

**JEREMIAH: SHINING AS SPIRITUAL TWILIGHT FALLS**  
**"Part V: The VALUE Of Doing God's Will In Taxing Relationships"**  
**(Matthew 1:18-25; Jeremiah 22-23)**

Introduction: ( To show the need . . . )

During this last summer's vacation, Nadine and I traveled north to Stockbridge, Massachusetts to view the famous town Norman Rockwell painted in his Christmas painting of its main street shops.

The Shell clan had put together a puzzle of that scene at our Christmas gathering in California in 1990, and we wanted to see the original town up close.

Stockbridge turned out to look like that painting, only with 1999 decor instead of its mid-50's trappings. It was something to look at the shops across the street, shops we had put together on the Christmas Season puzzle of that famous painting.

At the Rockwell museum itself which is located outside of the town, we surveyed the actual painting from which the puzzle picture had been taken. Looking at that mid 50s painting made when I was 5 years old or so made me remember wanting that big earthmover trucking equipment for Christmas! I recalled huge caramel popcorn balls, oozing fudge, candy canes -- the memories were great!

But while dwelling in this nostalgic "la-la-land", I was brought back to cold reality when I heard the museum curator's report. He was talking about the paintings, and the life of the famous artist behind them. The statement that caught my attention and spilled a bit of sourness over my experience there was the news that the artist had been divorced. The court papers cited his former wife complaining that he spent too much time in his art studio instead of taking time with her!

Reality can bite! To think that my favorite Christmas painting was formed in part by work done at the cost of a marriage turned the painting into just another picture!

"Why does so much of life have to be tainted with relationship problems?" I wondered.

**Well, it's a fact that relationships at Christmas are not as picture-perfect as a Norman Rockwell painting can depict. HOW then can we DEAL effectively with this need?!**

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . . )

***Need: "If all my relationships with family and colleagues were as picture-perfect as a Norman Rockwell painting, Christmas would be great! However, reality often paints a plainer portrait. Any ideas?!"***

- I. **When Mary, the mother of Jesus came to be with child, this state created a taxing relationship with Mary's fiancé, Matt. 1:18-19.**
  - A. Much in conflict with the morals of that day, Mary came to be with child (of the Holy Spirit) during her betrothal to Joseph, Mtt. 1:18.
  - B. Joseph knew the child was not his, and considered divorcing Mary since he felt she had become pregnant through immorality, Matt. 1:19.
- II. **God's angel encouraged Joseph to marry her, explaining Mary's pregnancy was the result of a divine miracle, Matthew 1:20-21.**
- III. **As INCONVENIENT as his marrying her would have been, events in history made it IMPERATIVE that Joseph WED Mary:**
  - A. A chain of events in ancient Jewish history had set up a **humanly impossible hurdle** to God's ever blessing humanity with a Messiah:
    1. Israel's King **DAVID'S** heart was good, so God had promised him an everlasting royal lineage, 2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-13.
    2. However, that line produced an evil king, Jehoiakim who even burned God's written Word in his fireplace, Jeremiah 36:1-3, 21-23!
    3. Because of this blatant rebellion against God's **WORD**, regardless of God's promise to David of an everlasting line, **GOD** pledged Jehoiakim would **NOT** have his sons reign, Jer. 36:29-31.
    4. Indeed, when Jehoiakim's evil son, Jehoiachin (alias Coniah) tried to rule on his father's throne, God promised Coniah would never have a son sitting on David's throne, Jeremiah 22:24-25, 30. Coniah was deposed by Babylon just three months into his reign before he could become established, and the line of Jehoiakim has since not had a king rule over the people of Israel, 2 Chronicles 36:9-10.
    5. This situation is compounded by the many promises of the eventual God-blessed **Messianic Kingdom** where Messiah of that royal line and seed would be the vehicle of **world** blessing, cf. Isaiah 9:6-7.
    6. **In effect, the humanly-impossible tragedy arose in which the royal line of David through which the world's messianic blessings would come was CURSED by God Himself!**

- B. However, by grace, God **planned** for Joseph to wed Mary under such strained circumstances to **bypass** this historical hurdle as follows:
1. God had the prophet Jeremiah predict that in **place** of Coniah's line that had been "cut off" from blessing, God would cause a "Branch", the Messiah, to grow up from "**below**" that cut, Jeremiah 23:5-6.
  2. We can trace how this fact involved Joseph uniting with Mary:
    - a. David's **royal** but **cursed** line is traceable through the man, **Joseph** whom God planned to wed Mary, Matt. 1:2, 11, 16.
    - b. Yet, Jesus could not be the **physical** descendant of **Joseph** to avoid Coniah's curse **and** to be God's Son, so Mary was to carry Jesus as a **virgin BEFORE** she and Joseph wed, Matt. 1:18.
    - c. Nevertheless, through his mother, Mary, a descendant of David's son, Nathan, Jesus **was** to come from **David's line** by **another lineage BRANCH**: Luke 3:23, 31b. [In the Luke 3:23 lineage account, Joseph is Heli's son by **marriage**, Ryrie St. Bib. fn.] Thus, through Nathan, Jesus came from the promised "Branch" located "below" the "stump cut mark" of cursed king Coniah.
    - d. Finally, for Jesus **legally** to be able to **RULE** on David's throne though **not** of Joseph's royal lineage, since Joseph of Coniah's **royal** line was to marry Jesus' mother, Mary, and since Jesus was her eldest, by **adoptive** right via His **mother's husband**, Jesus could rule on David's throne! (Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 18)
  3. Yet, for this plan to **WORK**, **Joseph** had to **obey** God **quickly** and **marry** the **pregnant** Mary: (a) he had to **wed Mary AFTER** she was **pregnant** to **prove** that **God, not Joseph**, was Jesus' Father. (b) Yet, he **needed** to **MARRY** her so Jesus could qualify to **reign** as **Messiah** by **adoptive** right through himself. (c) Also, Joseph had to wed Mary **SOON AFTER** she **became** pregnant to protect Mary **and thus her unborn** from destructive community reprisals for what would otherwise seem to them to be a godless pregnancy!
- IV. **Joseph bravely obeyed God and QUICKLY wed Mary, going so far as to withhold intimacy with her 'til after her delivery, Matt. 1:22ff.**

**Application:** *If facing a taxing relationship this Christmas, (1) we can become righteous like Joseph (Mtt. 1:19a) by believing in Christ as personal Savior from sin, Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:17, 19. (2) Then, by (a) leaning on God's power given us at salvation in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23; Rom. 8:9b), (b) we can read what Scripture teaches is God's will IN the relationship, and DO it. (c) We find motivation for doing so in recalling the eternal VALUE we NOW see in Joseph's challenging choice to wed Mary, knowing our OWN like obedience to God will be of similar eternal VALUE in God's plan!*

**Lesson:** *THROUGH Joseph's obedience to God in his uniting with Mary, TAXING as it was, God provided our Messianic hope through Christ!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

As most of us know, through extensive interaction with the State fire marshal of Hartford and New Hartford fire marshal, we have changed our decorations. The live Christmas tree boughs have been replaced in part due to fire marshal decisions, and in part due to problems with the boughs drying out prematurely.

Did have that I must share with you! Years ago, Rick Lynn who owns a Christmas Tree farm picked out a tree he thought would be great for our Church. But each year as he trimmed and readied the tree in plans to offer it to the church, something would go wrong: the tree's top would brown, or a side would grow out unevenly, making him prune and plan to use it the following year. As the years went by, the tree became just too big for use in our sanctuary, so Rick considered it "washed up" for Nepaug.

But when he learned in talking with Oma Jean that she could use individual boughs for decorating the sanctuary, he thought, "Well, I can't use that tree elsewhere, so I'll cut off some of its boughs for her!"

That "washed up" tree's boughs were the ones used for the first decorations around our sanctuary this year. The rich pine odor and beauty you enjoyed for a while that circulated our room here came from that tree that almost didn't make it because of its **imperfections**. Yet, it **made** it in a way that we could enjoy its beauty and odor in a **greater** way than if it had set in the corner of our sanctuary as a tree.

Rick relayed to me that **just like that tree, when we think matters in our lives or we ourselves are "over-the-hill" as far as being of VALUE to God's plan, GOD has the ability to make something VALUABLE out of these IMPERFECTIONS!**

And so it is in our RELATIONSHIPS: if we do God's **will even in what TAXING relationships we have this Christmas, what is IMPERFECT can be graciously used of God in** ways that bring even GREATER glory to God Himself! As in the case of Joseph's choice to wed Mary, we are better off doing God's will ANYWAY!