

Lesson 4 EARTHLY PARENTS CHOSEN FOR JESUS

From Lesson 2, CLUES FOR THE JEWS, we learned several things about Jesus' earthly parents. If we were trying to find parents with all these qualifications a lot of vetting would need to be done. Not so with God, He knows all His creation. The following are some of the important facts.

1. A new covenant will replace the Law of Moses. Jeremiah 31:31-34.
2. A child will be born to do this. Isaiah 9:6-7.
3. He will be a descendant of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1-3.
4. His earthly parents will be from the tribe of Judah. Micah 5:2.
5. Actually, God will be his real father. 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalms 2:7.
6. His mother will be a virgin. Isaiah 7:14.
7. He will be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2.
8. John the Baptist will be his advance man. Malachi 3:1.
9. Jesus said, "A body you did prepare for me"
and "Here I AM...I am ready to do your will, O God." Hebrews 10:5-7.

For all those to be true, earthly parents must be carefully selected, informed and guided. Matthew and Luke tell us how it all came about. We will start with Luke 1:26.

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And he came to her and said, "Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹ But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I have no husband?" ³⁵ And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. ³⁶ And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible." ³⁸ And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:26-38 (RSV).

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. ² This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. Luke 2:1-5 (RSV).

We continue with Mathew because he adds some important information.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; ¹⁹ and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; ²¹ she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:18-35 (RSV).

The following are some of the things that were fulfilled:

1. John the Baptist is on the way; Elizabeth, Mary’s kinswoman is in her sixth month.
2. The virgin, Mary, is betrothed to Joseph of David’s clan; she was married to him.
3. She will conceive a son by the Holy Spirit and name him Jesus.
4. The son will be great and called the Son of God most high.
5. He will be given the throne of David forever and his kingdom will never end.
6. Jesus will be born in Bethlehem because of the census rules.
7. When Joseph realizes Mary is with child he chooses to divorce her quietly.
8. When an angel explained why she is with child, Joseph takes her home as his wife.
9. Since Jesus was to be born of a virgin, Joseph knew her not until Jesus was born.

Let us look at some of the facts given in the Scriptures. Mary was a virgin betrothed to Joseph. He was going to give her a divorce. Your author did not understand why until 1984. That summer I talked to a West Bank Palestinian young lady who was about to get married. She was going to get married but her groom would not even be there. It was their BETROTHAL, or as she called it “Marriage Part 1.” His parents would call on her parents and they would do the marriage. All she would do, when they had reached an agreement on the dowery, was say “I will,” from another room, when asked if she would marry their son. The papers would be signed and they would be legally married. No legal papers were needed later. She referred to Abraham’s servant and Rebecca’s family as an example. She even talked about Jacob and Rachael as the longest time between part one and two. She knew of the one-year exemption from the army for the couple to get acquainted and start part two. She knew a lot of Bible; but back to her story.

Now it would be her husband’s job to find a place for them to live and to come for her. There would be a feast and other things when her husband came to take her home to be his wife (Part 2). Rebecca and Isaac did not have the feast, but that was OK; they were already married.

I came home and researched BETROTHAL to be sure of my new understanding. To get the non-Jewish viewpoint I looked up “marriage” in an article by James Orr in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1956. Of special note was the last sentence, “The betrothed parties were legally in the position of a married couple, and unfaithfulness was ‘adultery.’”

For the Jewish viewpoint I used the article “On Marriage, Divorce, and the Position of Woman in Judaism” from the book *Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, edited by J. H. Hertz, 1941. This statement stood out. “It was 1500 years before the Jews regularly combined the two events (Betrothal and Nuptials) into one time frame.”

The results were simple. A betrothed virgin is someone's WIFE. So Joseph and Mary were married, part ONE. I doubt if many, besides Joseph and Mary and Elizabeth and her husband knew what was going on. I am sure the neighbors just thought Joseph didn't wait for the feast as Isaac did not. That would not have been a sin. One thing is for sure, they would not have traveled to Bethlehem alone together if they were not married. Joseph was an amazing man. God would have known he would be. Even before the angel told him why and how Mary became pregnant, he was going to give her a divorce quietly. He may have thought Mary loved someone else and he wanted to give her freedom to marry that man. When he learned the truth he took her home as his wife immediately; but to fulfill the scriptures, Joseph left her a virgin until Jesus was born. Then God blessed them both by letting them have children of their own. (Mark 6:3).

Mary was not a disgraced woman. In fact, Mary sang, “From now on all generations will call me blessed.” Luke 1:48b (NIV). Isn't it amazing how God takes care of things?

One last thought, the church is referred to as the bride of Christ. In keeping with this lesson, what Jesus said to his disciples makes sense, “Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am.” John 14:1-3 (NIV).

Where should we all be when the bridegroom returns?