

**Matthew's record of Jesus' birth is...***Describing & Discussing**Mark the lines below as correct (C), incorrect (X), or partly correct (▲). Most, but not all, are correct.***( ) short, not interactive?**

- ( ) much shorter than Mary's interaction with Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38?
- ( ) short if the wise men and Herod are considered separately?
- ( ) short because Joseph was not as important as Mary?
- ( ) short because Joseph did not say anything?

**( ) serious, not very joyful?**

- ( ) somber because of the shocking and difficult situation (1:18-19)?
- ( ) somber because the wise men are studied separately (2:10)?
- ( ) somber because joy is rarely mentioned in Matthew?
- ( ) somber because Joseph was unhappy (1:19)?
- ( ) not nearly as joyful as Luke's account?

**( ) special, narrowly focused?**

- ( ) about Joseph being called?
- ( ) about the incarnation and virgin birth?
- ( ) about Joseph's thinking rather than Mary's?
- ( ) focused on fulfilled Scripture (1:24, Isa. 7:14)?
- ( ) focused on God's plan to bring salvation (1:19-21)?

**applications***Doing*

**Dr. Ed** *(on the length of Matthew's Christmas account)*

Does the story of Jesus' birth in Matthew include the wise men? Yes, of course, it does in a way, even though they came to Bethlehem a year or more after Jesus was born (2:16). Today's worksheet on Jesus' birth, however, does not include them. Is this a mistake?

**Theo** *(on the theology of chapters one and two)*

I don't think so. Matthew 1:18-25 is **focused on the incarnation and the virgin birth**, but the main theological topic in Matthew chapter two is divine protection. So I think it is wise to use two worksheets instead of one.

**Red** *(on the practical nature of chapters one and two)*

Oh, come on! Let's read the Bible itself more! Divine protection is everywhere in chapters one and two. Today's verses are not just about the incarnation and the virgin birth. They are also **about God calling Joseph to protect Mary and her special Son**. Joseph's ministry started in chapter one, **not** in chapter two.

**Matt** *(on the need to limit the passage length)*

I agree with Red. It is obvious that the calling of Joseph is closely linked with his subsequent ministry. Yet, like Theo, I think it is wise to split up the Matthew Christmas passages. Otherwise, we would be trying to cover too much material in one study. Our study on Matthew 1:18-25 is **not too narrowly focused**, as long as we keep the close connection with chapter two in mind.

**Dr. Ed.** *(on the need to be practical)*

You said exactly what I was going to say, Matt. Designing worksheets for Bible studies involves practical issues, such as the length of the passage to be covered, as well as the theology involved. The same is true in preaching.

**Evan** *(on Matthew's account being evangelistic)*

Does that mean that our worksheet lines are really sermon notes? If so I would like to add some things. To me, Matthew's record of Jesus' birth is **evangelistic**. It is not just about Jesus' legal father being called; it is also **about Joseph coming to faith**. He had serious doubts, but they were overcome. Did he understand everything? No, but I suspect he had a basic understanding of Isa. 7:14. Matthew **focused on fulfilled Scripture** in his **Jewish evangelism**.

**Dr. Ed** *(on hoping to improve worksheets)*

Great! Thinking about how to improve the worksheets is exactly what I want everyone to do. Does anyone else have a suggestion?

**Opti** *(on the need to be more positive)*

As much as possible, I like to look at things in an optimistic way. So I was disappointed to see many negatives on today's worksheet. Although it is true that Matthew's account is **not as joyful as Luke's**, I like to think that Joseph was happy rather than sad after the angel explained everything to him. To me, Matthew's report is **serious but uplifting** rather than "lacking in joy."

**Red** *(on rejoicing in Matthew)*

Reading ahead, I noticed that the women at the tomb had great joy after the angel appeared to them (28:8), but it also says that they were fearful. Likewise, the wise men rejoiced when they saw the star (2:10), but they were also warned about Herod. So Matthew's Gospel is **uplifting but serious**. Joy is not mentioned very often.

**"I wonder why it does not say anything about Joseph being happy or at least relieved to learn about the divine cause of Mary's pregnancy. In a way it does, because Joseph did as the Lord commanded. His joy and faith were shown through his obedience."**

Dr. Quest: an (imaginary) expert on biblical Q&A

**Dr. Ed** *(on the main point of the short passage)*

In closing, I wonder what is the most important thing that should be said about Matthew's account of Jesus' birth? It is **short, serious, and special**, but there must be a better answer than that. The best answer I have developed so far is that it is **about the supernatural, yet down-to-earth, nature of Jesus coming to save his people from their sins**. The supernatural incarnation had already taken place, but Joseph's protective earthly ministry was just beginning.