

WHEN GOD “CRASHED” INTO THE WORLD OF JOSEPH

Two weeks ago, we started a Christmas series I entitled “When God Crashed into the World.”

We looked first at the life of Zacharias and Elisabeth. They were a God-fearing and righteous couple who faithfully obeyed and served God. They were also both “well stricken in years” (Luke 1:7)—and childless. Zacharias was a priest and while doing his duty of burning incense in the temple, God—through the angel Gabriel—“crashed” into his world. God had last spoken to His people through the prophet Malachi 400 years earlier—and “out of the blue,” now speaks to Zacharias. The message: “thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (Lk 1:13). “He shall be great in the sight of the Lord” (Lk 1:15) “and shall go before Him [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk 1:17). The “duty” part of their message was two-fold—they were to prepare John for serving God by being good examples and they were to spread the good news of both John and Jesus.

Last week we looked at when God crashed into the world of Mary—a poor, unknown, young Jewish teenager from the city of Nazareth who had been chosen by God to carry and give birth to the Son of God! In spite of her youth—and the tremendous privilege it was to be chosen to be the mother of Jesus—she knew her place. She was humble in that she considered herself a **servant**—referring to herself twice as the handmaiden of the Lord. She also knew she was a **sinner** who needed a Savior! In her prayer of thanksgiving to God she exclaims, “...my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior!” (Lk 1:47). In Gabriel’s message to Mary, two eternal truths stood out that are applicable to us—God keeps His promises and with God, nothing is impossible!

This morning we are going to look at “When God Crashed into the World of Joseph.” Please take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 1, verse 18, and follow along as I read through vs 25.

1. Who God sent a message to—Joseph

So, what do we know about Joseph?

A. Background

- i. Like Mary, he lived in the city of Nazareth (Lk 2:4)
- ii. Was espoused (engaged) to Mary (Lk 2:5)

Similar to Mary, his age is not given in the Bible but it was customary for young men to be engaged at 15 to 16 years of age.

- iii. Like Mary, he also was from the line of David

Notice Mt 1:1, 6. In Luke 2:4 we have the phrase “(because he was of the house and lineage of David:)”

- iv. He was a carpenter (Mt 13:55)
- v. Seemingly passed away prior to Jesus’ public ministry

Was alive when Jesus—at the age of 12—was accidentally left in Jerusalem while they were there for the Passover (Lk 2:43, 48).

Was presumably alive when Jesus began His public ministry at age 30 (based on Mt 13:55 we just looked at). Was probably **not** alive when Jesus was crucified (see John 19:26-27).

B. Behavior/Character

Don’t know a whole lot about his character, but we do know a couple of things

- i. **Just (righteous)** (Mt 1:19)

Not sure about you, but when I hear the word “just,” I think of *fair*. “Just” here comes from the Greek word “dik-ah-yos” and is usually translated “righteous” which would most certainly fit here. Joseph was right with God and had the right conduct toward people and God.

ii. Sensitive toward God

Notice Mt 1:24 “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him...”

Mt 2:12 Being warned...departed into their own country another way

Mt 2:13-15 warned by an angel to flee to Egypt—and “be thou there until I bring thee word.” Did just that

Mt 2:19-21 Angel appeared unto Joseph while in Egypt w/msg to go back to Israel. Joseph obeyed

Mt 2:22 Warned of God in a dream to go to Galilee

Spiritual leader—God appeared to him and spoke to him—not Mary—when it came to guidance

2. What was Joseph doing when he received the message

Sleeping 😊! Mt 1:20 “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream...” Verse 24 “Then Joseph being raised from sleep...”

On a more serious note, look again at verses 18-20. Although Mary and Joseph were engaged—and not yet married—the arrangement was so binding that any unfaithfulness during the engagement period was considered adultery and punishable by death. (See Deuteronomy 22:23-24)

Joseph’s world was **not** turned upside down by an angelic visit like Zacharias and Elisabeth and Mary; his hopes and dreams and future were shattered by the news that his wife-to-be was pregnant—and not by him!

He was a righteous man—he loved and feared God—and wanted to do the right thing. But what was the right thing in this situation? That is why he thought on these things (verse 20). His options, it seems, were 3:

a) Have Mary put to death for adultery IAW Deut 22:23-24

b) Divorce her, but not do it in a public manner. It was customary when a man divorced his wife to state in writing **why** he was divorcing her and to even have witnesses, but Joseph was considering divorcing her privately.

c) Believe Mary’s story—the impossible—and stay with her in spite of the mockery he would have to endure for months and possibly years.

3. What was God’s message to Joseph?

A. Perplexion was removed: “fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife” (vs 20)

As stated just a moment ago, it is interesting that the angelic visit Joseph received had the opposite effect on him compared to the impact of Gabriel’s message to Zacharias, Elisabeth, and Mary. Their world was “normal” when Gabriel appeared to them and God’s message turned their world on its head. Joseph’s life, however, was already in chaos and confusion with the news of Mary’s pregnancy and the message from the angel actually **cleared up** the confusion he had in his heart and mind.

Notice the message beginning in the middle of verse 20.

--“Joseph”—angel knows his name

--“thou son of David”—angel knows his ancestry

--“fear not to take unto thee”—knows what Joseph is agonizing over

--“Mary thy wife”—knows her name and that they are engaged

--“for that which is conceived in her”—knows the situation

What was true for Joseph is true of us. God knows our name, our background, and the situation we are in. Not only does He know—He also cares, has a will, and wants to guide us in the path that He wants us to take. There are situations that are confusing; there are things that are beyond our ability to figure out—but they are not above God’s ability to figure out or to fix! We need to look to Him and seek Him and wait for Him to give direction and clear up the chaos and confusion in our lives.

That's what happened to Joseph—his perplexion was removed; he was confused no more! "Joseph, thou son of David, **fear not** to take unto thee Mary thy wife..."

Not only was the message a blessing because his perplexion was removed, it was also a blessing because he was assured that...

B. Purity was retained: "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (vs 20)

When did Mary tell Joseph she was pregnant? We don't know for sure, but my guess is that she told him before she went to see Elisabeth. It is possible, I suppose, that she just "took off" for 3 months without telling him where she was going or why, but that doesn't seem likely. It also doesn't seem likely that she would tell Joseph she was going to see Elisabeth because an angel had told her Elisabeth was pregnant without sharing with him the **rest** of what the angel had told her.

At any rate, it would be natural for Joseph to question the truthfulness of Mary's claim that she was pregnant, but had been intimate with no one. I can't help but imagine what that conversation was like. It probably started with, 'Joseph, I have something to tell you. You aren't going to believe this, but... I'm pregnant!'

Imagine the emotional roller coaster—first shock, then anger, then the feeling of betrayal, then sadness, then confusion, then probably anger again as she continued to insist that she was pure!

The angel's message did not end with "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife;" the message went on to affirm that she was pure—that she was telling the truth—that she had not been unfaithful—and that her pregnancy truly was a miracle! What a blessing that must have been to his heart to know from the all-knowing God the truth about Mary's pregnancy. There would be tough times ahead. There would be misunderstandings and whispers behind their backs. But having God's Word to trust in gave a confidence and peace that nothing else could bring.

Do you and I have a quiet confidence in the Word of God? Do we let the facts of God's Word calm our fears—or do we let fears drive calmness from our hearts? Oh how we need to focus on what God says rather than what we feel! That is what Joseph did and what a blessing it was to him that he did!

Not only did the message remove his confusion and restore his confidence in Mary, the message also revealed the purpose all this was happening

C. Purpose was revealed

Why was this happening to Mary? What was God's plan for this child—and why was it necessary that this child be miraculously conceived? All this and more are answered in this angelic message. Three things regarding the coming of this child.

i. Jesus came to save man (v 21)

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."

Luke 2:11 "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The "saving us from our sins" and the "taking away of our sins" required that the penalty of sins be paid for and Jesus willingly became our substitute on the cross.

I John 4:16 "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins."

That is the main reason Jesus came and yet how few know that and celebrate that. The church as a whole has failed miserably in conveying the true meaning of Christmas—that Jesus was born to die that we might live!

ii. Jesus came to fulfill Scripture (vss 22-23)

Notice verses 22-23. “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...” All **what** was done? A virgin having a child who would be called “Immanuel.”

Twice through the prophet Isaiah, 700 years before Jesus came to earth, we have these wonderful promises of a special child being born:

Isaiah 7:14 is quoted almost verbatim here in Matthew 1: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and **bear a son**, and shall call His name **Immanuel**.”

Isaiah 9:6 “For unto us a child is born, unto us **a son is given**: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God, The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace.” Jesus’ coming fulfilled both of these promises.

iii. Jesus came to reveal God (v 23b)

“...and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

The two verses we looked at in Isaiah not only indicate a son would be born—they also declare that this “Son” would be **God** in the flesh!

Is 7:14 says He will be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us”

Is 9:6 says His name shall be called “The mighty God” and “The everlasting Father.”

John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” In the “beginning of beginnings” the Word—Logos—was there. The Word was God and with God and created all things.

John 1:14 “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

When was God made flesh? When Jesus came to earth as a babe in a manger!

What did Jesus look like? He looked like most Jewish men who lived on earth at that time. He did not come to show us what the Father looked like in **appearance**, but He did come to show us

what the burden of God

and the compassion of God

and the love of God

and the long-suffering of God

and the patience of God

and the wisdom of God looked like in human form.

What is God like? Look at Jesus. But don’t just look—follow Him and He will make you a fisher of men!

4. How did Joseph respond to the message he received

Verse 24 “Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him...”

Simply put, he obeyed. He did what God wanted him to do.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. Joseph was thrust into a situation that he did not ask for—and that he did not bring on himself. He was confused and hurt, but above all else wanted to do the right thing. He pondered—and I believe prayed—and then received guidance from God by having a message from God. Where do you turn to when you are confused or hurt? Turn to God...and His Word...and wait for His direction—then obey!

2. Jesus came to save His people from their sins. Are you saved? Jesus came to die for the sins of all, but not all will be saved from their sins. Why? Because not all receive Him. Some don’t see their need; some don’t see Jesus sufficiency; some say “it can’t be this easy.” Have you received Him?

John 1:12 “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”