

Pictures of God's Saints - 04  
**Joseph - Innocent Bystander**

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**Outline:**

**I. God's Unique Saints**

**A. Queen Esther**

**B. Arnunah**, King David & his commanders

**C. Mary** the mother of Jesus

**D.** Today we look at **Joseph**, Jesus' stepfather, an innocent bystander

**II. Spiritual Warfare:**

Most of the time, when we think about the Christmas season and the birth of Messiah, we do not think about spiritual warfare. However, I want to propose to you that spiritual warfare is what the birth of the Christ child is all about. This is God's intervention in the lives of His created human beings who are captivated by sin. They are locked into the slavery of sin and God has sent His Son to break the chains of the power of sin. Satan knows that this Child to be born in a manger is God's Son, and the messiah. So Satan is doing everything he can to stop this most intimate invasion of God into human history. His very life depends on it. Let's step into the middle of this battle and see what is going on and why it is so important to us some 2000 years later.

**A.** First I want you to notice that Angles are appearing everywhere:

**1.** First an Angel appears to Zacharias.

**Luke 1:5-25 (NASB)**

**[5]** In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of A-bi-jah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. **[6]** They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. **[7]** But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

**[8]** Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, **[9]** according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **[10]** And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. **[11]** And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. **[12]** Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. **[13]** But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. (I wonder if Zacharias was still praying this prayer for a child in his old age or if this was a prayer he had prayed many years ago. Perhaps he had even forgotten he had prayed this prayer at one time in his life. It really does not matter though because the important thing to remember is that God answers prayers according to His will and His time-table.) **[14]** "You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. **[15]** "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. (There is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week. **"Nothing is impossible with God."**) **[16]** "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. **[17]** "It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the **attitude** of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

**[18]** Zacharias said to the angel, "How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my

wife is advanced in years." [19] The angel answered and said to him, **"I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.** (There is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week. **"Nothing is impossible with God.")** [20] "And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time."

[21] The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.

[22] But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. [23] When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

[24] After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, [25] "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men."

2. Next the Angel appears to Mary the mother of Jesus: I know we read this last week but it is so applicable to the message today that I could not leave it out.

### **Luke 1:26-38 (NASB)**

[26] Now in the sixth month **the angel Gabriel was sent from God** to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, [27] to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. [28] And coming in, he said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. [30] The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. [31] "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. [32] "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; [33] and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." [34] Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [35] The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. [36] "And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. [37] "For nothing will be impossible with God." (Did I mention that there is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week? **"Nothing is impossible with God.")** [38] And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

3. Next Angels appear to Shepherds. Again I know we read this passage last week but I could not leave it out of this message.

### **Luke 2:6-20 (NASB)**

(Joseph & Mary have come to register in the public census.) [6] While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. [7] And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. [8] In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. [9] And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. [10] But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; [11] for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [12] "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." [13] And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, [14] "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." (Have I mentioned yet that there is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week? **"Nothing is**

### **impossible with God.")**

[15] When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." [16] So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. [17] When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ("I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.") [18] And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. [19] But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. [20] The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

4. Next an Angel appears to Joseph. I believe Joseph is more like you and I than any other character in this spiritual battle account. I believe that because Joseph was just an innocent bystander. Just a simple man, engaged to the girl he loved, waiting to marry her and get on with the plans he had for their lives together. Then, all of a sudden, he is caught up in the unfolding events of the battle between God and Satan for the salvation of mankind.

### **Matthew 1:18-25 (NASB)**

[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ("**Nothing is impossible with God.**") [19] And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. [20] But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. [21] "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Did I mention that there is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week? "**Nothing is impossible with God.**") [22] Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: [23] "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US." [24] And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, [25] but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

### **Matthew 2:13-16 (NASB)**

(The magi have just visited Jesus.) [13] Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him." [14] So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. [15] He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON." [16] Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.

### **Matthew 2:19-21 (NASB)**

[19] But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, and said, [20] "Get up, take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." [21] So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. (Did I mention that there is one thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week? Wait for a response. "**Nothing is impossible with God.**")

5. Next an Angel appears to the magi or Wise Men.

## Matthew 2:1-12 (NASB)

**[2:1]** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, **[2]** "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." **[3]** When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **[4]** Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. **[5]** They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

**[6]** 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH;

FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.' "

**[7]** Then Herod secretly called the magi and determined from them the exact time the star appeared. (Did you ever wonder why Herod wanted to know the exact time that the star appeared? Did you ever wonder why Herod chose to kill all the babies who were two years old and younger? These two things are connected.)

**[8]** And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I too may come and worship Him." **[9]** After hearing the king, they went their way; and the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was.

**[10]** When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **[11]** After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him.

Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**[12]** And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way. (The most important thing that caught my attention over and over again as I studied this week was the message that, "**Nothing is impossible with God.**" We are living out a spiritual battle in our daily lives and the message or story of Christmas speak to us at the intersection of the moment in time where we are living, every single day. The message is very clear; "**Nothing is impossible with God.**")

**B.** The second thing we should notice about this spiritual battle is that Satan throwing up roadblocks everywhere:

**1.** To **Elizabeth & Zechariah** Satan says... (You're too old, you can't do anything at your age. God can't use you any more. Just sit back and wait for the end and its rewards to come to you.)

**2.** Satan says to **Mary**... (What will people say? You are pregnant and unmarried, and that goes against all that God and His law stand for. God can't use you.)

**3.** Satan says to **Joseph**... (You are a steadfast man of God. You don't want to get mixed up with a woman like Mary do you? God can't use you if you're mixed up with someone like her. You're just a victim of circumstances. Walk away and go live the life you planned, there is a GOOD woman out there for you.)

**4.** Satan says to the **Shepherds**... (You're just shepherds, don't get all excited, you're just seeing things. God can only use you right here watching these sheep so people can continue to offer up sacrifices for their sins, like they have always done. This is the law of God, stay away from change, it just upsets things.)

**5.** Satan says to the **Wise Men** (Wow! Did you hear that? The great Herod wants to worship this new born Messiah King. Even the highest officials appear to be interested in the one true God. Don't miss the opportunity to let this man worship the Christ child.)

**III. Joseph** - Victim of circumstances or Faithful servant: Joseph steps beyond the temptation to do things as he planned them. Joseph sets himself, his plans, his preconceived ideas aside and steps out to follow the will of God no matter what it might cost him. Joseph decides he is going to be who

God created him to be as a unique individual.

**A.** At the command of God's messenger he takes Mary to be his wife in spite of the pregnancy

**B.** He flees to Egypt leaving everything behind. But, he is not the only one in this battle who decides to stand up and do God's will.

**1. Elizabeth & Zechariah:** (In spite of their doubt they went ahead and tried. And guess what? A child came.)

**2. Mary:** (I don't know how this can happen but I am willing to be your servant Lord. Do to me whatever You like, I am in Your hands.)

**3. Joseph:** (I don't understand all of this but I am going to serve and obey my God. So whenever and whatever He asks of me, I will do it.)

**4. Shepherds:** (After what these men had seen and heard they could not sit still and they could not keep silent. They went out telling everyone the Good News about the Messiah. "I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.")

**5. Wise Men:** (We don't know everything, and everything is not as it always appears to be. We will follow the truth and we will listen to God, we will order our lives according to His bidding. So they turn and go home by another way.)

#### IV. Today

**A. Spiritual warfare** rages on. Like Joseph and the others we are caught in it just like they were.

**1.** To the **elderly** Satan whispers: (You're too old, you can't do anything at your age. God can't use you any more. Just sit back and wait for the end and it's rewards to come to you.)

**2.** To the **young** Satan whispers: (You're too young, you can't do anything at your age. God can't use you yet. Just sit back and wait until you get older and wiser, there's plenty of time.)

**3.** To **women** Satan says: (What will people say? God can't use you except to take care of your family. You can't do that.)

**4.** To **men** Satan says: (You're too busy making a living for your family, you don't have time for that religious stuff. Besides that's for women and children. God's using you just like you are.)

**5.** To the **common people** Satan says: (You're too lowly, you don't have any influence or wealth of resources. Just keep your nose clean and keep quiet. You have to be concerned about your survival.)

**6.** To the **educated** Satan lies and says: (All the research, facts and logic itself tells us that this Bible is just a bunch of ancient writings that have been disproved by modern science. Don't listen to this stuff.)

**7.** To the **wealthy and influential** Satan says: (You don't need God. You have been blessed by your wealth and you can take care of yourself. Eat! Drink! Be merry! Enjoy what you have earned and deserve.)

**B.** Will you and I be innocent bystanders, victims of circumstances, or will we be instruments for God's purpose? This Christmas season, remember - **Nothing is impossible with God.**

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