



**Christmas Message 2007**  
**GCSP – 12/22/2007**

*(Damon sings, "Joseph's Song")*

*How could it be?  
This baby in my arms  
Sleeping now so peacefully  
The Son of God the angel said  
How could it be?  
Lord, I know he's not my own  
Not of my flesh, not of my bones  
Still Father let this baby be  
The son of my love*

*Father show me where I fit into  
This plan of Yours  
How can a man be father to the Son of God  
Lord, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter  
How can I raise a king?  
How can I raise a king?*

*He looks so small  
His face and hands so fair  
And when he cries the sun just seems to disappear  
But when he laughs  
It shines again  
How could it be?*

*Father show me where I fit into  
This plan of Yours  
How can a man be father to the Son of God  
Lord, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter  
How can I raise a king?  
How can I raise a king?*

*How could it be?  
This baby in my arms  
Sleeping now so peacefully  
The Son of God the angel said  
How could it be?*

For those who have had children, think back to the time when you held your firstborn child in your arms for the very first time. I'm sure you had an unbelievable smile spread across your face and I'm sure you were swelling with pride. Some of you may have had a tear or two in your eyes, while some of you may have been in a state of panic as sheer terror ran through your mind. How am I going to be able to take care of this child? What were we thinking?

Could you imagine holding baby Jesus, the Son of God, in your arms? And then after the shock of that wore off, could you imagine the weight of responsibility you would feel in your humanness of now having to care for, feed, and raise the Son of God as an infant, toddler, young boy, adolescent, teenager, etc.?

The Bible is silent concerning these years with a few small exceptions, but I would have to imagine that Joseph felt the weight of that responsibility many times.

Joseph is a man in the Bible that we all know but the Bible actually has very little to say about him. Matthew's gospel gives him the most "press" so turn with me in your Bibles to **Matthew 1**.

The first 17 verses of this gospel is a genealogy from Abraham to Jesus. It is fascinating to see the names and the people who were all part of the ancestry of Jesus if for no other reason than to see the mercy of God in allowing real imperfect people to be part of this royal lineage. I won't take the time to go over this list, but you will find murderers, adulterers, prostitutes, and all manner of other "unworthy" people that God used to preserve the holy line to the birth of Jesus.

Joseph was not one of these less than perfect people; although he was by no means a perfect man because only Jesus can stake that claim. But the Bible does call Joseph a righteous man. Let's read a few passages to help us understand who this man was.

### **Matthew 1:18-21**

When the Bible speaks of a couple being betrothed it is similar to being engaged but it was more binding than what we call engagement. A betrothal was a marriage contract that could only be severed by a decree of divorce. During the betrothal period, typically a year, the prospective husband and wife still lived apart but they were legally joined to one another. There was to be no nookie-nookie during this year but neither party was free to date around either.

This is where we find Joseph and Mary. During this time Joseph discovers that Mary is pregnant. The child is obviously not his and by right of law he could have had Mary stoned to death for what would seem to be her commitment of adultery and fornication. But Joseph was a righteous man and he must have loved Mary very much because he was instead going to discreetly get a divorce and move on with his life.

That night an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and set the record straight. Mary had not been unfaithful after all, but instead was still a virgin. Her pregnancy was a divine act of the Holy Spirit. Joseph receives the message from this angel that he is going to be the earthly father of the King of kings and Lord of lords; the Savior of the world is going to be placed in his care.

### **Matthew 1:24-25**

Joseph realized that there was no time to waste and he is immediately obedient to the commandments from the angel. He curtails what was left on the betrothal period and quickly arranges the wedding ceremony before it becomes obvious that Mary is pregnant. But Joseph does not engage in any sexual relations with Mary until after Jesus was born. Joseph is indeed a righteous and godly man.

Well, Jesus is born, and we all know that story very well, and the Magi make their way to the home of Joseph and Mary probably after Jesus is somewhere between 6-18 months old. It is during this time that king Herod feels threatened by someone who has been designated the king of the Jews.

### **Matthew 2:13-14**

Joseph, like any loving father, does what he needs to do to protect his wife and son. And notice that Joseph is once again immediately obedient to God's directions.

### **Matthew 2:19-23**

Again Joseph is obedient and he does everything in his power to protect his son.

What about Mary? How did she deal with being mother to the Son of God?

*(Connie sings, "Mary, Did You Know?")*

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
would one day walk on water?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
would save our sons and daughters?  
Did you know that your baby boy  
has come to make you new?  
This child that you delivered  
will soon deliver you.  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
will give sight to a blind man?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
will calm the storm with His hand?  
Did you know that your baby boy  
has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little baby,  
you kiss the face of God!*

*Oh, Mary, did you know?  
Oh, Mary, did you know?*

*The blind will see, the deaf will hear  
the dead will live again.  
the lame will leap, the dumb will speak  
the presence of the lamb.  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
is Lord of all creation?  
Mary, did you know that your baby boy  
will one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your baby boy  
is heaven's perfect lamb?  
This sleeping child you're holding  
is the great I am.*

Turn with me in your Bibles to **Luke 1**.

### **Luke 1:26-38**

Ladies, imagine the angel Gabriel standing before you and announcing that you are going to be mother to the Son of God. Mary is most likely between 14-17 years old when this event occurs; that was the typical age for girls to be betrothed in that time and culture.

At the risk of possibly offending some of you who may have been raised with certain religious backgrounds, allow me to state a few facts about Mary:

She was definitely favored of God; the verses we read state that fact clearly. But Mary was not and is not any different than you and I outside of this special privilege that God bestowed upon her.

She was not a perpetual virgin. Scripture speaks of her other children on several occasions; at least two daughters and three other sons. Two of her other sons wrote Books of the Bible – James and Jude.

Mary is not our intercessor and it is wrong to pray to her. Mary needed a Savior just like you and I do because Mary was a sinner just like you and I are. When Jesus died on the cross the veil in the Temple was torn in two giving you and I personal access with God the Father. Praying to Mary is not only useless it is sinful for the Bible is clear that we are only to pray to the Triune God; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

If any of what I just said offends you, please forgive me. I would be glad to show you from the Bible the truth of these statements at a more convenient time.

So here we have Joseph and Mary left with the awesome responsibility of raising the Son of God. So how did they do?

The only instance in the Bible that speaks of Jesus' childhood after His infancy is found in **Luke 2**.

#### **Luke 2:39-47**

**Verse 40** tells us that Jesus "**continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom.**" That verse covers age 8 days to age 12 years. As I mentioned earlier, the visit from the Magi most likely happened somewhere between 6-18 months but we get no insight into what Jesus was like in that passage in Matthew; just that they visited and brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

At 12-years old we see Jesus traveling with his family and many others to Jerusalem for Passover. Jesus gets left behind when the festival was over but Joseph and Mary are not aware of this fact until the next day. Joseph and Mary were not being neglectful, for these caravans were always filled with family and friends who looked out for each other. Whatever the specific circumstances were, Jesus stayed behind in the Temple without His earthly parents knowing about it.

Jesus confounds the teachers with His understanding and His questions to them. He was mature beyond His years.

#### **Luke 2:48-51**

If Joseph and Mary had allowed the fact that Jesus was the Son of God escape them even briefly, this incident surely jolts them back to reality. But notice the middle of **verse 51**: "**He continued in subjection to them.**" Even though Jesus knew who He was and where He needed to be, He also knew that God's law said to honor and obey your father and mother, and so He did.

After this account we do not see or hear from Joseph again. The bible does not tell us any specifics but somewhere in the next 20 years or so we have to conclude that he dies. Every time we see Mary from this point on she is on her own or with friends or her other children; but no Joseph.

For the time we have left this evening I want us to focus in on one verse about Jesus that in essence covers age 12 to 30. We have no other Scriptural accounts of the life of Jesus after this verse until His public ministry begins at approximately age 30.

#### **Luke 2:52**

In this simple verse we have a pattern to follow that will enable us to have a godly and balanced life.

Jesus grew in four distinct categories of life. All four of these are vitally important for us as well. Eliminate any one of them and your growth will become lopsided and out of balance.

### Wisdom

Jesus kept increasing in wisdom. Wisdom is the application of knowledge. You can have an IQ that is off the charts but be very lacking in wisdom. Knowledge apart from practical application is primarily useless. Practical application apart from knowledge is somewhat impossible without a lot of trial and error; and in essence the trial and error piece is actually gaining knowledge.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **2 Timothy**.

### **2 Timothy 2:15**

We are commanded to study God's Word for the purpose of completely understanding it and then we are to do what it says. That is wisdom. Growing in wisdom simply means progressively learning what God's Word says and then doing it.

### Stature

Jesus kept increasing in stature. This is the physical aspect of our lives. As we read earlier, the child Jesus was growing physically stronger. The physical aspect of our lives is important. This does not mean that you devote an inordinate amount of time to exercise but it does mean to take care of your body.

Turn with me to **1 Timothy 4**.

### **1 Timothy 4:7b-8**

Paul is making the point that growing spiritually is more important than growing physically but he is not discounting the physical. Godliness is profitable for this life and the life to come but physical exercise is still profitable for this life.

Those who have submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and have accepted His glorious salvation from sin are no longer your own. The Bible says that Christians have been bought with a price and that our physical bodies are now the Temple of the living God. So we need to follow the example of Christ and continue to increase in stature throughout our lives by devoting some time to proper exercise and healthy eating.

### Favor with Men

I'm going to go out of order for these last two, but it also says that Jesus kept increasing in favor with men. We could call this the social aspect of our lives. The Bible does not call for us to become hermits and recluses. We are called to spread the gospel message to all mankind. We cannot do that if we are unfriendly, aloof, introverts. Yes I know we all have been given a different and unique set of characteristics and qualities, and I also know that we have all been raised uniquely; some have been raised well and some not so well, but none of that precludes us from growing socially.

Turn with me in your Bibles to **1 Corinthians 9**.

### **1 Corinthians 9:19-23**

Paul was a social person with a cause. He wasn't being fake or phony, he genuinely cared for people; he cared for their eternal souls. So Paul was always striking up conversations with strangers to not only grow in favor with men but to find an opportunity to share Christ with them; which brings us to the final aspect of Jesus' growth.

### Favor with God

The final area of life that Jesus kept increasing in was spiritual. Your spiritual life is a part of you whether you acknowledge it or not. Without having Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior there will always be a hole in your life. You won't always be able to put your finger on it and you won't always be able to recognize that it is indeed the spiritual part of your life that is lacking, but the fact will remain that you have a hole in your life.

The reason God sent His Holy Spirit to divinely impregnate Mary with His Son Jesus Christ; the reason that Jesus went through being a human baby in her womb, then going through all stages of humanity just like you and me; the only reason Jesus lived a perfect life and then endured the cruelty of death on the cross; the only reason Jesus rose again on the third day; and the only reason Jesus left us with these Bibles we hold in our hands, is so that you and I could be saved from eternal punishment in hell.

All of mankind has an incurable disease called sinfulness. We all sin on a regular basis and God cannot allow sin to enter His heaven. But God loved us so much that He provided the payment for sin; we could never pay the debt we owe. Your good deeds and your works of righteousness can never come close to making up for the sins you commit. Jesus became that sacrifice; the payment for our sins.

If tonight this truth is becoming a reality to you for maybe the very first time, then you are ready to accept the gift of salvation. You are finally prepared to surrender your life to His leading and to the greatest Christmas gift mankind has ever known.

Let's pray.