

The Preparation of Joseph and Mary

As we've prepared for Christmas, we have looked at how God prepared the Magi by giving a testimony and record for our assurance of who the Messiah would be. We also looked at how God prepared His plan from eternity. We saw how John as the forerunner prepared the way of the Lord. In all of this, we should notice how preparing for Christmas is more than getting ready to celebrate Christ coming into the world. It is also about celebrating the opportunity to share Jesus as God's gift of salvation with the world.

Today we are going to look at how God prepared Mary and Joseph for Christ's entrance into the world. Even though they were descendants of David, by the time you get to Joseph and Mary, they were just two of *many* descendants. Mary and Joseph were two very ordinary people.

1. The angelic visitation -

Mary and Joseph certainly needed an angelic visitation to prepare them for what was going to happen. In their ordinary station in life, it was not as though they would have any real expectation of greatness, let alone the role they would play in the most important life in history.

- Mary's quandary.

First, let's look at Mary's quandary.

Luke 1:26-38 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

28And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, *thou that art* highly favoured, the Lord *is* with thee: blessed *art* thou among women.

29And when she saw *him*, she

was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. **[There is nothing like a visit from an angel to shake up your day.]**

30And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

31And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. **[The angel gave her assurance of her calling.]**

32He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

34Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? **[Here is Mary's quandary. Ordinarily, there has to be a father involved. Ordinarily you are married.]**

35And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. **[The angel prepared Mary for her extraordinary moment. She was going to have an ordinary pregnancy and an ordinary birth, but the One who would be born would be extraordinary.]**

36And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

37For with God nothing shall be impossible.

38And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

[The angel directed Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, a visit that would serve to confirm this extraordinary moment.]

- Joseph's dilemma.

Next, we notice Joseph's dilemma.

Matt 1:18-25 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. **[Joseph's dilemma was that he was a just man who loved Mary. His fiancé was found with child. Being a fiancé was actually considered to be as good as married...except for moving in together. Being a just man, it was a problem to take her to be his wife, but he didn't want to shame her. He was ready to take a middle option by divorcing her privately and quietly.]**

20But while 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: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. **[The angel spoke to this ordinary man who ordinarily would have divorced Mary. But the angel prepared Joseph for this extraordinary moment.]**

22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

2. Ordinary people

Joseph and Mary had an extraordinary visit, but they, themselves, were just an ordinary man and an ordinary lady who lived in an extraordinary moment in history. In our penchant for the fantastic, it would be easy to not appreciate another very important preparation of Joseph and Mary to receive the Lord. Their *strength* was in being *ordinary* as responsible adults. Perhaps being a responsible adult is not *usual*, but living responsibly *should be* ordinary. It does not require heroic efforts to live an ordinary life of responsibility.

When you contemplate the extra effort that would be required for a ministry opportunity, you have to rely on what should be common in the Christian life: selflessness. Whether it is stepping out of your comfort zone to witness to someone or dropping back in a passing zone to let someone in front of your truck, it is all ministering to the needs of others which calls for being selfless. Ministry does not require heroic efforts most of the time. It just requires being responsible.

As a young maiden, Mary had no real chance to have done anything heroic. She was not like Esther or Deborah. Her life, later, was not marked by any outstanding contribution to art, theology, or philosophy. Joseph was a construction worker. In his life, we are not told of any medals he won for military action. He was not known as a philanthropist, a captain of industry, or a wolf on Wall Street. What *was* recorded about them is

a reflection of their ordinary responsible character.

Luke 2:41-52 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.

42And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.

43And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*.

44But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.

45And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.

46And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.

47And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

48And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.

49And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

50And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.

51And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

52And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Joseph and Mary were did not drive Jesus to be a superstar athlete or political, financial, or social success.

What *is* recorded and noted was that they maintained a responsibility that should be ordinary. What they *did* do was "drive him to church". They took Him to Jerusalem *every* year as required for the Passover. Jesus was *also* not a stranger to the synagogue. He was treated with honor when He appeared at the synagogues during His ministry, which speaks of His reputation of being faithful in His attendance at the synagogue. Mary and Joseph worked and provided for their family like anyone would, but what was outstanding was that they exercised the normal spiritual responsibilities in caring for Jesus.

Don't underestimate the significance of the ordinary ministry of your church. Most of the churches of America are *not* megachurches with pastors who broadcast from coast to coast in every major media market. The mega church pastors have their work to do in delivering challenges to the nation, but most churches are made-up of very ordinary ministries. According to one statistic, less than 1% of churches in America are megachurches. Only about 10% of churchgoers make up mega churches. 99.5% of churches are operated by people who are not rock stars. There are numerous quotes on the Internet about ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The *proper* quote is that there are no *extraordinary* people, just *ordinary* people doing *ordinary* things in *extraordinary* times. As anyone in the military or law enforcement should be able to tell you, in the heat of the moment you fall back on your training. This can be truly said by anyone whether it is in a kitchen, an office, or a shop as well as in the battlefield. The experts make their work look so easy because to them it is *ordinary*. We certainly live in extraordinary times that call for ordinary responsible people who are well practiced in ordinary spirituality.

3. The call to an ordinary life -

What does it take to be ordinary?

- Be faithful

Prov 20:6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?

- Be together

Heb 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

- Be busy

Luke 19:13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

- Be with Jesus

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

- Be ready to witness

1Pet 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

- Be filled with God's Word

Ps 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

It doesn't take a great faith to be saved, just an ordinary faith in a great God and Savior. Then, although there might come a time when we find ourselves in an extraordinary moment, our ordinary life in Christ will rise to the occasion. If you are in the habit of sharing the Gospel, it will be no big deal to share it with the powerful as well as the guy sitting next to you on the bus. If we are faithful to our responsibilities, we will be ready when any opportunity presents itself to make a spiritual

difference. Do the normal, ordinary thing and get baptized, take on an area of service, keep your repentance fresh, and be a faithful witness for Christ.

1. The angelic visitation - Luke 1:26-38, Matt 1:18-25
2. Ordinary people Luke 2:41-52
3. The call to an ordinary life - Prov 20:6, Heb 10:25, Luke 19:13, Acts 4:13, 1Pet 3:15, Ps 119:11