
BIBLE TALK

This week the question is: ***Did Joseph suspect Mary of fornication? (pt. 2)***

Review: Let's begin by re-reading the passage to refresh our thinking:

Matthew 1:18-21

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Last week we examined the "suspicion view." This view says Joseph was suspicious of Mary. He thought she had committed immorality and he was thinking about divorcing her on the grounds of fornication.

We gave two reasons why the "suspicion view" should not be accepted:

- Because the text explicitly says, "*Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit.*" In other words, she was not simply found to be "with child."
- The OT law did not allow divorce for an immoral bride-to-be. Rather than divorce, the OT required the death penalty (Dt 22:20-21).

THE "HUMILITY VIEW"

We will now consider the alternative, but less popular view, called ***the "humility view."***

The "humility view" says Joseph knew Mary was a virgin. The people of that time were in expectation of the coming Messiah (Lk 3:15). They also knew that when the Messiah comes, He will be born to a virgin (Isa 7:14). Therefore, when Joseph learned that (a) Mary was a virgin and (b) she was with child "of the Holy Spirit," he was not suspicious of her. Rather, he was afraid of marrying the virgin who was being used by God to bring the Messiah into the world.

I read now from the Holman Christian Standard Version:

Matthew 1:20 (Holman Christian Standard Version)

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit."

Notice that Joseph's problem is fear; "Do not be afraid ..." the angel said. If Joseph was suspicious of Mary, the word fear does not make sense. If he was suspicious of Mary being immoral, the proper wording would be, "Don't be angry," or "Don't be broken-hearted." Instead, the angel said, "Don't be afraid."

If read carefully, you will also notice the angel is not informing Joseph of something new. Joseph already knew Mary was pregnant with a child "by the Holy Spirit." Let's read it again:

Matthew 1:20

²⁰ ... "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, [just] because what has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit."

Q: How did Joseph know this?

A: Mary probably told him. (What's so hard about believing that?)

If someone should argue, "That's not believable!" I would then ask in return, "Why not?" I would ask people who say, "That's not believable," if they themselves believe Jesus was born of a virgin.

- If a person says, "No, I do not believe Mary was a virgin," then they are not a saved Christian because belief in the virgin birth is required for salvation. (Jn 8:24).
- If a person says, "Well, yes ... I believe in the virgin birth," then I would ask, "How did you come to believe in that? Did someone tell you? If you can believe someone

telling you about the virgin birth, then why couldn't Joseph believe in the virgin birth when his bride-to-be (Mary) told him?" After all, Mary is a chaste and honorable. She has the reputation of telling the truth. She would not fabricate such a story as this and Joseph, knowing her proven character, would naturally believe her.

Therefore, since the angel is not informing Joseph of new information, what is the angel saying?

The angel is saying, "Do not be afraid to take to you Mary as your wife just because the child being born to her is of the Holy Spirit. Instead, she will give birth to a Son and you shall show that you are adopting the Son as your own by naming the child yourself." (When the father names a newborn son, he demonstrates the son is his own son.)

By adopting the baby Jesus as his own, Jesus will be the legal heir of the throne of King David. That's why the angel addressed Joseph as "Joseph the son of David."

In summary: Joseph, upon learning of Mary's divine child, was "afraid" of marrying her. He was afraid he would be interfering with God's plans and he wished to excuse himself from this frightening situation. But the angel informed Joseph that there was a place in God's plan for him. God needed this child to have an adoptive-earthly-father in the lineage of King David so that the child could later, rightfully claim the throne of David to fulfill the prophecy of 2 Sam 7:12-16.

The "humility view" says: Joseph in his humility was afraid to taking Mary as his wife. But the angel told him not to be afraid of taking Mary just because her child was of the Holy Spirit. God has a place for Joseph to fulfill. Joseph, the son of David must name the child, adopting the child as his own. The child will then be a legal heir of the throne of David – fulfilling the prophecy given to David in 2 Sam 7:12-16.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Well ... thanks for listening to our message this week. We invite you to visit our website www.WillOfTheLord.com. There you may download the notes and the audio file of the message you just listened to.

Call again next week when we consider a new subject on ***Bible Talk***.