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What if an Angel Appeared to You?

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Three scenes in the Christmas story plea for a closer look. In Matthew's gospel, attention is fixed on:

Mary and Jesus

The star

The shepherds

The magi and their gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold.

But we should also consider a man viewed in another's shadow. We seldom speak of Joseph, but Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matthew 1:16), or Joseph the son of David (Matthew1:20). He's never called the father of Jesus, but the supposed father of Jesus—which he was (Luke 3:23). Importantly, Matthew tells us he was faithful to the law and compassionate (1:18). He loved God and people.

Yet this man—actually a young man at the time of the Lord's birth—was the recipient of three angelic dreams that carried an urgent message. In the first dream an angel told him to take Mary as his wife—with the explanation that she had conceived the child supernaturally (Matthew 1:20). In the second dream an angel told him to take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13). In the third dream an angel told him to return to Israel (Matthew 2:19).

You might think Joseph would respond to the first command with a request for proof. That's what Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, asked for when an angel told him his elderly wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son (Luke 1:18).

But Joseph didn't ask for proof. Instead, "He arose from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt. 1:24). After the second dream we read, "And he arose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt" (Mt. 2:13). Joseph showed the same obedience when he, "Arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel" (Mt. 2:21).

This was the man who held Jesus as an infant and played with him as a boy. He taught Jesus how to work with tools and build with wood. But perhaps most importantly, on the days, weeks, months and years leading up to that first Christmas, Joseph was a man who obeyed God without hesitation or explanation. His obedience assured God's protection of Mary and her child.

Pause for a few moments, take your mind off the political confusion and celebrate the Lord's birth. Pray for the kind of faith Joseph demonstrated when he obeyed God in the face of grave political danger. And celebrate the birth of the King of Kings and the Prince of Peace. To him and him alone we must look for safety and peace.

Have a blessed Christmas.

A Great Christ*mas Gift*: *The Jesus Story*

Check out this beautiful and classic version of the blended Gospels. If you want to know Jesus better next year consider a regular reading of the Gospels. I've read the Gospels 109 times over 107 months and I never get bored. I learn something new every reading and grow deeper into Jesus. Follow this link and look it over: http://readthejesusstory.com/