

## ***DREAMING JOSEPH*** 12-24-13

Matthew 1:**18-25**

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.<sup>19</sup> And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."<sup>22</sup> Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."<sup>24</sup> And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,<sup>25</sup> but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.*

On Sunday we looked at this same passage but then we focused on the name which God appointed for His Son -- the name of Jesus which means *Savior*. This evening I want to look at the dream of Joseph. There are two very famous Biblical characters named *Joseph*. And what is it that they both have in common? They were both dreamers. Not dreamers in the sense of the Wright brothers dreaming of airplanes, but they had real sleepy-time dreams that were massively important. Have you ever had a dream that was really important to you? Huh? Who here has had a dream that made a real difference in your life? I would love to hear your stories. Anyway, the dream we read of here brought resolution to a most perplexing situation. Joseph and Mary were betrothed. That was like engagement on steroids. They were legally united but the ceremony and the consummation was still ahead. And now, Mary shows up pregnant. Joseph must have been out of his mind. This was not at all like the Mary he thought he knew. We have no idea what Mary tried to tell him to explain herself, but really, what could she say that any man would have believed? So Joseph is heart-broken, confused, hurting deeply. And then, then, he has a dream that makes all the difference in the world for him, and for us.

In this dream, an angel appears to Joseph. Our passage says *behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream*. Behold! Now there is a good Christmas word, right? We read it several times. Behold a star! Behold shepherds! Behold angels! Behold a baby! So, I will just run with that approach and ask you to behold from verse 20 of Matthew 1, three things. First, behold a speaking God. About 90% of Americans believe in God. But how many believe in a speaking God? In a God who communicates with the ones He makes in His image? Big difference. You

see, I am a Christian because God has communicated with me. He has spoken to me and that voice has changed me forever. It did that for Joseph and Mary too. Behold, an angel appeared. The word "angel" means "messenger." Angels usually communicate something from God and this dream-angel does exactly that. And you will notice that the word of God brought light where there was darkness, brought clarity where there was confusion, brought healing where there was pain. Behold a speaking God. The God who is didn't set the world machine into motion and then sit back on his cosmic recliner to observe. He is involved with those He made, and chooses, graciously, to reveal Himself. He does it in dreams, in visions, in prophetic messages, in the Scriptures and most importantly, He did it in His very Son whose birth the angels explains in our verse. If you have not heard the voice of God in your life, then ask for it. Ask God tonight. Say, *Father in heaven, teach my heart how to listen and then speak your word to me.* Better yet -- say that with an open Bible in hand. Behold, a speaking God. How great is that!?

Secondly, behold a prophecy fulfilled. This book is so very amazing. One of the reasons I believe it truly comes from God is because of the many prophecies in it that have been fulfilled in the most incredible ways. 900 years or so before our story, God appeared to King David and told him that he was going to have a descendant who would be a son of God and whose kingdom would never end. Numerous times after that the Old Testament prophets would mention this son of David who would be king and rule with wisdom and justice and peace. They came to call him the Messiah, which, in Greek is the Christ. The one thing everyone agreed on is that the Messiah would have to be from the line of David. The Scriptures made that plain. That is why the angel notes in his little speech that Joseph is what? A son, a descendant of David. The point is that he is in the royal line. Two verses later we read *Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.* Exactly! Isaiah 7:14 had foretold that a virgin would be with child and that child will be God with us. Awesome! Hard to believe - yes, yes. Joseph had a dream from God, but you know what? I don't think Joseph would have believed in the dream had he not found the alternative to be so hard to believe. He could not imagine Mary violating his trust that way. It just did not make sense. Now think -- this Jesus story is preposterous on so many fronts. Why do bright people believe it? Because God confirms it through prophetic consistency, through miracles, through the changed lives of those who buy it - but also because the alternatives make no sense. My point? This world makes no sense! We can't figure it out. Apart from what God reveals to us in this book, it all seems so confusing and pointless. But when you hear God saying of Jesus, *this is*

*my beloved Son, listen to Him, trust Him, follow Him* - the light comes on and the darkness flees. This was Joseph's experience. His world made no sense. It was dark, confusing, bitter. But one sweet dream, one word from God, and everything changed. Hallelujah!

So, Behold a speaking God. Behold a prophecy fulfilled, and finally, behold an immaculate conception. Are you familiar with that term? Immaculate conception? Walk through our airport and you see a reminder of what? Not the immaculate conception, but the immaculate reception by Franco Harris on December 23, 1972. That improbable catch made some Steeler fans believe in God. But the term "immaculate conception" as coined by the Catholic church actually does not pertain to Jesus so much as to Mary. They teach that Mary, from the time of her conception, was without sin. Nothing in the Bible would suggest that to us, but in our passage we have testimony from an angel that the conception of Jesus, in the womb of Mary, was indeed "immaculate" - without the taint of sin because it was the work of the Holy Spirit of God. No human paternity. The birth of Jesus was a miracle. And so, Charlie Brown, that is what Christmas is all about. The miracle birth of a baby to a virgin in the town of Bethlehem, long ago and far away.

Why should you believe that? Oh, the reasons are many. Behold, the prophecies made centuries prior of just this kind of thing - even naming the little town where the birth would occur. Behold the life that this miracle child went on to live. Behold His power! Behold His words! Behold His wisdom! Behold how He dies! and the Behold how the same one who had a miracle birth is then the One who rises from the dead. Behold the changed lives of his followers! Behold how He continues to speak today, with the result that all over the world this very night billions are meeting to worship Him and declare that He, this Bethlehem child, is God, is Lord, and is the Savior of all who believe. Matthew chapter one, verse 20 is either packed full of nonsense and lies, or it describes the miracle of God that comes into a bitter, dark, ugly world and changes everything, for Joseph, for me, and for you. Sweet dreams!