

Matthew 1:18-25 – Joseph’s Surrender

1. Joseph surrendered his personal pride

Three stages to the Jewish wedding – The first stage of a Jewish marriage was called the engagement. Parents normally picked the spouses of their children. Many times, the couple never met until the second stage.

The second stage of a Jewish marriage was called the betrothal, or the “kiddushin.” During a brief ceremony, the bridegroom would pay the dowry, or the “mohar,” which was known as the bride price. It was often paid in cattle or clothing or money, or all three, depending on the wealth of the bridegroom. The “kiddushin” usually lasted a year.

In Joseph and Mary’s day, the “kiddushin” was binding. They were actually considered husband and wife. They were considered legally married, even though the third stage had not yet been reached.

The betrothal period was a time when both man and woman prepared themselves for the wedding. During the betrothal the woman would be collecting all the things necessary for the home and things needed to be a wife and a homemaker. The man would be busily preparing a dwelling place which was most often built onto his father’s house.

The third stage of a Jewish marriage was called the “hoopa” and was the time when the wedding ceremony would take place. This ceremony involved several days of feasting and celebrating the goodness of God in establishing another household of faith.

Analogies to Christ’s return: **John 14:2** “*In My Father’s house are many mansions ... I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also.*” Jesus has gone to the Father’s house to prepare a place for us and He will come again to gather His bridegroom unto Himself!

Vs. 18

Now we can understand the devastation experienced by Joseph. Instead of celebrating, rejoicing, and feasting he hears the news that Mary is pregnant. What would Joseph do?

Vs. 19

Matthew 1:19a begins with a reminder of the legally binding relationship Joseph has with Mary. “*And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man . . .*” He could legally end the “kiddushin.” The rabbinical writings allowed a man in this position to either accuse his betrothed publicly or divorce her quietly.

The Greek word for “righteous” or “just” refers to the heart as well as to the conduct. Being a just man Joseph wanted to do what was above the law. **Matthew 1:19b**, “. . . *and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.*”

Didn’t God do above what He had to do to save us?

2. Joseph surrendered his privacy (Vs. 20-21)

Joseph will become the stepfather of the Messiah. He is going to raise the Savior.” After the birth of Christ, Joseph faces the reality of how much his life would change.

- Family and friends abandon the young couple
- Shepherds show up unannounced to worship the baby Jesus
- Dignitaries from the land of Persia visited by an entourage of Magi that brought with them costly gifts
- Three times in three years, he relocated his family
- They must run for the safety – their lives are threatened

The will of God would be inconvenient, uncomfortable, surprising, dangerous, tiring, confusing, demanding, and very, very public for Joseph. No blissful, quiet life for Joseph.

What has God asked us to surrender for His Son?

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3. Joseph surrendered his personal priorities (Vs. 24)

Joseph chose to give his life to care for Mary and raise his son, along with other children who will come along later, according to the gospel accounts.

The father was responsible to pass down the traditions, customs, ordinances, and the laws of God to him. Where is the parenting manual for raising the Messiah?

Application

1. Being in the will of God is not as much a matter of convenience as it is a sacrifice.

We need to sacrifice as Joseph demonstrated for us with his life. We should say, “*Lord, put my education to use for Your glory. You can have my children and my house. You can have access to my calendar and my schedule and my wallet and my career . . . You can have my life.*” **Romans 12:1**, “*that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy ...*”

How many Christians attempt to avoid spiritual battles, and avoid anything that would cause them to engage in the cause of Christ to advance His name? Unfortunately, there are far too many. Jesus said in **Matthew 9:37** “*The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*”

Following the will of God has more to do with sacrifice than convenience. We need to be willing like Joseph to set aside our pride, give up our privacy, and surrender our priorities for God.

2. Surrendering our lives for God to use does not require experience, just obedience

How many giants did King David kill before he stood in front of Goliath? None. How many Messiahs did Joseph raise before kneeling over the Messiah in a manger in Bethlehem? None. God is not looking for experience, but readiness, willingness, obedience!

Verse 24, “*And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him...*” The tense of the Greek verb indicates an immediate action. Obeying God really is as simple as that - Joseph obeyed the word of God immediately.

However, it will cost Joseph everything – his pride – his privacy – his priorities – his life.

What has God asked us to surrender for His Son?