

Christmas

First Christmas : God's Message to Joseph

Foundation

Bible passage: Matthew 1.18-25

Matthew and Luke both record the events leading up to and surround Jesus' birth. Whilst Luke concentrates more on Mary, Matthew looks more at Joseph. From verse 16 in the genealogy, we are not told that Jesus was the son of Joseph, like everyone else in the list, but that he was born to Mary. In verse 18 the facts of the case from Joseph's perspective are explained as is his understandable but compassionate response. He evidently thought Mary had been unfaithful, but Matthew then explains how Joseph came to know the truth of the matter. Here, as with Mary, there is nothing to suggest that Joseph doubted what he was told.

Joseph and Mary were betrothed, meaning that they were promised to one another but had not yet come together as man and wife. This was the ordinary practice and the betrothal, like an engagement, could last for several years. The betrothal was binding so that it could only be broken by a divorce. Joseph clearly thought that Mary had acted in a way that meant he could and should divorce her.

The message to Joseph came in a dream and was delivered by an Angel, that is a "messenger" from God. The message confirmed what Mary had already been told and knew, that the child

Jesus

Names can be confusing as the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek, though Jesus spoke Aramaic and names come into English via Latin/French or Germanic/Anglo-Saxon. Jesus and Joshua are the same name, beginning with the first letter of the divine name, which can be rendered YHWH or JHVH.



was not conceived in a normal, natural way. Instead, the child would be conceived by the work of the Holy Spirit within her. It was therefore supernatural, or as we would more likely say, miraculous.

"you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins"

Joseph was told to call the child Jesus which means the LORD saves. Joseph is told the significance of the name; because Jesus will "save his people from their sins". Right from the beginning we see that Jesus is not just going to be a teacher but a saviour, and to save people from sin.

The message to Joseph is underlined when he is told that this is something that had been promised hundreds of years before through Isaiah the prophet. There the child had been given another name "Immanuel" meaning "God with us".



Long ago God had promised a special child. Joseph was told it is Jesus, God with us, who will save his people from their sins.