

Chapter 4

Hated from the Start

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Matthew's Good News
Chapter 1, verses 18-25

Who is the Main Character again?

The genesis of Jesus Christ was like this. His mother Mary was engaged to Joseph. Before they came together, her womb was found to be with a child from the Holy Spirit. Just as God's Spirit was there at creation, overseeing the elements, the Spirit was there as a new creation began in the womb of Mary.

Her husband Joseph assumed that Mary had been unfaithful to him. He could have had her legally killed. But he was a man not merely of law, but of justice. True justice is not about mere laws but about ideals. So Joseph chose to avoid making Mary a public example. He planned to end the relationship in a private manner.

But as all this was going through his mind--look!--a messenger from the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The message was, "Joseph, son of David, stop fearing to receive Mary as your wife. What is in her is generated by the Holy Spirit." This was not the result of some blasphemy. This was a new work of God's creation. The Creator was bringing something new into the world. And he was doing this new creation in the context of the old story of Genesis, Abraham, David, and Babylon, the story of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba.

But the messenger had more to say: "Born to her will be a son. And you will call his name Jesus"--The name Jesus means God is Savior--"because he will save his people from their rebellious failure."

All this has happened in order that the Lord's word spoken through the prophet would be fulfilled: "Look! The virgin will have a child in her womb! Born to her will be a son. They will call him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

Joseph woke up and did what God's messenger directed. He embraced Mary as his wife. And he did not know her sexually until the son was born. And he named the son Jesus.

God was creating again. He created a new man to get right what every other human had missed. He would be the fulfillment of the story begun in Genesis. God is the Savior, and this new man would save his people from their rebellious failure. To do that, God was entering his own story in the flesh. God would be with us. God would meet us us face-to-face. God would know our pain. God would die our death. God would lead us out of the mess we're in.

Joseph, this isn't merely about you doing the right thing. This is about what God is doing. This is about what God has been up to all along, from the beginning. This is about what God has prepared for his people. This is about God with us. This is about God.

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