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# Mary and Joseph – Chosen by God

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Christmas is approaching, and it's a time to be happy and merry. Even the word "Christmas" infers it has to do with Christ, our Savior. Unfortunately, however, Christmas has become a holiday for adults and children alike that focuses not on Christ, but on Santa, toys, food, parties, and jingle bells. But let's revisit the time when Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

The writer of the book of Matthew states that Mary was betrothed (or pledged) to Joseph when she was found to be pregnant. When one was betrothed in that culture, it was the equivalent to a civil contract of marriage and was confirmed by a religious rite. During the time when Christ was born, it was more like an engagement, but carried with it religious overtones which made it sacred. The betrothal was formally made at the home of the bride under a tent or canopy. In the strictest sense of the word, the betrothal ceremony was sacred and usually arranged by the father (although it was sometimes arranged by the mother if the father was dead). In rare cases, the betrothal was arranged by a guardian and the consent of the brothers and sisters was required. A betrothal was like a marriage, and could only be broken by a formal 'bill of divorcement'.

Because of Mary's pregnancy, the situation became complicated. Upon her return from her visit to Judea, the fact of her pregnancy could not be hidden. However, Mary told Joseph that she was pregnant. At this point, Joseph had to do some serious thinking. The Bible says he was a "righteous man"; and indeed he was. After serious consideration, he arrived at two options available to him. He could publicly accuse her of adultery and have her stoned (Deut. 22:13-21) or he could divorce her secretly, thus saving her from a public disgrace (Matt. 1:19). Notice that Joseph was careful in his decision. While he was thinking about his course of action, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, revealing that Mary's conception was from the Holy Spirit and he should not fear to take her as his wife. The angel further told Joseph that the child

was to be named "Jesus" ... "because he will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

It is clear that Matthew considered the prophecy of Isaiah as referring to a "virgin" and not just a "young woman". The definitive article "the" used by Isaiah had one virgin in mind – Mary. The angel had promised Mary she would bear a son, and that His name would be Jesus. He would be called Immanuel (God with us) – the eternal God, and One with the Father from all eternity. What a miracle. Christ united humanity and deity in one person forever. Such was the revelation given to Joseph by the angel. Joseph's response was one of faith and obedience. He never asked for a confirmation or explanation. He accepted the news that Isaiah's prophecy concerning the virgin birth was the accurate explanation of Mary's pregnancy, and

obeying the angel's command "he took Mary home as his wife" (Matt 1:24). At this point, Joseph demonstrates an amazing godly restraint, having no union with Mary until the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:25). Thus Christ was born with a godly earthly mother and father.

Let us focus on the Christ Child who was born in a stable on a special wintry eve. Let us praise Him for going from the cradle to the grave and from the grave to the sky. Let us rejoice that He lives forevermore as our Lord and Savior!



*Merry Christmas from my family to yours!*



# Do You Hear What I Hear?

“*Do You Hear What I Hear?*” is one of my favorite Christmas songs. And all kinds of sounds remind us that it’s “that time of year” again — bells ringing, choirs singing, and music filling the air. Yet in the midst of the joyous sounds of the “holly-jolly holiday season” are other sounds — those of grief and despair.

There are the cries of anguish and death from the people in India held hostage by radical terrorists. And the cries of a family who lost a loved one in a stampede by “holiday shoppers” seeking a “bargain!” There are the prayers of soldiers in Iraq who will not be home for Christmas this year ... and the list goes on. If we could go back to that first Christmas, we would also hear many different sounds—the sounds of a busy inn, of animals feeding in a stable, of angels singing on high, of excited shepherds visiting a baby in a manger, and the sweet sound of Mary singing a lullaby to her new born son.

Yet even these happy sounds are soon replaced by the loud and angry shouts of soldiers, the cries of children, and the wailing of mothers as Herod issues orders to kill all the little boys in Bethlehem two years old and under. And thus the prophecy of Jeremiah is fulfilled ...

The Bible is always truthful. So, when it tells the story of the first Christmas, it not only tells about angels, shepherds, and wise men, but also about Herod and his hatred, and the murder of little children.

So ... are the sounds of today much different than those of 2000 years ago? Probably not ... **but we have hope!**

- 1. Jesus came to bear the suffering with us*
- 2. Jesus came to lead us through the uncertainty in the world*
- 3. Jesus came that we may overcome death*
- 4. **OUR DELIVERER IS COMING AGAIN** ... and there will be no more tears or death, and we will have everlasting life with HIM!*

**Keep your eyes on the only ONE who can deliver you.**

**Merry Christmas!**

**May your life be full of JOY!**  
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