

The Sixth Day of Christmas: Joseph the Dreamer

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome back. Over the course of the Christmas period I'm doing a series of videos on echoes and symmetries within the nativity and infancy narratives of the Gospels. To this point I've mostly focused on Luke's Gospel but now I want to turn to Matthew's Gospel and look at some of the connections that we can see there.

One of the first things that we see within Matthew's Gospel is that Matthew's Gospel, unlike Luke, focuses upon the character of Joseph. Joseph is the one who's foregrounded within this text whereas in Luke it's Elizabeth and it's Mary that are foregrounded.

Here in Matthew's Gospel we see Joseph front and centre. Now Matthew's Gospel, like the other Gospels, makes allusions back to the Old Testament, chiefly to the book of Genesis.

And Matthew's Gospel, it could be argued, is structured according to the Old Testament canon more generally. It begins with the words, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

And that draws our minds back to Genesis as a book of genealogies. The book of the generations of such and such is a formula that we find within the book of Genesis.

[1 : 0 8] And so it's familiar words and then that reference back to Abraham as well is significant in that context. Likewise, when we reach the end of the book, it ends on the decree or it ends on the Great Commission, which echoes quite closely the end of the Old Testament canon at the end of 2 Chronicles.

If you read the final verse of 2 Chronicles, it should be obvious that there is some sort of illusion being made at this point. Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth, the Lord God of heaven has given to me, and he has commanded me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? May the Lord his God be with him and let him go up. So it's a very similar structure. It's a similar sort of commission ascending forth.

And so you have Genesis to the end of 2 Chronicles, that whole canon of scripture held together. And we also have allusions to that in places like Matthew 23, the blood of Abel, the first martyr, to the Zachariah son of Berechiah, which is again in 2 Chronicles.

And so these are significant framing events. Likewise, in the genealogy, the symbolic genealogy of 42, a time, time and half a times in months, broken 6 by 7, broken 3 and a half in the time, time and half a times.

[2 : 3 6] And so it's a significant number of the genealogy. And there are generations missed out at this point. And it's helpful to see that there is something more going on here.

In the genealogy that's given, there's an emphasis upon the women of Israel's history, key women within Israel's history. There's also a blocking of Israel's story into Abraham to David, and then David to the exile and from the exile to Christ.

And that significant blocking of the history, again, provides a framework within which the Gospel writer perceives the story of Israel. And so all of this is background.

Then, into this scene, comes this character, Joseph the son of Jacob. And we've met a character named Joseph the son of Jacob before. In the Old Testament, he's one of the characters that occupies the foreground in the whole of the end of the book of Genesis.

And so he's a significant figure. And he's famous for his dreams and leading the people into Egypt, protecting the people from being destroyed by the famine. And here again, we see a character named Joseph, who's a dreamer, a character who leads people into Egypt, and a character by whom people are saved and delivered from what would have been death otherwise.

[4 : 02] He's also an Adam-type figure. He's a figure who protects the bride from the serpent. From Herod, who's seeking to kill the baby boys, and seeking to kill Christ in particular, he protects them.

And again, our focus narrowly upon Mary can often miss the fact that Joseph is a deeply significant figure. The whole story of Matthew, the beginning of Matthew's story, is told with an emphasis upon Joseph's role within the narrative.

Christ is given to a betrothed couple, not just to Mary alone, but to a betrothed couple. And that is significant, that Joseph was already in the picture.

God wasn't just viewing Joseph as an inconvenience. Joseph was supposed to be part of the picture. And so giving Joseph this child to be a father to is part of God's intent.

And Joseph is addressed as the son of David by the angel. It's significant again. Within the dream. Within the dream, he's addressed, Oh, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary, your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, etc.

[5 : 24] He is spoken to as a royal figure. And the son of David is not just any old title. It's something that suggests that he has some royal lineage.

And it's treating him as a royal figure. He's someone, of course, who goes to Bethlehem. He's associated with Bethlehem. He's a man of David's line. And other things that we see about Joseph.

He leads the people into Egypt. And just as Joseph brought his family into Egypt to protect them, so Joseph brings his family into Egypt to protect them.

the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

So there are these themes of the threat of the serpent to the woman and the child. And here comes Joseph as the true Adam figure who's protecting the child and the mother.

[6 : 26] And this is, again, it helps us to see some of the deeper themes that are at play within these texts because it goes all the way back to Genesis. The woman and her seed and the seed of the woman being threatened by the serpent and the woman being threatened by the serpent.

And what is the role of Adam within this situation? He's supposed to be the priest, the guardian, the one who protects the woman and the seed. And these themes are deeply rooted within the text more generally.

And so when Pharaoh or when Herod or when some other figure plays the role of the serpent, the figure of Adam, the figure of Joseph, the figure of Abraham, whoever it is has to stand in the gap and has to protect the bride from the serpent.

And so Joseph is a very significant character. Joseph himself prefigures some of Christ's life in various ways. Joseph, the Old Testament character, sold by his brothers, despised by his brothers, sent into Egypt.

He's the one who is put in a pit and then raised up. He's the one who sits at the right hand of the leader of Egypt. And he's the one who rules and gives bread and life to people in a time of famine.

[7 : 39] And then his brethren are restored to him and he brings life. And these themes in various ways prefigure some of what Christ does.

And so Jesus as the son of Joseph is someone who takes on the character of Joseph. The original Joseph just as the Joseph of the Gospel stories takes on some of the character of the original Joseph.

And what we see there again is these characters in the Old Testament whether that's Abraham, whether it's David, whether it's Joseph or whether it's even Adam himself. All of these characters are playing in the background and they are worked out, their patterns of their lives are worked out within these subsequent figures.

early on in this series in the first day I discuss the connection between the character of Joseph at the beginning of the Gospel account and the character of Joseph of Arimathea at the end.

There is a Joseph and a Mary at the beginning of the Gospel. Joseph and his wife Mary and the parents of Christ and then there's a Joseph and a Mary at the end. Joseph of Arimathea who prepares the tomb for Christ and then there's Mary Magdalene and there are other Marys within that scene.

[8 : 59] But these two figures again suggest that Joseph's character is part of a bigger picture. He's a character that points out the deeper patterns that are at play within these texts.

That this Gospel narrative of the Nativity is not something that's just a historical account and just a blow-by-blow account of what happened.

It's something that shows forth a sort of musical pattern, a musicality to God's work in history that connects the beginning of Christ's life with the end and the story of Israel is being played out here.

Joseph leading his people into Egypt to protect them. The struggle with the serpent in a Pharaoh type figure and then leading the child out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

A Moses type figure at that point. Joseph plays the role of Moses as well as we'll see at some later point. I hope this has been helpful. If you have any questions for me please leave them on my Curious Cat account and I hope to get to questions when I finish this series.

[10 : 04] If you found these videos helpful please consider supporting them using my Patreon account or my PayPal account. Thank you very much to everyone who does support them. It really makes such a difference and makes it possible for me to do these things.

Thank you for listening and Lord willing you're enjoying your Christmas season still. God bless. God bless. God bless.