

Shortly after Mary learns that she is to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit, she travels to see her cousin Elizabeth and stays there for three months. Likely she is there when John the Baptist is born. Then she returns to Nazareth. She is now into her second trimester of the pregnancy, which means that she is beginning to show her condition.

In a culture where everyone knows everyone else and being nosy is as common as dirt, it is not long before her condition is discovered. To the shock of her family, neighbors, and Joseph, she is pregnant. The question on everyone's mind is: "Who is the father and why would she commit adultery when she was espoused to Joseph".

Accusations run rampant through the community. "She has committed adultery, she should be stoned." "She doesn't deserve a man like Joseph." "Why was she gone for three months and why did she commit this grievous sin?" "Why didn't her male protector prevent this."

Even Joseph has questions and is grieved over the situation. "Should he follow the Law of Moses, and have her stoned?" "Should he just give her a bill of divorcement?" "What about all of the preparations he has made for them to be a family?" "Why would she treat him like this?" "Is he not good enough for her?" I am sure all of these and more questions went through his mind as he tried to sort out the predicament.

In our culture this happens so frequently that it has become more or less accepted in some circles, and for many it is no big deal. So as we read this story it doesn't have the impact on us that it should have. But it did have great impact on those living in this culture.

Mary's honor is completely destroyed within the community and Joseph's is weakened. In their culture Honor is everything. It defines who you are. Shame is to be avoided at all costs, but shame is written all over this situation.

Rumors are running rampant. Fingers are being pointed and accusations are numerous. It is no wonder that the community and individuals are thinking these thoughts. They are missing one important piece of information and adding in its place their own suppositions as to the cause of this pregnancy.

The missing element? Namely that this pregnancy is unique – caused by God to produce a Son of Man who is equally the Son of God.

Joseph was "on board" with the rest of the community until an angel, who explained the situation, visited him.

Her husband-to-be, Yosef, was a man who did what was right; so he made plans to break the engagement quietly, rather than put her to public shame.

But while he was thinking about this, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream and said, "Yosef, son of David, do not be afraid to take Miryam home with you as your wife; for what has been conceived in her is from the Ruach HaKodesh. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, (meaning Adonai saves) because he will save his people from their sins."

All this happened in order to fulfill what Adonai had said through the prophet (Isaiah), "The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him 'Immanu El.'" (God is with us)

When Yosef awoke he did what the angel of Adonai had told him to do – he took Miryam home to be his wife, but he did not have sexual relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Yeshua.
Matthew 1:19-23 (CJB)

All of Israel was waiting for the Messiah but the promise and the conditions surrounding that promise is shrouded within the story in Isaiah about King Ahaz and an army seeking to destroy Judah. It is no wonder that most people did not recognize the signs of the Messiah being born.

Read Isaiah 7 to see if you would understand this prophecy, if you were reading it before it happened. Much of prophecy is not clear to us until it happens. Then one can say "Oh that's what God said would happen".

Joseph as well as Mary needed divine direction and understanding before they were able to do what God desired for their lives. The fact that they were willing to follow God's direction shows their spiritual maturity and commitment to following God in spite of the circumstances that might follow such actions.

Next – The journey to Bethlehem and the Birth

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