

Joseph the Just: Son of David

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Matt. 1:18-25, 2:13-15, 19-23; Luke 2:22-24, 39-52
- B. The Roman Catholics call him Saint Joseph or San Giuseppe.
 - 1. Born in Bethlehem between 50-40 BC (according to non-canonical historical sources); was an older man when he took Mary to be his wife
 - 2. Died in Nazareth on July 20, 18 AD.
 - 3. Local itinerate carpenter by trade (tekton from which we get the word technology); would have made furniture, doors and panels, some roof framing for mud brick homes; however, the word is not limited to wood worker; also used for those who work in stone and metal; only tradition limits it to wood working.
- C. Matthew follows the major royal line from Solomon for Joseph
 - 1. Luke follows a minor royal line from Nathan, another son of David and Bathsheba for Mary.
 - 2. Consequently all the names between David and Joseph are different.
 - 3. Matthew and Luke are also the only Gospel accounts to include the infancy narratives.
 - 4. Joseph lives in Nazareth and travels to Bethlehem in compliance with the requirements of a Roman census. Jesus was born there.
 - 5. Matthew is the only Gospel to include the narrative of the Massacre of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt.
- D. After this there is no further mention of Joseph by name, although the account of Jesus at the Passover visit to the Temple in Jesus' 12th year includes a reference to both his parents. Last time Joseph is noted in scripture as alive.
 - 1. Tradition represents Mary as a widow during the adult ministry of Jesus.
 - 2. Joseph does not appear in any of Paul's epistles or Mark's Gospel.
 - 3. Very little other information on Joseph is given in the Gospels. He is never quoted.
- E. Matthew records four occasions when Joseph is supernaturally instructed about the care of Jesus.
 - 1. In the first dream, an angel confirms to Joseph that Mary is with child conceived by the Holy Spirit, that she will bear a son to be named Jesus, Who will save His people from their sins. Joseph should marry her. Marriage customs in that day differed from ours. Their relationship was such that it was a covenant that it required divorce to break it.
 - 2. In the second dream, Joseph is told to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt (from Bethlehem), because Herod is seeking to kill Jesus.
 - 3. In Joseph's third dream, an angel instructs him to return his family to Israel, implying that Herod is dead. However, Joseph hears that Herod's son Archelaus reigns in Judea, and he is afraid to continue the journey.
 - 4. In the fourth dream, God Himself warns Joseph to avoid returning to Judea (Bethlehem). Joseph then settles Mary and Jesus in the region of Galilee in Nazareth.

- F. Jesus states to Joseph that he is not His father, although Joseph would have already known this - Luke 2:41-51.
1. None of the Gospels mention Joseph as present at any event during Jesus' adult ministry.
 2. In Mark 6:3, they call Jesus "Mary's son" instead of naming his father. In Matthew, the townspeople call Jesus "the carpenter's son," again without naming his father, and again he has brothers named James, and Joses (Joseph), and Simon, and Judas - Matt. 13:53-58; Luke 3:23
 4. Joseph is not mentioned as present at the Wedding at Cana at the beginning of Jesus' mission, nor at the Passion at the end.
 5. If he had been present at the Crucifixion, he would, under Jewish custom, have been expected to take charge of Jesus' body, but this role is instead performed by Joseph of Arimathea. Nor would Jesus have entrusted his mother to John's care had her husband been alive.

I. JOSEPH TEACHES US

- A. Righteousness - God chose a human to be a human father to Jesus; a man who had godly character to be a father to the Messiah. The fact that God chose him says something about his character.
1. He was a righteous man, a reflection of God's righteousness.
 2. Joseph was not perfect; no one is. But his character would enable him to raise righteous children.
 3. Regardless of the lack of faith exhibited by Jesus' brothers during his ministry, one of them became James the elder at Jerusalem and the author of the book of James, and the other became Jude the evangelist and author of the book of Jude.
 4. That's the kind of men righteous Joseph raised.
- B. Mercy
1. Jewish marriages took place in 3 stages:
 - a. The contractual stage / espousal stage / actual consummation
 - b. Contractual - Young people had little to do with the process, as most marriages were pre-arranged. A legal contract would be signed with details of the dowry put in writing.
 - c. Espousal stage - An engagement period which normally lasted about a year. They were allowed to spend time together and start getting to know each other. In Matthew 1, Joseph and Mary are in the espousal stage: they spend time together but must keep themselves pure.
 - d. Marriage with a seven day wedding feast and consummation to follow.
 2. Merciful in his treatment of Mary
 - a. If Mary was unfaithful, the law required the death penalty.
 - 1) Deut. 22:13-21
 - b. Joseph would have been publicly humiliated, yet he was merciful to Mary.
 - c. He planned to send her away quietly.

d. His merciful character would enable him to raise a merciful son.

C. Faithfulness

1. He did as the Lord commanded him.
2. He accepted and raised Jesus as his own and protected Him according to the visions because God said so.
3. His faithful character would enable him to raise a faithful son.

Conclusion:

A. Joseph was the father chosen by the Heavenly Father to raise His only Begotten Son. That makes a profound statement about the kind of man Joseph was.

B. "Just as God told Joseph: 'Son of David, do not be afraid!' (Matt. 1:20), so he seems to tell us: 'Do not be afraid!' We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be rebuilt if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground."

C. "Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation." (Kate Fowler, "Ite Ad Joseph," 2/2/21)