

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 58

Joseph a good man, a just man, a righteous man, an upright man, a kind-hearted man, a man of honour. (Matthew 1.19 – the various ways Matthew’s description of Joseph’s character has been translated)

Joseph was a dreamer. The other Joseph, the Old Testament Joseph, the one who became ‘Prime Minister’ of Egypt, was also a dreamer, but the two Joseph’s are quite dissimilar. Our Joseph had no coat of many colours, no arrogant self opinion. You couldn’t imagine anyone being so annoyed and aggravated by our Joseph that they’d want to put him in a pit to sell him off to passing Midianites! Our Joseph was a humble man, to the point of being transparent. We know very little about Joseph. Most of what we’re told is about him sleeping!

One thing we know is that Joseph was a ‘carpenter’. We should think more of a jobbing builder rather than a cabinet maker.

As we read his story we could easily imagine that all was going wrong for Joseph. His marriage plans collapsed. He seemed left out of the circle of those who knew what was going on. It wouldn’t be until the angel spoke to Joseph in a dream that he first knew of what had happened to Mary. It would seem that Joseph knew little or nothing at all about Mary’s privilege or her meeting with the angel Gabriel. It wasn’t enough that Mary was with child but poor old Joseph, unlike Mary and Elizabeth, knew nothing of those things.

When he arrived in Bethlehem with Mary no one seemed to want to have anything to do with the two travellers, even though Bethlehem was Joseph’s family town. The accommodation offered them was a ‘stable’. Pregnant as Mary was no one was willing to give up their room in the inn so Mary and Joseph might be more suitably accommodated. We cannot be exactly sure what the ‘stable’ was. There have been many suggestions. All that really matters is that the ‘stable’ represents the world’s rejection of Jesus from the very moment of his birth, a rejection that would end in his being crucified ‘outside the city wall’.

But we read not one word of complaint from Joseph, no insistence on a better bed and bathroom, no protestation about his ‘human rights’. We might think Joseph was weak. But that would be a misunderstanding. Joseph was not weak, he responded with fortitude and determination to all that was revealed to him; without question he did all he was told to do. In this too he was Mary’s companion – a fellow spirit. Joseph was not weak, he was meek. I believe his meekness of character was not far from the thoughts of Jesus in the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. Like Mary, Joseph too was an influence in the human life and development of Jesus.

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward

is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.
(Matthew 5.11-12 and 39-42)

Things didn't seem to get much better for Joseph after the birth of Jesus. There would have been no great encouragement for Joseph in the visit of the shepherds – after all they were only shepherds. And the visit of the wise men must have been very perplexing for this humble couple. And then the next thing is he is forced to flee with Mary and the little infant to Egypt, to become refugees in the land of bondage. What chaos of conscience Joseph felt on hearing of the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem we can only imagine, this good and gentle man.

And then Joseph is never heard of again in the Gospels. This is the Joseph we know – and this is all we know. This is the man God chose to be the 'home-father' for his Son.

From Matthew's Gospel it would seem that Joseph spent a lot of time sleeping! 'The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream' (Matthew 1.20); and again in Matthew 2.13; and again in Matthew 2.19; and again in Matthew 2.22!

God spoke to shepherds in the fields; Mary in her kitchen; wise men in the night sky; scribes and priests in the Scriptures – Joseph in his sleep! This is all about *guidance* – Joseph was guided by the words of an angel who spoke to him as he slept, in his dreams. Don't be anxious about *how* God will let you know what he wants you to do, where he wants you to go. To all who listen and wait for the guidance of God he will in time, and at the right time, make his will and his ways known. Guidance isn't a *problem*, guidance is a *promise!*