

DAY 3

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1ST

Our theme for today: Doubts and Anxieties.

How then did the birth of Jesus come about, if Joseph was not the one to father this babe? We find the answer beginning in Matthew 1:18.

Scripture

¹⁸ 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.

Matthew 1:18

Thought provokers

- Mary is pledged to be married and, in this culture, it is a formal engagement – they were considered husband and wife; though no consummation of the marriage had yet occurred; they had not yet lived together. In their culture, once you had made such a pledge, it was no easy matter to withdraw and free yourself from the arrangement. Startlingly, we learn that Mary is pregnant! But, (bombshell) the father is not Joseph!! Which, on its own would be astonishing enough, but then we see that she is given a child from the Holy Spirit!!! And, just to add one further layer, as much as we can understand, Mary has probably been pregnant for three months (if we investigate the nativity passages of Luke)!!!! And... if that wasn't enough, read the following Scripture:

*“In those days Mary set out and went **with haste** to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth” Luke 1:39-40*

So, on the one hand everything is looking rosy for Joseph – he is pledged to be married, but, then suddenly this strange journey Mary “had” to take. Why did she have to leave her home and travel all the way to Judea and do so “in haste”? What was all that about? What must have gone through Joseph’s mind? Of course, at some point, Mary had to return and (given the passage of time) her pregnancy was now visible!!!!

*“Pregnant?” “Mary?” “Who does she know in Judea?”
“But this is Mary... I know her!” “Don’t I?”*

As you read this passage, consider and discuss how Joseph might have felt.

- How would you feel? And, what would you do under such circumstances?
- Next, let us consider what Joseph (and Mary) knew about the Holy Spirit. They probably knew some things from their Scriptures, but could they have known that it would be the

Holy Spirit that would be the One to bring a child; could they have known when the Holy Spirit would bring such a child; and, could they know that the Holy Spirit would be the One to bring them a child?

- What conclusions might you make about what Joseph and Mary knew about the Holy Spirit? Did they have no knowledge, a little knowledge, or a lot?
- As you consider their story and what they knew, think about your own lives – how much do you know from Scripture about what will happen in the future (or even the present) for you? Will you be stunned by what God might do? Will you be perplexed or confused? Will you be amazed? Will you be prepared?

Reflections

There are many ways that things can happen. They can happen by accident, they can happen by endeavor, they can happen even by our own plans – but none of these compare to the plan of God; absolutely, nothing! God’s plans far exceedingly outweigh, outstretch and supersede anything we can or could imagine. This can fill us with marvel and wonder when things are going well for us. We can reflect and express the thought *“oh, it surely will be wonderful”*. At the same time, it can fill us with assurance and hope when things are not so well. *“Thank you, Lord for being there; thank you, Lord for rescuing me.”*

Joseph was caught in the crossfire of doubts and anxieties. Things were not so well.

“Pregnant?” “Mary?” “Who does she know in Judea?”
“But this is Mary... I know her!” Don’t I?”

We may get caught up in situations, but remember: God has a plan for us. And, He wants us to know His plans. His words of Scripture provide us content, direction, hope and love.

There are so many things that we have yet to learn about God and about his plan. What can you share with your loved ones (maybe one thing) you know that God is going to do? What can you learn from each other – to encourage one another, especially in our times where we too know so very little of what may or may not happen in the days ahead?

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing this well-known carol:

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

*God rest you merry, gentlemen,
let nothing you dismay,
remember Christ our Savior
was born on Christmas day,
to save us all from Satan's pow'r
when we were gone astray;*

Refrain:

*O tidings of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy,
O tidings of comfort and joy.*

*From God our heav'nly Father,
a blessed angel came;
and unto certain shepherds
brought tidings of the same:
how that in Bethlehem was born
the son of God by name, [Refrain]*

*"Fear not, then," said the angel,
"let nothing you affright;
this day is born a Savior of a pure virgin bright,
to free all those who trust in him
from Satan's pow'r and might." [Refrain]*

*The shepherds at those tidings
rejoiced much in mind,
and left their flocks a-feeding,
in tempest, storm, and wind,
and went to Bethlehem straightway,
the Son of God to find. [Refrain]*