

Jesus Was Born of a Virgin

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of the genealogies of Jesus which show that He is the One who fulfilled all of the prophecies given about the Messiah in the Old Testament. In this topic, we will learn about the actual birth of Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-20 says, “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. Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 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.’” The words “betrothed” or “espoused” mean *to be promised in marriage*. Legally, this promise was as binding as a marriage and could only be ended by a divorce in the culture of that day.

As a result, we see the events that are mentioned in the following verses happened after Mary had been promised in marriage to Joseph. We also see that the events in these verses happened before Mary and Joseph came together physically as husband and wife. We see that Mary was found with child by the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:30-33, we see that an angel came to visit Mary. Those verses say, “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’” Here, we see that the angel told Mary she would become pregnant and give birth to a son who would fulfill the Old Testament promises.

Mary had the same question that all of us would have had in that situation. In Luke 1:34-35, we read, “Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered and said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*’” Mary did not understand how she could become pregnant without a sexual relationship with a man. The angel explained that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. Genesis 2:7 tells us how the first man came into existence when that verse says, “And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Here, we see the angel said that the power of God was going to create Jesus within Mary without any sexual relationship with a man. That is why her child would be called the Son of God. It would be a miracle, just like the creation of Adam.

However, just because Mary had been told about this miracle did not mean that Joseph understood. He was probably filled with great sorrow when he first heard that Mary was pregnant. That left Joseph with two choices. He could accuse her publicly at which point the law said she would either have to identify the father and marry him or be stoned. The second choice was to give her a bill of divorce secretly so that she could marry the father and not be

stoned. Joseph was a just man and wanted to do what was right, so he decided to make the second choice.

However, that night, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and he realized that the Lord had given him a third and much better choice. Here, we learn a key principle for life. If we try to deal with the problems of life in our own strength, we will either turn the problem out and get angry or turn the problem in and get hurt. When we take the problem to the Lord and turn it over to Him, He will give us His knowledge and His love to act in a way that will serve others, instead of hurting self or others. That was what happened with Joseph. The angel called him Joseph, son of David, and told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because the child that was within her had been conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit.

When the angel said, Joseph, son of David, he immediately started thinking about the Old Testament prophecies because of the words of the angel. Matthew 1:21-23 says, “‘And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’” Here, we see that the angel told Joseph what to do and then reminded him of the prophecy of Isaiah by quoting the prophecy given in Isaiah 7:14. Joseph knew his own genealogy and knew that he was a descendent of David. He would have known the genealogy of Mary, as well, and known that she was also a descendent of David.

Suddenly, the sorrow of Joseph was turned to great joy because the angel said that he was to have the privilege of raising the Son of God. The naming of a child was the privilege of the earthly father. This is illustrated in Luke 1:13 where Zacharias was instructed to name his son John. That verse says, “‘But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.’” Then, Luke 1:59-63 says, “‘So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, ‘No; he shall be called John.’ But they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.’ So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, ‘His name is John.’ So they all marveled.”

The fact that the angel told Joseph that he would be the one who would name the baby, Jesus, meant that he was to take Mary as his wife. That would have brought a certain amount of shame to Joseph because everyone else must have thought that Joseph was admitting that he was the father. Exodus 22:16 says, “‘If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her *to be* his wife.’” Then, Deuteronomy 22:23-24 says, “‘If a young woman *who* is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor’s wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.’” Joseph was betrothed to Mary so this brought shame to his name, but it protected Mary from either a divorce or a stoning. Joseph chose to accept that shame with joy.

Joseph understood that he would have the privilege of naming Jesus and the angel had told him

in advance that Jesus would save his people from their sins. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” In this verse, we see that Jesus would bear a much greater shame as He hung naked before all who passed by as He bore our sins. In fact, Joseph was not the only one who was willing to experience shame for Jesus. Acts 5:41-42 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” Joseph and the apostles also rejoiced for the privilege to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Joseph and the apostles certainly give us an example to follow when we suffer shame for Christ.

The prophecy from Isaiah explained that Jesus would also be called “Immanuel”, which means *God with us*. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Then, John 1:17-18 adds, “For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.” The Old Testament showed the full consequences of the Law. Christ revealed the love of God for all mankind when He came and paid those full consequences. That means that every person must now make the choice to come to God in repentance and receive that free gift by faith or make the choice to pay their own penalty throughout eternity by not accepting that free gift.

Matthew 1:24-25 says, “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.” Joseph was a man of action when he knew the will of God. He immediately went and took Mary to him as his wife and not just his betrothed. This meant that Joseph took the shame on himself and protected Mary from that shame. In addition, even though he had taken her as his wife, he protected her as a virgin. This meant that he had no sexual relations with her until after the birth of Jesus. Later, Mary and Joseph did have normal sexual relations because Matthew 13:55-56 says, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?” In these verses, we see that Mary and Joseph later had four sons and at least two daughters.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God wanted to make it clear that Mary and Joseph later had other children who were conceived the way all of the rest of the children in the world have been conceived. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand these important things about Jesus.