

# Grasping Your Place in Christmas

CrossRoads Church, Pastor Terry Laughlin

There are many revelations from God connected with the birth of Christ. The best way of overcoming the world's view of Christmas is to have a Biblical understanding of the miraculous events that took place at the first Christmas. Many Christians remember the first Christmas after they had invited Christ into their heart and life to be both Savior and Lord. The Holy Spirit of Christ illuminated them with a fresh excitement and understanding that was pleasing to God.

Over time, however, like most things in life the joy that should be expressed this Christmas season can be snatched away by holiday busyness, life's trials, the loss of loved ones, poor health and especially by the lures of this world. Each of these distractions can be easily overcome by meditating upon what the Word of God says about the lives of those who were closely involved with the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

There are two people whom God ordained to be a very important part in Jesus' life that first Christmas. Listen to what the Bible says about Joseph and Mary. In Matthew 1:18-24 we read in the New International Version, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel' —which means, 'God with us.' When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave Him the name Jesus."

In Luke 1:26-38 we read of Mary, "In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.' Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end.' 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God...' 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May it be to me as you have said...'"

Just what was found in the spiritual heart of these two wonderful people that made them such a valuable part in the first Christmas? Can these character traits be found in the children of God today?

The Biblical accounts of the lives of Joseph and Mary hold truths that the Holy Spirit of Christ wants you to grasp this Christmas season. Many know the accounts of Christ's birth but have little Biblical revelation or understanding of the lives of Joseph and Mary. However, Christians who live a life expressing that the birth of Christ is an event worth celebrating

take time to invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate Biblical truth into their hearts.

The first truth worth grasping is that the Lord takes ordinary men and women and makes useful vessels of them. Joseph was a man doing ordinary common work and who, to our knowledge, held no place of authority or worldly fame. Mary was an ordinary but godly woman who lived a faithful life before God. Joseph and Mary were earthly parents of Jesus and they expressed the type of character that should be found in all Christian parents who claim to believe in God.

This is great news! Most people who believe in Christ are not going to be rich and famous in this world's eyes, yet the Lord has a very special place for them in proclaiming the truths of Christmas. It has been well said, "God takes ordinary people and does extraordinary things through them."

The second truth worth grasping about Joseph and Mary

if he would have laid the full brunt of the written law upon Mary and done all he could to save face in the community. Not only was Mary subject to accusations of giving in to sin, but Joseph as well. In the natural it takes two to bring about pregnancy. Instead of living in the natural Joseph decided to live out the righteousness he had seen in his God. The word "righteous" (dikaos) in Matthew 1:19 means to be merciful, kind and tender. The application is that Joseph was not a man given to passionate vengeance; rather he had a right relationship with God. Joseph lived in accordance with God's compelling standard, listened carefully to God's revelations that he was to be the earthly father to the Messiah and then obeyed God's instructions implicitly.

Children blessed to be raised in a true godly home have fathers who know their place in the Christmas story. They are fathers who seek out the will of the Lord Jesus for them and who love their wives as Christ loved the church. They trust in the power of the Holy Spirit of Christ to help them be merciful, kind and tender. They desire to be like Joseph, men who live in accordance with the full counsel of the written Word of God.

The fourth truth worth grasping this Christmas is what the Bible says about Mary. Again, little information is given about Mary in the Bible, yet what is said illuminates the character trait that is needed if someone is going to find his or her place in the Christmas story. Mary was submissive to the Lord's will for her. The key words that reflect her heart are "I am the Lord's servant..." The Greek word (*doile*) translated "servant" here means Mary considered herself to be a bond slave of and owned by the Lord. She was giving Him full permission to work His will in and through her life no matter what that meant to her reputation or physical safety. This attitude allowed her to live and express what God desires in all who want to know Him and to worship Him in spirit and truth. Mary said, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." (Luke 1:46-47)

Mothers who find their places in the Christmas story have submissive hearts to the Lord, and God intercedes for them just as He

did Mary. Mary no doubt faced gossip, accusations of immorality and could have been stoned to death under the law. What she found was strength to face her fears and the misunderstandings of those that did not comprehend what God was doing in the world. She could find rest in the protective hand of God and in the care of her husband, Joseph.

The last truth to grasp this Christmas season is that those who find their place in proclaiming the realities of Christ have the Lord with them. The words of Gabriel to Mary were, "The Lord is with you." This was not the first time this promise was proclaimed. When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon He proclaimed, "The Lord is with you, mighty warrior." (Judges 6:12) This is the very same promise given by Jesus to all soldiers of Christ who participate in the Great Commission. The Christ of Christmas said, "...surely I am with you always." The definition for "always" (*pantos*) here means to continually and forever be with us in our work with the Lord and in everything affecting our lives. There is no greater truth worth meditating on this Christmas season than the Lord being with us in every part of our lives.

Have you grasped your place in the proclaiming of the birth of Christ? Do you understand how much you mean to the Lord? Prayerfully cling to these truths and invite Jesus Christ to become Savior and Lord of your life and enjoy your God-ordained purpose in this world.



is that they were willing to seek out and do God's will for them. In Luke chapter two we read of them doing as the Book of Leviticus instructed regarding the presentation their first born son to the Lord. Their obedience to the law of the Lord sets the example for everyone whom God would make ready to find their place in the telling of the Christmas story. Believers in Christ who want to enjoy all that this Christmas has for them will be prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God and asking the Lord to give them wisdom and the strength to obey it.

The third truth worth grasping this Christmas is what the Bible reveals about Joseph. Very little is actually said about Joseph in Christian writings or in Scripture; however what is said about him the Holy Spirit wants to place deep within your spiritual heart. The Bible says that Joseph was a "righteous man." The Hebrew word for "righteous man" (*tsaddiys*) means that a man is known for his uncompromising obedience to the Torah, the law of Moses. The application for today is that Christians need to live uncompromisingly to the whole counsel of the written Word of God. Everyone who knew Joseph considered him to be a man who knew the written Word. In his natural man, Joseph's response at Mary's revelation that she was pregnant "by the Holy Spirit" would have been doubt and shock. His expectations of having a pure and godly wife and raising children in God's perfect will was now shattered. He would have been angry and felt betrayed. No one would have blamed him

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