**Recap of 12/20/15 (Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 1:18-25):**

1. Mary and Joseph were in the betrothal period when the angel Gabriel came to Mary. During the betrothal period a couple was pledged to each other, considered to be married, and would require a divorce to end the relationship. The betrothal period was customarily a year during which time the bride would continue to live in her parent’s home and the marriage would not be consummated. To be found pregnant during this period would be considered adultery. This was the situation that Mary and Joseph faced in light of the announcement by the angel of Mary’s coming pregnancy.

2. The gospel texts verify both explicitly and implicitly that Mary is a virgin (Luke 1:26,27,34; Matt. 1:16,18,23). The virgin birth is essential to Jesus’ saving purpose; only as the God-man would His sacrifice be acceptable. He had to be human so that He could die and He had to be God so that His death meant something and sin could be forgiven.

3. God allowed Joseph to struggle with the situation before sending the angel to him in a dream to explain that God was using him and Mary to fulfill ancient promises of the coming of the Savior. Joseph risked misunderstanding and gossip to be obedient to God.

4. Joseph and Mary are examples of the life of faith and obedience to God’s will in the face of adversity, difficult circumstances, disgrace and humiliation. Joseph and Mary both humbly submitted to God’s will and plan for their lives despite the fact that it would cost them greatly in the eyes of the community. They chose the hard way, with confidence in God’s ability to see them through it, not the easy way.