

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Arrival: A Study of Matthew 1–7

### STUDY THREE

## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*

*Think about this outstanding individual, Joseph. He fully accepted what he could never fully explain.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**J**ESUS said, “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me” (Matthew 5:11 NASB).

That blessing would fall first upon the subject of this study, Joseph. He received the blessing before Jesus ever spoke it. He received it amid a situation unlike any other situation of those who received it.

But he did receive it. It took an angel to convince him. Surely many wagged their heads at Joseph, scorning Mary's pregnancy. With courage, integrity, and faith, craftsman Joseph willingly bore the reproach of Christ without fully comprehending the divine plan.

We don't know much about Joseph. Yet, we do know that this strong man of quiet faith proves worthy of our contemplation—our task for this study—and makes him worthy of our emulation—our goal for this study.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Make the prayer below your own before studying God's Word.

*Father, thank You for the privilege of having Your Word. How precious and comforting it is to me. Please give me the patience, insight, and sensitivity to learn and receive it that I may fully benefit from it. As I read of a courageous couple who exercised great faith, allow me to stand in awe of Your Work and walk in the same steps of faith. In the wondrous name of Christ, amen.*



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

In his book, *Searching the Scriptures*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll helps us understand why we take time when we read God's Word:

Most people read their Bible in a hurry so they can get through an entire chapter in ten or fifteen minutes. But if you wish to become a serious student of the Bible, you need to forget your speed-reading course. There's no rush.<sup>1</sup>

Remember that you'll profit from these studies more so if you do them slowly in multiple sittings rather than hurriedly in just one.



#### *Searching the Scriptures* Study Tool

Just as we need tools in the kitchen to help us cook our meals, we need Bible study tools to help us feed ourselves God's Word. An essential tool for our studies is Pastor Chuck's two-volume commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15* and *Insights on Matthew 16–28*.<sup>2</sup>



#### Observation: A Revelation in a Dream

A helpful practice in observing a text is to put yourself in the key character's "sandals." Imagine Joseph hearing news that his betrothed bride is pregnant. If you were in Joseph's position, what thoughts and feelings would you have? Imagine the room where Joseph slept and the mat on which he was laying when the angel appeared to him in a dream. What would you have done when you woke from the dream? Let's see what Joseph did.

Read *Matthew 1:18–25*. In the space below, write down your observations.



## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*

How do verses 1:18a and 1:22–23 differ from the rest of the passage? How do they relate to the other verses in the passage?

How does 1:20–21 (Joseph's dream) relate to 1:24–25 (Joseph's response)?

*So Joseph awakens from his dream. And at this point he demonstrates what great character he has. He takes Mary as his wife . . . and what a treasured thing their relationship was! The secret they had between themselves was now shared deeply. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

How does the confirmation of Mary's virginity when she conceived Jesus in Matthew 1:18 relate to Isaiah 7:14 quoted in Matthew 1:23?

Matthew gave us a peek into a most exquisite event . . . where God's Spirit would "overshadow" a young virgin (Luke 1:35) . . . where the Divine took human DNA . . . where God called blue-collar, callous-handed Joseph of Nazareth, inconsequential in the world's eyes, to raise the Son of God.



## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*



### Interpretation: Joseph's Character

In a parallel passage, Luke recorded Mary's visit from an angel named Gabriel, who told Mary that she would "conceive and give birth to a son" (Luke 1:31). When she responded, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin" (1:34), Gabriel replied:

*"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age!" . . . A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to [be with Elizabeth]." (Luke 1:35–37, 39)*

Likely, in those "few days," Mary relayed the story of her pregnancy and the angel's visit to Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary at the time of her pregnancy. Read about ancient Jewish betrothal practices on page 25 of Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–17*, and record the intriguing and enlightening facts you discover.

In Joseph's eyes, Mary's apparent infidelity left him three options:

1. Marry her despite her seeming immorality—which would break Jewish law
2. Publicly divorce her, bringing her a lifetime of shame (Deuteronomy 22:23–24)
3. Quietly divorce her, protecting his character and her reputation



## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*

“As he considered” these things, the angel appeared to Joseph (Matthew 1:20). What does Joseph's response (1:24–25) to the angel's commands (1:20–21) reveal about his character?

*Joseph would know the truth of it, but to this very day none of us can explain it. For it's a miracle. And if you can explain virginal conception, it isn't a miracle. But it is. Christ's conception is beyond explanation, and in many ways, it's beyond our ability to understand.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Let your imagination explore Joseph's life. Record below the social sneering he must have carried during Mary's pregnancy and Jesus' upbringing.<sup>3</sup>

What did the angel tell Joseph to name the Son, and why, according to Matthew 1:21? What name from Isaiah's prophecy did Matthew ascribe to Jesus, and why, according to Matthew 1:23? What do these names tell us about God and God's intent?



## Try Standing in Joseph's Sandals

*Matthew 1:18–25*

At this crucial moment, young Mary needed more than a husband. She needed an advocate. In Joseph—a man of humility and courage—she had her protector who stood by her under the wedding canopy, kept her a virgin until the birth of Jesus, and devoted himself to her the rest of his life.<sup>4</sup>



### Correlation: Immanuel in Isaiah

Matthew interweaved Old Testament quotes in Jesus' birth narrative to interpret the divine meaning of Christ's earthly origins and to show how Jesus' birth continues the story begun in the Old Testament. Read [Isaiah 7:1–25](#) to get the context of the quote Matthew used to support Mary's miraculous conception.

Summarize what frightened King Ahaz, what he refused, and what sign God gave him.

The fulfillment of the prophecy would occur in the near future and the distant future. Isaiah explained the “near” fulfillment in the birth of the woman's son in [Isaiah 8:3–4](#) and the “distant” fulfillment in the birth of the future messiah in [9:6–7](#).

Read pages 27–29 of Pastor Chuck's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*, for a detailed explanation of Isaiah's prophecy. In the space below, record what you discover.

*Immanuel*—God with us. In Christ, the Lord has returned to His people by becoming incarnate as Messiah, the agent of salvation. Through Christ, Yahweh will draw all nations to Himself.



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*Matthew 1:18–25*

### **Application: Walking in Joseph's Footsteps**

Joseph's faith led him through a life-altering decision to endure the criticism of others and to advocate on behalf of Mary. Do you find yourself in one of these three situations?

1. *Has God brought you to a place in which you must make a tough decision?*
2. *Will you have to bear the ignorant judgment of others for doing what is right?*
3. *Do you need to support someone bearing immense troubles?*

Pray through the questions. Write about your situation and what tough decision God may be calling you to make in faith.

*As I look back over my life, some of the best decisions I ever made were some of the hardest decisions I had to make. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

Joseph knew far less of God's messianic plan than we know today. His simplicity of devotion and conviction shines through the pages of Scripture as a model worth emulating because we today, like him then, worship the same God who calls us to act with the same courage.



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*Matthew 1:18–25*



### A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I stand grateful for the passage You have preserved in Your Word. I stand in awe of the birth of Your Son and the people of faith whom You brought together to raise Jesus from a little child to become my Prince of Peace. I ask for His peace to rule in my heart through the decision You have called me to today. For His glory, amen.

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 87. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Other tools we recommend are a Bible dictionary, such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* and a whole-Bible commentary, such as the two-volume *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Versions of the Bible are available at [BibleGateway.com](#), and an excellent online Bible commentary by Thomas L. Constable is at [netbible.org](#).
3. An example of the sneering that Jesus' family endured was the Pharisees' accusation of Jesus, "We aren't illegitimate children!" (John 8:41). The implication: Jesus was illegitimate. No doubt, Mary and Joseph endured similar scorn regarding Jesus' birth.
4. Scripture does not indicate that Joseph kept Mary a virgin for the rest of their marriage or had children by another wife. Mary bore Jesus' younger brothers and sisters naturally.

