding with immediate obedience
- Joseph obeyed God at great cost to his own comfort and reputation
  - *“he took his wife”* – Joseph fulfilled his marriage commitment to Mary by following through with the wedding ceremony and celebration
  - *“but he knew her not”* – Joseph did not consummate their marriage sexually until after Jesus was born
    - Mary and Joseph did not abstain from sexual relations for the rest of their lives
    - Joseph and Mary had other children (12:46; 13:55-56)
- *“And he called his name Jesus.”* – Just as he was instructed, Joseph obeyed
- Obedience to God was costly for Joseph
- Listening and obeying are important for us as well
  - James 1:22
  - James 4:17

# Questions to Consider

- How can you be more prepared for changes and surprises that cause confusion and hurt?
- In what ways can you be more just and kind in your reactions to hurt?
- What examples can you give of God using changes and hurt in your life as pathways to good things for you and others?
- Why is it important to know and trust that God keeps His promises?
- What practical examples can you give of listening to and obeying God's promises?
- Merry Christmas!



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