



The People Behind the Promise

December 23-24, 2017
Pastor Joseph Sissac

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Explore and gain greater insight into the conditions surrounding Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' birth.
2. Explore and gain greater insight into the relationship between Mary and Joseph as they take on the responsibility of caring for the Creator incarnate.
3. FactorPoints

IT TOOK AN ANGEL TO CONVINCE HIM

Mary's first trimester was spent with her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist. It is very possible that Mary witnessed the birth and was greatly encouraged by the faithfulness of the Lord. It's after this that Mary returned to Nazareth and disclosed to Joseph all that had happened. This is the beginning of the second trimester.

It's very possible that Mary was struggling with concerns and fear regarding what her family and neighbors might say about her "miraculous" pregnancy. But her greatest concern is for that of Joseph her new husband. Will he believe her?

There are two things we learn from scripture about Joseph:

1. He did not believe Mary had supernaturally conceived. Thus he was going to divorce her.
2. He was most likely hurt and greatly disappointed, believing that Mary had committed adultery. Joseph still cared for her because he was going to divorce her in secret, not wanting to put her to shame.

It's not until after Joseph is visited by an angel in a dream that he is convinced that Mary's pregnancy is of the Holy Spirit. This is a turning point for their relationship. Before this encounter, the purpose of God was the cause of their strife and division. Or better stated, the lack of belief in the purpose of God was the cause of their strife.

FAITHFUL HEARTS UNITE IN GOD'S PURPOSE

But we must remember, this was God's plan. He was in no way surprised by Joseph's reaction. What happens relationally between Joseph and Mary is an incredibly important lesson from the Christmas story.

The plan of God can divide. The plan of God can unite. What makes the difference?

The hearts of the recipients. More specifically, The **FAITHFUL HEART** is God's desire. In Luke 1:38 Mary said, "**Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.**" Matthew 1:24 says, "**When Joseph woke from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife...**" At the heart of the Christmas story is the heart of God encountering the heart of mankind.

- » *Perfection meeting imperfection.*
- » *Hope arriving for the hopeful.*
- » *Faith arriving for the faithful.*
- » *And the Promiser encountering the promised-to.*

So what does God do during the division? He **inspires, creates** and **reveals**. Mary already had inspiration and conception (*creation*). Joseph needed revelation and God provided it. As we look at the rest of the story, after Jesus is born, after the shepherds and the wisemen, an attack begins. The enemy is well aware of the fulfillment of the promise and what it means to his dominion. So he attacks and seeks to destroy.

The picture we get during this time, is one of Mary and Joseph operating as one, **united in the cause** to care for and preserve the promise of God. The fact that God preserves supernaturally doesn't negate the fact that He also preserves **practically** and **personally**. He uses the **imperfect, fearful, doubtful**, human... yet **FAITHFUL**. What does that mean? It means:

"I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word."

"I trust you even though I don't understand."

"I'll obey even when there's no precedent."

"I'll go even when it's uncomfortable and inconvenient."

Christmas should inspire us to come together, rally around and exalt the life of Christ. The birth and purpose of Christ is the greatest gift to **ALL...** marriages, families, friends, communities, cities, governments and Kingdoms. Isn't it unexpected and astounding that the greatest gift ever sent into the earth from Heaven, was sent in such a way that we should care for it?

FactorPoints

He's Here - WORSHIP: The Lord Most High is worthy of our praise for sending Christ Jesus into the earth and entrusting those He created with the physical manifestation of His Son.

He Knows - LEARN: Meditate on the wisdom and knowledge of God that masterfully unfolds through the prophetic past, impacting both our past and future.

He's Able - SERVE: By the equipping of God's grace, preserve the Gift of Christ in your life and believe for the preservation of all your relationships through every trial, test and season.