

Advent: the obedience of Joseph



1.

Read Matthew 1 v 18-25

What did Joseph originally plan to do and why?

What did the angel tell Joseph to do?

What did Joseph do when he woke up?

What two baby-names are given in this passage and what do they tell us about the baby's identity?

3.

The angel was God's messenger to Joseph, who obeyed each time. He married Mary, sharing the awful reputation caused by pregnancy outside of marriage. He moved his little family to live in a foreign culture in order to protect the baby from Herod's murderous jealousy. He returned to Israel but still felt unsafe, and so moved back to Mary's home-town of Nazareth.

Joseph obeyed God, despite the massive personal cost of shame, life as a refugee in Egypt and returning to live in the community who knew all about Mary's 'illegitimate' baby.

2. Read Matthew 2 v 13-16.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem some wise men visited and brought gifts. Then the angel visited Joseph again.

What was Joseph told to do in his second angelic dream and why?

Read Matthew 2 v 19-23

What did the angel tell Joseph to do in this third dream?

What did Joseph do?

Joseph likely had a fourth angelic dream. What did the angel tell him to do this time?

4.

Angelic dreams are not God's normal method of communication! How does God tell us how we are to live as His followers?

What should obedience to God look like in your life?

Prayer: Thank-you God for Joseph's example of obedience to your word, carried to him by angels, even when that obedience made life difficult for him. Please help me to understand what it means to know and follow Jesus. Please help me to live in obedience to your word, which you have revealed in the Bible. Amen.

Matthew 1 v 18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But 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. ²¹ 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.'

²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 2 v 13-23

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.'

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'

¹⁶ When Herod realised that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷ Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

¹⁸ 'A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.'

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead.'

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.