



A Divine Plan and a Simple Man

Lessons from the life of Joseph (the 'supposed' father of Jesus)



The ordinary acts we practice
every day at home are of more
importance to the soul than their
simplicity might suggest.

Thomas Moore, Poet

What we know about Joseph

- He was a descendent of David through Solomon (Mt. 1:1-16)
- He lived in the city of Nazareth in the region of Galilee (Lk. 2:4)
- He was “engaged” to Mary (she was betrothed to him) (Mt. 1:18; Lk. 2:5)
- He was a carpenter (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

- Luke 1:26-38 – Gabriel announces the birth of Jesus to Mary and tells her that her relative Elizabeth is also miraculously pregnant
- Luke 1:39,40 – “Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste... and greeted Elizabeth.”
- Luke 1:56 – “And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her house.”
- Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant (perhaps she was “showing” or she told Joseph – we don’t know)

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

- “Husband” – Betrothal is a much stronger term than “engagement”
- “A just man” – A man who wants to do the right thing
- “Public example” – Joseph could have turned Mary over to the religious authorities. Penalty for unfaithfulness could have included stoning.
- “Minded” – Joseph took time to deliberate
- “Put her away” – A certificate of divorce
- “Secretly” – Indication that Joseph cared about Mary

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

- “Thought about these things” – Joseph was a careful decision-maker
- An angel appeared directly to Mary and in a dream to Joseph
- Neither Mary nor Joseph questioned the validity of their experience
- The angel provided an answer to the question Joseph had been deliberating over for some time
- Did Joseph continue to deliberate?

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

- Joseph IMMEDIATELY obeyed the angel's command; no more deliberation was needed once he knew what God wanted him to do
- Luke 2:1-21 – Joseph takes his family to Bethlehem for the census, Jesus is born, and the shepherds visit
- Luke 2:21-28 – Jesus is circumcised; Joseph names him Jesus (Lk. 2:21; Mt. 1:25); Joseph takes his family to Jerusalem to fulfill the customs of the law
- Matthew 2:1-12 – The family returns to Bethlehem for possibly up to two years, then the wise men visit

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

¹³ Now when [the wise men] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, ¹⁵ and was there until the death of Herod...

- Joseph had made the decision to relocate his family to Bethlehem
- He had probably setup shop and was working as a carpenter there...
- When God told him to move, he did it unquestioningly... in the middle of the night
- Herod died in 4 BC, so they were probably not there long (depending on how long they were in Bethlehem after Jesus was born)

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

¹⁹ Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, ²⁰ saying, “Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child’s life are dead.” ²¹ Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel.

- Once again, Joseph waits for direction from God
- As soon as he receives direction, he obeys
- Joseph apparently intended to take his family back to Bethlehem (in the land of Israel) where they had previously settled
- The people in Bethlehem had no knowledge of Mary’s unusual pregnancy

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth...

- Archelaus was even more violent and hateful toward the Jews than was Herod
- Although Joseph was afraid, there is no indication that he would not have continued to Bethlehem if he had not been directed otherwise by God
- God's plan was clearly not Joseph's plan, but Joseph obeyed nonetheless – he returned to his hometown of Nazareth

After Matthew 2:23 and Luke 2:39

- He and Mary go to the feast in Jerusalem each year until Jesus is 12 years old (Lk. 2:41-52)
- He is referred to as “the carpenter” (Mt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3)
- He is referred to one last time as Joseph (Jn. 6:42)
- We hear nothing more about him after these references

More things we know about Joseph

- He was a man of careful deliberation
- He desired to “do the right thing” in every situation
- He lived a simple, honest life
- He provided the best he could for his family
- He obeyed God without hesitation
- He faded away into the background, but his actions had great eternal importance in God’s divine plan

Nothing can thwart God's plan,
but what if Joseph had not...

- taken Mary as his wife?
- taken his family to Bethlehem for the census?
- stayed in Bethlehem with his family?
- taken his family to Egypt?
- returned to Nazareth?

By obeying God and doing the right thing for his family, Joseph played an important part in God's redemptive plan for mankind.

We have the same opportunity!

Let's be like Joseph

- Not rash in our actions, but careful and deliberative
- Quick to act when God tells us what to do
- Intent on doing to the best we can for those entrusted into our care
- Willing to live simple lives, even to the point of fading into the background to further God's plan

He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly, To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8