



Joseph

The Unappreciated Man of the Nativity



Every year at Christmastime, the birth of Christ is reenacted on stages around the world.



We scarcely need reminder of the roles necessary for such a production:



The angel Gabriel



The wise men from the east



The shepherds of the field and the barnyard animals



The Virgin and her child



and Joseph, the husband of Mary.



Each of these are celebrated in wonderful Christmas carols:

We sing about the angels

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley

Felix Mendelssohn

Hark! the he - rald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born King: peace on earth, and Christ, by high - est heaven a - dored, Christ, the e - ver - las - ting Lord, late in time be Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Right eous - ness! Light and life to

mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners re - con - ciled!" Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, - hold him come, off - spring of the Vir gin's womb: veiled in flesh the Je - su - s, our Im - all he brings, risen with heal - ing in his wings. Mild he lays his glo - ry by, -

join the tri - umph of the skies; with th'an ge - lic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is - born in hail thin - car - nate De - i - ty, - pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Je - sus, our Im - born that we no more may die, - born to raise us from the earth, born to - give us peace shall o - ver all the earth, Its an - cient splen - dor, King -

Beth - le - hem!" Hark! the her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry - to the new-born King." ma - nu - el, se - cond birth.

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It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Moderately Slow

Words by Edmund Sears
Music by Richard Willis

1. It came up - on the mid - night clear, That glo - ri - ous song - of old, From
2. Still through the clo - ven skies they come, With peace - ful wings, un - furled: And
3. Yet with the woes of sin and strife The world has suf - fered long: Be -
4. And ye, be - neath life's crush - ing load, Whose forms are bend - ing low, Who
5. For lo! the days are has - t'ning on By proph - et bards fore - told, When,

an - gels bend - ing near the earth, To touch their harps of gold: "Peace
still their heav - en - ly mus - ic floats O'er all the wea - ry world: A -
neath the an - gel strain have rolled Two thou - sand years of wrong: And
told a - long the clamb - ing way With pain - ful steps and slow: Look
with the ev - er cir - cling years Comes round the age of gold: When

on the earth - good - will to men From heav - en's all gra - cious King: The
bove its sad and low - ly plains They bend on hov - er - ing wing: And
man, at war with man, hears not The love - song which they bring: O
now! for glad and gold - en hours Come swift - ly on the wing: O,
peace shall o - ver all the earth, Its an - cient splen - dor, King - And

world in sol - emn still - ness lay To hear the an - gels sing -
er clear in Ea - bel sounds The bless - ed an - gels sing -
hush the noise - ye men of strife, And hear the an - gels sing -
rest be - side the wea - ry road And hear the an - gels sing -
the whole world - give back the song, Which now the an - gels sing -

We sing about the shepherds

While shepherds watched their flocks by night

Trad.

1. While shep-herds watched their flocks by night, All scat-ed on the ground,
2. *To you, in Da-vid's town, this day, Is born of Da-vid's line
3. Thus spake the se-raph and forth-with Ap-peared a shin-ing throng

The an-gel of the Lord came down, And glo-ry shone a-round.
A Sa-viour who is Christ the Lord; And this shall be the sign.
Of an-gels, prais-ing God, who thus Ad-dressed their joy-ful song:

"Fear not," said he, for might-ly dread Had seized their trou-bled minds;
The hea-venly Babe, you there shall find To hu-man view dis-played,
"All glo-ry be to God on high, And to the earth be-peace;

"Glad-tings of great joy I bring To you and all man-kind
All mean-ly wrapp'd in swadd-ling clothes And in a man-ger laid,
Good will hen-cforth from Heav'n to men Be-gin and ne-ver cease

The First Noel

Traditional

The first no-el, the an-gel did say, was to cer-tain poor shep-herds in
They look-ed up and saw a star shin-ing in the east be-
And by the light of that same star three wise men came from
This star drew nigh to the north-west, o'er Beth-le-hem it
Then en-tered in those wise men three, full rev-er-ent-ly up-
Then let us all with one ac-cord sing prais-es to our

fields as they lay, in fields where they lay keep-ing their sheep on a
yond them far, and to the earth it gave great light, and
coun-try far. To seek for a King was their in-ten-t, and to
took its rest, and there it did both stop and stay right
on their knee, and of-fered there in His pre-sence their
heav-en-ly Lord who hath made heaven and earth of naught, and

cold win-ter's night that was so deep. No-el, no-el, no-
so it con-tin-ued both day and night.
fol-low the star where-ev-er it went,
o-ver the place where Je-sus lay,
gold and myrrh and frank-in-cense,
with His blood hu-man-kind hath bought.

-el, no-el, no-el. Born is the King of Is-ra-el.

We sing about the wise men

We Three Kings of Orient Are

Trad.

One in a bar feel ♩ = c.54

1. We three kings of O - ri - ent are Bear - ing gifts we tra - verse a -
2. Born a king on Beth - le - hem's plain, Gold I bring to crown Him a -
3. Fran - kin - cense to of - fer have I. In - cense owns a De - i - ty
4. Myrrh is mine: Its bit - ter per - fume Breaths a life of ga - the - ring
5. Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise, King and God and Sac - ri -

far. Field and foun - tain, moor and moun - tain, Fol - lo - wing yon - der star.
gain, King for - e - ver, ceas - ing ne - ver O - ver us all to reign.
night. Prayer and prais - ing all men rais - ing, Wor - ship Him, God on high.
gloom. Sor - row, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing, Sealed in a stone - cold tomb.
face. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia! Earth, to heav'n re - plies.

O - star of won - der, star of night, Star of roy - al beau - ty bright,

West - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, Guide us to thy per - fect light.

O Holy Night

Adolphe Charles Adams

O Ho - ly Night! The stars are bright - ly shi - ning, It is the night of our
Led by the light of faith se - rene - ly beam - ing, With glow - ing hearts by His
Tru - ly He taught us love for one a - noth - er, His law is love and His

dear Sav - iour's birth. Long lay the world in sin and er - ror pin -
cra - dle we stand. O - ver the world a star is sweet - ly gleam -
gos - pel is peace. Chains He shall break, the slave, is our broth -

ning. Till He ap - peared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope the
ing, Now come the wise - men from O - ri - ent land. The King of kings lay
er, And in His name all op - pres - sion shall cease. Sweet hymns of joy in

wea - ry world re - joi - ces, For yon - der breaks a new and glor - ious morn. Fall -
thus in low - ly man - ger; In all our tri - als born to be our friend. He -
grate - ful chor - us raise we, With all our hearts we praise His ho - ly name. Christ

— on your knees! Oh, hear the an - gel voi - ces! O night -
— knows our need, our weak - ness is no strang - er! Be - hold -
— is the Lord! Oh, praise His name for - ev - er! His pow'r -

— di - vine, O night - when Christ was born; O night -
— your King! Be - fore him low - ly bend! Be - hold -
— and glo - ry - ev - er - more pro - claim! His pow'r -

— O Ho - ly Night, O night di - vine!
— your King! Be - fore Him low - ly bend!
— and glo - ry - ev - er - more pro - claim!

Of course, we sing about Mary and her baby

Silent Night

Trad.

Gently ♩ = c. 120

1. Si - lent night, Ho - ly night All is calm, all is bright
 2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep herds quake at the sight.
 3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God love's pure light.

5

Round yon vir - gin, mo - ther and child Ho - ly in - fant, so
 Glo - ries stream from hea - ven a - far Hea - venly hosts sing
 Ra - diant beams from Thy ho - ly face With the dawn of re -

8

ten - der and mild Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace. Sleep in hea - ven - ly peace.
 Al - le - lu - ia, Christ the Sa - viour is born! Christ the Sa - viour is born!
 deem - ing grace, Je - sus Lord, at Thy birth. Je - sus Lord, at Thy birth

O Little Town Of Bethlehem

Phillips Brooks

Lewis H. Redner

F Gm F C7

O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee
 For Christ is born of Ma - ry, and gath - ered all a -
 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is
 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we

4 F D Gm Gm/Bb

lie. A - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the
 above, while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their
 So God im - parts to hu - man hearts in
 pray. Cast out our sin and en - ter in, be

7 F/C C7 F G7

si - lent stars go by, yet in thy dark streets
 watch of won - d'ring love. O morn - ing stars, to -
 bles - sings of His Heav'n. No ear may hear His
 born in us to - day. We hear the Christ - mas

10 A Dm A F

shi - neth the ev - er - last - ing light; the hopes and fears of
 geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth! And prais - es sing to
 com - ing, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will re -
 an - gels the great glad ti - dings tell, O come to us, a -

14 Gm F/C C7 F

all the years are me in thee to - night.
 God the King, and peace to men on earth.
 cieve him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.
 bide with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el.

We even sing about the animals!

Away In A Manger

James Murray

A - way in a man - ger, no crib for His bed, the but
The cat - tle are low - ing, the ba - by a - wakes, the close
Be near me, Lord Je - sus, I ask Thee to say

5
lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down His sweet head. The I
lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing He makes. I
by me for - ev - er, and love me, I pray, Bless

9
stars in the sky — looked down where He lay, the and
love Thee, Lord Je - sus, look down from the sky, and
all the dear chil - dren in Thy ten - der care, and

13
lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.
fit us for heav - en to live with Thee there.

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What Child is This?

1. What child is this, — who, laid to rest, — On Ma - ry's lap — is
2. Why lies He in — such mean es - tate, — Where ox and don - keys are
3. So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh, — Come, pea - sant, king, — to

4
sleep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, While shep - herds watch — are
feed - ing? Good Christ - ian, fear — for sin - ners here — The si - lent Word — is
own — him. The King of kings — sal - va - tion brings, — Let lo - ving hearts — en -

8
keep - ing? This, this — is Christ the King, — Whom shep - herds guard — and an - gels sing:
plead - ing Nails, spears — shall pierce him through, — the cross he bore — for me, for you,
throne Him. Raise, raise — a song on high, — The vir - gin sings — her lul - la - by

13
Haste, haste — to bring Him laud, — The babe, — the son — of Ma - ry.
Hail, hail — the Word made flesh, — the Babe, — the Son — of Ma - ry.
Joy, joy — for Christ is born, — The babe, — the Son — of Ma - ry.

But very few songs even mention Joseph!

THE ENGLISH CAROL BOOK

The Cherry-tree Carol

Words Traditional.

Tune Traditional.

(Verses 7, 8.)

I Joseph was an old man, And an old man was he,

(Verses 5, 6, 7, 8.)

When he married Ma - ry In the land of Gal - i - lee.

JOSEPH was an old man,
And an old man was he,
When he married Mary
In the land of Galilee.

- 2 And as they were walking
Through an orchard so good,
Where were cherries and berries
As red as any blood—
- 3 O then bespoke Mary,
With words both meek and mild,
“Pluck me one cherry, Joseph;
For that I am with child.”
- 4 “Go to the tree, Mary,
And it shall bow to thee,
And the highest branch of all
Shall bow down to Mary's knee.
- 5 “Go to the tree, Mary,
And it shall bow to thee;
And you shall gather cherries
By one, by two, by three.”
- 6 Then bowed down the highest tree
Unto his Mother's hand;
“See,” Mary cried, “see, Joseph,
I have cherries at command.”
- 7 “O eat your cherries, Mary,
O eat your cherries now;
O eat your cherries, Mary,
That grow upon the bough.”
- 8 As Joseph was a-walking
There did an angel sing;
And Mary's child at midnight
Was born to be our King.

This is how it begins...

“Joseph was an old man,
And an old man was he.
When he married Mary,
In the land of Galilee.”

To begin to appreciate the significance of Joseph, one must look no further than the sixteenth verse in Matthew:

Matthew 1:16

¹⁶ And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.



Matthew 1:1 says it is “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ,” and it starts off with the lineage of Abraham to Joseph.

For the second time in the history of God’s dealings with his people, a man named Joseph, the son of a man named Jacob, played a critical role in the fulfilling of God’s plan.

Matthew 1:16

¹⁶ And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.



From the genealogy in Matthew, we learn that Joseph was a direct descendant of the kings David and Solomon.

Matthew 1:6

⁶ And Jesse begat David the king,
and David the king begat Solomon
of her *that had been the wife of Urias*;



All but one of the genealogies in the Bible are linked by seed, fathers to sons. But Jesus was not the son of Joseph by seed. Jesus is the Son of God.

Joseph was his father by divine appointment. This is the reason for the peculiar language in Luke when he gives us the lineage of Mary:

Luke 3:23

²³ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,



Matthew wrote about Joseph, the son of Jacob. Luke testifies of Joseph, the son of *Heli*.

Heli was in fact the father of *Mary*, and *father-in-law* to Joseph.

Luke 3:23

²³ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,



Mary's line also ran through David, but through his son *Nathan*, not Solomon.

Luke 3:31

³¹ Which was the son of Melea, which was *the son of Menan*, which was *the son of Mattatha*, **which was *the son of Nathan***, which was *the son of David*...



God decreed that the house of David would continue through Solomon. Therefore, it was through **Joseph** that Jesus was entitled to inherit the throne of King David. This fact alone emphasizes the vital contribution of Joseph to our redemption.

1 Chronicle 22:9-10

- ⁹ Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: **for his name shall be Solomon**, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.
- ¹⁰ He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I *will be* his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.



We can further appreciate the man chosen by God to raise his Son by looking at the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus.

Matthew 1:18-19

- ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise:
When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.



At the point in the story, only Mary and her cousin Elizabeth were certain that her unborn child was the Son of God. All that Joseph knew was that he was not the father of Mary's child. In his mind, he had no choice about what must be done:

Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, even *he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.



This led to the first of four very special commands that Joseph received from God.

Matthew 1:20-21

²⁰ But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying,



This led to the first of four very special commands that Joseph received from God.

Matthew 1:20-21

- ²⁰ 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.
- ²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.



Thanks be to God, Joseph was not a hearer of the Word only. He did as he was told.

Matthew 1:24-25

- ²⁴ Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
²⁵ And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.



It was on account of Joseph's heritage that he was required to take his very pregnant wife on a long journey to pay his taxes.

Luke 2:3-5

- 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

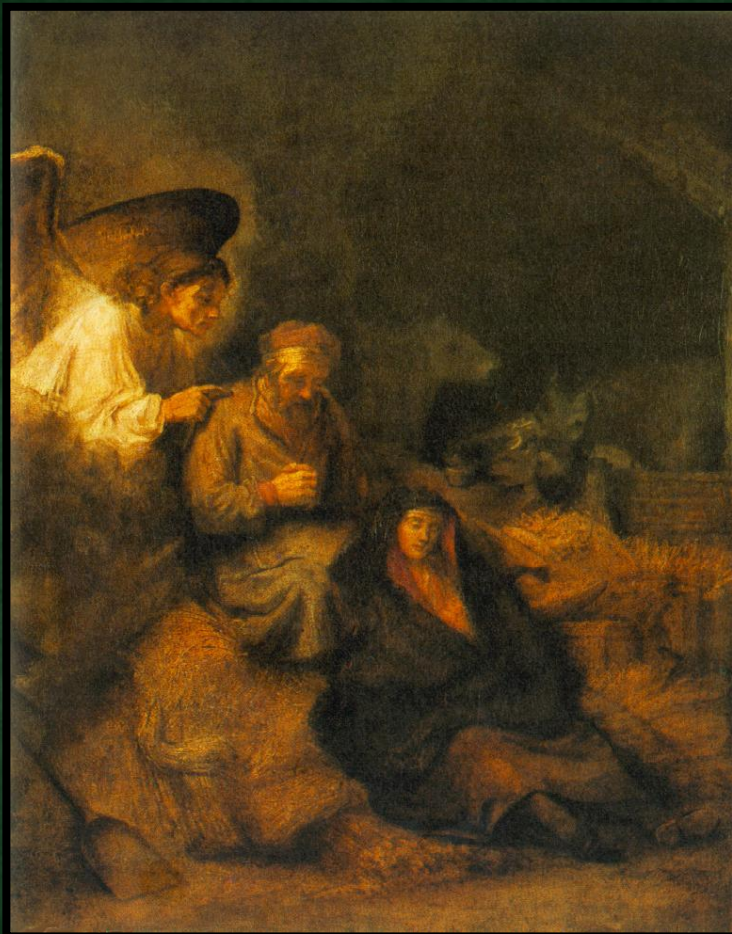


His obedience led to the fulfillment of a 500-year-old prophecy that the Messiah would be born in the little town of Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2

² But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though thou be little among the thousands of Judah*, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.





The second of the four special orders that Joseph received from God came after the visit of the wise men from the east.

Matthew 2:13

¹³ And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying,
Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word:
for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.



His obedience led to the fulfillment of another ancient prophecy.

Matthew 2:14-15

- ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
- ¹⁵ And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**



His obedience led to the fulfillment of another ancient prophecy.

Matthew 2:14-15

- ¹⁴ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
- ¹⁵ And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son.**

This prophecy is from Hosea 11:1:

- ¹ When Israel was a child, then I loved him, **and called my son out of Egypt.**

Joseph's obedience saved Jesus from Herod's wrath and the terrible event now known as the massacre of the innocents.

Matthew 2:16

¹⁶ Then Herod,
when he saw that he was mocked of
the wise men,
was exceeding wroth,
and sent forth, and slew all the
children that were in Bethlehem,
and in all the coasts thereof,
from two years old and under,
**according to the time which he had
diligently enquired of the wise men.**





Matthew 2:17-18

- 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.





Matthew 2:17-18

- 17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- 18 In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

This prophecy is in Jeremiah 31:15.



After the death of Herod, God used another dream to send the family back to Israel.

Matthew 2:19-21

- ¹⁹ But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,
- ²⁰ Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.
- ²¹ And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.



A fourth visitation directed Joseph to settle his family in Nazareth.

Matthew 2:22-23

- ²² But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:
- ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.



Archelaus came to power in 4 BC after the death of his father Herod the Great.

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Matthew Henry Commentary

“To be called a *Nazarene*, was to be called a *despicable man*, a man from whom no good was to be expected, and to whom no respect was to be paid.”

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He shall be called a Nazarene.

**We see evidence of this prejudice
in John 1:45-46:**

- ⁴⁵ Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him,
We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
- ⁴⁶ And Nathanael said unto him,
Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?
Philip saith unto him,
Come and see.

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He shall be called a Nazarene.

“This was not particularly foretold by any one prophet, but, in general, it was *spoken by the prophets*, that he should be *despised and rejected of men* (Is 53:2, 3), a *Worm, and no man* (Ps 22: 6, 7), that he should be an *Alien to his brethren* (Ps 69:7, 8).

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- ²³ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled **which was spoken by the prophets,** He shall be called a Nazarene.



Now we understand why Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned to their hometown of Nazareth.

Luke 2:39-40

- ³⁹ And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.
- ⁴⁰ And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

The next biblical reference to Joseph occurs when Jesus was twelve years old and Joseph led his family on their yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When the feast concluded, Joseph and Mary began their trek home. They must have traveled in a large caravan because a full day passed before they realized that Jesus was not with them.

Luke 2:41-45

- ⁴¹ Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.
- ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast.
- ⁴³ And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not *of it*.
- ⁴⁴ But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among *their* kinsfolk and acquaintance.
- ⁴⁵ And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.



Luke 2:46-48

- 46 And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.
- 47 And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.
- 48 And when they saw him, they were amazed:
and his mother said unto him,
Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us?
behold, thy father and I have sought thee
sorrowing.



Luke 2:49-52

- 49 And he said unto them,
How is it that ye sought me?
wist ye not that I must be about my Father's
business?
- 50 And they understood not the saying which he
spake unto them.
- 51 And he went down with them, and came to
Nazareth, and was subject unto them:
but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
- 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature,
and in favour with God and man.

By this time, it is clear that Jesus understood that Joseph was his *adopted* father.

Luke 2:49-52

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How is it that ye sought me?
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- ⁵⁰ And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them.
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but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.
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Here, with Jesus living in subjection to Mary and her husband, the record of Joseph ends. Except for disparaging remarks made by scoffers about “the carpenter’s son,” he is not again mentioned. Yet to minimize Joseph’s importance in the life of Jesus is to clearly miss the mark. His gift to Jesus was access to the throne of David via Solomon. In Joseph, the husband of Mary, we see a sterling example of faith, love, obedience, and courage under the most trying of circumstances. Certainly we can see that Joseph is the Unappreciated Man of the Nativity!



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