

International Conversation Cafe

New Testament: The Christmas Story Starts with Mary and Joseph, Matthew 1, Luke 1

Let's say that you were a 16-year-old unmarried female that became pregnant. Your family was ashamed, you could not go to school, and the entire neighborhood was talking about what a bad person you were. How would you feel?

Now let's say that you were a man that was engaged to marry that 16-year-old female. You knew that you did not cause the pregnancy. How would you feel?

The unmarried female's name is Mary and her fiancé is Joseph. The first Scripture tells how Joseph dealt with the shame. The time is around 1 AD and the place is a small village in Israel, Nazareth.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, ²³ "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (*Isaiah 7:14*) The name Immanuel means "God with us." ²⁴ Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not make love to her until after she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.



Mengs, Anton Raphael. The Dream of Saint Joseph. 1773/74. Oil on oak wood, 114 x 86 cm. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

1. *Retell the story in your own words.*
2. *Describe Joseph's character.*
3. *How do you think Jesus would "save his people from their sins"?*

The second Scripture explains Mary's pregnancy; how it came about and Mary's reaction to it.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month after Elizabeth had become pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. **27** He was sent to a virgin. The girl was engaged to a man named Joseph. He came from the family line of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel greeted her and said, "The Lord has given you special favor. He is with you." **29** Mary was very upset because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very pleased with you. **31** You will become pregnant and give birth to a son. You must name him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. **33** He will rule forever over his people, who came from Jacob's family. His kingdom will never end." **34** "How can this happen?" Mary asked the angel. "I am a virgin." **35** The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God. **38** "I serve the Lord," Mary answered. "May it happen to me just as you said it would." Then the angel left her.



1. Retell the story of Mary and the angel.
2. What is surprising about this story?
3. Describe Mary's character and her relationship to God.
4. How are Mary and Joseph an example to us?
5. What do you think is going on in the two paintings? What do you see that makes you say that? How does the painting help you understand the story?

Stomer, Matthias. Annunciation. 1633-38. Oil on canvas, 1600 x1130 mm. Uffizi Gallery. Florence, Italy