

JOSEPH'S CHRISTMAS

What did Joseph want to do when he found out Mary was pregnant?

What happened to Joseph when he was thinking about what to do with Mary?

What was he instructed to do?

Who told him what to do?

Who was just the son of?

What kind of a man was Joseph?

What was Joseph doing when instructions came to him?

What did Joseph call the Baby?

Why did he call Him that?

What did Joseph do when he woke up?

How do we know that Joseph and Mary had other children?

What was Mary's firstborn Child called?

Why?



Buddy Dano, Pastor

Divine Viewpoint

www.divineviewpoint.com

November 1987

JOSEPH'S CHRISTMAS

In Matthew 1:18-25 notice how many times Joseph's name is mentioned here. "When as his mother Mary was espoused TO JOSEPH." "THEN JOSEPH, HER HUSBAND, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily." "BUT WHEN 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.'" "And she shall bring forth a Son, AND THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS." "For He shall save His people from their sins." "THEN JOSEPH, BEING RAISED FROM HIS SLEEP, DID AS THE ANGEL OF THE LORD HAD BIDDEN HIM, AND TOOK UNTO HIM HIS WIFE, AND KNEW HER NOT TILL SHE HAD BROUGHT FORTH HER FIRSTBORN SON, AND HE CALLED HIS NAME JESUS."

Matthew's account of the nativity sets Joseph in the foreground. Joseph's pain and hesitation, his consideration of Mary, the Divine communication to him, and his obedience to the Word of God. Embarrassing as his position must have been, it takes up a much larger space than the actual miracle of the virgin birth itself.

Probably in all this we have an unconscious disclosure of the source of information of Matthew. At all events, he seems to speak of it from the standpoint of Joseph.

Luke, on the other hand, has most to say about Mary, and her wonder, and her submission, and her hurrying to find help from a woman's sympathy, as soon as the angel of the annunciation had spoken, and the hymn of exultation heartened her to pour forth which she heard to Elizabeth.

The two accounts beautifully supplement each other, and give us two vivid pictures of both Joseph and Mary, each of which, as believers, were tried in their very own special way, and each richly blessed by the respond-

ing to the Word of God given to them individually.

Joseph took up his burden and Mary took up hers, because God had spoken to them and they believed in the Word of God. The shock to Joseph of the sudden discovery, crashing in on him after he was bound to Mary, and in what would else have been the sweet interval of love and longing before they came together, is delicately and graciously brought out for us in verse 18. "She was found." How the remembrance of the sudden disclosure, blinding and startling as a lightning flash, lives in that word. And how the agony of perplexity as to the right thing to do in such a cruel dilemma is hinted at in the two clauses that pull in opposite directions.

As a "just man," and as "her husband," Joseph owed it to righteousness and to himself not to ignore his betrothed's condition, but as her lover and her husband, how could he put her, who was still so dear to him, his Right Woman, to public shame, some of which would cloud his own name? To "put her away" was the only course possible, though it racked his soul. And to do it "privily" was the last gift that his wounded love could give her, the "bishop of her soul," the "banner of love over her."

No wonder it says "these things" kept him brooding sadly on them, nor that his days troubled thinkings colored his sleeping hours. The Divine guidance, the Word of God, which is ever given to waiting minds, was given to him by way of a dream, which is one of the Old Testament media of Divine communication, is, and occurs with striking frequency in this and the following chapter, there being three recorded as sent to Joseph and one to the magi. It is observable, however, that to Joseph it is always, "the" or "an angel," "of the Lord" who appears in the dream, whereas **the dream only** is mentioned in the case of the magi. The difference of expression may imply a difference in the

manner of communication. But in any case, we need not wonder that Divine communications were abundant at such an hour, nor shall we be startled if we believe in the great miracle of the "Word's becoming flesh," that a flight of subsidiary miracles, like a bevy of attendant angels, clustered around it.

The most stupendous fact in history is announced by the angel chiefly as the reason for Joseph's going on with his marriage. Surely that strange inversion of the apparent importance of the two things speaks for the historical reliableness of the narrative. **The purpose in mind is mainly to remove his hesitation and to point his course, and he is to take Mary as his wife, for "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."** As to Joseph, tortured with doubts, doubts about Mary, and hesitations as to his duty, the sequence of the two things is beautifully appropriate, otherwise it is monstrous.

The great mystery, which lies at the foundation of Christianity, is declared in the fewest and simplest of all words. That He who is to show God to men, and to save them from their sins, must be born of a woman, is plainly necessary. Because "The children are partakers of flesh and blood. He must also partake of the same." That He must be free from the taint in the old sin nature, which passes down to all, "Who are born of the flesh," or of man is no less obviously requisite.

Both requirements are met in the supernatural birth of Jesus Christ, and unless both have been met, He is not, and cannot be, the world's Saviour. Nor is that supernatural birth less needful to explain His manifestly sinless character than it is to qualify Him for His unique office. The world acknowledges that in Him it finds a man without blemish and without spot. How come He is to be free from the flaw which, like black streaks in Parian marble, spoil the noblest characters? Surely, if after millions of links in the chain, which have been of mingled metal, there comes one of pure gold, it cannot have had the same origin as the others. It is a part of the chain, "The Word was made flesh," but it has

been cast and molded in another forge, for it is, "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

"She shall bring forth a Son." The angel does not say to Joseph, "a son to thee," but yet **Joseph was to assume the position of father, and by naming Him to acknowledge Him as his.**

The name "Jesus" or "Joshua" was borne by many a Jewish child then. There was a Jesus among Paul's entourage. It recalled the warrior leader, and no doubt, was often given to children in those days of foreign dominion by father's who hoped that Israel might again fight for freedom.

But holier thoughts were to be Joseph's, and **the salvation from God which was expressed by the name** was to be of another kind that Joshua brought. **It was to be salvation, deliverance, from sin and from sins.** This Child was to be a leader too, a conqueror and a king, and the mention of "His people," taken in connection with Joseph's having been addressed as "the son of David," is most significant. **He, too, is to have a subject people, and the deliverance which He is to bring is not political or to be wrested from Rome by the sword, but inward, moral, and spiritual, and therefore to be effected by moral and spiritual weapons.**

It is the evangelist, not the angel, who points to Isaiah's prophecy. And he does so with a certain awe, as he thinks of the greatness of "all these things." The Hebrew word rendered in Matthew "virgin" makes it clear from the development of the prophecy by Isaiah and especially from the fourfold name given to the child of Isaiah 9:6, and the glorious dominion there foretold for Him, that **Isaiah conceives of Him as the Messiah.** The great Messianic hope was necessarily trained to look further down the stream of time for the fulfillment. He who should fill the "role" set forth was yet to come.

Matthew believed that it was completely filled by Jesus Christ, and we know that he was right. The fulfillment does

not depend on the question whether or not the idea of virginity is contained in the Hebrew word "ALMAH," but on the correspondence between the figure seen by the prophet in the golden haze of his Divinely quickened imagination, and the Person to be described in the Gospel, and we know that the correspondence is complete. The name "IMMANUEL" to be given to the prophetic Child, breathed the certainty that in "God with us," Israel would find the secret of its charmed existence, even while an Ahaz was on the throne.

The name takes on a deeper meaning when applied to Him to whom alone it in fullest Truth belongs. **It proclaims that in Jesus Christ God dwells among us, and it lays bare the ground of the historical name, Jesus, for only by a man who is one of ourselves, and in whom God is with us, can we be saved from our sins.** The one name is the deep, solid foundation. The other is the fortress refuge built upon it. He is Jesus, because He is IMMANUEL, God with us.

How different the world and his own life looked when Joseph awoke. Hesitations and agonizing doubts of his betrothed's purity had vanished with the night, and, instead of the dread that her child would be the offspring of

shame, had come a Divinely given certainty that it was a "Holy Thing." In the rush of the sudden revulsion, all that was involved would not be clear. **His obedience was as swift as it was glad. He believed, and his faith took the burden off him, and brought back the sweet relations which had seemed to be rent for ever.**

The birth was foretold by the angel in a single clause. It is recorded by the evangelist in another. In both cases, Mary's part and Joseph's are set side by side, "She shall bring forth," and "Thou shalt call Him." She had brought forth, and he called Him Jesus. The birth itself is in verse 25 recorded mainly in its bearing on Joseph's marital relations. Could such a perspective in the narrative be conceived of from any other point of view than Joseph's?

The words "till" and "firstborn" remind us that they had other children as seen in other passages of Scripture. Medieval-minded people reject with horror the notion that Jesus had brethren in the proper sense of the word, while those who believe that the perfect woman is a happy wife and mother, will not feel that it distracts from Mary's sacredness, nor from her purity, to believe that she had other children than "her firstborn Son."

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME

Matthew 1:21, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."

I. The historical associations of the Name.

It was a very common Jewish name, and, of course, was given in memory of the great leader who brought the hosts of Israel to the rest in the promised land. **There is no sharper contrast conceivable than between Joshua and Jesus.** The contrast and the parallel are both most significant.

A. Contrast

Joshua is perhaps one of the least interesting of the Old Testament men, a mere soldier, fit for the fierce work which he had to do, rough and hard, ready and prompt, of an iron will and a brave heart. The one exhortation given him when he comes to the leadership is, "Be strong and of a good courage." That seems to have been the main virtue of his character. The task he had to do was a bloody one, and thoroughly he did it. The difficulties that have been found in the extermination of the Canaanites may be met by considerations of the changed atmosphere between then and now, and of their moral putrescence. But no explanation can make the deed other than terrible, or the man that did it other than fierce and stern.

No traits of chivalrous generosity are told of him, nothing that softens the dreadfulness of war. He showed no touch of pity or compunctions, no lofty statesman-like qualities, nothing constructive. He was simply a rough soldier, with an iron hand and an iron heel, who burned and slew and settled down his men in the land they had devastated.

The very sharpness of the contrast in character is intended to be felt by us. Put by the side of this man the image of Jesus Christ, in all His meekness and gentleness. **Does not this speak of the profound**

change which He comes to establish among men? The highest ideal of character is no longer the rough soldier, the strong man, **but the man of meekness, and gentleness and patience.**

How far the world yet is from understanding all that is meant in the contrast of the first and the second bearers of the name. We have done with force, and are come into the region of love. There is no place in Christ's kingdom for arms and vulgar warfare. **The strongest thing is love, armed with celestial armor. "Truth and meekness and righteousness" are our keenest edged weapons.** This is true for Christian morals, and for politics in a measure which the world has not yet learned.

"Put up thy sword into its sheath."

B. Parallels.

It is not to be forgotten that the work which the soldier did in type is the work which Christ does. He is the true Moses who leads us through the wilderness, but also He is the captain who will bring us into the mountain of His inheritance. But besides this, **we too often forget the soldier-like virtues in the character of Christ.**

We have lost sight of these very much, but certainly they are present and most conspicuous. If only we will look at our Lord's life as a real man and apply the same tests and terms to it which we do to others, we shall see these characteristics plainly enough.

What do we call persistence which, in spite of all opposition, goes right on to the end, and is true to conscience and duty, even to death? What do we call the calmness which forges self even in the agonies of pain on the cross? What do we call the virtue which rebukes evil in high places and never blanches nor falters in the utterance of unwelcome truths?

Daring courage. Promptness of action, iron will, all conspicuous in Jesus. It has become a common place thing now to say that **the bravery which dares to do right in the face of all opposition is higher than that of the soldier who flings away his life on the battlefield.** The soldiers of peace are known now to deserve the laurel no less than the heroes of war.

But who can tell how much of the modern world's estimate of the superiority of moral courage to mere brute force is owing to the history of the life of Christ? We find a further parallel in the warfare through which He conquers for us the land. His own struggle, "I have overcome," and the lesson that we too must fight, and that all our spiritual life is to be a conflict. It is easy to run off into mere rhetorical metaphor, but it is a very solemn and a very practical truth which is taught us, if we ponder that name of the warrior leader borne by our Lord as He explained to us by Himself in His words, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Psalm 110, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning. Thou hast the dew of Thy youth."

II. The significance of the Name.

Joshua means "God is Saviour." As borne by the Israelitish leader, it pointed both him and the people away from him to the unseen and omnipotent source of their victory, and was in one word an explanation of their whole history, with all its miracles of deliverance and preservation of that handful of people against the powerful nations around. It taught the leader that he was only the lieutenant of an unseen Captain. It taught the soldiers that they got not the land in possession by their own arms, but because "He had a favor unto them."

1. God as Saviour appears in highest manifestation in Jesus.

I do not mean in regard to the nature of the salvation, but in regard to the relation be-

tween the human and the Divine. Joshua was the human agent, through which the Divine will effected deliverance, but, as in all helpers and teachers, he was but the instrument.

He could not have said, "I lead you. I gave you victory!" His name taught him that he was not to come in his own name. But "He shall save," not merely God shall save through Him. And "His people," not the "people of God." **All this but points to the broad distinction between Christ and all others.** In that God, the Saviour, is manifest in him as in none other.

We are not distracting from the glory of God when we say that Christ saves us. **Christ's consciousness of being Himself salvation is expressed in many of His Words.** He makes claims and puts forward His own personality in a fashion that would be blasphemy in any other man, and yet all the while is true to His Name, "God is the Saviour."

The paradox which lies in these earliest words, the great gulf between the name and the interpretation of the angel's lips, is only solved when we accept the teaching which tells us that in "The Word made flesh and dwelling among us we behold God manifest in the flesh," and in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The name guards us, too, from that very common error thinking of Christ as if He were more our Saviour than God is. We are not without need of this warning. **Christ does not bend the Divine will to love, is not more tender than our Father, God.**

2. Salvation brought by Jesus is in its nature the loftiest.

It is with strong emphasis that the angel defines the sphere of salvation as being "their sins." The Messianic expectation had been degraded as it flowed through the generations, as some pure stream loses its early sparkle, and gathers scum on its surface from filth flung into it by man. Mere deliverance from the Roman yoke was all the salvation that the mass wanted or expected.

The tragedy of the cross was foreshadowed in this prophecy, which declares an inward emancipation from sin as the true work of Mary's unborn Son.

We can discern the Jewish error in externalizing and materializing the conception of salvation, but many of us repeat it in essence. What is the difference between the Jew who thought that salvation was deliverance from Rome, and the Christian who thinks that it is deliverance not from sin, but from its punishment?

We have to think of a liberation from sin itself, not merely from its penalties. This thought has been often obscured by preachers, and often neglected by Christians, **in whom selfishness and an imperfect understanding of the Gospel have too often made salvation appear as merely as means of escape from impending suffering.** All deep knowledge of what sin is, teaches us that it has its own punishment, and that the hell of hell is to be under the dominion of evil.

3. God's people are His people.

Israel was God's portion, and Joshua was but their leader for a time. But the people of God are the people of Christ. **The way by which we become the people of Jesus is simply by faith in Him.**

III. The Usage of the Name.

It was a common Jewish name, but seems to have been almost abandoned since then by Jews from abhorrence, by Christians from reverence. The Jewish fanatic, who during the siege stalked through Jerusalem shrieking, "Woe to the city," and as he fell mortally wounded, added, "and to myself also," was Jesus. There is a Jesus in Colossians. We find it as the usual appellation in

the Gospels, as it is natural. But in the epistles it is comparatively rare alone.

The reason, of course, is that it brings mainly before us the human personality of Jesus. So when used alone in later books, it emphasizes this: "This same Jesus shall so come." "We see Jesus made a little lower." We should seek to get all the blessing out of it, and to dwell, taught by it, on the thoughts of His true manhood, tempted, our brother, born of our bone. **We should beware of confining our thoughts to what is taught us by that name. JESUS IS THE CHRIST, the Son of God.** Ever with thoughts of His lovely human character let us blend thoughts of His Messianic office and of His Divine nature. **We shall not see all the beauty of Jesus unless we know Him as the Christ, the Son of the Highest.**

And besides the name written on His vesture and His thigh, He bears a name which no man knoweth but Himself. Beyond our grasp is His incommunicable name, His deep character, but near to us for our love and for our faith is all we need to know.

That name which he bore in His humiliation He bears still in His glory, and the name which is above every name, and at which every knee shall bow, is the name by which Jewish mothers called their children, and through eternity we shall call His name Jesus, because He hath finally and fully saved us from our sins.

Jesus our Joshua. Joshua our Jesus.

Buddy Dano, Pastor
Divine Viewpoint

www.divineviewpoint.com