

# Joseph Learns Mary Is With Child, His Love For Her Is Put To Test

Editor's Note: Even the great human love story of the Gospels had its moments of tribulation. Here, based on ancient but non-canonical accounts is a reconstruction of the greatest and unique trial of Mary and Joseph.

By GEORGE CORNELL  
AP Religion Writer

Back from his building expedition, Joseph bar Jacob entered the house and found Mary standing alone before the hearth. Her back was toward him. She did not move. Quickly he hooked the door curtain aside to admit more light.

He started toward her, swept with eager devotion. He had not seen her for six months.

She turned about, facing him. An armload of firewood she held crashed to the floor at her feet. He stopped.

Beneath the gray cowl, her face was pale and drawn, and her eyes burned with anguish. Her palms spread imploringly, defenselessly, at her sides. Her body bulged. She was full, mealeth, with child!

Breath failed him, and his countenance sagged in disbelief and dismay. He took a step or two, in shattered incredulity.

She seemed to shrink from him, her fingers twisting at the folds of her cloak. She lowered her head, and then, clenching her lips, bent and began rapidly picking up the kindling and stacking it in a heap.

He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. A wave of helpless compassion came over him, an urge to take her in his arms and console her. Yet he remained rooted, sick at heart, shocked and confounded.

Abruptly he turned and plunged out of the house into his carpentry shed. He flung himself down on a pile of sackcloth.

"Oh Lord, my God," he moaned. "What shall I say concerning her?"

He wept bitterly.

"For I received her a virgin out of the Temple of the Lord, and have not preserved her such."

Rage boiled in him.

"Who has committed this evil in my house? Who hath defiled her?"

In the very dawn of matrimony had come betrayal. At the beginning of paradise, it was lost.

"Is not the history of Adam repeated in me? For at the very hour of his giving thanks, the serpent came and found Eve alone, and deceived her."

His fingers dug in his face. "So hath it befallen me also."

Angry he lurched to his feet. With a stroke of his arm, he sent a rack of boards smashing against the wall. He strode outside and into the grove.

He walked until his bones ached along with his heart, and then returned to confront her.

Now it was night, and a lamp flamed on the sideboard. He called to her, and she emerged from an inner chamber, looking on him with swollen, defiant eyes. He drew himself up determinedly, and said:

"Why hast thou done this?"

Her lips parted and her throat muscles moved in little spasms, but speech eluded her. He could see the veins purpling beneath her translucent skin, and sorrow shook him.

All his senses insisted that she could not have done this thing, she who was so prudent and full of grace, she who was schooled in the very Temple itself, yet here she stood, her unfaithfulness a taunt to his face.

"Why . . . ?" He shook his head. "Why hast thou, who has been so much favored of God, thus debased thy soul?"

Suddenly, tears burst from her in a flood, and she clasped her hands to her face, crying out shrilly:

"I am innocent, and have known no man!"

He stood there, dumbstruck, pitying her, loving her, detesting her, believing her, doubting her. "Then," he said unsteadily,

"how comes it to pass you are with child?"

A new burst of tears convulsed her.

"As the Lord my God liveth, I know not by what means."



"WHY HAST THOU, who has been so much favored of God thus debased thy soul?"

She bent almost double, covering her face in her arms, and whirling, rushed from the room.

For a time, he stood there, abashed, dazed, hearing her rending sobs from the blackness of the inner chamber. Then, his shoulders slumped, he went out again into the night.

An edge of fear formed in him, along with his shame and grief.

"I am innocent . . ."

She had been under strict covenant to him, and any breach in it was adultery. Mosaic law said, "If a damsel that is virgin be betrothed . . . and another man lie with her . . . then ye shall stone them with stones until they die."

Yet he could not see her slain. His head throbbed. He could put her away privately. Yes, so he could, without trial or clamor. He would deliver her to his kinsmen in Judea, away from the prattling tongues of Nazareth. He was a just man, and had loved her greatly.

He stumbled on in darkness, oblivious to the limbs that whipped his face.

Oh God, the day star is fallen and hope is become despair. It would not have been unlawful, even though unseemly, if he himself had known her before. Jealousy consumed him, and her cry haunted him like some wraith of Sheol.

"I am innocent! . . . innocent!"

If only, within reason, he could believe her, or pardon—for a good man is long-suffering, and unafraid of scorn—but he could not.

Somewhere in the night, somewhere in the gulf past purpose or return, he dropped with his knees, bitter tears mingling with his supplications. He could not say how long he prayed there, and finally he fell to the ground and slept a tumult and teeming sleep.

Joseph, that son of David, fear not to take unto this Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son. . . . He shall save his people from their sins.

He jerked erect, his heart beating wildly, his eyes feverish and exultant. It was true! A mystery unveiled! It was their Maker's doing, and the Lord of Hosts is his name. For this cause had the Lord wrought and kept her. He

got up, his body stiff, his mind aflame.

He ran, dodging and leaping, as the sun shot silver through the trees. He came to the house and found her waiting. His arms went

about that time, it was decreed by the provincial Roman legate that all citizens should register at the cities of their birth to be taxed. Since Joseph was of Bethlehem, he journeyed there, taking Mary with him, even though this was not required, for he would not leave her among the mockers of Nazareth.

Why does she do it?

Mrs. Waters said she became aware of the Christmas problems of cash-strapped patients in veterans hospitals when her late husband was hospitalized.

Although confined most of the time to a chair by arthritis, she spends most of her waking hours working on the Christmas cards.

She rehabilitates each one by either using bleach to erase the signature, or pasting over it with paper. Afterward, she said, they look like new. She makes new envelopes, too.

The cards are bundled up and sent to veterans hospitals in Roseburg, Portland, Medford and Vancouver, Wash. The veterans then send them out to their friends.

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The used cards come to her from all over the country. She lives at Pleasant Valley, a small community near here, but packages addressed only to "The Christmas Card Lady" reach her.

Postal authorities said that there were an average of 11 incoming packages a day for her last February.

She also receives letters from organizations all over the nation, asking details of her work. She says she is confident that her work will be continued by others.

For years she answered the correspondence by hand. This year, friends gave her a typewriter.

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2. Alleged close relations between a trucking trade association and ICC officials in Texas and alleged favored treatment for the association in enforcing regulations. No names of companies or individuals were specified except for last names of some ICC personnel and others in several letters quoted by the subcommittee report.

3. The CAB's findings of probable cause of air accidents "are conditioned on the effect such findings may have on the promotion of civil aviation." Also, the CAB takes too long to decide economic proceedings before it and certain CAB officials have received "unusual hospitality from air carriers."

4. Again no names were specified.

The subcommittee, under Chairman Orrin Hatch, D-Ark., made headlines in the past two years in its investigations of TV quiz show scandals, payola practices in broadcasting, and alleged backdoor influences on members of the Federal Power Commission.

Among its recommendations, the report placed high priority on a proposal that TV and radio networks, as well as individual stations, be licensed and regulated by the government.

Congress rejected bills that would have put this into effect at its last session on grounds that there had been no hearings on the views of opponents or advocates of the legislation.

Under terms of the special resolution creating it, the subcommittee goes out of business Jan. 3. Subcommittee members reportedly have agreed not to ask that its term be extended or renewed.

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The first two theories came from W. A. Patterson, president of United Air Lines. The third came from John R. McDonald, an official of the Air Line Pilots Association.

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## Committee Fires Salvo At Agencies

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House subcommittee that exposed the TV quiz show scandals has fired a parting salvo of criticism at the Civil Aeronautics Board and the Interstate Commerce Commission.

It was learned Tuesday night that the House subcommittee on legislative oversight, which goes out of business Jan. 3, adopted the critical report of its staff at a secret meeting Friday. The report is to be made public today.

Rep. Steven B. Derouin, R-N.Y., was one of several subcommittee members who protested making the report public. Derouin called it "unfair, unjust, and beneath the dignity of a congressional committee supposed to be seeking the facts."

"It isn't very American," Derouin added, "for the committee to make the report public without first holding hearings to determine whether the charges are true and give the people concerned their day in court."

There was no immediate comment from CAB or ICC spokesmen.

The charges in the report were in general terms and made few specific allegations against individuals. Among subcommittee charges:

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## Christmas Card Lady Big Sender

GRANTS PASS (AP)—The mail comes in a torrent, some of it addressed only to "The Christmas Card Lady." It all goes to Mrs. Mary Waters, who spends the year helping others to have a Merry Christmas.

The 78-year-old woman rehabilitates used Christmas cards, and sends them to veterans hospitals in Oregon. This year, she sent more than 12,000 cards, plus 2,000 smaller gift cards.

Why does she do it?

Mrs. Waters said she became aware of the Christmas problems of cash-strapped patients in veterans hospitals when her late husband was hospitalized.

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## Labor Official Attacks Plan

PORTLAND (AP)—Labor Commissioner Norman O. Nilsen Tuesday took issue with Gov. Mark Hatfield's proposed reorganization plan. The plan includes making the commissioner of labor an appointive position, rather than elective.

Nilsen, in a letter to state legislators, said, "It is hard for me to imagine how taking away from the people the right to elect the labor commissioner would make the Bureau of Labor more responsive to the people."

Nilsen said that Hatfield's case was overstated and it "should be applied only where need has been demonstrated." He said the record of the Bureau of Labor had shown "a continuous record of honesty, sincerity and vigor."

In addition to making Nilsen's position appointive, Hatfield's reorganization plan would consolidate many independent agencies related to labor and employment.

Nilsen said the election of a labor commissioner "is a powerful stimulus and not one to be given away lightly."

The proposed plan would be received by the Common Council of the City of Klamath Falls, Oregon, for the purchase of improvement bonds for the city's water system, estimated at \$1,000,000.

The bonds would be sold in \$100,000 increments, with a maturity date of January 1, 1961, at the rate of 5 percent interest.

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