

The Angel's Message

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

As you can tell by the wings, I am an angel. Specifically, I am the angel who came to Joseph in a dream, recorded in **Matthew 1**. Over the years, people have speculated about my identity. Am I Gabriel, the angel who visited Mary and Zechariah? I would like to clear things up once and for all. Gabriel is identified to show the authority by which he spoke because both had questions. Zechariah asked how he could really know what the angel said was actually going to happen, and Mary, although she believed it would happen, wanted to know *how* what Gabriel said was going to happen. In his dream, Joseph recognized me as a messenger of God and simply accepted what I said as the truth. In other words, my identity isn't important; my message is.

The Message

The message was simply that Joseph should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife. The Child she was carrying was of the Holy Spirit. And they will name the boy "Jesus" because He will save His people from their sins. But this message isn't just for Joseph. This message comes from God to you, as well.

Fear

My purpose for coming was two-fold. To calm Joseph's fear concerning Mary and to tell him what to name the Boy. Joseph was afraid because he was betrothed to Mary, and she was with child. Being betrothed meant that they were in every sense married, except having intimate relations. That would have to wait until after the wedding. Betrothal was legally binding and could only be severed by divorce. Joseph was in a pickle. He knew the baby wasn't His; how could he go through with the wedding knowing Mary had been unfaithful to him? Yet, he was a good man and didn't want to bring shame on her by publicly denouncing her as an adulteress. He was considering a way to try to divorce her quietly.

The Solution

I simply revealed to him that Mary hadn't been unfaithful. God had chosen her to be the mother of His Son. What was going on with Mary may seem to others as a disgrace, but it was really an honor. It also put Joseph's responsibility to Mary in a different light. God was entrusting both with the care and upbringing of His Son. But God doesn't call anyone to do anything without giving them the ability to carry out the task. Just look throughout Scripture. God has a habit of picking people the world wouldn't and then empowering them to do something great. Think of Sarah and her inability to have children. Think of Moses and his feelings of inadequacy when God called him from the burning bush. Think of David, the shepherd boy, who was the youngest of eight brothers, yet was to be the greatest king of Israel.

For You

The point is, no matter what's happening, no matter how bad things get, God is still in control and has a plan for you. When He chooses you, He will empower you to do the job.

The Name

The name Joseph was to give God's Son was Jesus. "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew "Yeshua", which means "Yahweh is salvation." Jesus was a common name for Jewish boys at that time. It expressed the hope of the Messiah. They were longing for the Messiah to come and save them. However, their idea of salvation was political. They were looking for the Messiah who would overthrow Israel's enemies. But what they forgot was the real enemy is sin. That's the real enemy of Israel and of all people. The Son of God was coming into the world to save His people from their sins. This casts a different light on the name "Jesus." As a Jew, Joseph knew what paid the price for sins – sacrifice. The Son of God was coming into the world through Mary to sacrifice Himself for the sins of the world. Joseph was to raise up this boy to be a sacrifice.

The Message Today

And that's the message for you, the message of Christmas, the message for all the world. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)*. But God, in His love, has come into the world and paid the price of sin on the cross, that *whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)*.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
