

Joseph - The Forgotten Figure of Christmas

Matt 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. 19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. 20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. 24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Introduction:

1. When God sent His Son Jesus into the world, God chose the ideal vessel when He chose the virgin named Mary.
2. Since the birth of Jesus was a virgin birth, there would be no need for a human male to father the child.
3. Because Jesus was coming into this world as a helpless infant, and since God was sending His Son into this world to live in poverty and not splendor, there would be a great need for someone to provide for the needs of this child. Therefore, God chose the man Joseph to be the earthly caretaker of His heavenly Son.

4. It is easy to miss the importance of Joseph in the incarnation of our Savior
5. Joseph was no ordinary man.
 - a. From our text, it is easy to see that Joseph was a man of compassion, integrity, decency and love.
 - b. He was a man who honored God's will in his life, and was totally committed to doing God's will.
 - c. Joseph was a humble man who was more concerned about what God wanted out of his life than about what he himself wanted.
 - d. He was a humble man chosen for a heavenly mission.
6. As I read this passage, I can see a man who possesses certain characteristics that mark him as a special man.
7. I am sure that the Lord will not call you and me to go through what Joseph went through but I am also sure that God wants to use your life and mine for His glory, just as He used Joseph.
8. Let's consider some things about this man Joseph, who saw the Lord Jesus grow from infancy into adulthood.

I. JOSEPH WAS A MORAL MAN – vs 18

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

A. Joseph

1. Joseph is a person of sterling character.
 - a) If tradition is correct and Joseph was a widower, then it took a man with moral principles to stay pure, after having been married before, that is, if he was married previously.
 - b) They had no intimate relations during the engagement period
2. In all four gospels we never hear Joseph speak

- a) *Maybe he was one of those strong / silent types*
- b) *Just because we don't hear him speak, does not mean that Joseph was not vital to the birth of the Savior*

B. "Before they came together"

1. Marriage in the NT had three stages
 - a) *The contractual stage*
 - (1) Their fathers had agreed earlier that Mary and Joseph would marry one day
 - (2) The kids had no say in this
 - b) *The espousal stage*
 - (1) The espousal period which normally lasted about a year
 - (2) They were considered married and were called husband and wife
 - (3) This was a time of testing their purity
 - (4) They followed through as they should have, staying separated, until that period of trying purity, was all over.
 - (5) We have already mentioned how Mary kept herself pure and was a virgin before Jesus was conceived.
 - c) *The actual consummation of the marriage*
 - (1) The husband went to the bride's house and claimed his wife
 - (2) He led the procession back to his house for the marriage feast
2. Notice the phrase "before they came together"
3. Their relationship would require a bill of divorcement if broken
4. Joseph kept himself right morally.
 - a) Vs 25 says that Joseph, "Knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son."
 - b) He stayed right all the time up to his marriage with Mary.

C. Found with Child

1. Even though Mary and Joseph had not come together she was pregnant
2. Joseph's dreams were shattered - "happily ever after"

3. She had been immoral and impure

Joseph was a Moral Man.....

II. JOSEPH WAS A JUST MAN – vs 19

19 Joseph her husband, being a just [man], and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

1. The Bible calls him in this verse a "just" man.
2. Joseph could have given Mary a bill of divorcement, taken her before the judges at the gate, and caused a public scandal for her
3. Mary could have been stoned to death by order of the city elders
De 22:23 If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; 24 Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.
4. Mary was not guilty of such things, but a wrong judgment could have been given, and she could have been stoned at the city gate
5. Just imagine how the neighbors talked when they found out that Mary was pregnant.
 - a) I am sure the phone lines were about to burn up
 - b) No they did not have telephones, but they had feet / tongues
6. Joseph's heart was broken when he received the news that Mary was pregnant.
 - a) He could not imagine Mary having been unfaithful to him.
 - b) He loved her dearly and did not want any harm to come to her
 - c) He decided not to create a public scandal for her and would divorce her quietly, so as to not make it harder on Mary.
7. Then is when the angel came to Joseph in a dream.

- a) What did the angel tell him?
 - b) Her condition was not caused by man but through the HS
 - c) Vs 20 That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
8. Can you imagine how that relieved Joseph?
- a) He knew for sure then, after the angel had appeared and conversed with him, that Mary was still pure and had been completely faithful to him.
 - b) That angel let him know that Mary was carrying a Savior, the Lord Jesus, and that he would save his people from their sins.

Joseph was a Just Man....

iii. JOSEPH WAS A THOUGHTFUL MAN – vs 20

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

- When he was thinking about all these things, and what would be right for him to do, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream
- He did not jump and make a rash decision. He was going to think things over because he wanted to do what was right concerning the person that he loved so much.

A. *The Content of His Thinking – vs 20 “these things”*

1. What things?
 - a) That which concerned someone he loved very dearly / deeply
 - b) He could not hardly bring himself to rush out divorce Mary, and bring her before the elders of the city.
 - c) I believe Joseph knew that Mary would not betray his trust, but the evidence pointed otherwise.
 - d) She had a child in her womb, and Joseph knew it was not his.

2. It pays to ponder much the decisions that we have to make as we go through this life, especially those which affects others.

B. The Communication In His Thinking

1. His fears were relieved – vs 20

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, **fear not** to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is **of the Holy Ghost.**

- a) The angel of the Lord vouches for her purity and seeks to set the record clear with Joseph what had really happened.
 - b) This proves God cared much about Mary.
 - c) That is why he sent the angel to tell her husband that what had occurred was a supernatural act of God.
2. A miracle was declared - vs 20 "**of the Holy Ghost.**"
 - a) Spirit is very active in doing things in behalf of the Godhead
 - b) In Ge 1:1 the earth was without form and void, darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
 - c) He operated there and brought order where there was chaos.
 - d) Here He (Holy Ghost) is the Divine agent in the conception of the Lord Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary.
 3. A name is revealed – vs 21

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name **JESUS:** for **he shall save his people from their sins.**

- a) His name shall be called "Jesus."
- b) He would be the New Testament Joshua that would led his people into spiritual victory.
- c) Joshua in the OT led people into Canaan, which is a type of the

spiritual victory of the believer.

- d) There is something powerful in his blessed and precious name.
- 4. A mission is stated - "to save his people from their sins."
 - a) His people are the elect.
 - b) They rejected Him, but He is not through with them, because as I have already stated, in a coming day, all of Israel shall be saved and shall turn unto the Lord. Read what Paul says about it sometime in the Book of Romans.
 - c) I am glad that Christ in the church age has turned in a very special way unto the Gentiles. The gospel was to the Jew first, but hallelujah to God for the "also to the Greeks."
 - d) That includes you and me and we become a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham, but of course not his physical seed which have many promises in the OT just for them.

5. Prophecy recalled – vs 23

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

- a) This is a reference to Isa 7:14.
- b) How did Isaiah know what would come down the road hundreds of years later?
- c) It had to be the spirit of prophecy that came upon him.
- d) He even knew that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.
- e) No one could have told Isaiah about it, because no one else could have known.
- f) Only God knew, and the HS revealed it to the prophets as they wrote the Scriptures. The writers of Scripture looked into and studied their own writings, because God gave the Bible.

Joseph was a Thoughtful Man....

iv. JOSEPH WAS AN OBEDIENT MAN – vs 24

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

1. Joseph had been instructed by God in a dream
 - a) He knew what he was supposed to do
 - b) This dream brought Joseph clarity, conviction and courage
2. He took her unto him as his wife, but there were no physical relations until Jesus was born.
3. The angel had told him to not fear to take Mary as His wife.
4. You never go wrong by obeying God.
 - a) If you were to ask Abraham, "Do you regret obeying God and leaving the Ur of Chaldees for a land that you knew nothing of? He would tell you no.
 - b) If you were to ask Peter if he regretted obeying the Lord, even though he were thrown in prison for his preaching? He would tell you no. He saw a miracle when God shook the fetters loose and miraculously opened the closed gate for Peter to go through as he escaped the prison.
5. God will never disagree with His written Word, rightly divided. The Word and the Spirit never run cross grain or disagree.

Joseph Was an Obedient Man....

v. JOSEPH WAS A REWARDED MAN

- What kind of rewards did Joseph receive because he was co-operative and obedient to God?

A. *A Special Wife*

1. If we walk with God He will see to it that we get a very special husband or wife.

2. Mary was not just the every-day woman.
3. A man once said, "Well, I married an everyday woman."
4. I do not feel that way. God gave me an extraordinary woman to be my wife.
5. I am not trying to get brownie points, I am stating a fact.

B. A Special Role

1. Joseph would supervise the activities of Jesus in the days of his boyhood.
2. Can you imagine being the foster-father of God?
3. He taught Jesus to work and to deal with others.

Lu 2:52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

C. A Special Realization

1. He knew that Christ was God.
2. No liberal or modernist could talk Joseph out of that.
3. He knew the real story of what happened.

Conclusion:

1. Did you know that God used Joseph in the life of Jesus in a powerful fashion?
 - a. No doubt Joseph was very involved in the life and training of Jesus as a young man.
 - b. God took a poor, humble carpenter and used him to carry out an important heavenly mission.
2. Did you know that he is still looking for special people He can use to carry out His will in the world today?

- a. I am certain that He will never ask you to do what He asked Mary and Joseph to do.
 - b. But, I am certain that He has plenty of difficult assignments that need to be fulfilled.
 - c. He is looking for people who will follow him in spite of the tragedies life.
3. He is looking for people who will take of the tasks He assigns them and go for God.
 4. He is looking for people who possess the right kind of testimony, who will go with Him until their assignment is completed.
 5. Are you that kind of person? If so, why not get before Him and say, “Here am I, send me!”
 6. Or, maybe you are one of those people who has watched as your dreams have become nightmares; you feel overwhelmed by the task you have been assigned.
 7. Why don’t you get before Him and lean on Him for the grace you need to complete your mission.
 8. I don’t know your heart or your need, but I know the God Who will help you with both.