

THE FOREST HILL NEWS



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Bible Study..... 9:30 A.M.
Morning Worship..... 10:30 A.M.
Evening Worship..... 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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Number 12

Jesus Christ - A Family Portrait (Part 1)

Wayne Jackson

The Family Unit

The apostle Matthew provides us with a snapshot of the lord's human family:

And coming into his own country he taught them in their synagogue, in-somuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brothers, James, Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? (Mat. 13:54-56). [Note: the plural feminine adjective "all" in the final sentence may imply more than two sisters.]

Let us briefly reflect upon these family members.

Joseph

One must conclude that Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, was an extraordinarily devout Hebrew inasmuch as he obviously was selected providentially to be the foster-father of baby Jesus from among the thousands of available Israelite men.

Matthew depicts Joseph as a "righteous" man (1:9). He was "betrothed" to Mary, a young Jewish virgin. Betrothal involved a prenuptial contract which was generally formalized by physical marriage after about a year. The couple was considered legally married before the union was consummated (1:24-25), and a sexual breach of the betrothal was judged adulterous and subject to the most serious consequence (cf. Deu. 22:23-24).

When Mary's pregnancy was effected, Joseph was troubled about the matter, obviously not persuaded initially that a miracle had occurred. Nonetheless, he was a compassionate soul and was not willing to publicly expose Mary; but he seriously considered putting her away discretely (Mat. 1:19b). When he was informed in a dream of the true nature of the conception, he "arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife" (v. 24). Joseph was an obedient soul.

Luke records that it "came to pass in those days," i.e., the days when Mary was near to the delivery of her holy child, that Augustus Caesar issued a decree that a Roman subject should adjourn to "his own city" for taxation purposes. It is rather amazing, in view of Mary's condition, that she accompanied Joseph on a seventy-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem (either by walking or by donkey). While Mary was obligated to pay taxes "it was not required for her to go and do so in person" (Geldenhuis 1956, 100).

(continued on page 2)

Jesus Christ - A Family Portrait (continued from page 1)

It is entirely possible that both Joseph and Mary were aware of Micah's prophecy that the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; cf. Mat. 2:4-6), and thus yielded to the prophetic declaration. What courage and devotion beat within the hearts of this couple!

After the birth of the precious child, when the brutish Herod the Great resolved to search out and murder the baby, Joseph was warned in a dream: "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt" (Mat. 2:13). Immediately the yielding husband arose, took the baby and Mary, fled Bethlehem in the dead of night (the most dangerous time for travel), and began the 150 mile journey to Egypt. Does not the submissive confidence of this devout couple shine with brilliance?

The final time the Bible student encounters Joseph alive has to do with the family's journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem to observe the annual Passover, a dozen years after Jesus' birth (Luke 2:41). During those early years Joseph had trained young Jesus in the carpentry business (Mark 6:3). The rabbis taught that to rear a son without teaching him a trade was to bring him up as a robber.

Joseph also saw to it that his "son" had regular religious instruction. We later learn that it was the Lord's habitual "custom" to attend the synagogue service on the Sabbath. He could both read the Hebrew Bible and locate specific texts (Luke 4:16-17)! Although we happily acknowledge that Mary was "highly favored" (Luke 1:28) (though never treated as "Mother of God" or "Queen of Heaven"), we must not forget the contribution of Joseph as well.

Mary

One can only marvel at the qualities that must have adorned this Hebrew maiden, who likely was in her early teens. The rabbis placed the minimum age for a girl's marriage at twelve (thirteen for the boy). She exhibited great faith for one so tender (reflect back upon the arduous journeys previously sketched). We are constrained to look closer at Mary under a magnifying lens.

When this Jewish girl was addressed by the angel Gabriel and informed that she was "highly favored: by the Lord God (Luke 1:26ff), she was "greatly troubled" about the nature of the statement. She was both confused and worried. But the angel cautioned, "Fear not"—or more literally, "Stop being afraid." When she was told she would conceive a son, she was puzzled because she had never been intimate with a man (v. 34).

Mary was instructed that the event would be supernatural. Her response was amazing. First, she acknowledged that she was prepared to be the "handmaid" ("bondmaid" ASVfn) of the Lord (vv. 38,48), i.e., a **slave** to do her Lord's will—her own interests thrust aside. Second, she confidently petitioned, "Let it be unto me according to your word." Such a resolution in the hearts of men would renovate the entire world! This was the "bud" of courage and commitment that would be seen in its "full bloom" at the foot of the cross.

It was Mary, with the heart of a fretful mother, who out of frustration rebuked the twelve-year-old boy after he lagged behind in Jerusalem and made his way into the temple where he engaged the professional teachers in stimulating dialogue (Luke 2:46). "Son," she asked, "why have you treated us in this way? Your father and I have been looking for you with painful sorrow" (v. 48). The following text contains the first recorded words of the Savior: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (v. 49; or "about my Father's affairs?"- cf. KJV). The questions express some surprise that his parents, at this point, did not fully appreciate the relationship that he sustained to his **heavenly** Father (v. 50). Nonetheless, Mary would treasure these things "in her heart" for future reflection (cf. v. 19). His mother would progressively appreciate his Messianic role, culminating in that day when she watched him die, and a "sword" would pierce through her soul (v. 35).

(to be continued)

From the Preacher

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,” so stated the apostle Paul regarding his affection for his Philippian brethren (Phil. 1:3). I borrow his words to describe my feelings for the many faithful at Forest Hill. March is one of our busiest months of the year. So many rise to the occasion and willingly serve the Lord and others to make sure that our work flows smoothly. Gratitude is expressed to one and all.

A few recent activities deserve special attention. The Timothy, Phoebe, and Eunice classes ended this past week. Certificates were awarded to each class member at a special gathering in the fellowship hall last Sunday evening. It was a special joy to see each one of the boys in the Timothy class lead a verse of a song. In these training classes seeds are being sown that will cause our youth to blossom into great leaders in God’s kingdom. A special thank you to Dan Dawson for teaching the boys and Deborah Watson, Joyce Phillips, and Toreda Earls for teaching the girls.

Last Thursday evening the work team reorganization meeting took place. We are thankful for all the good this program has accomplished for many years. While some who are involved in this program can only send cards, so many from various places inform me of how grateful they are to receive these words of encouragement. Still others take advantage of the opportunity provided to call upon someone who needs to be visited. All who do this are to be saluted for their labor in the Lord. A special word of thanks to deacon Danny Brad-dock for coordinating this ministry.

Don’t forget the annual youth day and lectureship beginning Saturday, March 28 and continuing through Thursday, April 2. After that the students and I leave for the Restoration Trip, April 6-11. No slowing down! Barry

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