



TEEN TREE OF LIFE

What Child Is This? Part 5

January 24, 2021

Before you begin, ask yourself a very important question: Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins? If you answered yes, you will need to be sure that you are filled with The Holy Spirit. How do you do this? You name your sins to God The Father in His Son's Name. This is called Rebound. As a Christian, you must rebound any time you sin. This is taught in 1 JOH 1:9: *If we confess [name] our sins [directly to God], He [God] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Now, if you have never believed that Jesus Christ died on The Cross for all of your sins, all you have to do is say to yourself that you believe in Him and you are saved! The Bible verse which teaches us this is ACTS 16:31: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."*

Last week, we covered the fascinating story of the life of Jehoiachin who became king of Judah at 18 years old but reigned for only three months. King Jehoiachin, all his officials, and the queen mother, ended up surrendering to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon during an attempt to capture the city of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar then appointed Jehoiachin's uncle to be the next king. Jehoiachin remained exiled in prison throughout Nebuchadnezzar's entire reign and was released shortly after it ended by King Evil-Merodach.

We also noted that because of Jehoiachin's sinful life and his refusal to obey God, that it was ordained that none of Jehoiachin's descendants would ever rise to the throne of Israel. Jehoiachin's curse from God went deeper than just his being removed as king and then exiled: ***So now the Lord has something to say about Jehoiakim, the king of Judah. He says, "No one from Jehoiakim's family line will sit on David's throne. Jehoiakim's body will be thrown out. It will lie outside in the heat by day and in the frost at night. I will punish him and his children and his attendants. I will punish them for their sinful ways. I will bring on them all the trouble I said I would. And I will bring it on the people of Jerusalem and Judah. They have not listened to me."*** (JER 36:30-31 New International Reader's Version) And with that, the line of kings from David's family ended with Jehoiachin. As you will see, this had ramifications for Christ, The Messiah, who was to be the Son of David.

Jehoiachin's story is a strange tale! He was the son of a puppet king of Egypt; imprisoned by the king of Babylon to make room for another puppet king; taken in the

second wave of exiles; and released from prison to be given a gracious end to his life. Jehoiachin seems to be a man stuck in the middle of history. The Bible does not tell us what happened during his years in prison or why Evil-Merodach was so kind to him in the end. The lesson in Jehoiachin's story, though, is God's Righteous Judgment as well as His Merciful Grace. That is an important lesson for all of us.

The ramification of Jehoiachin's curse was that his descendant Joseph (Jesus Christ's earthly father) ended up in an unfortunate situation. You see, Joseph was the rightful heir to the throne of David, but instead, ended up as a carpenter. Because of the curse, his family lineage had no value in a nation that was controlled by Rome. This created a dilemma. If the descendants of Jehoiachin were cursed and none could ever sit on David's throne, then how could Jesus Christ avoid the curse? The answer is two-fold.

First, Jesus inherited His Davidic lineage through His mother, Mary. She traces her lineage back to David through Nathan instead of Solomon. Because Jesus Christ is a physical descendant of David through Mary, his blood line is qualified to fulfill God's statement to David in **2 SAM 7:12-13 (New International Reader's Version): *Someday your life will come to an end. You will join the members of your family who have already died. Then I will make one of your own sons the next king after you. And I will make his kingdom secure. He is the one who will build a house where I will put my Name. I will set up the throne of his kingdom. It will last forever.***

Second, Joseph's genealogy spelled out in **The Book of Matthew** establishes the royal line qualification to inherit David's throne. It is this lineage through Joseph that established Jesus Christ's legal right to the throne. However, Jesus did not receive it by blood because Joseph was not his biological father. He received it through adoption as Joseph's first born. In **MATT 1:16**, we read: ***Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.*** This verse tells us that Joseph is the husband of Mary, "***by whom was born Jesus.***" The word "***whom***" here is vague in English but in Greek, it is truly clear. In Greek as a feminine pronoun and so it must be looked at as a reference to Mary. This fits with Matthew's emphasis that Jesus is the Messiah and has the rightful claim to the throne of David as the legal (not physical) son of Joseph, tracing back through King David to Abraham.

So, let us go back to the first stanza of the beautiful song lyrics on which this doctrine is based:

*What Child is this, who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?*

One of the reasons why Jesus Christ was born in "***such mean estate***" is that Joseph and Mary were not at their home in Nazareth. This is because Caesar Augustus

(who was the first Roman Emperor and ruler when Jesus Christ was born) had decreed that a census be taken and that everyone was required to travel to their own city to register for it. Since Joseph was of the house of David, he and Mary had to travel to the city of David, which is Bethlehem. We learn about all of this in **LUK 2:1-5 (New International Reader's Version): *In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. It was the first time a list was made of the people while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone went to their own town to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea. That is where Bethlehem, the town of David, was. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David. He went there with Mary to be listed. Mary was engaged to him. She was expecting a baby.*** So, Joseph and Mary made the trip to the city of David (the town of Bethlehem), even with the birth so close at hand. Stop for a moment and think about what honorable people they were to follow Caesar Augustus' law. Most people today would just hide out!

Now, as you can imagine, many had travelled to the very prosperous town of Bethlehem for the census. Because of this, there was no room in the normal places in which they would have stayed. So, the very pregnant Mary, and the very devoted Joseph, stayed where they could: in a manger. People have different ideas of what a manger was like in those days. It was a place where farm animals like donkeys, oxen and horses ate and slept. Most imagine a manger is constructed of wood but the only examples we have left in the Holy Land, from ancient times, are actually large stones that have been carved out on top to hold straw. The lowly manger points to Jesus' Humble Birth. It embodies a profoundly moving truth: that on His first night on this earth, The King of Glory, The Son of God, slept in a trough where the animals were fed. But still, this Child saved the world!

There are two common misconceptions about what went on at the manger. The first is that it was a filthy place. Think about it. It's very hard to believe that Joseph and Mary would not have cleaned the place out before settling in. The second misconception goes in the opposite direction romanticizing it to be the most heavenly place imaginable. While it's safe to assume that Joseph and Mary were resourceful and would have made the manger setting as nice as possible, you can be sure that if they had a better option, they would have taken it. No new mother wants her newborn sharing quarters with the barn animals, if she can help it. So, Mary, in her steadfastness and out of her love for God, made do as best she could.

{to be continued}