



REFLECTIONS

December 11, 2016

**God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every
name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should
bow,**

Philippians 2:9-10

Reflecting on Christmas—Naming the Child

It's one of life's most exciting times. A baby on the way, a new life coming into the world, and one of the first responsibilities of its parents is naming the child. For most couples, name discussions begin well before the baby's birth. In our day, we selected two names since gender screening was not available back then. The gender question added excitement to the mystery of new life, but the naming decision was ours to make, an important one. The name given a human life identifies them beyond their time on earth.

It is uncanny how names seem to fit the person given them. The Bible has many examples that suggest the name would even define the character of the person. Makes me wonder if God doesn't have a hand in the naming of everyone. He certainly did in the naming of one person in our lives.

Gabriel delivered Mary the news of the child she would bring into the world. He also told her the name she was to give him. A bit later, after Joseph considered what to do about the troubling situation unfolding before him, the angel appeared to him, also with instruction. "*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,*" the angel began to explain, "*because what is conceived in her is from the 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.*" (Matthew 1:20-21)

Now, like Mary, Joseph must have been astounded by this messenger. Even more perplexing was the angel's message. It was hard to believe. Maybe even harder to accept. But Joseph believed. And Joseph accepted his role just as Mary accepted hers. He was a righteous man who loved God and he loved Mary. He took her home as his wife.

The conversation between them would have been interesting to hear when they next saw each other—Mary describing Gabriel's surprise visit and his stunning message; Joseph explaining the dilemma he faced until the angel explained it all in a dream. Still, as overwhelmed as they must have been to be chosen by God to be the earthly parents of the Messiah, they knew a son would be born, and his name chosen. A name above every name that lives beyond his time on earth. Jesus. Prince of Peace. Immanuel. God with us.

Now believe this. By the Holy Spirit, Christ Jesus is born in you. By his promise, He is with you always, even to the end of the age.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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