

JOSEPH: Jesus' Earthly Father

A few weeks back, I was invited to a Men's Fellowship Breakfast and to say a few words or do a brief teaching on something. I had planned to do a short teaching on a topic in which I prepared that week. As I was driving to the Fellowship, I began thinking upon Joseph, the earthly father of our Savior, Jesus.

As I was getting closer to the place where the breakfast was being held, I began to get an urge to speak on Joseph instead of what I had prepared during the week. There I was, in the parking lot of the ministry where the fellowship was to be held, searching the scriptures concerning Joseph and what his function and position was in the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ.

There are not too many scriptures concerning Joseph, yet as we all know, he was an integral part of the birth of Jesus, as well as being an important part of the early life of Jesus. Let's start at the beginning.

For that we must begin in both Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:24-38. In these scriptures we get two different genealogies. Without going into detail, we know that Matthew's genealogy traces Jesus' lineage through Joseph. We see this by the way Matthew concludes his genealogy in Matthew 1:16 as he writes, "*And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*" He writes that Joseph was the "*husband*" of Mary indicating that this was the lineage of Joseph as it pertains to the kingly line of Jesus who is the King of kings, going through King David.

Luke followed Mary's line which reveals Jesus' actual lineage to God, not just from David, but all the way back to the Godly line of Adam because it went through Adam's son called Seth. Adam, we all know was created by God as the first man.

Both of these genealogies were written in this way because, as we know, back in that time, everything had to be written in the form of the language of that time. Luke was writing a legal document to the Roman courts so he had to write it in the most "legal" way of the time. He

expressed that Jesus came from God, not a human man, in the best way that he could without the Roman courts throwing his whole document out from the beginning.

We must remember that this whole concept that Jesus was God was not being accepted by Rome and not by too many others. However, for our purposes we do see that there are two collaborating documents that state the fact that Joseph was indeed Jesus' legally "adopted" father in the natural realm – the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The scripture declares that when two agree touching any one thing, it shall come to pass and be accepted as the truth. (Matthew 18:19) The two Gospels agree on this fact.

The first time we read of Joseph is in Matthew 1:18-25. Matthew starts off with Joseph. Mary has already been told by the angel and she is already with child. Joseph is already aware that Mary is pregnant but he mistakenly thinks that Mary has been with another man. Thinking this, he was ready to end the agreement to marry her. We must remember that they were not together nor were they officially married. They were "betrothed" to be married and Joseph was getting things in order and saving his money and possibly building a home for when they did finalize the marriage covenant.

We must understand that there were three "steps" to properly getting married in the Jewish tradition. Joseph and Mary were both good Jewish people and therefore they were doing everything correctly as prescribed by Jewish Law. The following shows us the process of a proper Jewish marriage arrangement.

- 1st step - Engagement: This could happen when the "bride and groom to be" were quite young, and this was often arranged by the parents.
- 2nd step - Betrothal: This made the previous engagement official and binding. During the time of betrothal the couple were known as "husband and wife" even though they were not together, and a betrothal could only be broken by divorce. The betrothal typically lasted a year.
- 3rd Step - Marriage: This was the final step. The marriage was considered complete at the conclusion of the wedding ceremony and then the marriage would be consummated by the husband and wife.

Joseph and Mary were “betrothed.” The marriage was getting near. Joseph then finds out about Mary being pregnant. The news most likely spread quickly that Mary was with child. Joseph could have publicly humiliated her by calling her out in front of the whole town, as was the usual Jewish custom. Jewish law provided that Mary, because of her supposed unfaithfulness, could be placed before the elders for judgment and possibly, stoned to death.

However, Joseph thought to just “*put her away quietly*” without public knowledge. We see here that Joseph was not a violent or mean spirited man. He was a righteous man, a true Godly man. That is why God chose him and Mary to bring the Savior into the world. Joseph just simply could not take Mary as his wife because she was pregnant and he thought, like everyone else, that she cheated on him.

That is when God steps in and sends His angel to Joseph. It was then that the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. (Matthew 1:20-25) He explained to him that all this was bringing about the fulfillment of prophecy that “*a virgin would bear a child who was to be the Savior.*” (Isaiah 7:14) Joseph did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. However, he had no union with her until she gave birth. He gave this baby its God given name, Jesus.

We tend to sometimes just read that passage and then go on. However, let’s take a moment to think about the decision that Joseph actually made. Everyone knew that Mary was pregnant and everyone agreed that she should be put to death. But... Joseph stood by what the angel told him. Because Joseph did that, many in the town could have thought that he was the one who got her pregnant and that he actually was not as “good” as everyone thought him to be.

Joseph took the call of God and he did it wholeheartedly. That is why God chose both Mary and Joseph. These were two people who believed God and two people who God could trust to bring the Savior of the world into the world. Isn’t that something. God trusted these two people with the greatest move of God ever upon this earth. He trusted them to bring His Son, the Son of God into this world, so that He could save from eternal damnation those on this earth who would believe and trust in Him.

Their journey wasn't over. It was just beginning. They had to travel south to Bethlehem because of a census that the Roman government held. However, this was actually another move of God. This was brought about so that Mary and Joseph would have to travel to Bethlehem because that is where the scripture tells us the Savior would be born. (Micah 5:2)

They stayed in Bethlehem for two years. We see that after these two years while they were still in Bethlehem that the Magi came from the east to worship the King of kings. Matthew 2:1–12 speaks of these Magi, or wise men, who followed a star from the east to Bethlehem in search of a newborn king that would save the world. There they found the King, Jesus, and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After this, Joseph again hears from God. They were to leave Bethlehem and flee into Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-15) This again, fulfills the scriptures that the Messiah will come forth out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1) When it was time to return after the death of Herod, Joseph hears from the angels again and returns to Israel. However, Joseph is warned by the angel not to go back to Bethlehem but to go and settle in Nazareth. This again was all done and brought about by the prophetic Word and the will of God. (Matthew 2:19-23)

The next time we see Joseph is when Jesus is 12 years old. (Luke 2:27-50) This was the pivotal moment that the Bible gives to us concerning Jesus' ministry on this earth. It is also a pivotal moment for Joseph. The family would go to Jerusalem and fulfill their obligation to go to the Temple three times a year to observe the three annual feasts that every Jewish person would be required to attend – The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Shavout (Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) and Sukkot (Festival of Booths). The Bible tells us that it was at "Passover."

Passover was the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Also during this time, another feast day that was to be observed – Bikkurim. However, the Jewish people referred to, and still do even to this day, as the entire time of those three feast days as "Passover." So, actually it was a time when three of the "annual feasts" were taking place.

At the conclusion of the three feasts and on the way home back to Nazareth, we see that Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus. They immediately returned back to Jerusalem. They

find Him in the Temple area with all of the sages. They asked Jesus what He was doing there in the Temple area and why did he cause them such turmoil. They were typical parents.

We see that Mary asked, *“Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, **thy father** and I have sought thee sorrowing.”* As we can see, they were both very loving and good parents. Jesus simply responded, *“How is it that ye sought me? Wouldn’t you know that I must be about **my Father’s** business?”* In Mary’s questioning of Jesus, we see that Mary referred to Joseph as Jesus’ “father.” Jesus corrects her. He emphasizes who His real Father is (God, the Father). This is the last we hear of Joseph in the scriptures.

Yes, this would be the last time we hear or see of Joseph. There is a reason. Now, Jesus is at the age of being a man. Now, Jesus would be about His Godly Father’s “business.” Joseph did what He was supposed to do. He brought up Jesus. He protected Jesus. He was led by God and His angels and he was faithful every step of the way.

We do not hear anything else in the rest of the New Testament about Joseph. Joseph did His task and he preformed it well. He enabled Jesus to be protected and He did whatever God told him to do. He did His “call.” Joseph did not have a call to preach the Gospel. He did not have a call to save thousands of people. His call was to simply be a true Godly husband and father to His wife and to his children. He was, what I believe, a true Godly role model for every husband and father was and is to be.

What did Joseph do? He loved God and because of that love he was able to be used by God for a great purpose. Joseph heard from God through the angels and did exactly what God wanted him to do. There was no promise of greatness. There was no promise that it would be easy. If anything we can see that it was pretty difficult.

Joseph had to move from where he settled a number of times. He was taken out of his comfort zone. He married a pregnant girl who everyone else ignored and criticized. He went beyond even his own understanding and what everyone else thought. He simply believed and trusted God.

We see that there are really no great accolades for Joseph found within the scriptures. Actually, if we really look in the scriptures, especially in the New Testament, there are really no great accolades for anyone who does the will of God. The only accolades we will receive will be when we get to heaven.

However, even then, all the crowns and all the rewards that we receive will all be thrown at the feet of Jesus. We all will bow down and worship the Father and the King of kings and Lord of Lords, Jesus. It is all to be done simply His Glory and for others to see who our God truly is and hopefully turn towards Him and make Jesus their Savior and Lord.

It is interesting to note that we do not literally “hear” Joseph speak anything in the scriptures, but his actions “speak” volumes. Joseph, as we mentioned, is not spoken of nor is he around when Jesus began His public ministry. He presumably passed away. However, everything that Joseph did gave Jesus and his brothers and sisters the opportunity to grow in a safe Godly environment. We know that in the Gospel accounts, after Joseph had passed, we see that Jesus’ brothers were not very receptive or friendly towards Jesus. (John 7:5)

However, we see that after Jesus died and rose again, they did end up following and believing in Him. James and Jude are examples of this. James became the chief elder in Jerusalem and wrote the letter of James. We have the letter of Jude in the Bible as well. They may not have believed Jesus when He lived. Not too many people did. But... when it came down to it and they were confronted with the truth and they believed and became mighty unto the Lord.

I think this was because Joseph did instill within them the truth of God’s Word. Like many of us, they were a little hard headed and maybe jealous of Jesus. But, when the bottom line came—they chose to believe in Jesus as their Messiah and as their Lord and many of them became great people of God.

We can sum up the life of Joseph by observing and learning from his faithfulness to his God. He was a true man of God. Joseph was asked to do a number of difficult things. We find that each and every time the Lord commanded Joseph to do something, he yielded and complied with the will of God. This allowed for the fulfillment of God’s Word to be accomplished without Joseph truly recognizing it. He just did what God told him to do.

In concluding, I believe that Joseph provides a great example to us all of what true obedience to the Lord really is. He demonstrated that he was totally yielded to the Lord. Joseph was and still is a great role model to every person who calls themselves a child of God.

We may not be the one who everyone sees and remembers. Maybe God is calling you to be a Joseph. God is calling each one of us for His purpose – not our own. If you are the one who God is using to give a good foundation to your children or to others to become what they were truly meant to be, then praise the Lord!!! Just do it all unto our God and for His glory!!! Amen!!!