

The Three Dreams of Joseph

Written by Bill Perkins

In Matthew's gospel, attention is fixed on Mary, Jesus, the star, the shepherds, the manger, and the magi with their gifts of frankincense, myrrh and gold (I think the Magi came two or so years later to Nazareth, not to Bethlehem at the time of the Lord's birth).

Always Linked to Others

When referred to, Joseph's name is linked to another person. We seldom speak of Joseph, but of Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matthew 1:16), or Joseph the son of David (Matthew 1:20). He's never called the father of Jesus, but the supposed father of Jesus—which he was (Luke 3:23). Importantly, Matthew tells us Joseph was faithful to the law and compassionate (1:18). He loved God and people.

Yet this man—a young man at the time of the Lord's birth--received three dreams with an urgent message.

In the first dream an angel told him to take Mary as his wife—with the explanation that she had conceived the child supernaturally (Matthew 1:20).

In the second dream an angel told him to take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt (Matthew 2:13).

In the third dream an angel told him to return to Israel (Matthew 2:19).

Immediate Obedience

Does it impress you, as it does me, that Joseph obeyed without proof? He didn't request evidence from the angel. That's what Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, asked for when an angel said his elderly wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son (Luke 1:18).

Instead, "He arose from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (Mt. 1:24). After the second dream we read, "And he arose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt" (Mt. 2:13). Joseph showed the same obedience when he, "Arose and took the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel" (Mt. 2:21).

Joseph held Jesus as an infant and played with him as a boy. He taught him how to work with tools and build with wood and stone. But Joseph taught Jesus something more valuable. Throughout the days, weeks, months and years following that first Christmas, Joseph showed Jesus how to obey his Father . . . immediately . . . without hesitation . . . or delay.