

December 13, 2020

“Called to Be Immanuel”
Lesson 2 of Unit

Matthew 1:18-25

Intro

Today’s lesson focuses on Joseph of Nazareth, the earthly father of Jesus. Nazareth is so small and insignificant that it isn’t mentioned in any sources from Jesus’ time except the Bible. The majority of the people there worked as subsistence farmers or trade laborers, like Joseph being a carpenter.

His occupation produced long workdays and sometimes dangerous conditions. Whatever the reason for it, Joseph isn’t mentioned after he and Mary go back to Jerusalem to find Jesus when he was 12 years old, asking questions of the religious leaders.

Joseph appears to be an ordinary kind of person living in an ordinary kind of town. But he stands out in several ways, as this lesson explores.

Read Matthew 1:18-25

1. What do we learn of significance about Joseph’s engagement to Mary (vs. 18)? How is the Jewish custom of being betrothed (“pledged to be married”) different from what an engagement is to us? (Not in our text; you’ll need to look this up, but it’s worth it!)
2. What was the consequence if a betrothed woman was found pregnant before the wedding day (vs.19)? (See Deut. 22:22) What does it say about Joseph that he “did not want to expose her to public disgrace”? What is implied about Joseph in saying that he was “faithful to the law”?
3. Who else in the Bible had an angel appear to them in a dream (vs. 20)? What do those people have in common with each other? What does this show about Joseph that he too has dreams from God?
4. The angel in vs. 20 tells Joseph not to be afraid? Of what is he to not be afraid, and why might he be afraid of that?

5. In vs. 21, the angel tells Joseph what to name this child? Why is that name to be given to the child?
You may want to find the answer to question # 7 before answering this one.
6. What does in mean if a prophecy is “fulfilled” (vs. 22)? Who is the prophet Matthew is referring to?
7. What is the reference for the OT scripture quoted in vs. 23? Find how many years before Christ’s birth this prophecy was given.
8. What does Joseph do when he awakens from this dream (vs. 24)? What do his actions tell us about Joseph? How far in her pregnancy is Mary at this time (see Luke 1:56)? How might this fact have influenced Joseph’s decision about what he does with Mary here?
9. What does in do in vs. 25 that is obeying the angel’s instructions, and what does he do of his own will? For what reason do you think Matthew includes this information about what Matthew does on his own?

Application: Joseph appears to be a normal guy living a normal life, but some very extraordinary things happen to him. Our text refers to this as a “Who me? / Yes, you!” situation. Joseph certainly didn’t expect these events, and we can imagine him being surprised and shocked, much as we might be in similar circumstances. But the fact that he was faithful before being asked showed that God could use him in this heightened situation that called for greater faithfulness. Joseph’s example of an ordinary but faithful person being called by God to be used for his purposes should ring true for us. We aren’t well-know perhaps, but we are capable of being faithful where we are, and of letting God use as in some way that we may not be expecting.

Prayer: Father God, help us remember that You can use us if we are faithful to follow You. We ask for Your Spirit to be with us, helping us to be obedient whenever You call. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

