

Heaven & Earth Collide

Part 2 - Joseph

Intro

As Christmas comes into view, we begin focusing our attention toward the historical moment when Heaven reached down at touched Earth, as the Messiah came to mankind.

Over the course of this Advent season, we will look at the coming of Christ from different viewpoints and perspective – from that of Heaven and that of Earth. Last week, we watched Mary receive the news that she would be the one through whom the One would come to save the world.

Out of all people in history, she was tasked with giving birth to the Son of God. She was, at once, both terrified and thrilled that God had found favor on her. Today, we look at the life of a man named Joseph.

Matthew 1:18

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 we hear *betrothal* we naturally equate it to our modern-day *engagement*, where 2 individuals decide to get married to one another in the near future. However, our process of leading to marriage, is vastly different that the ancient practice of betrothal.

Engagement is between 2 people.

Betrothal was between 2 entire families.

Engagement was a decision to get married.

Betrothal was a binding contract which assumed marriage.

Engagement could easily be broken.

Betrothal required a written decree of divorce.

Engagement cost nothing but the ring.

Betrothal cost the families a great deal.

Betrothal was not merely a couple deciding to get married, it was an actual ceremony in which the 2 people [and their families] were joined together in marriage – only to be consummated within a year's time. The union was binding and legal – the couple to be married stayed in their [respective] parents' houses and did not sexually consummate the marriage until the wedding ceremony, but everything else about the betrothal was marriage.

So when Mary turns up to be pregnant during their betrothal period, a time when they are [basically] *legally married*, but still to remain celibate, there were only 2 assumptions that could be naturally made:

- 1) Mary & Joseph had consummated the marriage before the appropriate time.
- 2) Mary had broken the betrothal by being with another man.

Joseph's Rights

In that day and time, neither was a good option. Joseph would have to clear his name – either by making it publicly known that the 2 had not consummated the marriage, which carried its own recourse, or by joining public assumption that Mary had been unfaithful.

Joseph was in an impossible situation. Stay with Mary & be ridiculed – for either acting immorally by having sex before the wedding ceremony or by allowing his betrothed to do so with another man.

He was well within his legal rights to divorce Mary, and to have her shamelessly dragged through the mud, as to clear his own name and retain his reputation.

1:19

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

Mary & Joseph's initial reception of the conception of Jesus likely carried different emotions. After the initial shock, Mary realized that she has found favor with God and had been blessed to be chosen as the one to carry the One the world had been waiting for.

Joseph, on the other hand, lost everything. His future wife, his name – which would likely be tainted forever, the ability to be a suitable marriage partner to a future wife, and a disgrace within the family.

Under current law, the legal expectation would have been to bring Mary before the council to be placed on trial for her [presumed] adultery – which could have led to execution if found guilty. It was expected that Joseph would divorce his wife, and do so in a public way to bring shame on her.

However, Joseph being a **just** and *kind* man, decided that he was more concerned with Mary's life than he was about retaining his own sense of rights and dignity within the community. So, he decided to quietly part ways, to simply start over for both of them.

1:20-21

But as he considered these things, 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. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

With Joseph's decision made – to remain just, but do so with compassion, and divorce his wife legally and ethically – an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph [much like an angel appeared to Mary]. **Do not fear** – God was calling Mary and Joseph to things that were being their control, beyond their comprehension, and beyond their level of comfortability.

What was happening to them was near impossible to believe, much less actually live out. Each of them needed divine intervention and encouragement that they could trust the path that God was leading them down.

To Us – Do Not Fear

And while I don't want to make the announcement of Christ too much about us, it's hard not to stop and realize that we too have those moments where we feel God leading and directing our lives – that seem impossible to believe, far outside our comfort zone – and God comes to us and says **do not fear**.

His Name Jesus

After reassuring Joseph of God's plan to work in/through his and Mary's life, the angel explains that this son Mary is carrying is different, special. Joseph is instructed to call his name Jesus – which means *God is salvation*. Jesus would be the Messiah that Joseph, and all of mankind, had been waiting for.

1:22-23

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

The writer, Matthew, helps Joseph see that this moment is the fulfillment of thousand year old prophecy, as he quotes from the prophet Isaiah foretelling the way in which the Messiah would come to the mankind.

1:24-25

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

What happens next is probably one of the greatest moments in the life a human male.

Joseph did not get a chance to be part of the child’s conception; did not consummate his marriage until after Jesus was born; and did he get the typical parental right of naming his child. In these instances, God was clearly stating *this is MY Son*.

Joseph’s Adoption of Jesus

So Joseph finds himself in this [seemingly] thankless position. *I’ll be ridiculed by everyone in town. I’ll be questioned by all of our family. It will look like I’m cruel for leaving her, but weaker for staying with her. He’s not my Son. I don’t get to name Him. Yet God is asking me to parent Him. Sure! Sign me up!!*

At that moment, Joseph decided to receive this child as though he was his own. Joseph chose to adopt Jesus as his son.

While all of these typical marriage and birth rights were stripped from Joseph’s life, he was not just along for the ride. While God used Mary’s physical body to bring forth the Son of God, Joseph’s heritage gave Jesus the lineage through which the Savior of the world was prophesied to come.

[Nathan the Prophet speaking to David – King of Israel]:

***When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
II Samuel 7:12-13***

Remember how the angel of the Lord addressed Joseph?

Joseph, son of David -Matthew 1:20

Joseph was from the line of the great king David, through whom God said He would send forth His Son who would *save his people from their sins*.

Joseph had to be the earthly father. He wasn’t a simple bystander in this historic event. God had been working in and through Joseph’s family for generations – waiting for the right moment in time. The writer, Matthew, had spent the first 17 [seemingly boring and insignificant] lines of his work to record the lineage through whom God would bless the peoples of the earth.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham... and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. Matthew 1:1 & 16

If Jesus was not officially recognized as Joseph’s son, then Jesus would have lost his royal lineage!

Legacy/Heritage

As men, our name, heritage, and legacy are hugely important to our significance within history. All of the other men of the line of David [history for that matter] could have only hoped that their name would have been chosen for this life-altering event to take place. Joseph's name would forever be tied to the Messiah that His people [all people] had been waiting to see.

So many times, we focus on what God has taken from us, or what we have missed out on, or how we have been left out or forgotten. We feel small and insignificant, as though no one sees us. We carry this heavy burden that God has placed in our lives – feeling as if our life and efforts are meaningless...blips in time, that they will never make a difference.

Joseph had likely lived most of his life struggling through a quiet obedience. Until the moment God chose to use his faithful life to fulfill the greatest prophecy the world had ever known.

Oftentimes, we fail to see that God has invited us to be part of His story that He is writing in the world – not just in us, but through us as we seek to live in humble, faithful obedience to Him.