

JOSEPH'S OBEDIENCE, MT.1:18-23

Casting Call #4

◆ **Intro:** Casting call skit on Joseph, the Skit Guys...

◆ (So far we've pondered several characters in the Nativity Story: the angel, Mary, Herod) The character in the Christmas nativity we'll look at today is Joseph, the non-biological father of Jesus. God of course is his truest father. But as we have been looking at what truths the Word of God teaches us through each one present in the Nativity story, let's wonder just briefly what we can learn from the man that God picked to be the earthly father to the Son of God.

◆ In a word, Joseph is courageously obedient. Four times Joseph meets an angel in his dreams. Four times he received instructions. And four times he immediately does what God told him to do.

◆ vs24 *he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded, and took Mary as his wife*

◆ 2:14 *so Joseph got up, took the Child and his mother in the night and left for Egypt.*

◆ 2:21 *so Joseph got up, took the Child and his mother and came to the land of Israel*

◆ 3:22 *after being warned by God in a dream, he left for the regions of Galilee.*

◆ Joseph probably didn't know it at the time, but with each of his acts of obedience, prophecy was being fulfilled that came from a millennium earlier. So what exactly does it mean to obey God? That's our question.

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◆ **1. For one, Joseph shows us that obedience is the courage to deny self-determination.** Realize that in obeying the angel, Joseph was giving up a load of his own plans and desires. He's going to be a father but he doesn't get to choose the name of his child, an honor afforded to the husband in that culture. Also, from what the angels says about this child, it is clear that Joseph will not ultimately be the manager of him, but he will be the manager of Joseph's destiny. Furthermore, the angel sends him off the Egypt, but remember, his carpentry business was in Israel. Do you know all that it entails to move to a foreign land and start over?

◆ And so it is when God comes into your life. You do not get to control God, he controls you. You can fight that your whole life and many do, but ultimately at death's door, God is the only one with power. In our day, everyone urges you to be true to yourself, fulfill your own dreams, follow you heart where it leads you. But you see, that's where we go wrong. It is far better to be true to the truth, reality -that comes from God. It is far better to cooperate with God's dreams for your life, after all, he's the one who determines your purpose.

◆ *Proverbs 16:9 In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.*

◆ This all means that if you want God in your life you don't get to make conditions. "God, I'll do ___ if you___." You actually have to rebel against our self-centered culture and ask God to be on

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the throne of your life. You need to bow. You don't make him your co-pilot. You ask him to fly the plane. But don't you see, there's no danger there, because he knows who he made you to be, and what he made you for, and how your life will best work!

◆**2. Secondly, obedience to God is at it's heart the courage to deny a worldly reputation.** Joseph is not a prominent figure in the New Testament. In fact we only hear of him here in the nativity story. Otherwise he is almost never mentioned again except in an oblique dishonorable reference when some folks later observe Jesus' followers and teachings and comment, "isn't he just the son of that carpenter guy?" See they don't even name him.

◆By taking on fatherhood of the virgin born Jesus, Joseph took on a world of shame and disrespect. Everyone would either think he got Mary pregnant out of wedlock, or was just plain cookoo when he blamed it on a "Holy Spirit" and angels from heaven and all. This is the inevitable result of lining your life up with the God of heaven; people of earth will always find a way to despise you. It's really not surprising that a good name with God is a bad name with the world. God sets law in place. God declares things right and wrong. God claims authority. Anyone with the courage to obey God, joins that camp which makes other people uncomfortable. Anyone who denies God's existence or his authority over their life doesn't have to feel guilt when they do wrong because who's to say what wrong or right for me?

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◆ Christians are therefore more and more persecuted as history continues. Thousands of Nigerians have been slaughtered, and their villages burned in 2020 by Islamic Jihadists just because they profess to believe in Jesus. In America we can tolerate men who think they are women, as though that were scientifically even conceivable; we are urged to tolerate a brand new definition of marriage and what a human family actually is; we are urged to support all the religions and their holidays -except the Christian ones. Saying "merry Christmas" is now considered offensive. Do you know why? Because Jesus claims to be the one true God, and that's intolerable to anyone who wants to be in charge of their own life. But Jesus said,

◆ *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Mt.16:24-26*

◆ **3. Finally, obedience is the courage to deny self-reliance.**

Joseph was well aware as a "righteous" Jewish man that he was far from sinless. The term means he was a devoted follower of God. It does not mean he was bumping his moral head up there on the clouds of heaven. He too needed a savior from his sins.

◆ The main place we humans choose to rely on ourselves is in our own achievement. We cherish the ability to do it ourselves. Our pride looms large as we naively believe that we can be good

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enough to obligate God into granting us blessings, and heaven on top of that. No, for Jesus to come into your life, you have to have the courage to admit that you are a moral failure, that you'd never be able to earn forgiveness, that you are guilty of sin/breaking the rules God put in the earth.

◆ But that's not so dangerous either because the Bible says

◆ the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:7-9

◆ **Conclusion:** these three acts of courageous obedience are what in fact lead a person to eternal salvation. Joseph showed us them, and so did Jesus.

◆ Christ Jesus denied himself the right to self-determine. He was given by the God the Father that whoever believes on him might not die but have eternal life. (Jn3:16). In the garden of Gathsemane Jesus imitated his earthly father in saying to God "not my will, but your's be done."

◆ Christ Jesus denied himself the praise of the world. Instead he was born to die on a Roman cross as a criminal, despised by the world while he was in fact saving it.

◆ And finally, though Christ Jesus denied self-reliance, it wasn't because he needed to be saved like us. It was because someone needed to die for our sins. And when he

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did that he said, "Father into your hand I commit my spirit"
and he died. He relied on God the father as we must do too.

◆ Don't let Christmas 2020 go by without inviting)Zeus onto
the throne of your heart! Ask him to forgive your sins! Ask
him to be boss over your life!