

# Passion

Luke 2:41-52

“Jesus will belong to God.”

A Dramatic Monologue of Joseph of Nazareth

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## Introduction – The Naming

Safe. We have him back now, at least in a manner of speaking. He travels with us, away from the dangers of the City. Yet, there is a part of me that knows that he would have managed well without us if he had never been found.

Yet, caring is what we have done. It is what we know; and it has been God’s calling to us from the first days that we knew of his coming. Mary, you see, had been betrothed to me and had not yet been brought to my house when I learned she was with child. The anguish I felt through the night is too great to describe. Mary! How could this be? She tried to tell me of the angel’s appearance and her drive for obedience. It was so unlikely. The Law instructed that I should put her on trial where, with public humiliation she could be put to death. This, I could not do. So, I designed to end our betrothal quietly, leaving her to her father’s care.

The night was one of fitful sleep. I could not tell the difference between waking and dream. This is when an angel appeared, telling me the truth of it. Then came the instruction: to be wed to Mary after all; and when she was to have the child, name him “Jesus”: “Yehoshua,” which means, in my tongue, *the Lord Saves*. Yehoshua was not a family name. It was not the name I would have chosen for the first-born of my household or any of my children. Yet the angel was specific, and as Mary was obedient, obedient would I be. “Jesus,” for he would save his people from their sins.”<sup>1</sup>

I awoke and I did as I was called to do. Mary became a part of my house; and when the days were fulfilled that she should give birth, we were in Bethlehem for the great enrollment. The angels sang and the shepherds came; Old Prophet Simeon and then Anna the old prophetess declared the child’s place in God’s plan; then later, the strange seers came from the East bearing gifts and adoration. It seemed there was so much made of him by some; and yet outside of these a whole world carried on with. Roman

soldiers marching; bartering in the marketplace; teachers teaching in the Temple and in the synagogues: it continued as it had before as though there were no difference.

Save for Herod. Another fitful night for me, and as clear as the message before came another word of the angel to take up our belongings and move away: away from Bethlehem and away from Jerusalem; away from Judea and Galilee; away from the region under the Herod's control altogether. The King had heard of the birth and considered it a threat, and this monster, who had put his own sons to death out of fear that they plotted against him, was now bound to slaughter all the infant boys in the region. We fled to Egypt and kept him safe.<sup>2</sup> This was our charge: to care for the child.

And from those early days we watched over him: more easily after Herod died and we could return to Nazareth. He learned my trade. He was fond of working his hands in wood fashioning furniture and structure. All watched him grow, strong in body, quick of mind, steadfast in spirit. He had a hunger to know everything; and his greatest hunger was to know our God. We cared for him: saw to it that he was gentle and compassionate with his friends but this was no difficult task. He was a normal boy, yet extraordinary at the same time and all held him in favor.

### **Telling Answers**

We packed the animals and carts and left Nazareth with nearly the rest of the village. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover was necessary; and this year, Jesus would see it for the last time as a child. Next year, he would be thirteen: a son of the Law; fully responsible for his conduct and relationship to God and his people.<sup>3</sup>

On we journeyed to the center of God's work and the heart of who we are. Jerusalem: who could approach Jerusalem without song? Who could see the city, how it appears like a jewel, without waving branches and dancing for the joy of it? We entered the City with the throng of pilgrims and in those crowds broke bread and sang psalms, offered prayer and heard lessons from the rabbis. We remembered the story, how with an outstretched arm the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth made our people, who had been no people at all, into a great nation, redeemed us from oppression and led us to the Promised Land. And we remembered as the story was retold with the breaking of unleavened bread and sharing of the cups of salvation and hope that with our Law to guide us we should be ready to wait the salvation of God that is yet to come.

Twelve years old. Ready to become an adult, we watched when he was with us and saw his eager flair for learning. Then, there were long periods when he was not to be seen; but we trusted, for a twelve-year-old knows responsibility and, besides, almost our whole village was there to provide any care he should need. All this was not out of the ordinary. We knew what we could expect.

Three days out from the City; a mere day's journey from home: that is when we realized that he was not among us at all. None of our neighbors had seen him. He must have never joined the caravan home. What can I tell you about our panic, when this son God gave us was lost? How can I describe how time stood still and our racing hearts and swirling sight were of no concern, for reclaiming the lost child was all that mattered? We journeyed with haste to the City. We inquired in the market; we sought his belongings in the inn. He was not to be found. The only place left to look was the Temple. When we approached we did not know whether there we would find him there or only cry out for the mercy of God.

We entered the courtyard...and laid eyes on the most blessed sight we had seen since the Heavens were afire at his birth. Jesus! Sitting among the teachers still listening.

We were overwhelmed. And then...How is it that a parent's worry and fear can so quickly be turned to anger when all is found safe? Mary (to this moment I had thought her such a meek and gentle thing) Mary said, "Jesus! Child! What were you thinking? Why have you treated your father and me like this?" She shook her finger at him: "We have been worried sick!"

Why shouldn't she say this? It was true. He belongs to us. We love him. We must take care of him...and now he does this. "Your father and I have been searching all over for you."

And he said, "Why were you searching for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's House?" "His Father's house:" we did not at first understand; but it was occurring to him who he is and who he is becoming and to whom he really belongs.

This was not a question of obedience or disobedience to us. It was a matter of who he must be.

## Obedience and Mission

All the while we have sought to care for him and make him ours.

In the end, he will not belong to us; rather, we will belong to him. ***He will belong to God*** and be set on the purpose for which he was born. That is why his name is Jesus: God's Messiah – I think: Savior of all the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:18-25

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 2:1-23

<sup>3</sup> Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Luke*. Trans. By David E. Green. Atlanta: John Knox Press. 1984. p 63.