

An Angel Appears to Joseph

Joseph discovers Mary is with child before their marriage and plans to divorce her quietly, but an angel appears in a dream revealing that the child is from the Holy Spirit and will save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:18-25

CHARACTERS: Joseph, Mary, Angel of the Lord, Jesus

THEMES: Divine Revelation, Obedience, Faith, The Incarnation, Fulfillment of Prophecy

THE BIRTH OF Jesus Christ came about in a manner that confounded human expectation and revealed the supernatural workings of God. Mary, espoused to Joseph, was found to be with child before they came together as husband and wife. In Jewish custom, betrothal was a binding legal relationship, though the couple did not yet live together. For Mary to be pregnant during this time placed her under suspicion of unfaithfulness, which carried severe social and legal consequences.

Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to make Mary a public example, determined to put her away privily—to divorce her quietly without public accusation or shame. This decision revealed Joseph's righteous character: he would uphold the law, yet show mercy. However, while he thought on these things, divine intervention altered his course entirely.

An angel of the Lord appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.' The angel addressed Joseph by his Davidic lineage, a significant detail foreshadowing the royal identity of the child. The message was clear: Mary had not been unfaithful. The child within her womb was conceived by the Holy Spirit, a miraculous work of God.

The angel continued: 'And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.' The name Jesus (Yeshua in Hebrew) means 'the LORD saves,' and the angel explicitly stated the child's mission—salvation from sin. This was no ordinary child, but the long-awaited Messiah.

Matthew noted that all this fulfilled the prophecy spoken by Isaiah: 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.' The virgin birth was not an accident of history, but the fulfillment of ancient prophecy, demonstrating God's sovereign plan.

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel commanded. He took Mary as his wife, yet knew her not until she had brought forth her firstborn son. And Joseph called his name JESUS, obediently fulfilling the angel's instruction. Through Joseph's faithfulness and obedience, God's redemptive plan advanced, bringing the Savior into the world.