

Truth-3: Spirit-Filled **Joseph & Mary, God's Communication Methods & How God Chooses To Communicate & Guide Us Today** **Matthew 1-2 & Luke 1-2**

Have you ever noticed how clearly God personally communicated with the characters of Christmas? God explains things to them, shows them when and where to go, warns them of dangers, and arranges amazing meetings for them. What a wonderful way to live with God communicating so clearly & powerfully.

From that familiar story of Christmas, we can pause and extract some powerful truths by observing what the Scriptures reveal about: *Joseph & Mary, God's Communication Methods & How God Chooses To Communicate & Guide Us Today*.

It was nearly 2,000 years ago that God literally spoke to a young, teenaged couple. They had been engaged for marriage by their parents. Mary¹ was probably between 14 and 16, and Joseph was perhaps between 18 and 20.

God frequently, personally, and clearly communicated with Joseph & Mary; and that is one of the most amazing elements of the Christmas story.

God Almighty instructs, commands, guides, warns, and leads Joseph & Mary; and does so for a documented period that spans the first 12 years of Christ's life.

The Lord uses angel visits, dreams, as well as the Scriptures to call, protect, guide & direct them in this amazing time surrounding Christ's birth. Here's our first lesson:

1. THE SILENCE ENDED AGAIN & GOD SPEAKS

When the Christmas story opens, God breaks another period of recorded silence. This time the recorded silence lasted a bit more than 400 years.

The last time God had spoken, that He wants us to know about, is through the prophet Malachi, who recorded God's Word in about 435 BC.

Then it was silence until in 6/7 BC, as Zacharias was offering incense at the Temple, God broke the silence and sent Gabriel to speak for Him. The Christmas story captures some amazing communications from God, recorded for us by Matthew & Luke. These ten specific, recorded events, shared with us by the God of Heaven are to show us what He wants us to know about His supernatural, direct, special revelation to humans:

1. God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 1:20);
2. God guides the **Wise Men** from the East with a star (Mat. 2:2, 9);
3. God warns the **Wise Men** in a dream (Mat. 2:12);
4. God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:13);
5. God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:19);

¹Keener, C. S. *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* . InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill, 1993.

6. God warns **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:22);
7. God sends an Angel of the Lord (Gabriel) to talk to **Zacharias** in the Temple (Luke 1:11-20);
8. God sends an Angel of the Lord (Gabriel) to talk to **Mary** (Luke 2:26-38);
9. God sends an Angel of the Lord to talk to the **Shepherds** (Luke 2:9-15);
10. God's Spirit reveals & leads **Simeon** to Baby Jesus (Luke 2:26-27);

Then what?

A question any serious student of knowing God would probably ask is:

2. WHAT IS GOD'S NORMAL PATTERN OF COMMUNICATION?

There are some today who claim angelic visits, visions, God's Voice speaking aloud to them, and supernatural messages delivered to them that they feel are to be proclaimed to others as directions from God. So a perfectly timed question at Christmas is:

Does God picture that His guiding dreams, visions, angel visits, supernaturally guided shepherd and Wise Men visits continued in these believer's lives?

The answer is: No. That type of direct revelation was a very special form of revelation. It was infrequent and always targeted for specific times in God's plan.

There were no more **recorded** angel/dream visits for any of those people.

Note I said: **recorded**. So are we arguing from silence in the Scriptures for a doctrine here? In a sense: yes. Now think with me:

God inspired the Scriptures.

God said Scriptures were all we needed for doctrine, correction, and instruction in righteousness for us to be completely equipped to serve Him through life.

Then the recorded history with no more recorded angel visits, dreams, and voices is what God wants us to learn from. God's Word gives us the facts to frame our understanding of how God operates. The secret things (those not revealed in God's Word) belong to God. He does what ever He pleases.

God wrote down our doctrine, our framework, our pattern for every day life.

God shows us that in all of Divinely recorded history (that is what he have in the Bible): God gives Special Revelation in clear, powerful ways for special periods of time, and then stops.

The next truth we need to hold onto today is the reality that:

3. GOD WANTS TO COMMUNICATE CLEARLY WITH HIS PEOPLE

God uses Joseph as an illustration of the incredible array of communication methods our Lord can use, has used, and still has at His disposal: even to this day.

God gives us the lesson by what He reveals and doesn't reveal, that: *He does not want us to think that we must have constant added revelations of God's speaking to us beyond what he has already given us.*

God also shows us how amazingly He wants to guide our lives.

Turn back to Matthew 1:18-25 with me. In these eight verses we see the opening event of the 10 personal & direct communications from God with the characters of Christmas starting in

Matthew. Please stand with me as we read this account that God gave to us to teach us about His plan and how He operates.

Matthew 1:18-25 (NKJV) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 **But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream**, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 **Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife**, 25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Pray

4. OUR GOD LOVES TO SHOW US THE PATHWAY OF LIFE

For a moment look at what God did just in Joseph's part of the Christmas story. This is what God can do, what God likes to do for us, and what God offers to us as a guide to His will for us as we go through life.

Of the ten direct communications in the Christmas event, almost half of them were to Joseph (who gets four distinct messages). In fact, Joseph gets more direct guidance than all the rest of those involved. Joseph gets more communiqués from God than Mary (one), Zacharias (one), Simeon (one) & the Shepherds (one) combined; and Joseph gets twice as much guidance, as the next most communicated group: the Wise Men (who get two). So how does God lead Joseph directly, and how does He communicate that plan to him?

God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 1:20); Joseph responds v. 24.

We can see that:

5. JOSEPH PORTRAYS SEEKING THE LORD'S LEADING

Move on to Matthew 2:13.

God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:13); Joseph responds v. 14.

God sends an Angel of the Lord to **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:19); Joseph responds v.21.

God warns **Joseph** in a dream (Mat. 2:22a); Joseph responds v.22b.

Have you noticed a pattern?

God speaks, Joseph listens.

God leads, Joseph follows.

We can see something wonderful about Joseph: Joseph listens for God's plan, and when he hears it he follows God's will for his life and family.

If you hold to the truth that the Scriptures are the rule of our faith and practice, and the guide, by which we measure life. Then each event recorded in God's Word is for us to learn from. Then what can we see about Joseph? Move on with me to Luke 2:27.

6. JOSEPH FOLLOWED THE LORD'S DIRECTIONS IN THE WORD

Luke 2:27-33 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, **to do for Him according to the custom of the law**, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to [bring] revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. (NKJV)

Joseph was following the written Word (law of Moses) and Simeon was following the special supernatural guidance of the Spirit (came by the Spirit), and they collided in the midst of God's plan. But notice that Joseph didn't need to have an angelic vision or voices from God to go to the Temple. He just obeyed what was already written down.

That happens to be the "normal" way God leads throughout all of Divinely recorded history (in God's Word) and throughout all of recorded Church History to this day.

"Normal" is not angels, voices, and visions. Normal is the written, settled, inspired Bible. Look onward at v. 41.

Luke 2:41 His parents **went to Jerusalem every year** at the Feast of the Passover. (NKJV)

God has laid down the plan, we are just to obey and follow it. Do you know what God's directions are for you as a son and man, as a daughter and woman, as a mother and wife, or as a father and husband? God has written out His desires for each of us in His Word.

Joseph was a leader in godliness because he followed the Lord's direction for how to live life. Are you following His directions?

7. GOD PRIMARILY SPEAKS TO US THROUGH HIS SCRIPTURES

We can get a very clear overview of how God has communicated over human history. If you believe that God's Word is true, as Jesus Christ affirmed it to be, then we have a tool to frame every single one of God's recorded contacts with humanity.

We know today that God has given us a record, written down, confirmed by Jesus Christ in person, and still in our hands today. God's Word the Scriptures are given for us to know what God wants us to know. What God tells us is what He wants to shape our understanding, and frame our analysis of current events as we live through the last days.

To best understand our study of God's record of His communications with humanity, turn to Hebrews 1:1-2. Here is a summary of God's inspired Word, called the Scriptures or the Bible.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 **has in these last days spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Think of what this passage says: God is making a very big statement about how He has and will communicate. Here is a simple guide to understanding whether we need to have angelic visits, visions, and voices to really be spiritual, and really know we are hearing from God.

Jesus is the Word of God. Jesus came and lived and spoke as God with us, as Emmanuel, and as God the Son Incarnate.

What did Jesus say about the Bible? Jesus Christ authenticated our Bible.

First He told the people that they had in their possession the Scriptures (Jn. 5:39). Jesus authenticated that the Hebrew Old Testament's books that all the people had, read, and knew exactly what he was talking about: *were the only inspired revelation of God recorded for authoritative discussions of Divine Truth*. Nothing else. There were many books of the Apocrypha that the Roman Catholic Church today recognizes, that were known in Christ's day, but Jesus Christ said those are NOT the Scriptures. Just the 39 books we still have in our Bibles. Those Jesus Christ said are God's Word.

PERIOD-1: EDEN THEN 500 SILENT YEARS

God spoke in person in the Garden of Eden and after to Adam, Eve, Cain & probably Abel (Genesis 3-4).

Then there is a communications blackout noted in the official, flawless, supernatural historical record of the Universe (the inspired Scriptures) for seven generations or about 500 years.

PERIOD-2: ENOCH THEN 700 SILENT YEARS

Then God walks and talks with Enoch (Genesis 5).

Then God is quiet again for almost 700 years from Enoch's translation to Heaven to Noah's 500th year.

PERIOD-3: NOAH THEN 200 SILENT YEARS

Then God talks now and then to Noah (Gen. 6-8).

Then God is quiet again for about 200 years.

PERIOD-4: JOB THEN 200 SILENT YEARS

God speaks to Job (Job 38-42), usually set in the period after the Flood and before or around Abraham.

Then God is quiet again for another 200 years.

PERIOD-5: PATRIARCHS THEN 300+ SILENT YEARS

God speaks to Abraham, then Isaac, and then Jacob in Genesis 12-50.

Then God is quiet again for about 300+ years.

PERIOD-6: MOSES & THE PROPHETS THEN 400+ SILENT YEARS

Then God speaks to Moses, Joshua & Israel through a series of prophets for about 1,000 years, ending with Malachi. This is the most amazing time of God meeting with Moses, appearing to Joshua, leading Israel, speaking through prophets; but most of all writing down the entire Old Testament.

God starts by writing the first of His Scriptures by forming words of God with His own finger on stone tablets, at Sinai. God then directs Moses to write the first five books of the Scriptures (the Pentateuch), then a series of His prophets take over writing His Word down.

All the time God is actively at work showing Himself during this writing period.

Then comes the blackout of any writing, prophecy, or direct activity of God doing any signs or wonders.

400 YEARS OF SILENCE

Then God is silent for 400 years until the Birth of Christ.

When, God broke the silence and sent Gabriel to speak for Him to Zacharias, we may wonder: Had God sent any angels, visions, dreams, or made any personal appearances from 435 BC to 6/7 BC?

The answer is “not any that He wanted us to know about”.

PERIOD-7: THE BIRTH OF CHRIST & HIS CHURCH

From the rapid succession of the ten special angelic visits, visions, dreams, and the voice of God at Christ's birth, through Christ's ministry, then through all the amazing Divine communication events in Acts, and ending at Patmos: God speaks more powerfully and widely than ever before.

Christ comes, lives, dies, rises, the Church is born, the Spirit is sent, the Gospel goes global, and John is told to “finish up” the written record of God to mankind.

Jesus chose the Apostles to record the New Testament, and promised them that the Spirit of God would inspire them to write down the Scriptures (Jn. 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

As the book of Revelation ends, and the last Apostle speaks, God says: **“Don’t touch My message by adding to my Word or subtracting from my Word”.**

The Scriptures are finished.

God has spoken, and no more Divinely verified truth is needed to the very end of human history.

Did God do anything else, speak aloud to anyone since, send angelic messengers, dreams, or visions? We may confidently say: **the answer is “not any that He wanted us to know about”.**

Applying the doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture to our lives today.

2,000 YEARS OF GOD SPEAKING THROUGH HIS SCRIPTURES

Everything needful for us to know about God is contained in His Word.

The Scriptures are not an exhaustive record of everything about God; **but they are everything God wants to reveal as Truth about Himself for us.**

God's Word is sufficient and complete. It is not missing parts or waiting for completion. As Paul said the Scriptures are what we need so that we are lacking nothing (2Tim. 3:16-17); because God has given all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1); and so God's Word is perfect as David says (Psalm 19).

During one of the early times of deceptions and false teachers attacking the early church, Peter builds upon the primacy of Scriptures over any experience as he says that we have a more sure communication from God than if we were on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

2 Peter 1:12-21 (NKJV) For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. 13 Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, 14 knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. 15 Moreover I will be careful to ensure that **you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.**

16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 **And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.**

19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; 20 knowing this first, that **no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,** 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

GOD'S WORD TRUMPS ANYONE'S EXPERIENCE

The written Word trumps all other manifestations of God from the writing of the New Testament onward. Why? Because deception, deception, deception.

No matter what anyone says God told THEM, each of us know exactly what God has told ALL of His children.

God does not reveal His will for you by speaking or giving signs to someone else.

Just like anyone who says they know when Christ's return is going to be, we can be sure they are wrong, because the day and the hour is known only to God (Mt. 24:36).

Joseph heard angels, saw dreams, but we have something even more sure than anyone's experience. We have all of God's Word that He wants us to have. We have every events He wants us to know about. We have every promise He wants us to cling to.

We don't need any other experiences: we have what God wants us to have.

We have God's perfect message for all of our lives; and we each can hold it in our hands and get it written upon our hearts each day.

OTHER MESSAGES ON JOSEPH:

970615AM Godly Dads Like Joseph
031207AM GCM-13 Joseph & Mary
041226AM GCM-22 Does God Have All of You
051225AM GCM-29/31 Joseph & Mary Yielded
101205AM GCM-46 Joseph the Quiet Man