

## Christmas99

Before the next Lord's Day we will celebrate the birth of our Savior. We are most familiar with Lk 2 so let's go to Joseph's perspective in Mt. 1. We know so little about Joseph. But what I read here in verses 18-25, he sounds just like one of us. He is engaged to Mary during which time he discovers she is pregnant. We don't know if Mary tried to tell him about the angelic visit. It was not proper for an unmarried couple to be alone so I don't think she would really have the opportunity. She is able to convey to him her condition or perhaps her parents did. Since she was a young virgin her age would have been around 14. Joseph is AFRAID to go through with the marriage. He is thinking of quietly releasing her from her covenant – in essence a divorce.

Imagine being in Joseph's shoes. I would be hurt, angry, confused...but the only emotion mentioned is fear. An angel comes to him in a dream and tells him "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife" and explains that the conception was a miracle of the Holy Spirit. Was he afraid she would shame his home? That she seemed so genuinely pure but was really a hypocrite? Whatever the fear the angelic visit answered his question. The angel went on to say she would give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, Yeshuah, Joshua, Salvation of Jehovah, because He will save people from their sins.

If Joseph wasn't already in 'mental meltdown' mode, he surely was now! His girlfriend is giving birth to the Son of God. Can he have a normal marriage? Will God be jealous? Does he discipline the boy or will the boy discipline him? Save from sin? Isn't that what the sacrificial system is all about? -WAIT- Does that mean He will be sacrificed? Or will He reign like my ancestor King David? OH, maybe He is the One Nathan the prophet told David would come from my family line that would reign forever! I'm gonna raise Him!? How does a carpenter raise a King? Will we go to the Temple or Herod's palace? Do babies without a sin nature cry? Will it be OK for him to call me ABBA?

So many questions and a million more must have rushed through his mind. Most of them didn't matter for God had all the details planned – most of **our** questions don't matter- for as sons and daughters of the Most High, He, Himself, is overseeing our transformation into His likeness.

Matthew under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says this all came about fulfilling Isaiah 7:14 and 8:18-20. I hope Joseph knew the verse. I would imagine the Holy Spirit brought back to his memory the reading of it in the Synagogue.

Emmanuel – God with us! All space cannot contain Him – How did He get into a body? And imagine the vulnerability. Of course God the Father was watching over Him. “This day have I begotten Thee.” Love with skin on it. Now we know the extent of God’s love, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son. Now we know He knows what it is like as a human to face, temptation, pain, sorrow, rejection, death.

He took a giant step down so we could take a giant step up! If the cross was the greatest display of love – Jn 15:13 – then this birth had to be a close second! From the throne of eternity into time, location and physical constraints. Phil 2 –Says to do that He had to empty himself. Theologians say He emptied Himself of his glory. I think we’d be more correct to say He emptied Himself of everything that would keep Him from inhabiting a body. That must have been a lot. Too bad our minds can’t grasp all that was that He set aside for us. It would make us want to love Him more for it.

If your husband gave up his royal title and income to marry you, a commoner, you would surely consider his love to be great. That is nothing compared to what Jesus gave up for you. And it wasn’t just for 30 years! Yes, He is in a glorified body now but a body nevertheless. It is the only body in heaven with wounds!

Why did He do that? It was to bring us life, life to the full. That was His declaration. “I am come that they might have life and life to the full” - that is more love than we can comprehend. What does He see in us? What would draw such love out from His heart? He sees what you will one day be, a pure and spotless bride. He sees it as if we were already there, and it so delights His heart that He has no regrets. You look at yourself and think He made a mistake. No way! He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness. You will be what He sees now because He is the Master Creator. He doesn’t make mistakes.

I’m not challenging you with something this morning like I usually do. I’m just saying LOOK. Look at what He did. Try to imagine the cost. Adore Him for it. Just to behold that glory, changes us. Looking at all that love draws love from us, for love begets love. Oh come let us adore Him. The wonder of God in that baby’s body for us! Can we take a few moments and just in our mind’s eye look at that baby and marvel, like I’m sure Joseph did. Then let’s close with some prayers of praise and adoration and thanksgiving for His willingness to be incarnated out of love for us.