THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO JOSEPH

Matthew 1:20&21 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Review

The angel Gabriel has told Zechariah his wife will have a son who will be the forerunner of the Messiah, who “will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.” Gabriel has told Mary she will have a son who “will be called the Son of God” and who will not have a human father.

Luke 1:56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Joseph’s Dilemma

Matthew 1:18&19 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

“Messiah” is *“christos,”* Christ. The words “Messiah” and “Christ” both mean “Anointed One.” In modern Hebrew Jesus’ name is “Yahshua ha Mashiach.”

“Pledged to be married.” Joseph is called her husband in verse 19. They had been “betrothed,” or engaged, but the engagement was binding, so they were considered legally married, even though they had not lived together.

Immediately after the visit from the angel Gabriel “Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth” (Luke 1:39&40). It seems very likely that either she did not tell Joseph that she was going away, or at least she did not tell him why she was going away. There was usually little contact during the betrothal period.

Sometime after she returns to Nazareth after her three months away, it becomes obvious that she is pregnant. Joseph makes the natural assumption; she has been unfaithful to him.

“Faithful to the law” is literally simply the Greek word meaning “just” or “righteous,” which in this case would mean he was someone who tried to do the right thing, as he understood what was right though the Word of God, the Old Testament. He obviously did not want to marry a woman who had been unfaithful to him before they even came together as husband and wife.

Joseph had two divorce options: a public trial, which would have exposed her to public disgrace, or to hand her a letter of divorce in the presence of two witnesses, with the reason for the divorce not being made public in any way. He had made up his mind to privately divorce her.

The Dream

Matthew 1:20&21 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

“The fact that such an announcement came to him in a *dream,* would dispose Joseph all the more readily to receive it. ‘A good dream’ was one of the three things popularly regarded as marks of God’s favor; and so general was the belief in their significance as to have passed into this popular saying: ‘If anyone sleeps seven days without dreaming (or rather, remembering his dream for interpretation), call him wicked’ (as being unremembered by God).’” Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,* Book One, Chapter Four, page 155.

“Joseph son of David.” Being addressed as a “son of David,’ one from whom the Messiah might come, would prepare Joseph for what the angel was going to say next.

“Do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife.” Joseph was afraid that he could not trust Mary. The angel tells him, “Do not be afraid…because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” We don’t know if Mary and Joseph had talked about her situation. She may have been afraid to even try to explain things. “She was found to be pregnant” sounds like they had not talked.

“She will give birth to a son.” The first prediction that would line up with what the angel Gabriel had told Mary, and one that would become obviously true or untrue when the baby was born.

“You are to give him the name Jesus.” Gabriel had told Mary the same thing. Comparing their experiences would bring added certainty. Jesus (Yahshua) means Jehovah (the personal name for God – Yahweh in Hebrew – Exodus 3:13-15) is salvation.

The word “save” could refer to being rescued from danger, being healed, national deliverance or several other things. “Because he will save his people from their sins” specifies what Jesus would save people from. Being saved includes being saved from the penalty of sin (not going to hell when you die), being saved from the power of sin in the here and now, and being saved from the presence of sin after you die. It probably also includes being saved from the Tribulation – God’s wrath on sinful humanity. Romans 5:9&10; I Thessalonians 5:9

The Fulfilled Prophecy

Matthew 1:22&23 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”). Isaiah 7:14

John 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Joseph’s Obedience

Matthew 1:24&25 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Once Joseph and Mary had been betrothed, they were legally married. There would usually be a wedding ceremony before they started to live together. The most “proper” way to do things was to have a ceremony performed by a rabbi. The next most “proper” way was to have a civil ceremony, like being married by a Justice of the Peace in our culture. But since they were already legally married, the couple could simply move in together, and although this was frowned upon, it was not sinful.

In taking Mary home as his wife, Joseph was stating without words that he believed Mary had not been unfaithful to him. Most would believe that the child was his, and that her getting pregnant by him was “improper,” but not sinful.

Luke 3:23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph.

They “did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son” implies that they did so afterwards, and the lists of Jesus’ brothers and the mention of his sisters certainly indicate they had normal marital relationships after Jesus was born. Matthew 13:53-57; Mark 6:1-4; Acts 1:14

“And he gave him the name Jesus.” The name and the meaning of the name are important.

Things to Think About

As we pointed out last week, God gave Mary a difficult task, but provided her with people in her life who believed what God was doing in her. There is no indication that God told her parents, although we don’t know for sure.

God chose a righteous man to be the apparent father of Jesus, and, practically speaking, to be His father at least until He was twelve. Character is critical in serving God in any way.

The name Jesus defines why He came: “To save His people from their sins.” It includes to keep us from going to hell; to give us the power through the Holy Spirit to lead a godly life; to save us from even the presence of sin in eternity and to save (rescue) us from “the coming wrath.”

The name Immanuel defines who He is: He is God with us, fully God and fully man.

Have you been saved from the penalty of sin? Have you asked Jesus to save you based on the fact that He paid for your sins when He died on the cross? If so, are you being saved from the power of sin? Do you care enough about those around you to witness to them so that they might escape the coming wrath?