**COULD YOU BE JESUS’ PARENTS?**

***Raising a Jesus or John***

What if?

What if the Holy Spirit had come down and tapped you on the shoulder and announced that you would be the adoptive father responsible for raising God’s Son?

What if the Spirit had revealed Himself to you one night with the news that God wanted you to be the mother who bore the coming Messiah to save the world? And you were at that moment a mere teenager, and… an unmarried virgin!

Would you be terrified? Actually, I’m trying to think of a synonym for terrified that has even more emotional impact. My Thesaurus has synonyms like “frightened” and “scared” and “alarmed.” But they don’t seem to touch the paralyzing sensation I would feel in such a life-changing moment. Sheer panic would overpower me. If I was a woman I think I would probably “*remember Lot’s wife*” and become a pillar of salt right there beside her! If I was a man (and I am) I would likely feel like Peter’s angelic prison break, thinking I “*was seeing a vision*” (Ac. 12:9). Or I might follow the example of Zacharias and become mute for nine months, too petrified to say a word.

Have you ever thought about the role the parents of Jesus and John had on these precious children? From all indications it was not a foregone conclusion that John and Jesus would just naturally (or super-naturally) grow up and become who they became. God personally chose their parents because they were godly people who would raise their sons in a God-fearing home.

Of John’s parents Luke tells us: “*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*” (Lk 1:5-6). Now there’s a remedy for successful parenting.

Is it any wonder it was said of John: “*the child grew and became strong in spirit*” (Lk. 1:80)? Jesus later said these praise-worthy words of John: "*Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist*” (Matt.11:11). You can thank his parental guidance for that outcome!

Of Jesus’ parents (Joseph was Jesus’ adoptive dad) we can be sure God chose for His Son to be born and raised by God-fearing people. Joseph was said to be “*a just man*” (Matt. 1:19). When charged by the angel to take pregnant Mary to be his wife, regardless of how it looked in public, the scriptures say, “*Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS*” (Matt. 1:24-25). Not for one second should we underestimate the role Joseph played in the righteous life of Jesus.

Mary’s favor with God is known by all Bible readers and church goers. The angel Gabriel came to her and startled her with this announcement: “*Hail highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women*” (Lk. 1:28). Later we read of the incredible “Song of Mary” that revealed her deep-seated faith (Lk. 1:46-55). You cannot read it without thinking Jesus, along with his brothers James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, and unnamed sisters (Mk. 6:3) were very fortunate indeed to have this worthy woman as their mother. Remember, she and Joseph also raised James and Jude (aka Judas) who wrote the books of the New Testament by those names.

After His birth Joseph and Mary brought the babe to Jerusalem to “*present Him to the Lord*” (Lk. 2:22). That almost sounds like Hannah dedicating Samuel to the Lord with these words: "*For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the LORD." So they worshiped the LORD there*” (I Sam. 1:27-28). Note also that Joseph and Mary “*were careful to perform all things according to the law of the Lord*” (Lk. 2:39).

So little is known about the raising of Jesus in Nazareth in that humble carpenter’s shop. But it is not hard to imagine the daily life of this righteous family. By the age of 12 Jesus fully understood His purpose in life. He said to His fearful parents who had frantically searched for the “lost” boy: “*Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business*?” (Lk. 2:49). That was not a rebuke, but a high compliment, for just as she had previously heard Gabriel’s words and “*kept all these things and pondered them in her heart*” (Lk. 2:19), so now “*His mother kept all these things in her heart*” (Lk. 2:50). She was a very thoughtful, spiritual woman! It is little wonder the text then says, “*Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them*” (Lk. 2:51). When the Bible says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right*” (Eph. 6:1), we have Jesus’ example to follow to prove why “*this is right*.”

The boy Jesus “*increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (Lk. 2:52). Joseph and Mary can take a great deal of credit for that statement. Parents need all the examples of success we can find to raise children today. Zacharias and Elizabeth, along with Joseph and Mary, are a great place to start so that you can “*bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*” (Eph. 6:4).

To raise a Jesus or a John you must start with Godly fathers and mothers. While it would be terrifying (petrifying, shocking, frightening – you choose your synonym) to be given the task of raising God’s Son, in reality you have the same responsibility to raise your sons and daughters to be God’s child. He will ask for them back one day.

*Note*: I believe we have many such parents right here in this congregation who could have raised Jesus or John. But while you’re not Joseph or Mary, I thank you (and God thanks you) for bringing your own children up in the training of the Lord. May your tribe increase!

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