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Joseph's Jitters

Life was good. Joseph was a regular guy. Hard worker. Builder. Respected in his community. Engaged to be married to Mary. He had finally found the wonderful girl of his dreams.

But Joseph had a severe case of pre-wedding jitters. Because one night his whole world changed. A nightmare? No, it was an angel from God. Matthew 1:18-25 tells the story.

Mary had already told him the news. "Good news" she said. But it was bad news. Mary was going to have a baby. And Joseph was not the father. That would have been bad enough, because having a child out of wedlock was just not something godly people do.

Mary said the Holy Spirit was the father. Right. We're talking God, here, so certainly it's possible. But who would believe it? Hardly anyone. Wink wink.

And Joseph was righteous and just. He was not the father. If he said nothing, and married the girl, he would lose his good reputation too. Everyone would think he had been immoral. Not true! No way! He just wouldn't do that. Neither would Mary. But clearly, she was with child. He wanted to believe her. But something had to be done.

Joseph had decided to divorce her, to break off the engagement. Quietly, without fuss, without bringing any formal charges against Mary. Just let her go. That seemed the best way out of a bad situation.

But now God was speaking to him, through an angel, the same way He had spoken to Mary. "Joseph, son of David," he said. Quite a salutation. Joseph was a distant descendant of David, the once-king of the nation, who had been promised an eternal throne. For thousands of years his people were expecting God to make good on His promise of a Savior, the Messiah, the Christ, who would come to set everything right and fulfill all God's promises.

"Do not fear to take Mary as your wife," the angel said, "because the baby conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." That's just what Mary said! And now God was confirming this to Joseph.

He knew the Old Testament prophecies, including Isaiah 7:14 "behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son." And that's what the angel was saying "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Joseph knew that name means "Jehovah saves." Another reminder of God's promises.

Then the angel said this son "will save his people from their sins." There it was again – God's Word. The prophecies. The promises. The good news of Christ, the Savior!

Joseph's jitters had to end. Decision time. He couldn't ride the fence. He had to do what was right. Not just for himself, not just for Mary, but in obedience to God Himself. No matter the bad news for them, this was good news for God's people!

Matthew 1:24 records the result: "When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Hallelujah! Way to go, Joseph! "He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus."

And that's why we celebrate "Merry Christmas" – because Joseph and Mary chose to trust God instead of just their own thoughts and emotions. To let God be bigger than their humble circumstances. To let God turn bad news into good news.

That's the good news about Jesus – and He's asking YOU to trust Him today too. Will you?