



The Dilemma of Christmas

SUNDAY, December 18, 2022

Key Scripture: Matthew 1:18–25

INTRODUCTION

We're in our third week of Christmas in the Neighborhood series. This week, we focus on Joseph. While we don't have any recorded words of Joseph, Scripture tells us he was righteous, a man of integrity, and from the line of David and ultimately Abraham. In our passage this week, we look at the dilemma Joseph faced, the dream he had, and the decision he was forced to make. We all are faced with dilemmas. And every dilemma requires a choice. And every choice has a consequence. Ultimately, it's His voice, your choice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Think back to Sunday's message. What do you remember? Review your notes if you have them.
2. Share about a recent dilemma you've faced?
3. Read Matthew 1:18-25. What was Joseph's dilemma? How would you have reacted if you were in his sandals?
4. Do you feel like God speaks to you in the midst of your dilemmas? How?
5. What five things did the angel of the Lord tell Joseph above?
6. Which of them did Joseph obey?
7. What was the outcome of Joseph's obedience?
8. Share an experience of personal obedience and the outcome.
9. Is there something you're dealing with currently that requires obedience? How can we help?
10. What's one thing you learned from Sunday's message and today's discussion that will help you become a better disciple of Christ, and help others do the same?

Big Now What:

Choose Obedience.



NOTES

As Matthew launched the account of Jesus' birth, note that he was careful to highlight the title "Christ"—the title he used in the preceding passage that demonstrated Jesus had the right to claim deity. Watch for Matthew's use of this title throughout his Gospel. His purpose in writing was to make the case for Jesus as the promised King. To understand the significance of some statements in this passage, it is necessary to understand the Jewish marriage customs of the day. The bride and groom went through a period of betrothal or engagement. In that culture and time, betrothal was virtually as binding as marriage. In this waiting period, Mary was found to be pregnant. Matthew was careful to protect the virtue of Mary and the supernatural origin of Christ. Why is it so important that the Christ, the promised king, be born to a virgin? The virgin birth is more than a miracle to draw attention to the unique nature of this child. Because Mary was a virgin, only God could have been the father of Jesus, making Jesus the one and only God-Man in all the universe. God's plan would have been impossible if Jesus had been anything less. 1:19. A betrothed couple was as good as married, and breaking off the relationship was seen as divorce, even though the couple had not yet been married. It also helps us gain a better perspective of the emotional state of Mary and Joseph when we realize that she was probably in her teens at the time of these events. The minimum marriageable age in Israel was twelve for women and thirteen for men. To remain unmarried as late as one's twenties may have been cause for social embarrassment. 1:20-21. Mary, initially fearful of being an unwed mother, accepted God's revealed intentions for her. And Joseph, initially not all that sure himself about the "virgin birth," was originally thinking divorce, albeit quietly and with no public scandal. But when Joseph was approached by God through the angel, he accepted his role and did precisely as he was instructed by God.

DIGGING DEEPER

On listening to the Holy Spirit: <https://craigkeener.com/how-can-we-hear-the-holy-spirit-accurately/>

[The Art of Listening Prayer: Finding God's Voice Amidst Life's Noise](https://www.amazon.com/Art-Listening-Prayer-Finding-Amidst/dp/0975430564) by Seth Barnes, October 15, 2004.
<https://www.amazon.com/Art-Listening-Prayer-Finding-Amidst/dp/0975430564>

Pastor Amos' last year's Christmas message on wisdom: <https://www.cvchurch.org/messages/wisdom-week-1/>