

***The Duties of The Priest
The Mission and the Work of The Church
(Child Dedication)***

Part 32

“But you are the chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

God spoke to His people through Moses when He told them, ⁶ ***These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.*** ⁷ ***Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.*** ⁸ ***Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.*** ⁹ ***Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.”*** (Deuteronomy 6:6-9) We ought to put the commands of God in our hearts and impress them in our children by teaching them the ways of God.

What the Lord wants from us is to raise up our children in the ways and the fear of the Lord. Therefore we ourselves need to dedicate ourselves to God and to dedicate ourselves to raise up our children in the fear of the Lord.

There are many churches honour and consider the ceremony of child dedication especially to those who are newly born and that is good. But if we only do that for the sake of the procedure and the ceremony to be performed without the real commitment of the parents to obey God and follow His word and discipline their children according to the commands of God then there is no point for the child dedication ceremony.

¹³ ***Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.*** ¹⁴ ***Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”*** ¹⁵ ***When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.”***(Matthew 19:13-15) Jesus desire that the children would come to Him and no one should hinder them. But coming to Jesus would not mean only to bring the children to the church physically and do the dedication ceremony, but to raise them up and nurture them in the ways of the Lord.

We will study how Jesus was born and how He was raised up so we can understand what the meaning of child dedication is:

¹⁸ ***This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.*** ¹⁹ ***Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did***

not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.” (Matthew 1:18-19) Joseph was a righteous man, he was pledged to marry Mary but he found her with a baby therefore he wanted to divorce her. According to the Scripture the girl who is pledged is considered married and is another man wife.

That is why when Joseph discovered that Mary is pregnant he decided to divorced her. But since he was a righteous man he wanted to do it secretly and not to expose her to public disgrace.

The marriage according to the bible is not based upon people like each other. But upon God calling two royal priests to be put together in the matrimony of marriage to lead the family in righteousness and to raise up godly offspring. So marriage never builds on Eros love or lust. But according to the Scripture, when two priests called by God to lead a family, they get pledge to get marry. During the period that they are pledged to marry the love between them are the following:

1- Agape love: Unconditional love, sacrificial love, and this type of love will enable the man to care for his wife and family and it does not depend on the condition of the wife or the circumstances of life.

2- Philadelphia love: A brotherly love, to help and carry each other burden and to respect each other rights

So Joseph was a righteous man and that is the basic foundation for the marriage that God ordained. The value to be a righteous man and righteous parents and live a righteous life as Joseph lived or the value of a husband and wife living righteous life and the impact of that on the family is as the following:

1- We dedicate our children to the Lord first by dedicating our lives as parents to live unto Him: God can speak and direct a righteous man or righteous parents (God can speak to you and direct you if you are a righteous person). God directed Joseph in dreams to make the birth of Jesus and his childhood life glorious, ²⁰ ***But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*** ²¹ ***She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*** (Matthew 1:20-21)

God continually was speaking to Joseph and directed him through dreams to protect Jesus from the enemies that they wanted to take away His life, and to direct the affairs of Jesus life according to the plan of God as we can read in the following Scriptures: ¹³ *When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."* (Matthew 2:13) ¹⁹ *After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt* ²⁰ *and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."* ²¹ *So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel."* (Matthew 2:19-21) ²² *But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee,* ²³ *and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."* (Matthew 2:22-23) The same thing can be applied for us and for our children. If we live a righteous life then God will continually come to us and visit us and inspire us and speak to us to do the right things for us and for our children.

2- We dedicate our children to the Lord first by dedicating our lives as parents to read, study and to meditate on His word: God spoke to Joseph in the dream from the Scripture, of how Mary is pregnant, based on the Scripture: ²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:* ²³ *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."* (Matthew 1:22-23) Righteous parents should know the Scripture to understand what God is speaking to them and what He wants them to do.

3- Righteous man or parents can take right decisions and live a good and fruitful life: ²⁴ *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.* ²⁵ *But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus."* (Matthew 1:24-25) Righteous man is a wise man, *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."* (James 3:13) A Righteous man or parents can raise up godly children. Joseph and Mary raised up our LORD Jesus Christ in God's ways and will. As well as Joseph and Mary raised up all their children and finally all of their children became part of God's church as we can read in the book of Acts, *"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."* (Acts 1:14) One of their children, who is James, the half brother of Jesus became an apostle and one of the pillar of Jerusalem church and he is the one who wrote the book of James.

You are called to act as righteous parents. Go through the message and see the fruit of Joseph and Mary and what they did to God in the way they cared for their family, and this as well will be a challenge for us to follow and do

Read Luke 2 and see how Joseph and Mary did their part for Jesus from birth, and their rules in the childhood of Jesus, ²² *When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord* ²³ *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"),* ²⁴ *and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."* (Luke 2:22-24) Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to dedicate Him to God according to the Law of Moses. *"Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord."* Mary and Joseph were dedicated their lives to God to serve Him and live according to His will. Therefore they were able to raise up Jesus and the rest of their children in the way that God wants Him and ordained for Him to be.

As Joseph and Mary did their part from birth and in the childhood of Jesus then He grew, *"And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him."* (Luke 2:40) The parents were leading Him and bringing Him up in the way of righteousness. *"Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover."* (Luke 2:41) Joseph and Mary were caring for Jesus at home and they made Him involved in the temple life. Therefore as they were doing their parts the bible tells us the following: *"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men."* (Luke 2:52) The same is what we need to do for our children. We need to care for them spiritually at home as well as we need to get them involved in the church life so we will ensure for them that they will grow in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.

My Dear and Beloved: What are the factors for Jesus growth? *First* God was behind that, *Second* the rule of Joseph and Mary as dedicated godly parents to do the task entrusted to them. In the same way these are the factors for our children to grow. Our children God called us to spend our lives to nurture them with God's word and raise them in the will of God as He ordained for them from His good and perfect plans as we agree to pray.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the Cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Lord I dedicate my life as father/mother to dedicate my children to you in raising them up in the fear of God by providing their physical needs and by teaching them your words and your ways. Lord enable me and provide for me to do that well, this all I ask and pray in Jesus name Amen.*