

A Miracle Difficult to Believe

Introduction

- We have examined the conditions in the OT where the birth of Christ was prophesied – people needed encouragement & hope.
- The majority of people that heard & were recipients of the prophecy did not believe it – no encouragement or hope.
- The majority of people who were recipients of the prophecy right before Christ’s birth did not believe it.
- Only those who believed the prophecy in any generation would receive encouragement & hope.

I. The Circumstances of the Conception (Mt. 1:18)

A. Betrothed

*Matthew tells the story from the perspective of Joseph rather than Mary (Luke). Betrothal [engagement] was a binding agreement between a man & woman where they were legally pledged to be marriage. The period of betrothal was typically one year (1Co. 7:36-38). Betrothal could only be broken by death or divorce. **Joseph was betrothed to Mary in the typical Jewish tradition.***

B. Pregnant

*There was no sexual intimacy during betrothal – “before they came together”. The pregnancy or conception was miraculous involving no human other than Mary – “with child from the Holy Spirit” (Lk. 1:35). **Mary, the circumstances & the child were holy in this conception.***

II. The Response to the Conception (Mt. 1:19-25)

A. Joseph’s initial plan (v. 19)

*Betrothal was a legal bond – “her husband”. Joseph assumed that Mary had committed adultery – **this miracle was difficult for him to believe. 2,000 years later the majority of people still find this miracle too difficult to believe, even some professing believers. Joseph obeyed the law of God & he was compassionate – “just man” & “unwilling to put her to shame”. He planned to divorce her privately. God’s miraculous activity is always amazing, but can sometimes be beyond a believer’s ability to apprehend!***

B. God’s intervention (v. 20-23)

*God faithfully reveals His will. God uses many means to reveal His will (dream & an angel – v. 20a) = **other people, scriptures, nature, circumstances & directly. The will of God is understandable (v. 20b-21) – God’s will for Mary, Joseph & Jesus. “Fear” often keeps believers from knowing & doing God’s will. The will of God never contradicts scripture (v. 22-23). Even when believers are confused, doubtful, fearful, perplexed, discouraged or even disobedient God faithfully intervenes to reveal His will – Moses, Jonah, Gideon, Sarah, Naomi, David, etc.***

C. Joseph’s humble obedience (v. 24-25)

Hearing from God & knowing His will convinced Joseph to obey – “he did” (v. 24). Faith overcomes fear, doubts, confusion & personal opinions. Faith trusts the Lord without understanding (Pr. 3:5). Joseph obeyed God completely: he kept his marital vows (v. 24), he kept Mary pure during pregnancy (v. 25a) & he adopted Jesus to care for Him as his own (v. 25b). Mary & Joseph were both reluctant to obey God initially because this miracle was truly so amazing that it was difficult to believe. God does not choose or use people because of their accomplishments or worth to society, but because of their worth to Him & what He plans to accomplish through them (1Co. 1:26-29; a carpenter & poor young virgin).