

## (6) Announcement of Jesus' Birth to Joseph (Matt. 1:18-25)

1. During Joseph & Mary's engagement, Mary became pregnant & Joseph planned a discreet divorce (Matt. 1:18,19).
  - a. Aor.pass.ptc. μνηστεύω mnēsteuō #3423<sub>3x</sub>: *to woo her and ask her in marriage* (Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:27; 2:5).
  - b. "Before they came together" (πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν αὐτοῦς) may indicate they had not even met at this point.
2. Joseph was a believer (righteous man) who sought Mary's best interest.
  - a. Under the marriage contract Joseph is already legally Mary's husband. ἀνὴρ anēr #435<sub>197x</sub>. This engagement period could have been for up to a year.
  - b. Joseph chose to divorce Mary secretly rather than exposing her to the public shame the Law required (Deut. 22:23,24).  
See below: "The Savior's Entry Into the World" (The Daily Study Bible series, W. Barclay, Ed.) for information regarding the betrothal practice.
3. Joseph's intentions were overruled by the faithfulness of God (Matt. 1:20,21).
  - a. ἐνθυμέομαι enthumeomai #1760<sub>2x</sub>: to process information by thinking about it carefully, *reflect on, consider, think* (Matt. 1:20; 9:4; also Acts 10:19 διενθυμέομαι dienthumeomai #1760<sub>1x</sub>).
  - b. "An angel of the Lord" is not the Angel of the Lord.
  - c. In the dream message Joseph is addressed as Joseph, son of David (Ἰωσήφ υἱὸς Δαβὶδ). Although more than 28 generations removed from the great king, a son of David is being called to witness the birth of the long-awaited Son of David. דָּוִד dawid #1732<sub>1071x</sub>: *beloved*. The Hebrew letters d w d numerically add up to 14 (4+6+4).
4. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Matt. 1:22,23; Isa. 7:14).
  - a. Both Joseph and Mary are given the naming instructions regarding the name of Jesus (Matt. 1:21; Lk. 1:31).
  - b. Before Immanuel can undertake the work of Immanuel (Isa. 8:8,10) He must first undertake the work of Jesus.
    - 1) Ἰησοῦς Yēsous #2424<sub>909x</sub>: YHWH is salvation.
    - 2) יְהוֹשֻׁעַ yehōshua' #3091<sub>218x</sub>: YHWH is salvation. יָשָׁע yasha' #3467<sub>184x</sub>: *to save, deliver*.
5. Joseph responded to the angel's message with unquestioning obedience (Matt. 1:24,25).
  - a. Joseph woke up and ended the betrothal period with a completed marriage ceremony rather than a divorce.
  - b. Joseph & Mary did not participate in marital sexual relations until after the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25). After this she and Joseph gave birth to four more sons and at least two daughters (Ps. 69:8; Matt. 13:55,56).

## THE SAVIOUR'S ENTRY INTO THE WORLD

Matthew 1:18–25

The birth of Jesus Christ happened in this way. Mary, his mother was betrothed to Joseph, and, before they began man and wife, it was discovered that she was carrying a child in her womb through the action of the holy spirit. Although Joseph, her husband, was the man who kept the law, he did not wish publicly to humiliate her, so he wished to divorce her secretly. When he was planning this, behold, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. "Joseph son of David," said the angel, "do not hesitate to make Mary as your wife; for that which has been begotten within her has come from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you must call him Jesus, for it is he who will save this people from their sins. All this has happened that there might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Behold, the maiden will conceive and bear a son, and you must call his name Emmanuel, which is translated: God with us.'" So Joseph woke from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him; and he accepted his wife: and he did not know her until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.

To our western ways of thinking the relationships in this passage are very bewildering. First, Joseph is said to be *betrothed* to Mary; then he is said to be planning quietly to *divorce* her; and then she is called his *wife*. But the relationships represent normal Jewish marriage procedure, in which there were three steps.

(i) There was the *engagement*. The engagement was often made when the couple were only children. It was usually made through the parents, or through a professional match-maker. And it was often made without the couple involved ever having seen each other. Marriage was held to be far too serious a step to be left to the dictates of the human heart.

(ii) There was the *betrothal*. The betrothal was what we might call the ratification of the engagement into which the couple had previously entered. At this point the engagement, entered into by the parents or the match-maker, could be broken if the girl was unwilling to go on with it. But once the betrothal was entered into, it was absolutely binding. It lasted for one year. During that year the couple were known as man and wife, although they had not the rights of man and wife. It could not be terminated in any other way than by divorce. In the Jewish law we frequently find what is to us a curious phrase. A girl whose fiancée had died during the year of betrothal is called "a virgin who is a widow". It was at this stage that Joseph and Mary were. They were betrothed, and if Joseph wished to end the betrothal, he could do so in no other way than by divorce; and in that year of betrothal Mary was legally known as his wife.

(iii) The third stage was *the marriage proper*, which took place at the end of the year of betrothal.

If we remember the normal Jewish wedding customs, then the relationships in this passage are perfectly usual and perfectly clear.

So at this stage it was told to Joseph that Mary was to bear a child, that that child had been begotten by the Holy Spirit, and that he must call the child by the name Jesus. *Jesus* is the Greek form of the Jewish name *Joshua*, and *Joshua* means *Jehovah is salvation*. Long ago the Psalmist had heard God say, "He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities" (Psalm 130:8). And Joseph was told that the child to be born would grow into the Savior who would save God's people from their sins. Jesus was not so much The Man born to be King as The Man born to be Savior. He came to this world, not for his own sake, but for men and for our salvation.