

Matthew 1:18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do 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 as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name Him Emmanuel”

which means, “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection Questions

- 1) Luke's account tells us of Mary's obedience (Luke 1:38) and Matthew tells us of Joseph's obedience (Matt. 1:24-25). Why would the virtues of humility and obedience be essential to the characters of the parents of the Christ child?
- 2) Under the law, Mary (due to her pregnancy outside of marriage) should have been subject to death by stoning or at least divorce and a kind of social excommunication. The scripture tells us that Joseph is a "righteous" man: a man who lives by God's law of Love. He does not demand the harsh justice that he could have demanded. He demonstrates a Godly balance, restraint and love (even *before* the angel came and spoke with him). How are these qualities of Godly restraint, balance and love core qualities of a disciple?
- 3) Just when Joseph had resolved to put Mary away quietly, the angel appears to him in a dream and asks Joseph to take her as his wife because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. For most of us, this angelic request would be adding insult to injury. What do you think makes Joseph agree to do it?
- 4) After hearing from the angel, Joseph does not hesitate to take Mary as his wife. His lack of hesitation speaks to his courage, his obedience and his holy fear of the Lord. How are these qualities essential to a powerful and effective disciple of the Lord?
- 5) The baby is named (Hebrew) "Yehosue" which means "YHWH is salvation." This child would save people from their sins, but the Jewish people were expecting a messiah who would save them from their oppressors. In what ways can our own sin be more oppressive to us than certain external forces of oppression that we face? How can we ask Jesus to help us name those things and then let Him free us from those things?