

## **Shalom** Mishpacha

Which means – G'day Church Family

Ani-kin Yosef, ben Yakov, ben Mattarn, ben El-aw-zawr, ben El-ee-ood, ben Yo-Keem

I am Joseph, son of Jacob, son of Matthan, son of Eleazar, son of Elihud, son of Akim

In fact - my **family tree** goes all the way **back to King David** and as far back as the patriarchs, **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**

I live in **Nazareth** in **Galilee** in the **Northern** part of **Israel**

I have a nice little **carpenter's workshop** there – and I do okay

It's been a **tough time** for us here in **Israel** – especially since the **Romans** occupied our land in **63 BC**

The Romans do let us **practice our faith** in the **Lord God YHWH** – and we can go to the **synagogue** on the Sabbath – and we **can celebrate** all our **Jewish festivals** – like Passover and Pentecost and the Festival of the Tabernacles

But there are so many **rules and restrictions** – and of course **taxes**

I believe you know a bit about **government restrictions** – here in Australia!

(pause)

**People** in Israel are getting a bit **tired of being oppressed** by the Romans – there have been a few **riots and rebellions** lately – again you might have the **same thing in Australia** – I believe

But the people live in hope of better days ahead

I don't know too much about the Scriptures

But I remember at **Sabbath School** – the **Rabbi** told us about some of **God's promises**:

- The Rabbi said that - **God promised Abraham** – that Abraham would have **many descendants** – and become a **great nation** – and that the whole world would be **blessed by one of Abraham's descendants** – but that was over 2000

years ago [4000 years ago for you here] –And our country - Israel - used to be a great nation – but not anymore – the **Romans** have **seen to that!**

- At Sabbath School – the Rabbi also said that **God promised King David** – there **would always be a King on his throne** – but we haven't had our own King for a long time now – We have **King Herod** in Judea [37-4BC) but he's **just a puppet king** for the Romans – he's not really our king
- At Sabbath School - the Rabbi said that **God would one day send His Messiah – a chosen One** – who would **bring people out of darkness** – and that this Messiah would be a **wonderful counsellor, mighty God and prince of peace** – and that **His government would bring peace that would never end** [Isaiah 9] – but there's not peace here in Israel!
- The Rabbi even said where this **Messiah would be born** [Micah 5:2] and that this Messiah **would be born of a virgin** [Isaiah 7:14]
- The Rabbi said – the prophet **Malachi** – foretold that **God would send His messenger** – and it would be the **Lord Himself** [Malachi 3:1-5] – but that was 400 years ago

We **don't have prophets** these days

I'm sure **God** meant to keep His promises but – maybe He got **too busy** – or just plain forgot

So here we are in December 4 BC – and **everyone is struggling** – and the **future** looks **hopeless** – just more **Roman rules and oppression** – nothing ever changes

Well – that was true for me – until about a year ago.

When **I met this beautiful young girl** –her name is **Mary** - she's **unbelievable** – so **pretty** and **kind** – and she **knows** her **scripture** better than me – she obviously listened at Sabbath School

She's about **16 or 17** – I'm not sure – you know what **women** are like about telling men their age – we **men, have to try and guess, apparently!**

And **oh boy** – if we say they're older than they are – then **we're in all sorts of trouble!**

Coincidentally, Mary's family tree goes back to King David too – so we're kind of **half-related** – somehow! It's all **too complicated** for me! I'm just a carpenter!

Anyway, **Mary changed my life** – I can't stop thinking about her – I **almost sawed my hand off** – the other day - in the workshop – **daydreaming about her!**

How can a girl do that to a man – **turn his mind to mush!**

So, after knowing Mary a few weeks – I **popped the question** – and she agreed to marry me – and we were **betroted** – our families were all cool with it

But then a few days later

Mary came to me and **said she was expecting a baby!**

I have to tell you – it was a **good job** – I **didn't have a saw in my hand at the time!**

I was **so angry** – I said *“who is the guy that made you pregnant – I'll flatten him”*

But Mary insisted – that **there was no other guy!**

**Mary told** me this **far-fetched story** of some angel guy – called **Gabriel** –as if right – an angel – like you just see them down the street at Coles don't you!

But Mary insisted that the angel – **this Gabriel guy - told her** – that God's Holy Spirit would come upon her and she would have a special baby boy – a child from God – the holy one – called the **Son of God** – and she was to call him – **Jesus**

It was all too much – I **said to Mary** – *“I have to go and process this Mary – It's doing my head in”*

I have to admit – as I walked away – I was thinking – **I'm going to have to call off this engagement** – but I'll have to do it quietly and nicely – I **don't want to hurt Mary** – I **love her so much**

It **took me ages to get asleep** that night –

But would you believe it – this same angel dude Gabriel **appeared to me in a dream** – it was more like a vision – it was as clear as day

I can still hear **the angel's words** – *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from God's Holy Spirit. 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”*

When I **woke up** – I was **gobsmacked** – **Mary** was **telling the truth** after all

The angel also said *“this was to fulfil a prophecy from the prophet Isaiah that a virgin would give birth to a son – and He will have the title “Immanuel” – which means “God is with us”*

When I **pulled myself together** – I **ran** down to **Mary's place** – and told her I was sorry for doubting her - and how much I loved her – and **that we were getting married right away!**

I was so happy that day!

It **took my mind off the Romans** for a while.

Then about **8 months later** - the news came out that the **Roman Emperor** – Caesar Augustus – **wanted** to do a **census** – to **count all his subjects** – so we **have to all be registered** – a bit like your QR codes!

For the census, **everyone had to return to their place of birth** – which meant I had to go to Bethlehem – that's about **160km from Nazareth**

That was a **bit unfair on Mary** – she was soooo pregnant – **we had to walk to Bethlehem** – it would **take about 5 days** – I managed to **muster enough shekels** to get a **donkey for Mary** – there's no way she could walk that far!

When we got to Bethlehem – **every man and his sheep was there** – the place was packed!

And **Mary** was so close to giving birth

We **found a place at the back of a guesthouse** – where they **kept some animals**

I was a bit ashamed that I hadn't provided better for Mary

Fancy having a baby in a stable!

But the baby came – He was **so beautiful and adorable** – and we **placed** him on some clean straw in a manger – **wrapped in a nice baby blanket**

It was **kind of romantic** in a way

But as I look back now – knowing that Jesus is King of Heaven and Earth – it's hardly a place fit for a King – but yet it showed what Jesus was all about – He came into the world humble – and remained humble – and he came for those who would humble themselves– and realize they needed King Jesus – **to fix up their sins!**

But back to the story, you have to understand **Bethlehem is full of sheep and shepherds**

Before we knew it – our peace was disturbed by **some crazy excitable shepherds** – they were more excitable than the barmy army! And boy did they smell – they must have been out in the fields with their sheep for weeks – **they'd never heard of soap and water!**

But what a story they told!

Apparently, they were out in the fields watching over their sheep

When, yes, you've guessed it, an angel appeared

I was **starting to detect a theme** here

The angel said to the shepherds *“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

And so, here they were to see our baby – the Saviour – the Messiah

It was pretty hard to wrap my head around this piece of news!

All **those lessons from the Rabbi at Sabbath School** were racing around my head – about God sending a Messiah and a Saviour

I was **pinching myself** – is our baby - really the **ONE** – God was talking about it.

These **shepherds were convinced He was!**

They went on to tell me and Mary – that **suddenly a whole choir of angels had appeared to them - and started singing** – a bit like your St. David's Choir

And according to these shepherds - this choir of angels was praising God and giving glory to God for sending my baby boy!

What a night it was – I'll never forget it!

Praise God!

When things settled down a few weeks later...

**Mary and I took baby Jesus to the Temple** to present Him to God and give thanks for Him – this was in the Law of Moses somewhere [Exodus 13:2, 12] – and we had to offer a sacrifice – we had a choice of offering **a lamb** or if we couldn't afford it - offer two doves or young pigeons

I'm sorry to say we couldn't afford a lamb – so **we had to do the cheaper option**

But it just so happened when we were in the temple – there was this lovely old guy – **Simeon – so righteous and devout**

Simeon's reaction to seeing us was amazing – I'd never seen him before

But **Simeon knew all about us** – and more importantly he knew all about Jesus

Apparently, God's Holy Spirit had told Simeon – he wouldn't die – **until He'd seen the Lord's Messiah**

It was all starting to make sense – **our baby Jesus** – is really the Messiah

**Simeon** took our **baby** in his **arms**

And he said to God "*my eyes have seen your salvation*" – and Simeon said "*Jesus was going to be light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of us Jews*"

Wow! Our Son is going to not only save Jews but also non-Jews.

Again, I had to process that!

Whilst I was still thinking about it

Simeon also said that Jesus was “*destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel*”

Looking back, I now know what Simeon meant - that **some of our people would believe that Jesus was God’s Messiah** and sadly some of our people would reject Jesus as God’s Messiah.

And it’s the same today – here in Australia – some – like you people here – **believe in Jesus** – and many sadly in our nation – reject Jesus and don’t believe in Him – and they have made Christmas about everything other than Jesus!

**Let’s pray this Christmas** – that people who haven’t accepted Jesus before – come to believe in Him – **what a great Christmas present that would be**

Sometime later, I’m not sure how long

Mary and I and Jesus – **had some more unexpected visitors**

These guys were **called the Magi** – there were **wise learned men** from some place in the East [I’m not sure how far East] – apparently, they were **wise men who studied the stars** – and they had **noticed a special star and followed it to Jerusalem**

In their learning and tradition – **they knew this star meant a special king had been born** – so they came to worship him

They **brought gifts** of **gold, frankincense and myrrh**

Usually **Gold** – represents **royalty** – Jesus is King

**Incense** – represents **divinity** – Jesus is God

And **myrrh** is usually used for **anointing bodies for burial**

All these **gifts were fit for King Jesus** – the **King of Kings** – and to show that Jesus was/is fully God and fully human – and to also remind us that Jesus would one day die for the sins of the world

I marvelled at how far these wise men had travelled to find our baby

It reminds me to also say to you – it's very wise for all people all this Earth to come and find Jesus – and have a loving relationship with Him!

In your Bibles – you people don't hear much about me, Joseph, after the early days of Jesus

But let me just tell you a couple of things to show you what it was like watching Jesus grow up

- He pretty much knew God's Word from the moment he could breathe – after all He is God's Word in flesh
- His **teaching from God's Word was so amazing** and he had the Pharisees and teachers of the law – tied up in knots
- **Mealtimes were very interesting** – food and wine – just turned up out of nowhere
- **He had such compassion** – he healed people of dreadful sickness – and cast out demons – he even raised people from the dead
- Nothing was impossible for Him
- But as Simeon predicted – some rejected Jesus – and **had Him arrested and crucified**
- My wife, **Mary, was devastated** – to see what happened to our son
- But **she needn't have concerned herself**
- It was **all part of God's plan** – *God loved the people of this world so much – that God sent His Son (and my son) – Jesus - to die on a cruel Roman Cross* –
- In doing so – all the sins people committed were put on Him on that cross - He took the punishment for sin – and people could simply look to Jesus – and believe in Him – to have their sins forgiven
- And also, part of God's plan – was that **God raised Jesus back to life 3 days later** – to show He had the power over death as well

- God did this so that all who believe in Jesus' resurrection – can have eternal life in Heaven – with Jesus – with Mary – with me, Joseph, and with all who believe

## Conclusion

Tonight, you're here celebrating Jesus' birth

**And I, Joseph, can tell you – it's all true – it's in your Bibles**

And it's right to celebrate Jesus' birth

Because without His birth – there's no cross, no forgiveness of sins – and no eternal life!

You see, Jesus didn't come to get rid of the Romans like I'd originally thought or to get rid of the annoying hypocritical religious leaders

**He came to get rid of two things that are way more annoying than the Romans, way more annoying than the Jewish religious leaders – even way more annoying and problematic than COVID19 – I don't know exactly what COVID19 is – but you do.**

**Jesus came to get rid of two things which affect us all deeply – and affect us into eternity**

Jesus came to get rid of the punishment for sin, once and for all – by replacing it with forgiveness

AND –Jesus came - to get rid of dying – by replacing it with eternal life

The **best gift we can share this Christmas** – is to tell people the true story of Jesus birth – and what it means

One last thing, the angel that spoke to the shepherds said this – and it applies to all of us – especially if we're afraid of the future

*"Do not be afraid. I bring you **good news** that will cause **great joy** for all the people."*

**Shalom Mishpacha**