

THE TWELVE VOICES OF



**CHRISTMAS**

— WOODROW KROLL —

The Twelve Voices of Christmas  
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**United States**  
P.O. Box 82808  
Lincoln, NE 68501  
800 759 2425  
[backtothebible.org](http://backtothebible.org)

# JOSEPH

## VOICE OF REASON

MATTHEW 1:16-25

*There was no music in Joseph's soul. Mary, his fiancée, was pregnant, and the child was not his. Being a man of reason, He considered his alternatives carefully and made his decision. But reason did not reign that day – God did. And the angel's message to him made his heart sing.*

As a child, I watched my father's strong and skillful hands turn pieces of wood into beautiful furniture. How I wanted to be a good carpenter like him.

I watched him carefully and listened to what he said, as every child watched and listen – and judges – a parent. I saw that he was generous, kind, loving, honest and wise. But above all, I noticed his deep love for God. He was everything I wanted to be.

As a young man, I began to think of having a family of my own, one in which I could be the kind of leader that my father was. It was Jewish custom for families to arrange marriages. The first on of Jacob – me – would marry the first daughter of Eli. Her name was Mary. She was much too young to be married, but I watched her from a distance, and I loved her.

While I watched her mature, I honed my skills as a craftsman, for I wanted to be ready to support a wife and any children God might send us. And I studied the Law of God and prayed, for I wanted to be a godly husband and father.

Mary finally reached the age when plans for marriage were appropriate, and I

spoke to her father. We went through all the customary steps that led to the engagement. The dowry was small, and the betrothal ceremony was simple, but we said our vows with joy. And after the benediction, we drank from the customary cup of wine and received the congratulations of relatives and friends.

Mary and I were bound to each other for life. From that time on I would call her my wife, and she would call me her husband, even though months would pass before we celebrated the wedding feast and began to live together.

During this time, Mary went to visit Elizabeth, her older cousin. I missed her during the three months she was gone. But I knew that she would be comfort to Elizabeth, who, unbelievably, was pregnant!

After she returned, Mary sent word that she wanted to talk. I greeted her warmly. But I noticed immediately that somehow she was different. There was an aura of dignity and confidence about her. She spoke quietly, and I listened carefully, for I had longed to hear her voice again. But her words just didn't make sense to me. "I'm pregnant," she told me.

I was stunned and heartbroken. I was *not* the baby's father.

"Mary, how did this happen?" I asked in anguish. Then she told me about the visit from the angel and what he had told her. She said she was carrying a child conceived of the Holy Spirit.

I couldn't believe it. How could she have been unfaithful to me? Surely she could not be pregnant and still be a virgin! My mind reeled, and I stumbled away, not knowing for caring where I went.

A war raged within me. My whole conscience had been molded by the Law of Moses, which required a woman who was unfaithful to her husband to be stoned to death. But I loved her! In my agony I cried out to God, "What should I do?"

Should I drag my dear Mary into the courtroom and publicly accuse her of adultery? She would not be stoned, for the old law was usually not followed. But she would be exposed to public disgrace and scorn. No, I told myself. I love her too much to let that happen.

Or should I divorce her privately and keep the reasons for the divorce to myself? I thought this alternative through carefully. I could just give her the bill of divorce privately. In the presence of two witnesses, and pay the fine. Then I would quietly say good-bye to her. I would love her always but never see her again.

I wanted to do what was right for Mary. But neither choice was what I really wanted. I sought a reasonable solution, but I was so confused. If only I could believe her story!

As I fell asleep that night, my mind was almost made up. I was inclined to divorce her privately. But then an angel appeared to me in a dream.

"Don't be afraid," the angel told me. "Go through with the marriage feast. Take Mary as your wife. The child she is carrying was conceived of the Holy Spirit."

When I woke up, I didn't know if I should laugh or cry. Mary had told me the truth! So much for reason.

Immediately, I ran to tell her what had happened. I usually didn't have much to say, but that morning my words just tumbled out. Her child would be a boy, the angel had said, and we were to name him Jesus. She cried. So did I, and I asked her to forgive me for not believing her.

Mary and I were married soon. Because of the circumstances, we had a small wedding – just the priest and our families. But that ceremony made Mary's child mine legally. Jesus would be my Son.

During the years that followed, I had time to think about the rest of what the angel said to me. And Mary and I discussed his words many times.

Why had he addressed me as the son of David? Granted, I was an heir to David's throne, but I would never sit on that throne. Could it be that the angel spoke these words to assure me that one day one of my legal heirs would?

Why did the angel quote from the prophet Isaiah about a virgin conceiving a child, who was "God with us?" Why did the angel reveal to me that Jesus would save

His people from their sins? What did these things mean?

Mary and I were never able to understand all of this completely, but this much we knew: Jesus was God in our midst. He was the Savior of the world, and He would reign on the throne of David forever.

I, too, was one of the twelve voices of Christmas. I will never forget the angel's voice – nor the peace and assurance of his words. His message changed not only the course of my life but the destiny of the world.