

ANTICIPATION!

Joseph eagerly awaits creating a life and life, together with Mary, his wife. They are formally engaged, in a very real sense 'married' yet having not physically consummated their relationship. We can only imagine the conversations Joseph and Mary have engaged in, the hopes, dreams and plans excitedly shared between them.

DEVASTATION: Matthew 1:18-22

Can you imagine what was racing through Joseph's mind as Mary begins to 'show'? The baby bump told a story that he couldn't get his head around. He knew he wasn't the dad. That is all he knew for sure. But, how he loved and cared for Mary. In the ache and angst of his heart, he wanted to protect Mary. Matt. 1: 19 "...A Jewish betrothal period...could only be broken by divorce...he would sign the necessary legal papers but not have her judged publicly and stoned (Deut.22:23-24)." We can only speculate on the emotional condition of Joseph...a mix of bewilderment, shame, anger, compassion, confusion...yet, he wanted to act righteously and compassionately. That was his resolve.

REVELATION: Matthew 1:20-23

An angel from God reveals truth to Joseph in a dream. There are times when God spoke and speaks to people in dreams. This phrase 'in a dream' occurs 5 x in the first two chapters of Matthew. A guiding principle to discern if a dream is of God involves compliance with the revealed character of God. God will not 'speak' words or share visions of what could be that are in contradiction to his character and moral standards, especially as revealed in the teachings and conduct of Jesus.

The angel addresses Joseph by name and lineage. "*Joseph son of David*". Why? Because Jesus was of the 'house of David', Jesus was "the legal son of Joseph." The angel reveals an astounding truth, the baby growing in Mary's womb is of the Spirit of God. A miracle is being created in the shape of a baby...You can only imagine what is going through Joseph's mind!

The angel reveals more critical information. Vs. 21. No need to fuss about choosing a name...probably relieved! "*You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*"

Pause and Ponder the Passion of God's Plan and Love: Do you understand who Jesus is and what he longs to provide for you? Salvation from the power and penalty of sin. What is sin? The failure to love...God, supremely, others sacrificially and ourselves wisely. How did Jesus provide salvation?

By willingly sacrificing himself on the cross as payment, full payment for our sins. Yours included.

How do we experience forgiveness of sins? It begins by admitting that I am a sinner and only the perfect sacrifice of Jesus can satisfy God's requirement for just punishment of sin. I can't save myself, regardless of how hard I try. My good works will never compensate for my sins. Never. I must transfer hope for forgiveness from self dependence to reliance upon Jesus. I John 1:9 And salvation is not only from sin, but also to a life with hope, purpose and fulfillment.

Let's continue to consider the revelation Joseph received. Vss. 22-23 "*All this was to fulfill*" a specific, historical prophecy from God. Isaiah 7:14 Friends, check out the web site, Jews for Jesus, Top 40 Most Helpful Messianic Prophecies, very instructive and inspiring.

Pause and Ponder the Reliability of Biblical Prophecy regarding Jesus. And note too another name given: Immanuel, God with us. Friends, let this be a Christmas season where the truth of 'God with you' can breathe hope, comfort, courage and compassion into your heart and mind.

Will you consider the revelation of God, that Jesus is 'God with the skin on', wanting to be personally involved in your life?

COOPERATION: Matthew 1:24-25

Joseph trusted God's words of reassurance and direction fully. He warmly and willingly maintained his relationship with Mary, weathering the raised eyebrows, the behind the back whispers and stayed the course with Mary...all the way to Bethlehem, and welcomed the baby Jesus one silent and holy night.

Pause and Ponder this question...will you cooperate with God in living as a follower of Jesus and serving others in his name? What holds you back? What inspires you to live cooperatively with God?

Let these 4 words turn over in your mind and stir your heart this Christmas season:
Which word and which aspect of Joseph's story intersects with your life at this time?

Anticipation

Devastation

Revelation

Cooperation

What questions about Christmas have been answered today for you?

What questions do you have about the Christmas story as a result of today?

What question might God be asking of you today in light of Joseph's story?

Let us take heart and find hope and courage to engage life honestly and thoughtfully, with God at our side.

The Drive Home

Series Title: **The Questions Christmas Answers**

Message Title: **Joseph's Dilemma in Four Words**

Date: December 16, 2018

CONNECT:

1. What does the word dilemma mean and what kind of dilemma's have you experienced?
Relational? Financial? Physical? Relational? Spiritual?
2. Let's look at the 4 words that capture Joseph's dilemma: which word most resonates with you...and why?
Anticipation. Devastation. Revelation. Cooperation.
3. Matthew 1:18: What did Joseph anticipate?
4. Matthew 1: 19-22: Devastation...what do you think was going through his mind? Have you experienced a devastating event in your life? How were you affected emotionally, relationally, spiritually, etc?
5. Matthew 1:20-23: Revelation: How did God's word, through an angel, in a dream, settle Joseph and give direction?
How has God's word helped you endure and navigate a devastating event?
6. Matthew 1:24-25: Cooperation: How did Joseph cooperate with God, in specifics?
How has cooperating with God in hard times shaped and formed you, again, in specifics?

APPLY:

1. Which of these 4 words has stirred something deep within you...and why?
In your here and now life, who have you learned about cooperation with God from, in the midst of hard times?