

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 **betrothed** . 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?

It was the Spirit of God that overshadowed her, the “3rd” person of the Godhead. Yet, it is God the Father that is His Father. This only makes sense as we consider that there are truly three persons, but at the same time they are One.

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

His identity as God made Him acceptable to His Father. His identity as man made Him a suitable sacrifice for our sin. To pay the sin debt of man, He had to become the second Adam, live a perfect life, and offer Himself a sacrifice to God for our sin. His dual nature was essential to the plan of salvation.

Joseph's Dilemma (1:19-21)

The word “just” means **righteous** or **holy** . What does this imply about Joseph? Read Matthew 13:49 and Romans 5:1.

Joseph was likely a saved man who had gained his righteousness from the Lord. His actions later in this chapter support the belief that he was a saved man.

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.

By her pregnancy, Mary seemed to undermine the very foundation of their commitment to one another in betrothal. A husband's heart can safely rest in the faithfulness of a virtuous wife. She will do him good and not evil. In an unrepentant state, Joseph would be taking a serious spiritual risk by marrying her and would also jeopardize his future children by allowing them to have her as a role model.

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

Joseph intended to privately divorce Mary in an inconspicuous manner. His reasons were lawful under both Old and New Covenant principles.

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

It was very possibly Gabriel, who also appeared to Zacharias and Mary.

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

He was called the "Son of David". He was not a random guy stumbling into this situation, but was picked and prepared for the task the Lord was giving him. Through Joseph came the lineage of the kings.

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 = **Judas**; Simeon = **Simon**; James = **Jacob**; Miriam = **Mary**; Hannah = **Anna**.

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.

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

He is called Jesus, "Jehovah saves" because He will save His people from their sins. This is one of my favorite passages of Scripture because it so clearly and concisely explains the purpose of Christ's coming and the breadth of His ability to bring remedy to man's greatest problem. Our problem is sin. Christ came to save us from it and He can completely and totally cleanse us from it and ultimately remove its consequence from our life. Every problem can be tied back to sin and therefore Christ is the ultimate solution to every problem. We have a God that is mighty to save!

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).

The Lord gave Isaiah sons and prescribed their names to serve as prophecies to the land of Judah. In this particular case, the Lord was proving to Ahab that He would save the Davidic line (through Ahab) from their enemies, the nations of Israel and Syria (Aram). The immediate fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 was that Isaiah was to take a second wife, presently a virgin, and have a child with her. Before this child reached maturity, knowing right from wrong, God would bring to pass judgment on Israel and Syria (Aram).

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)

The greater fulfillment is found in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, Emmanuel. Scripture is spiritually discerned and the Old Testament is but a shadow of the New Testament to come.

Jesus was considered, "God with us". Discuss how having God as a Father makes Jesus equal with God. Because Jesus was born of the seed of woman, He completely experienced humanity. Yet, His Father is God, making Him equal with God in His essence. Remember that Jesus was not created at conception, but merely transplanted, in a manner of thinking. A child may be under the authority of their father, but they are in essence equal in their nature. God created many wonderful creatures, but none could share His glory (Isaiah 42:8). Yet, Jesus shared His glory (John 17:5). They are completely equal in all ways.

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.