



13 Christmas Meditations

Adapted from

Where's the King?

From Matthew

&

Speak, Lord!

From Luke

(Excerpts from my own
devotional studies of these passages
for this Special *Christmas Gift Edition*)

© 2003-2005 Ruth Marlene Friesen



Matt.1:1-17 **Jesus' Family Tree and Mine**

This gives the genealogy of the generations between Abraham and Jesus Christ, but on the side of his foster father, Joseph. There are fourteen from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to Christ.

It means that Joseph was accepted and counted as Jesus' ancestor, even if not born directly from Joseph's seed. Maybe it also means that genealogy matters to God. It is possible to go overboard, but if God thinks it's important enough to record these people and even little personal notes about who the mother was of some, like Judah whose mother was Tamar, Solomon whose mother was Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. See these non-Jewish women were included once they became part of the blood-line.

I already have respect for genealogy, and think it important to include all who marry into the line, or are adopted. I feel like this validates that attitude. I've been saying that I keep trying to give genealogy up because I don't have time for it. Maybe I need to change that to simply saying, "I hardly have time for it any more." When it comes up I end up dealing in it anyway.

Perhaps the Lord has been gracious and allowed me to build and upload my genealogy website. I don't give myself more than one night a week to work at this hobby, but that's enough to keep a finger in it.

We are also reminded that God can see us not just as individuals but as part of many generations of people, and that what we do affects the ones who follow behind us. You and I may seem to be small, insignificant twigs in the generational family tree, but not to God. Our most ordinary decisions are recorded in His records.



PRAYER: Thank You, O God, for these reminders today. You see us as part of a whole over many centuries of people. Help me to be a bright and holy spot in all my generations, even if they stop with me.

I want to make wise and godly decisions, for I don't know how that will affect the destiny of those who come after me. Amen.

Matthew 1:18-21 **Hesitate to Hurt**

This is one of the briefest stories of the birth of Jesus Christ. It's from the point of view of Joseph.

When he learned that Mary was discovered pregnant before they even came together, he knew he ought to divorce her but he didn't want to shame or embarrass her, so he had in mind to do it quietly. But while or after he thought this over, an angel came to explain that he should not hesitate to take Mary to wife, for she had conceived by the Holy Spirit, and that the son she would bear would be called Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins.

This tells me that Joseph really loved and cared for Mary, and was anxious not to hurt her or embarrass her with a public divorce. Such a thoughtful gentleman God picked for His Son's foster father! It also says that he was a righteous man, so Joseph loved and trust God for his salvation yet to come.

People before Christ died had to trust God's promise of a Saviour who would take away their sins. That will have been just as difficult for some as it is nowadays to believe that God did send His Son to be our Saviour.

My lesson here today is that when things don't go the way they were meant to, I should not over-react, for God may be about to do a very unusual miracle. If I really hesitate to hurt someone even though that action is expected of me, God will see to it that I get the right information. Look to Him.



PRAYER: Lord, more than once You have taken care of a situation for me where I expected trouble, or like when I had to do a very hard thing. I fret about these things, yet, when I commit it all to You, it all works out. Like Joseph, I need to obey You even if I'm totally shocked.

Thank You that You are so very able to deal with the surprises in our lives!

Matthew 2:1-3 Dust Raised by True Seekers

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a group known as Magi, and traditionally understood to be wise men arrived in Jerusalem, asking where the newborn king of the Jews was. They explained that they'd seen his star and were coming to worship him.

King Herod was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him.

I know from many other sermons, articles and books, that King Herod was a wicked, jealous and cruel man. He'd already killed some of his sons so he could remain king. News of another king of the Jews born - so that foreigners came from a distance to see this baby, well, that would have shook him up and disturbed Herod all right!

What I find interesting is that all Jerusalem was disturbed with Herod. They may have had other reasons. Some will have been plain curious. Some will have been thrilled at the prospect of being rid of king Herod. Some may have wanted to maintain the status quo. In any case, the arrival of the Magi was not a secret, or quiet event. It was front page news. How does this apply to me? Or you?

Any time there are real true seekers of Christ in our midst, even in our church, it stirs people up. Some on one side and some on another. Often it stirs up the community or church leaders too, and makes them antagonistic. That may explain why certain ones seem a threat to the status quo in church, and some have left the church very wounded.

Another thought is that sometimes the things that stir us up the most, are sent from God, and we don't recognize them as such. I've felt like I've got insights into the unseen spiritual conflicts in a congregation, but I wasn't sure what move to make next, except to pray harder.



PRAYER: Lord, help me to recognize and receive aright the magi or wise people that show up in my life. I don't want to reject them if You have sent them. Strengthen me also against the fears of being associated with them.

Matthew 2:6-12 **Where is the King?**

Once Herod found out from the prophets where the Ruler was to be born, and he had told the Magi and asked them to find the child and bring him word, they were on their way again, following the star which guided them.

They did find the right home and the child, they recognized him as the one designated by the heavenly star, and worshipped Him, and gave Him gifts of gold, myrrh and incense.

These wise men found accommodation for the night, and in a dream were warned not to go back to Herod, so they didn't keep that appointment.

It seems that when these magi went to ask in the city of Jerusalem for the newborn king of the Jews, they were switching to a secular mindset in their search. If they had stayed with their original guide, the star, they would not have had trouble finding Jesus.

If they had gone back to tell Herod, I believe they would have been killed. Rather God protected these worshippers by warning them with a message to detour.

I'm afraid there are times I detour to do things the secular way, instead of continuing to follow God's guidance. Fortunately, as soon as I come back to worshipping Jesus, He guides me by His Holy Spirit again. Sometimes He even protects me from the consequences of my foolish mistakes.

Can you think of times you've done that too?



PRAYER: Oh God, help me to keep my eye on the Jesus, the bright and morning star, and the Word by which You guide me. Help me not to stop to lean on secular ways of thinking and seeking.

Thank You too, for protecting me numerous times from the consequences of my mistakes!

Matthew 2:13-15 **Quick to Obey**

After the wise men left by another route, the Lord told Joseph in a dream to take the young child and his mother and go to Egypt because Herod was going to try to kill him.

Joseph obeyed immediately. They left that same night.

This passage points out that this would full fill the prophecy (in Hosea 11:1), "Out of Egypt have I called my son."

Obviously, the Lord God was coordinating things from Heaven, even though baby Jesus was helpless to do anything, and Joseph and Mary didn't know all that was going on either, and may not have thought of that particular prophecy being fulfilled until much later.

Joseph's important part was to be open to hear God's directions, and ready to obey immediately. He didn't even wait until morning light. Which was a good thing, because this way even the neighbours could honestly say, "We have no idea where they went. Last night they were here, and this morning they are gone! They never breathed a word about going away."

Am I like this Joseph? Do I hear God's guidance and obey it promptly? I wish I could say a resounding yes. But listening to my own spirit I hear an embarrassed silence or uncertainty.



PRAYER: Lord God, I would love to be like Joseph, and I know that in times past I have been eager to do Your bidding instantly. Now I have got myself into so many things there is hardly time to listen, never mind hear Your directions.

Please clear out a path for You to get Your directions and guidance to me, so that I may hear and heed Your voice. I can tell it will be for my good, and part of Your ultimate plan.

Matthew 2:16-18 **Over Reaction!**

When King Herod realized that the Magi were not coming back to give him the scoop on the new born king, he was furious and gave orders to kill all baby boys and up to toddlers of age two in Bethlehem and the area around it.

Joseph had already fled with Mary and Jesus, so they were safe, but many other homes were in deep mourning for their baby boys. This fulfilled a prophecy by the weeping prophet, Jeremiah, which he spoke centuries before; *"A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."*

This didn't just happen to accommodate Jeremiah's sermon and make it come true. However, young families who knew of and understood that prophecy could have made sure they lived elsewhere.

This does show up the wickedness of Herod, and the stupidity of over-reacting. Ouch! Sometimes I do that too! Yes, I have to admit there are times I've over-reacted, and caused more trouble than there was before. (I never dreamed I'd be in the same class as that horrible Herod!)

When someone implies even, that I'm not working as hard as I should, I'm all over them with an angry reaction. Why? Because I know how many other things I'm doing, many of which I see as more important than the one item this person focused on. He judges me by his standard, and I judge myself by what I know, but I hold him accountable for all I know.



PRAYER: Oh Lord, to think I can identify with that horribly wicked Herod today! I'm ashamed of myself. I have sinned and need Your forgiveness, but also help to control my reactions. Most especially in my writings because that's where I wield the power of words and influence others.

In my spoken words too, Lord Jesus, I am often careless about the effects my words have on others. Come, sanctify my tongue thoroughly!

Matthew 2:19-23 **Guided Naturally**

After king Herod died, an angel told Joseph in a dream to take Mary and the child back to Israel, they went. They discovered that Herod's son, Achelaus, reigned in Judea, Joseph as afraid to go there. Warned in another dream, he took his family to Galilee, and settled in the town, Nazareth. This fulfilled the prophecy; Jesus would be called a Nazarene.

This tells me that Joseph was a spiritually sensitive man, who heard God's directions in his dreams, and he always obeyed them promptly. In this particular instance his fear that it was not safe to be in Judea with a son of Herod as king also became a factor that is recorded.

All this happened naturally, but they were part of God's plan to fulfill things He had foretold many years earlier through His prophets.

What might this have to do with me today?

God has a plan for my life too, and is it possible that He will guide me into that plan by the intuition and natural fears and desires He has given me? I do believe at various times He has guided me that way.

This implies the importance then, of paying attention and being spiritually alert. Key moves and directions into God's plans will come in soft subtle ways, and if we am not obedient right away, we may miss some important turns in the road of our lives.



PRAYER: Oh Father-God, I want to follow Your plan for my life, even though I'm not sure any prophets foretold details about me years and years ago/ Still, I do want to know and do Your Will. If You plan to reveal those to me through the intuitive ideas, and the dreams and desires of my heart, or through natural, common sense decisions, then I want to pay closer attention and obey.

But oh, do keep me from following my heart against Your best wishes and plan! Keep me from errors! Amen.

Luke 1:46-56 **Mary's Song**



And Mary said:

*"My soul praises the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me -
holy is his name.*

*His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.*

*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever,
even as he said to our fathers."*

This is Mary's song magnifying the Lord when Elizabeth says her baby leaped in her womb, recognizing Mary's voice as the mother of our Lord. She praises the Lord with joy for being mindful of her humble state. She knows she is going to be famous for the great things the Mighty God has done for her.

Mary recognizes that God is merciful to all those who revere Him in every generation. He has done mighty deeds in each generation, but scattered and put down the proud, bringing down rulers from their thrones and lifting up the humble.

The Lord God fills the hungry with good things (not just food) - this includes spiritual hungry and need. Yet He lets the rich (or those who think they are rich) go without spiritual food or wealth.

She saw that God was keeping His promises to Abraham and his descendants. Mary worshipped an eternal and loving, sovereign God.

I too can praise God for being mindful of me in my lowly estate. I expect to be famous one day for my intimate walk with Him and all the ways, large and small, He has shown Himself involved in my life.

Yes, this is the same God who has been merciful to all who truly worship Him in every generation from Adam and Eve down. I do believe He puts down the proud and lifts the humble who trust in Him. He gives the hungry good things, besides food He also meets their deep spiritual longings. On the other hand, those who think they are rich and need nothing, God lets go without spiritual food or wealth.

God does have a plan for all time, and He makes promises to many generations - but He keeps them. He does what He says!



PRAYER: Oh Lord, there is so much to mull over here, and I see a number of things to apply to my life – just looking at Mary's example.

I too should sing praise songs to You for Your mercies and blessings upon me! I want to really carry that out this time, and not just say, "I ought to..." But I know I can't even praise You well, without Your help.

My Own Magnificat

*I magnify You, O Lord God,
for You have chosen mousy, ordinary me,
placed me in a family and community
where I heard the Gospel early and often.
You made it easy to receive Your salvation gifts,
and to fall in love with Your Word, and You!*

*You have rescued me many times,
from danger, and my own foolish mistakes.
You have provided food, homes, cars and work.
You, O God, constantly show Yourself mighty
and full of mercy and love to the humble and needy,
but You bring down the proud and cruel.*

*You keep Your promises – of a Saviour, a Comforter,
and You will surely come again to gather Your own!*

Luke 1:80 **Speak, Lord**

And the child [John] grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

After Zachariah's song of praise to God for the coming of His long promised salvation, and prophecy that this child John would prepare the way before the coming of the Lord, we read this simple, one sentence summary of John's early life. He grew and became strong in spirit. (Meaning the Holy Spirit).

Then he lived a private, secluded life, probably of communing with God and preparing himself for the work to come. Once the right time came to appear publicly to Israel, John's private years were over.

There may be a clue here to others of us who have a destiny of service to God. We need to grow up and become strong in the Holy Spirit, with our spirit alive and very much connected to God's Spirit. This may involve a number of secluded years, away from the public eye, getting to know our Lord very intimately, and understanding clearly what God's will is. Later, in public life there will not be time to think all these things through slowly and thoroughly. Even our reactions may need to be prepared in advance.



PRAYER: Yes, Lord, I see that I need to appreciate the quiet, sequestered life I now live, for it shall not always be thus. Most of all, I need to become strong in Your Holy Spirit. Amen, I want to, too!

Please speak, Lord, to me daily through Your Word, and help me, like John the Baptist, to grow strong in Your Spirit. Teach me to obey Your commands with single-mindedness, and to glorify You at every turn. Amen.

Luke 2:11-14 Eligible for the Benediction of Peace

This passage was the sum of the angel's message to the shepherds that Christmas night. It involves three simple parts. 1. The announcement of a Saviour's birth, where He was born, and who He was. 2. The physical sign by which they would recognize Him. 3. The praise – a benediction, praise to God in the highest, and on earth, peace was to be to those on whom God's favour rested.

It strikes me that God really does tell those who are listening what He is doing in our world. If I am listening He will tell me things too. This message about the Saviour is for me, and everyone, but He also tells me particulars about what He is doing in my life when I am open to hearing His voice.

The sign was specific enough that the shepherds were not likely to find two babies born that night, wrapped in swaddling strips and lying in a manger.

The praise and benediction was important; it took a whole host of angels to sing it. The angels knew His station. God is in the highest heights of the universe - none is higher or greater than He. For the lower level of earth they gave or offered peace. Only I doubt it was for all men equally. It says "*to men on whom his favour rests.*" This benediction was meant only to those with whom God was pleased or that He cared about. In one sense God cares about every living human on earth, past, present and future, and He wants them all to have peace. But it can only rest - present tense - on those who are in His favour at present. That includes those who expect and receive the Saviour He has sent, and seek to please God in all they do. Peace may be made available to all humankind through Christ, but these are the ones who actually experience God's peace in this life.



PRAYER:I receive You as my Saviour, and I desire to please You as completely as possible. I want to qualify for this benediction of peace. Thank You Lord. Help me to pass it on.

Luke 2:23 & 28-35 **First Born Males Belong to God**

It was the Law of the Lord, that every first born male be consecrated to the Lord, which brought Mary and Joseph to the temple in Jerusalem with the eight-day old Jesus. This obedience set up a divine appointment that an old godly man, Simeon, had been promised by the Lord, that he would get to see the Saviour before he died.

With the help of the Holy Spirit surely, Simeon recognized the baby Jesus as that long-awaited Saviour. Eagerly he took him into his arms and both praised God and pronounced a prophecy. He saw this as fulfilment of an old personal promise that he would get to see the Saviour, and Simeon was now ready to die in peace. He had personally seen the salvation God had prepared openly for all to see who wanted to, a Saviour who would be a light to reveal truth to the Gentiles (which has been true now for nearly 2000 years), and for the glory or fame of the nation Israel, and really - they have been famous for the Messiah that they rejected all these long years.

Then Simeon added personal words of comfort to the parents and added another prophecy; that this child would cause the success and failure of many in Israel, and would have enemies, and would reveal the real intentions and thoughts of many people. A special warning was tucked in for Mary - sorrows would pierce her like a sword through her heart.

I wonder how many first born males are dedicated to the Lord nowadays. I was, and was the first born of five. My brothers and sisters weren't. What does being dedicated do to our lives? To the plans God has for us?



PRAYER: I rejoice today with Simeon. His prayer was granted at last. His prophecies have certainly come true. Many of us Gentiles have revelled in the light that Jesus our Saviour has been to us over the past 20 centuries. We seem to have had the greatest blessing. Israel rejected their Messiah, but their day is coming when they will fall in love with Him in a way that may put the rest of us to shame.

Countless individual lives have turned on whether they accepted or rejected Christ, and their bottom-line thoughts about Him. Mine turned for the better, praise God!

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

This godly woman, Anna, was old by standards of that day. Widowed maybe sixty, seventy years, she had learned to live only for God. It is not said how many years, but at eighty-four she had the habit of staying at the temple around the clock, fasting, praying and worshipping the Lord. She didn't even go home any more. She was a fixture who knew everyone who came regularly to the temple, and they all knew her.

So when she came upon Simeon blessing and prophesying about the infant Jesus, Anna gave thanks to God in Heaven, and made it her business to repeat this good news to everyone who came into the temple that she knew was looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

Ah, so Anna was a missionary-gossip. Right in the house of the Lord. What a wonderful role for a godly old woman. She was in the right place to hear the good news and she spread it right there to everyone she knew would be interested in the temple foyers for as long as she remained alive. She probably had the job completed by then.



PRAYER: I wonder, LORD, should I think of myself as a widow, dedicated to You from now on? Perhaps I need to follow Anna's example and spend all the rest of my life in a devotional way. Since I have heard the good news of Jesus Christ our Saviour and the Saviour of the whole world, I need to be passing it on to any who are willing to be saved.

Father-God, a couple of years ago I wanted to be like Achsah, Caleb's daughter, and boldly ask for what I need. Now I want to take a lesson from Anna, and dedicate myself wholly to You, Lord, and to spreading the good news of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. You'll show me how this should work out in my daily life, won't You?

Luke 2:41-51

When Parents Misunderstand

When Jesus was twelve His parents took him on His first annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship in the temple. Mobs of people!

He was thought to be somewhere among His cousins and friends as they headed back to Nazareth. But at camp-set-up that first night He did not come to them. So they began to look for Jesus, retracing their journey.

Any parents who search for a child for three days will be panic stricken, so it is not surprising that Joseph and Mary were astonished when they found Jesus listening and asking wise questions in the temple. Mary thought they had been mistreated because of the anxiety caused them.

He sounds amazed they even had to be searching. "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?" The implication is that they should know He was the Son of God. From the accounts of His birth we realize that they did know back then; so why would they have forgotten now?

They must have become absorbed in daily routines and living like others so they forgot the special aspects and angel's words at his conception and birth. Even the prophecies of Simeon at that very temple twelve years earlier had faded from memory.

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. Jesus knew what it was like to have parents who misunderstand and do not fully appreciate God's plan for one's life, - still He went home with them to Nazareth and was obedient unto them.



PRAYER: If someone hunted for me, would they find Me in Your house, doing Your business?

You know, Lord Jesus, how it feels when parents misunderstand and do not appreciate God's wonderful plan for my life, but like You, we need to go home, be obedient, and You will open doors of public ministry later. Thank You, Lord. The more I think about these things, the more I see that You do understand my unique situation. You are not blind to it, and quite able to work with me within it! Amen! Do!



*This Christmas Gift is brought to you
With Love and Blessings*

*by
Ruth Marlene Friesen*

author/publisher of **Ruth's Secret Roses**
<http://Ruthes-SecretRoses.com>

and owner of Bouquet of Enterprises
<http://BouquetofEnterprises.biz>

Also, author of several genealogies available
at <http://AGodlyInheritance.com>

To keep current with my writing and business adventures
bookmark these blogs (or sign up for the ezine editions);
RoseBouquet – <http://blogs.Ruthes-SecretRoses.com>
eAction – <http://BouquetofEnterprises.biz/eAction/>
Updates – <http://AGodlyInheritance.com/Updates/>

Use the contact forms on any of my sites to reach me by email.
You can phone 306-225-2138,
or you can write me an old fashioned letter, and send it to
– Box 208, Hague, SK. S0K 1X0