

Q. If you were casting a Christmas Pageant, with adult actors, what sort of man would you be looking for to play Joseph?

A. Someone who looks like a Jewish carpenter.

[But if it was a movie (with close-ups), what would you be looking for...?]

Matthew 1 THE NEW TESTAMENT BEGINS WITH A SHORT STORY. ABOUT A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF KING DAVID.

"ACT ONE" HAS 3 SCENES.

Matthew 1:18,19 ESV ~ **SCENE ONE**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. [A story about the birth of Jesus Christ!] When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. → A righteous man. A kind man. He comes to the only conclusion available to him.

Matthew 1:20-23 ESV ~ **SCENE TWO** [In which the plot thickens]

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

vss. 22,23 ~ **EDITORIAL NOTE**

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, *God with us*). [The prophet = Isaiah]

+ 10 days from today: Christmas Day!

+ 10 weeks from today: Last Sunday in February and we will have just concluded a series of sermons (studies) from Isaiah.

The Big Picture re: Sunday mornings: "Isaiah" follows "Romans":

"Romans" is the clearest explanation of the Gospel; Isaiah, the "Evangelical (Gospel) Prophet."

THIS MORNING: This 1st of 2 Sundays about Christmas has a definite link to **Isaiah!**

THIS SERMON ON JOSEPH IS INTERRUPTED WITH AN IMPORTANT BACKSTORY.

"Once upon a time there was a wicked king named Ahaz. [735 – 715 B.C.] The king of a small nation. Tragic, for the small nation was all that was left of the spectacular kingdom of King David. The sad but true story was that there had been a civil war in the days of one of his royal ancestors (King David's grandson.) And now all that was left of the once great kingdom of David was a tiny remnant comprised of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. (It went by the name of "Judah." It had lost the ten other tribes, but it still had Jerusalem!)

Isaiah 7:1-14 ESV ~ **THE BACKSTORY**

In the days of Ahaz ..., Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah ... the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it... ...the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz ... And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands... **If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.**'"

[N.B. THIS IS A MESSAGE SIMILAR TO THE ONE BROUGHT TO JOSEPH BY AN ANGEL] BUT THERE'S MORE THAN A MESSAGE: THERE'S A SIGN!

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." [People can be so complicated! But

Isaiah wasn't fooled. Ahaz had lost interest in the God of Israel and Isaiah could see that.] And he said,

"Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. **Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name**

Immanuel." Sadly, King Ahaz did NOT stand firm in his faith. So he did not stand firm at all.

He became horribly idolatrous. He died at the age of 36.

And now "fast forwarding" 700 years, we read of a direct descendant of King Ahaz: a just, kind Jewish carpenter named Joseph, faced with a closely-related challenge. [Let's review!]

Matthew 1:18-23 ESV ~ **SCENES ONE & TWO WITH EDITORIAL NOTE**

Matthew 2:24,25 ESV ~ **SCENE THREE**

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

NOW THEN: If you were looking for an actor to play the part of Joseph? RIGHTEOUS... KIND...

THE ANGEL SAID: "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife." "COURAGE"?

THE PROPHET SAID: 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint... **If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.**' Not "courage" so much as FAITH.

More accurately, this righteous, kind carpenter was **a man of faith**.

Joseph's courage, like his "justness" (his righteousness), his kindness, was a product of his faith.

LET'S CALL IT... **JOSEPH'S SORT OF FAITH**

1. **Authentic faith in God connects us to Christ.**

Joseph was given **a unique role** in the life of Christ.

The primary male role model of Jesus. The man from whom Jesus learned what it means to be a man.

How appropriate: a just man, a kind man, a courageous man → a man of faith.

And his husbanding of Mary was an influence on Jesus as well: because of its impact on Mary and because it was Christ's first impression of how a husband loves his wife! ("Bridegroom"... "bride")

If Joseph had been a man of no faith, or little faith, he would have detached himself from Christ.

(In fact, no "father figure / husband figure" was absolutely required.)

Unlike Joseph, your role and my role is not unique, but you and I have a role.

That's true of all real followers of Christ. **Ephesians 2:10** ESV

Mysteriously, it's true of all human beings.

Proverbs 16:4 ESV

The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Will you take on your appointed role? By faith?

There are people who will be influenced by your answer to that question.

Compared to Joseph's assignment, yours is not **so directly** connected to Christ.

But everyone's role is connected to Christ!

Colossians 1:16 ESV

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things [including you and me!] were created through him and for him.

"All things": **created by him and through him and for him!** And Christ continues to be with us. "God with us."

But are you connected to him? By faith? → By trusting Jesus enough to obey him?

Believing people are the only ones who really know him. It's the way Joseph was connected to Christ.

John 14:21 ESV

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

And there's more...

2. **"Trusting and so obeying God" disconnects us from our fears.**

Isaiah 7:9 ESV

If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.

A VERY SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL QUESTION: A QUESTION FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS PARTIES: **What are you afraid of?**

Worried about? Anxious about?

Philippians 4:6-7 ESV

...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Do you know what you are afraid of?

(Is it pretty much the same as what Joseph was afraid of?)

Will you trust God?

Will you (courageously) do the right thing / the kind thing / the thing that God shows you to do?

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL QUESTION: A QUESTION FOR RIGHT NOW:

Q. Do you trust Christ enough to set aside your fears and worries?

As a newborn infant, the Christ Child was impossible to know.

But now...

Revelation 19:11-13 ESV

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

He is called "Faithful and True." He is called "The Word of God." Those are names you can trust!

NEXT WEEK: DECEMBER 23 "CHRISTMAS HUMILITY" Luke 1:26-56

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All Scripture references: HOLY BIBLE, **English Standard Version**, © 2001, CROSSWAY PUBLICATIONS