

PRE-CHRISTMAS LIGHT FOR JOSEPH

[Matt 1:20-21](#) “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.”

About 1700 years before the time of our text, another Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Jacob, lived a life of sunshine and shadows. At first he basked in the sunlight as Jacob¹'s favorite son, and received many special favors and gifts from his father. Dark shadows gathered about his head when his brothers out of envy wanted to kill him, but changed their minds and sold him as a slave into Egypt. Almost immediately the sun began to shine again, for his new master Potiphar elevated him to be overseer of all his house. Dark clouds gathered again when he was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and was thrown into prison. Finally the sun burst forth in all its splendor when Joseph was made the second highest ruler in the land. Joseph showed that he understood his life of sunshine and shadows and the ways of the Lord for he told his brothers, “Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good,” [Gen. 50](#).

Joseph, the husband of Mary, went through similar periods of sunshine and shadows. This was true especially before the birth of our Savior in Bethlehem.

PRE-CHRISTMAS LIGHT FOR JOSEPH

1. THE SHADOWS OF SADNESS

Darkness reigned in Joseph's heart before the angel of light came to him, but it was not because of his religion that he was sad. He was a man of God who feared the Lord and was a true Israelite indeed, a believer in the grace of God and one who put his trust in the coming Savior. He loved the house of God and his faith could only generate happiness and hope in his heart. Joseph, no doubt, reechoed the words of his forefather David who spoke of “the joy of thy salvation.”

Joseph was a carpenter, one of the oldest and most useful of trades. He was a faithful and respected craftsman, who found satisfaction and joy in the labors of his hands, so his work did not cause him to be disappointed and disturbed.

Surely his heart was not darkened because he found a maiden of his own faith who promised to marry him. Mary was a pure and chaste virgin who made his heart glad and whenever he thought of her it was with gratitude to the Lord who gave him such a wonderful maiden and future wife.

Joseph's plans for the future did not cause the shadows in his heart. Like all young couples, Joseph and Mary planned and dreamed of their future home and family. The future looked very bright indeed for these two children of God.

In the midst of all his sunshine Joseph received a terrible shock — Mary was “found with child.” What else could he think except that Mary had been unfaithful? All his dreams and plans for the future were suddenly wiped out. Thoughts like these must have raced through his bewildered mind, “How could Mary do such a thing? I always looked upon her as a faithful child of God, what caused her to sin?” The past seemed like a dream and his whole future was shrouded in darkness at this time.

Only one problem remained unsolved, and he asked himself, “How can I best deal in this delicate matter? I do not want to marry her, nor do I wish to shame her publicly. What is pleasing to God, what should I do?” There was no light of Christmas in the poor man's heart at this sad time.

2. THE SUNSHINE OF GLADNESS

An angel of light was sent from the God of light to dispel the shadows from Joseph's heart and bring him some Christmas light and joy. It was very fitting that an angel should do this, since the light to be shed into Joseph's heart was a message concerning a great miracle and the coming birth of the Savior.

How relieved Joseph must have been to learn that Mary had not been unfaithful, but that the child was “of the Holy Ghost.” The sunshine of gladness was beaming again in his heart and around his world. All his plans were before him once more with a more glorious future than ever before. He looked at Mary with a new admiration and respect because she bore all that shame without a murmur or complaint.

Joseph was overjoyed that he could have Mary again, but there was even greater joy in his heart that she was to be the mother of the long awaited Messiah and Savior of the world. And the Lord had honored him and chosen him to be the guardian of the little child! The shadows were all gone now and life was like a glorious new sunrise for this humble man of God.

Joseph did not care what the rest of the world thought of him or his wife. He knew who the future child was and he was filled with gladness and gratitude to know that the Savior of the world was about to be born.

The shadows deepened somewhat when he journeyed to Bethlehem and was refused a place of shelter for Mary, who was “great with child.” How frantically he must have begged for a place for his wife and finally was forced to accept the only offer he could get — a stable!

Again the sunshine of gladness chased away all shadows when he was able to gaze upon the new-born King of the for the child gave him new light and hope.

Later on, a few more shadows gathered around him when he had to flee into Egypt with the young child and his mother, but under the Lord's guiding hand those dark clouds were soon blown away.

Like Joseph we all must go through times and periods of shadows and sunshine. There are, and will be, dark days and deep shadows when it seems that all is hopeless and lost. When we "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" we should never forget the courage and trust which Joseph had, that the Lord would somehow dispel all gloom in His own good time and make glad the heart with His beautiful sunshine.

Now is the time to get some pre-Christmas light to dispel all darkness from our hearts. Should we let the world and the children of this world dictate to us the kind of Christmas we are going to have? Are we going to permit this commercialism to becloud our hearts and minds so that we see not the true light and sunshine of Christmas? Rather, should we not have the same holy joy which Joseph had, joy in the birth of the Savior from sin? If we will accept Jesus now by faith as our true and only light we shall dwell with Him in eternal light and glory where there will be no more shadows of sadness.

AMEN

PRAYER. O holy Lord, send Thy angel of Christmas night to drive out all darkness and shadows from our sinful hearts. Give us the sunshine of gladness that we may be enabled to look with new joy and hope upon the Babe lying in the manger. Fill our hearts with a new faith and trust in our Redeemer as Thou didst enlighten Joseph. Grant that the observance of our Savior's birth ever remind us of the everlasting light promised us who put our trust in Him. Hear us, O blessed Trinity, for thy holy name's sake.

AMEN