

Theme: Jesus' miraculous conception confronted Joseph and Mary with a scandalous, faith-testing situation that required radical obedience, revealing how God fulfills His ancient promises through the most surprising means.

## I. Intro - My Call to Be Pastor of BRCC

- A. Monday was 32 years as the pastor of BRCC
- B. I first heard God's call to be a pastor as a teen, to for BRCC in 1981, and I felt very certain of this call
- C. But the path to it being fulfilled had more twists and turns than I ever imagined! And the surprises continue!
- D. God works in surprising ways - and none more surprising than today's text!

## II. Surprising Revelations

- A. Joseph and Mary are 'betrothed'  
This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother **Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together**, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:18
  - 1. Joseph and Mary are betrothed - 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 stages
    - a. Engaged - often arranged by parents or a matchmaker; not legally binding
    - b. Betrothed - one year period prior to actual marriage; did NOT live together; no sexual relations; but it was legally binding - to end it required a divorce!
    - c. Marriage - when the couple actually came together to live, consummate, and start the family.
  - 2. Joseph and Mary have not come together - they are in stage 2 (betrothal) and have not had any sexual relations.
  - 3. As the date is drawing nearer, we can imagine their excitement - they will soon be married!

- B. A surprising, disturbing revelation - Mary is pregnant!  
This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, **she was found to be with child** through the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:18
  - 1. Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant!
    - a. We don't know how he found out - she may have told him, he may have heard through others (she may have been with Elizabeth - Luke 1), or he may have seen it with his own eyes!
    - b. However he knew, this was not a pleasant surprise!
    - c. Joseph can only see one possible explanation - Mary has been unfaithful and had sexual relations with another man!
  - 2. Joseph's dilemma and initial decision  
Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. Matthew 1:19
    - a. According to Deuteronomy 22, Mary and the man were to be put to death.
    - b. Joseph does not want to do that, but he is a righteous man and can't act like Mary did nothing wrong.
    - c. Joseph decides to divorce Mary, but to do it quietly, to do as little harm to Mary as possible.
      - 1. He does not post it to social media or make it public - he wants to keep it quiet.
      - 2. He is righteous, and so he is not looking for vengeance or to shame Mary - but she can't approve of her being unfaithful to God's Law.
    - d. Weary with sorrow, Joseph lay down his head to sleep, planning to divorce Mary quietly he next day.

### C. An even more surprising revelation from God's angel!

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Matthew 1:20

#### 1. Mary is pregnant - by the Holy Spirit!

- a. Joseph did not expect this!
- b. Ancients knew how women got pregnant (in fact, at least they knew the difference between men and women - which we seem to have forgotten!)
- c. This is even more shocking than the first revelation!

#### 2. Mary was just as shocked as Joseph was!

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"<sup>35</sup> The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Luke 1:34-35

- a. Mary understood where babies come from, so she could not understand how she would give birth!
- b. This was not a natural occurrence but the most staggering miracle in human history!
- c. Of course, they struggled to understand!

### D. A surprising fulfillment of Scripture!

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:<sup>23</sup> "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" — which means, "God with us." Matthew 1:22-23

1. Matthew shows us this was a fulfillment of Scripture
2. But it was a surprising fulfillment!

- a. Isaiah 7:14 in Hebrew (עַלְמָה - almah) often meant young woman, not just a virgin.
- b. It could refer to a virgin, but it seemed to refer to a young virgin in Isaiah's day who later married and then conceived a young son
- c. Interestingly, the LXX is quoted here - and it uses a Greek word (παρθένος - Parthenos) that almost always means a virgin!
- d. Like the promise to David about a son, the ultimate fulfillment looked forward to the coming of Jesus - born to a virgin!
- e. This also made sense of the first prophecy of the coming Redeemer given in Scripture

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring and hers**; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Gen. 3:15

1. The coming Redeemer is called the offspring of the woman - it does not mention a human father!
2. What a surprising fulfillment of God's promise!
3. This surprised everyone from Eve to Mary! (painting)

## III. A Surprising Identity!

### A. The Child is the Son of God!

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because **what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit**." Matthew 1:20

1. As noted above, this is not a normal pregnancy!
2. There is no human father - what a miracle!
3. This Child is none other than the Eternal Son of God taking our humanity through Mary!

4. The angel does not give a medical or scientific explanation - we could never understand anyway!
5. But he lets Joseph - and us - know that this Child is truly God and truly human!
6. Matthew confirms this by quoting Scripture!  
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him **Immanuel**” — which means, “**God with us.**”  
Matthew 1:22-23
  - a. Matthew tells us the Hebrew word Immanuel means “God with us”
  - b. This is not literally the name of the Child but rather His identity - He is God with us!
  - c. In Jesus, God Himself has come to be with us and to rescue us!

- B. The Child is God coming to save us from our sins!  
She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:21
1. Once again, in Hebrew, names had real meanings!
  2. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua
  3. The name Jesus/Joshua means “The LORD saves”
  4. Once again, this highlights the Deity of Jesus - He is the Lord Himself coming to save us.
  5. He comes to save us from our sins - this is our key need! (Remember the genealogy!)
  6. Many in Israel were looking for a political and military Messiah to save them from Rome - but that was not what they really needed!

## IV. Applying the Word

- A. Receiving forgiveness for my sins!
1. The heart of the Christmas story is Jesus coming to forgive our sins!
  2. Like the people in Jesus’ day, we are often tempted to be more concerned with things other than our sin, but this is a fatal error!
  3. God has diagnosed our terminal disease - and it is sin! Focusing on other things is a distraction from my real need!
  4. Jesus has come to bring forgiveness for my sin - just like the people in His family tree!
  5. Have you looked to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing - not in a vague way, but by specifically confessing your sin and need, and asking Him?
  6. Cry out to Him today - this is why He came!
- B. Trusting and obeying God’s will for my life!  
When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. Matthew 1:24-25
- “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” Luke 1:38
1. Matthew concludes with Joseph’s trust and obedience to what God told him!
  2. Luke records that Mary responded the same way!
  3. But this was not easy! God’s will was working out in a very surprising way! They had to trust even when they did not fully understand!

4. Sometimes we do not understand why God commands something or how it is really for our good - but we must respond with faith like this!
5. Sometimes it seems like God's promises to us are failing - but they will be fulfilled in His time, not ours!
6. This was what I learned regarding my call to be a pastor! This calls for persevering faith!
7. This was also costly obedience! Think of the scandal that surrounded Mary, like the women in the genealogy!
8. Think of the whispering Joseph heard about how his fiancée had been unfaithful, and he did not deal with it as he should!
9. Trusting, embracing, and obeying God's will is often costly!
10. Example: sexual purity before marriage
  - a. This text revolves around biblical sexual ethics!
  - b. I faced the opposite problem as a young Marine!
  - c. My fellow Marines mocked me for following the biblical practice and reserving sex for marriage./
  - d. I took a lot of mocking and pressure at the Academy and in the USMC.
  - e. My conversation on Okinawa - a fellow Marine regretted not following the biblical teaching!
11. Following God's will may be costly in the short term, but it pays eternal dividends!
12. If there is some area where obeying God appears difficult or costly, be like Joseph and Mary!

13. God will be with you as you walk in faith and obedience!

### C. The Table of Peace

1. Here we remember and celebrate the peace that Jesus has brought between God and us!
2. Here we celebrate sins forgiven!
3. Here we receive strength to trust and obey!

### Surprise Pregnancy

Matthew 1:18-25  
 December 7, 2025  
 Communion  
 Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas; biblical characters; Incarnation; salvation and deliverance; faith; obedience; prophecy (Old Testament)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

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<sup>20</sup> But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-25