

Joseph The Husband Of Mary, And Stepfather Of Jesus

Intro: Last week we looked at the angel Gabriel's message to Mary recorded in Luke 1:26-56. God dispatched the angel Gabriel to a young virgin named Mary with the message that she was to be the mother of God's Son, Jesus. Mary asked the angel how this could be, since she was a virgin? Gabriel informed Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most High [God] would overshadow her, and for that reason the holy offspring would be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35). As I noted last Sunday, the angel Gabriel's announcement to Mary, and the subsequent birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, comprises the heart of the Christmas story.

This morning I would like to focus our attention on Joseph, the husband of Mary, and stepfather of Jesus. Apart from Matthew's account of Joseph's story in his opening two chapters, very little is known about this man. He is barely mentioned in Luke, never in Mark, and only briefly in John. But Joseph is worthy of our consideration. He show us what it means to obey God, and what it means to love unconditionally.

Joseph was a dreamer. In a sense, he is similar to the other Joseph, the more famous one who wore the coat of many colors. Both had fathers named Jacob, both were gifted with heavenly dreams, and both ended up in Egypt for a while as a result of those dreams. The sacrifice and sufferings of both provided salvation for the people of God. God dispatches His angel, possibly Gabriel, on four different occasions to speaks to Joseph. In each instance, Joseph responds with unwavering obedience to God's command.

Turn with me in your Bible if you will to **Matthew 1, verse 18**, and follow along as I read the angel Gabriel's first announcement to Joseph to take Mary as his wife.

I. Joseph's First Dream: *Take Marry As Your Wife* (Matt. 1:18-25)

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, decided to put her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bear

a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.” v. 24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, 25 and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

The first dream comes to Joseph as he is deciding what to do about his pregnant fiancée Mary. We are not told if Mary had revealed her pregnancy to Joseph, or if he had learned about it from the local town gossips. In any event, Joseph knew the child wasn't his. And being a respectable and righteous man, Joseph decided to put Mary away privately. This meant that he was going to present her with a bill of divorcement.

The Law demanded that Joseph divorce Mary because of her perceived unfaithfulness to him. Joseph loved Mary very deeply, and didn't want to disgrace her by making her a public spectacle. He decided to put her away privately by presenting her with a bill of divorce. This would terminate their betrothal; their engagement and marriage.

As Joseph wrestled with his thoughts through the night, v. 20, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him to not be afraid to take Mary as his wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.” v. 24 Joseph arose from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife; 25 and he kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son, and he called His name Jesus.

I am of the opinion that Joseph was elated over the angel's revelation to him, that Mary's conception was in fact by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. He rushed to take Mary in his arms, and reassured her that God was with them. No matter what people might say, or the cost to him personally, Joseph lets Mary know that he would never leave her or forsake her. Joseph reveals his selfless love by keeping Mary a virgin until she gave birth to God's Son, Jesus.

Matthew lets us know in vs. 22 -23 that all of this took place in order to fulfill the prophetic word of God spoken through Isaiah the prophet, in Isaiah 7:14 saying, “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.”

Matthew, writing under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, lets us know that Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the

fulfillment of this marvelous prophecy in Isaiah 7:14-15. As I noted last week, God sent His Son, Jesus, to fulfill His promise to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15, that He would send a Redeemer, born of the woman's seed, to save His people from sin. God supplies additional details through His prophet Isaiah, in chapter 7, verse 14 concerning a virgin who would conceive and bear a Son, who would be called Immanuel, meaning "God with us."

Luke informs us in **chapter 2, verses 1-20** that Joseph took Mary his wife and traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David, where she gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. An angel of the Lord announced Christ's birth to a group of shepherds, who made their way straight to Bethlehem, where they found Mary and Joseph, and the baby Jesus as He lay in the manger.

Turn back to Matthew chapter 2, and look with me if you will at:

II. Joseph's Second Dream: *The Flight To Egypt* (Matt. 2:1-16)

Some time after Christ's birth, Magi from the East came to worship Him who had been born King of the Jews. We pick up the story in Matthew 2, verse 1,

Herod the king was disturbed when Magi from the East came to Jerusalem looking for the One who had been "born King of the Jews." Herod had no claim to the throne of David. In fact, he was an Edomite, who had been appointed ruler over Judea by Rome. Herod called the chief priests and scribes together and asked them where Christ was to be born. These Jewish religious scholars responded in Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet Micah 5:2. Herod instructed the Magi to go to Bethlehem and to search for the child. And once they had found him they were to send back word to Herod, so he too could come and worship Him. Matthew lets us know that Herod had no intention of worshipping Christ, but instead was planning to destroy Him.

The Magi departed from Herod, and the star which had guided them to Jerusalem, miraculously appeared and went on before them, until it came and stood over where the Christ child was. The Magi came in and bowing down they worshipped Him, and opening their treasures they presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Following Christ's visit by the wise men, an angel of the Lord once again appears to Joseph in a dream. **v. 13** Now when the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and

take the Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt and remain there until I tell you to return; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him.” 14 And Joseph arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; and remained their until the death of Herod.

Joseph once again responds with unquestioning obedience. He arose that very night and took the Child and Mary, and departed for Egypt. Most scholars estimate that Joseph resided in Egypt with Mary and Jesus for approximately a year. **Matthew concludes in v. 15** that this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “Out of Egypt did I call My Son.” This Old Testament quotation is from Hosea (11:1). Whereas God had called Israel, the Nation out of Egypt; now He calls His Son, Jesus, out of Egypt.

Joseph stayed in Egypt until Herod died. This leads us to Joseph’s third angelic dream in Matthew 2:19-21

III. Joseph’s Third Dream: *The Return To Israel* (Matt. 2:19-22a)

19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, **20** “Arise and take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child’s life are dead.” **21** And he arose and took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. **22a** But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there.

As Joseph traveled from Egypt back to the land of Israel, possibly intending to return to Bethlehem, he learned that Herod’s son, Archeleus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, and he was afraid to go there. I believe that Joseph prayed and asked God for wisdom to know what to do. God responded with yet another angelic dream instructing him to return to Nazareth, v. 23

IV. Joseph’s Fourth Dream: *The Return To Nazareth* (Matt. 2:22b-23)

22b And being warned by God in a dream, he departed for the regions of Galilee, **23** and came and resided in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

Joseph, true to his character, obeys God's warning, and settles his family in Nazareth. Matthew informs his readers that the families move to and settlement in Nazareth was yet another fulfillment of prophecy; "He shall be called a Nazarene."

The problem is, the words "He shall be called a Nazarene," are not found in any Old Testament prophet. While there is no specific prophecy of Jesus' residing in Nazareth, **Isaiah 11:1** foretells of a **shoot** springing up from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots that will bear fruit. This Hebrew word for Branch is *neser*. The shoot or Branch rising up from the stump of Jesse refers to God's Messiah, the Branch of David, that will rule over David's kingdom forever. Matthew applies this prophecy to Jesus.

Dr. Ron Allen, who has researched the meaning behind this prophecy, suggests that what Matthew meant was not that Joseph resided in a city called Nazareth, but rather *Neser town*. In about 150 B.C. a family named *Neser* settled in this area and named their town *Neser town*. So it may be said that Jesus was raised in *Neser town* = **shoot of David**.

Others contend, that since Matthew used the plural **prophets**, perhaps his idea was not based on a specific prophecy but on the idea that appeared in a number of prophecies concerning Messiah's despised character. For example: Psalm 22:6-9 and Isaiah 53, are two passages describing Messiah as despised and rejected.

Nazareth was the town which housed the Roman garrison for the northern regions of Galilee. For this reason the town of Nazareth was despised and looked upon with contempt. To call someone "a Nazarene" was to use a term of contempt and derision. Because Jesus was raised in Nazareth, He was later called a Nazarene, meaning He was despised and contemptible in the eyes of many in Israel. This was Nathanael's response when he heard Jesus was from Nazareth (John 1:46): "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The answer is YES. God's Son, our Savior came from Nazareth.

Matthew's point in presenting Joseph's angelic dreams is to highlight his relationship with God, and his unquestioning obedience to God's every command. Little more is known about Joseph. Many New Testament scholars believe Joseph died prior to Christ's turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. **May God help each of us to follow Joseph's example of unwavering obedience!**

Conclusion

While the biblical information on Joseph is sparse, we can conclude that Joseph was a godly and righteous man of unwavering obedience. We also see that He was a selfless man. He took God's Son into his home in Nazareth, thus providing Jesus with a normal, loving family environment in which to grow. What is more, Joseph took God's Son into his own heart, thus discovering the purpose for his own life within the greater purposes of God.

Men, permit me to address my final two points to all of us men here this morning. If we ever hope to become a godly and righteous man like Joseph, a man who God can use to accomplish His purposes, then we must begin by committing ourselves to spend time daily with God in His Word. It all starts here.

Lastly, we need to ask God to help us develop a loving and sacrificial heart so we can truly be a blessing to our wives and children, and to one another.

My prayer is that each of you will do the same this Christmas. May you, like Joseph, embrace God's dear Son in your heart, and thereby come to discover God's purpose for your life!

Closing Prayer

Father we thank you for the humble example of Joseph. Help us we pray to be useable vessels like Joseph and Mary. We pray for anyone here this morning that may never have trusted Christ as Savior. We ask Father that at this very moment You might open their heart to receive Christ Your Son as their Savior from sin and death. Father we pray right now that believers, all of us together in this place, may examine our hearts and find those things that displease You and hinder our usefulness for You. Help us to confess our sins and to yield them to You. And then Lord we ask You to take control of our lives and make us the useable persons that You want us to be. Thank You Father for the gift of Your Son, the Christ of Christmas!

Closing Song: *A Strange Way To Save The World*