

JOSEPH: VOICE OF REASON

Matthew 1-2

Some of these thoughts are taken from RBC Booklet:
"Mary & Joseph: Reflecting on the Wonder of Christmas"

Introduction

Introduce the "Twelve Voices of Christmas" and listen to the audio drama of "Joseph: Voice of Reason."

Joseph's Dilemma

What should he do about Mary? According to Luke, after Mary was informed about the child she was to have, she went away to see Elizabeth for a period of time. They lived in the hill country of Judea, probably somewhere northwest of Jerusalem. *Discuss the travel and communication issues of that day.* It is quite probable that neither Joseph nor Mary's parents knew anything of this pregnancy until Mary returned to Nazareth.

But when she returned, it was obvious that she was expecting a baby. Joseph knew this baby was not his. Mary tried to explain, telling them of the visit from the angel, but who could believe such an improbable tale as that.

So, what was he to do? If he claimed the child as his own, he would be living a lie, and disgracing both of them. If he brought an accusation against Mary before the courts, he could clear his name, but she would be punished severely, perhaps even put to death. It seemed that the only solution was to quietly end the betrothal with a bill of divorcement. What a dilemma.

But there is more to the story.

Joseph's Dreams

Joseph was somewhat of a dreamer. But these were no ordinary dreams. God spoke clearly to Joseph through these dreams. There were actually 3 dreams.

- a. Dream One came to reassure Joseph of Mary's purity and to tell him to go ahead and take Mary as his wife. – *Discuss the dream*

from Matt. 1:20-21,24-25. There are some very significant elements in this message:

- i. Joseph's position as a descendant of King David would place Jesus in the line of the royal family.
 - ii. The Holy Spirit is the source of Mary's pregnancy.
 - iii. The child's name, Jesus, would describe his mission – he will save his people from their sins.
 - iv. The child's birth would be a fulfillment of prophecy, explaining not only why he was coming but who he was – "God with us."
- b. Dream Two did not occur until some time after Jesus was born. *Set the scene in Matt. 2 (Wise Men) then read Matt. 2:13-14.* Mary and Joseph lived far beneath the notice of rulers and magistrates. The thought that their child might be in danger from such powers would never have occurred to them. Suddenly Joseph realized that they lived in a world that was far more dangerous than they ever imagined. It took an angelic voice to convince them that their baby boy was in danger.
 - c. Dream Three came some time later again, probably a period of several months. History tells us that it was not long after the birth of Jesus that Herod the Great died, leaving his kingdom to his sons, Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip. Archelaus received the portion of Idumea, Judea, and Samaria. Let's read Matt. 2:19-23. (*Go through what happened as a result of this dream.*) It appears that Archelaus was known for his cruelty and tyranny. The historian, Josephus, tells us that he put to death 3000 Jews in the temple not long after his accession to the throne.

Joseph's Obedience

Joseph is labeled as the voice of reason. He was a good man, and sought to do the right thing. His problem was that he had no way of knowing the right thing until God showed it to him, through his dreams. But what we need to notice is Joseph's response to these revelations from God.

- a. 1:24 – "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Obedience was Joseph's response to a deeply difficult situation. It was not an easy or painless obedience, and it did not come without cost.

- b. 2:14 - *"And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt..."* When Joseph received the warning from the angel, he didn't hesitate. His first instinct was to protect the child. The journey would be long, and even dangerous in itself. But with Herod's threats hanging over them they could not stay in Bethlehem. In Egypt they would be safe. So, without even waiting for morning, they left, in obedience to the angel's message.
- c. 2:21 - *"And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel."* Again, at the command of an angel, Joseph obeyed, taking his family back to the land of Israel, settling in Nazareth. In all of this the prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled - *"Out of Egypt I called my son."* (Hos. 11:1); *"He shall be called a Nazarene."* - that is, he will be humble and lowly, rejected and despised.

Joseph was very quick to respond to the command of the Lord as it came to him through an angel in his dreams. In each case, he got up immediately and obeyed the command of God. His obedience was imperative for the safety and protection of God's Son.

Conclusion

The question we need to consider is how quick we are to respond to God's call and direction to us. We don't usually have angels coming in dreams to give us instruction from God. However, I do have the Word of God and the Spirit of God to guide and direct my life. When you or I understand the clear direction of God, do we respond immediately to obey?

At this Christmas season, don't get so busy that you miss hearing the voice of God through His Word. And don't allow the busyness to keep you from responding to God in obedience.