

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS: THE COUPLE

(Advent 2018)

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But 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. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." ²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25)

³⁹At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴²In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!" ⁴³But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" (Luke 1:39-45)

⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child... (Luke 2:5)

THE EXAMINATION

- ___ 1. The angel Michael appeared and explained the baby's special conception to Mary: "*The Holy Spirit shall come upon you...*"
- ___ 2. Mary went to visit the home of her cousin Elizabeth three months prior to the birth of John the Baptist
- ___ 3. When Mary visited Elizabeth before the birth of Jesus, she:
 - a. Simply greeted Elizabeth
 - b. Kissed her cousin
 - c. Received a message from Zechariah
 - d. Felt the baby leap in her womb
- ___ 4. Mary was likely thirteen to fifteen years old when she became engaged
- ___ 5. Joseph's father's name was _____.
- ___ 6. How many dreams did Joseph have in connection with the birth and early childhood of Jesus?
- ___ 7. Joseph was a "*tekton*" which means he was likely a "stone mason"
- ___ 8. Mary and Joseph didn't get married until *after* Jesus was born
- ___ 9. In Jesus' day, marriage was considered a covenant between two families and usually included a dowry
- ___ 10. Unfaithfulness during the betrothal was considered adultery and could be punishable by death

- ___ 11. In Jesus' day, dissolving a legal betrothal required a formal divorce
- ___ 12. Joseph and Mary originally planned to settle in Bethlehem

THE EXPLANATION

A. A marriage had three basic stages: arrangements, betrothal and wedding

1. These arrangements were normally initiated by the father of the Groom
2. A dowry was offered by the groom for the bride
3. When everything was ready, the father of the Groom would say, "It's time"

B. Between Mary's betrothal and wedding came an angelic announcement:

"*Mary would have a baby!*"

"Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you... You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... His kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:30f)

1. Mary's pregnancy left Joseph with three basic options:

- a. Marry her quickly and hope no one noticed a sixth month baby
- b. Divorce her as an adulteress and risk her being stoned to death
- c. Have the marriage contract quietly set aside

2. An angel interrupted Joseph to explain:

"An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph 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." (Matthew 1:20)

3. Caesar Augustus' census gave them a plausible reason to leave Nazareth

C. Mary and Joseph returned from Egypt intended to settle near Bethlehem

1. But an angel warned Joseph and sent them back to Nazareth
2. Joseph was a "*tekton*" meaning he was most likely a "stone mason"

THE ELUCIDATION

A. When Jesus raised the cup, he was saying, "*I am willing to give my life for you*"

B. When we drink from his cup, we're saying, "*I'm willing to give my life to you*"

C. Jesus returned home to prepare a place for us

"In my Father's house are many rooms; I am going there to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:2)

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev. 19:7,9a)

D. When the Father says the time is right, our wedding day will come. Be ready!