

The Gospel of Matthew

JOSEPH'S COMFORT (1:18 - 1:25)

As we discussed in the introduction, each gospel provides a different perspective on the life of Christ. Matthew provides the only insight into the life of Joseph, the step-father of Jesus. We will see that the Lord not only chose a godly woman, Mary, but also a godly man for the task of raising His Son. We can learn a great deal from His example.

A Virgin with Child (1:18)

The word, "espoused" means to be _____. Read the following:

JEWISH BETROTHAL CUSTOMS

In the Jewish culture, the betrothal or engagement period was much more formal than what we are used to today. Parents were responsible for choosing the appropriate spouse for their children and the children were expected to accept their parents' decisions. A special betrothal ceremony was held in which the prospective groom presented a marriage contract to his intended bride, stating the marriage terms. He would also present her a gift of value, sometimes a golden ring. They would then pour a cup of wine for her. If she accepted the wine, they were considered "betrothed". During the betrothal period, the two would be separated for a year or more while the groom would prepare a home. The bride's father would not allow the marriage to proceed until he inspected the home and found it to be adequate. Upon the completion of the home, the two would come together for a formal marriage ceremony after which, they would consummate the marriage and begin their new life together.

The time of Jesus' conception was during the betrothal period of Joseph and Mary, before they had come together in formal marriage.

Read Luke 1:31-35. How is the Doctrine of the Trinity shown in Mary's pregnancy?

Why is Jesus' dual humanity and divinity important? Read Hebrews 2:14-18.

Joseph's Dilemma (1:19-21)

The word "just" means _____ or _____. What does this imply about Joseph?
Read Matthew 13:49 and Romans 5:1.

Joseph could only assume that Mary had been unfaithful to him during their espousal. Old Testament law provided for a woman in Mary's position to be stoned (see Deuteronomy 22:23-24). At this time, however, the Jews were not supposed to exact capital punishment on any without Roman approval. John 8:4-6 provides a similar example. It is likely that in lieu of stoning, the Jews would publicly

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announce the sin, so as to bring great shame upon the woman and/or man who committed the sin. Joseph did not want Mary to have to undergo this treatment.

Why would Joseph seek to put her away rather than go forward with the marriage? Read Proverbs 31:10-12.

What does it mean that Joseph intended to put her away privately? Read Matthew 5:31-32.

While not named, which angel likely appeared to Joseph in the dream? See Luke 1:18-19,26-27

With what title did the angel address Joseph? Why is this important?

The angel's appearance in the dream was a comfort to Joseph. The angel's first instruction to Joseph was to "fear not". Here was a faithful and just man dealing with a heartrending problem. He is trying to heed the words of Scripture in determining his path forward (see Micah 6:8). He is not forgotten by the Lord. God's comfort could have come in a myriad of ways. This way was unique indeed. As the psalmist says in Psalms 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

HOW THE JEWS NAMED THEIR CHILDREN

It was common in the Jewish culture for the child's father to be the ultimate authority on the name of the child. See Luke 1:57-66 as an example. Just as Zacharias was instructed to name his child John, Joseph was instructed to name this child, Jesus. The name Jesus is very similar to the Hebrew name, "Joshua". Others were named Jesus at this time as well (see Colossians 4:11), so the name did not make Him unique among His peers. Many names we are familiar with in the New Testament are simply transliterated versions of familiar Old Testament names.

For example: Judah = _____; Simeon = _____; James = _____; Miriam = _____; Hannah = _____.

Names held a great significance in Bible times and often spoke of a purpose or theme for the individual's life. Jesus' name was chosen by His true Father, God and spoke of His role as the true Deliverer.

What is the great meaning or purpose behind the name, "Jesus"?

The Birth Foretold (1:22-23)

This is our first of many references to Old Testament prophecy fulfilled by the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will find that the events described in this gospel (and the others as well) fulfill many other prophecies, even though they are not quoted by the writers.

PROPHECY

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." - Isaiah 7:14

Look at the text surround this passage (Isaiah 7:10-16) and discuss its immediate application (see Isaiah 8:18, 7:3, 8:3-5, and 8:7-8).

Discuss the greater fulfillment of this prophecy. What does this teach us about the proper understanding of Old Testament prophecy? (See 1 Corinthians 2:14 and Hebrews 10:1)

Jesus was considered, "God with us". Discuss how having God as a Father makes Jesus equal with God.

Joseph's Faithfulness (1:24-25)

God picked the right man. He completed the assigned task. Like so many others, he was not given a full revelation of God's plan, but only of his role. God strengthened and used this humble, God-fearing man in a great way because he walked by faith and not by sight. He remains an example to us today.