

The Untold Christmas Story

Written by Bill Perkins

There's a part of the Christmas story that seldom gets told. It involves someone overshadowed by Mary and Jesus and the shepherds and the star and the stable and the manger and the angels and the wise men.

The Supposed Father

When referred to, his name is often linked to another person. We rarely 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 he was faithful to the law and compassionate (1:18). He truly loved God and people.

Three Dreams

Yet this man—actually a young man at the time of the Lord's birth—was the recipient of 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).

No Request for Proof

You might think Joseph would respond to the initial command with a request for proof that the angel was from God and his message true. That's what Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist asked for when an angel told him his elderly wife, Elizabeth, would bear a son (Luke 1:18).

But Joseph didn't ask for proof. 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).

Unquestioning Obedience

This was the man who held Jesus as an infant and played with him as a boy. He taught Jesus how to work with tools and build with wood. But perhaps most importantly, on the days, weeks, months and years surrounding that first Christmas, Joseph was a man of unquestioning obedience to God. An obedience which assured the loving care and protection of Mary and the young child.

As we celebrate the Lord's birth this year, let's pray for the kind of faith demonstrated by a young man who risked it all to obey God. And let's celebrate the one whose very survival God superintended by choosing a man and woman of such faith.

Have a blessed Christmas.

Locking arms,

Bill