

## Matthew 1:18-25 – “The Arrival of the King”

Today we get to have a little taste of Christmas, at the least we get to hear the wonderful story of the birth of Jesus. Grab your egg-nog, light the candle, sit back and enjoy for though it wouldn't have been too silent, it was indeed a Holy Night.

**1:18-19 - *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.***

Here we have the account of the birth of Jesus. Remember in Matthew's genealogy he was tracing the line of Jesus through Joseph. Joseph was Jesus' royal connection to the throne of David. So, Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus is heavily focussed on Joseph. Whereas Luke's gospel (which follows Jesus' genealogy through Mary's line – His blood and legal connection to the throne) heavily focusses on Mary in the birth account.

Now it was mentioned in 1:16: “...of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.” And here we read that it's ***the birth of Jesus Christ***. We're going to discuss shortly what the name Jesus means, but just to clear up any confusion, Christ is not His last name. It's not Mr. Christ. Christ was not a name but rather a title.

- Christ is the English word for the Greek – *Christos*. It means ‘anointed.’ The Hebrew word is *Mashiach*, which means ‘Messiah.’ So Jesus is the Promised Messiah, the anointed one of Israel.
- Again this is what Matthew is setting out to prove to his Jewish audience.

Now this pregnancy hits Mary and Joseph at an awkward time. They were ***betrothed***. This was kind of like our engagement today but was much more binding.

- This goes back to a time of arranged marriages. Sometimes you had your spouse picked out before you were even born. If parents liked a certain family, they could make the arrangements to have their kids given to each other in marriage. This was kind of like the engagement.
- When they got older the two would exchange their vows and the two would now be seen as legally married (and by older, the woman was typically 13-14 years of age. This could have been the age of Mary at this point). This was the betrothment.

- But after they were betrothed, they would usually wait about a year before coming together. It was a time when the husband would prepare a place at his father's house for them to live. It was a time where they would remain chaste. The marriage would not be consummated until they came together after that year for the formal marriage ceremony.

So, it's at this time that Joseph and Mary are betrothed that this news breaks. Unlike engagements today that might not last and breakups happen with no legal repercussions, a betrothal in this day could only be ended by divorce. If the husband died during that time the woman would remain a widow.

So when news comes to Joseph that Mary is pregnant, right away his assumptions would be that she's been unfaithful. She's cheated on him! Now it says that Joseph was **a just man**. This means he was righteous. This was a man who desired to live according to the law.

To **put her away secretly** meant that Joseph was going to divorce Mary but not press charges. You see, according to the law, the penalty for a woman who was unfaithful and not found a virgin was death; death by stoning (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). Joseph, being a just man, was unable to marry a woman he believed to be unfaithful and immoral. But because of this righteous attitude of Joseph, he was looking to do the kind thing here by putting her away secretly and not exposing this supposed sin.

Can you imagine that conversation that Mary had to have with Joseph. *Joseph, I'm pregnant, but it's not what you think. I'm still a virgin! This is the Holy Spirit's baby!* Now who's gonna buy that story?!? That just seems absurd.

- And at this time the concept of the Holy Spirit was still relatively unfamiliar to the Jew.

Think about the difficulty Mary must have had to go through in this situation. This was a scandalous thing (or appeared that way at least). Mary would have gone through the scorn, sneers, and dirty looks by people thinking she's nothing more than a tramp. People suspiciously under their breath saying, *'Still a virgin?? Yea right! Nice try. I got a bridge I'd like to sell you too!'*

Though Mary was highly favored, she had to go through some difficulty and hardship. This was no easy calling living in the shadow of shame and public disgrace.

- But though this may have been the experience externally, God was bringing about something so incredible and wonderful. Mary was going to have the privilege of birthing and raising the Son of God!
- Sometimes the Lord allows us to go through persecution and pain because He's birthing something far greater out of it. There may be times we need to allow the accusations to fly and let the Lord be our defense and see His good work prevail in the midst of it.

Now Mary could have easily thought this is all just going to be too hard. *'How is Joseph ever going to believe this? I'm gonna be cast aside and die as an old spinster woman.'*

When she was confronted with this news she wondered, *'How can this be, since I do not know a man?'* (Luke 1:34). This news would have been troubling to her. But she received this word of the Lord believing that nothing is too hard for the Lord God to handle.

**Luke 1:37–38**, *"For with God nothing will be impossible."*<sup>38</sup> *Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her."*

With that kind of response, I get the idea that Mary was ready to say, *'Whatever you want to do God will be fine with me.'* When you recognize that with God nothing will be impossible, then you don't need to fret or fear the 'what if's'. You don't have to worry about what people are going to say, or how Joseph will respond, or how this is all going to work out. When you realize that we serve the God of the impossible, then what do you have to be worried about? Does your situation need more help than parting the Red Sea? Does your trial require a greater miracle than bringing down the walls of Jericho? If God can raise the dead, then surely He can help in your various need.

This is the faith that Joseph and Mary moved forward in and they got to be a part of one of the most incredible works of God.

Now like I said, Mary may have been really wondering how Joseph will respond, what will he say. But notice how the Lord is already working in Joseph's heart. Joseph has been pondering these things, thinking about it all. That's always a good thing to do. Don't be rash but wait on the Lord. And as he does, the Lord speaks to him through an angel...

**1:20-21 - *But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”***

An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph in a dream. This is not **the** angel of the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament we’ve had appearances of the angel of the Lord who was the preincarnate Jesus Christ. But now Jesus is ready to be born, and the appearances of the angel of the Lord will cease. So, this is **an** angel.

This angel confirms everything to Joseph that this is indeed a child conceived of the Holy Spirit. And this angel confirms that Joseph is an heir of David and that Jesus, through adoption will be a rightful heir to the royal throne of David.

And Joseph thankfully doesn’t have to go through long lists of baby names. He doesn’t have to squabble with Mary over which name they like best. His name is already determined – it’s Jesus. And His name comes with a mission, **He will save His people from their sins.**

- “So here, at the annunciation of Jesus’ birth, we are brought face to face with the central theme of the Gospel. God, who has been at work on his people since the times of Abraham, has come among them in person. And he has come for the specific purpose of rescuing them from the mess they have got themselves into. Christianity is not good advice about morals. It is good news about God and what he has done for us.” <sup>1</sup>

Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Jeshua* or *Joshua*. It means simply, “Jehovah [Yahweh] is salvation.”

- **Psalm 130:7–8**, *“O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. <sup>8</sup> And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.”*

Jesus is our only hope! Jesus is the one who saves us. We cannot do it ourselves.

The first time we see the name Joshua in Scripture is Moses’ servant Joshua. Moses is the guy that Jews really look up to. He’s the one the law was given to. But the problem is people put so much emphasis on the law as though if I just do these things, then I’ll be saved. But notice, Moses’ wasn’t able to enter into the

<sup>1</sup> Green, M. (2001). *The message of Matthew: the kingdom of heaven* (p. 60). InterVarsity Press.

Promised Land. The law does not aid us in leading us into the blessed life. It can bring us so far, but we need something greater. It was Joshua that brought them into the Promised Land.

- **John 1:17**, *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

The idea is that Jesus leads us into the fullness of life. A life of forgiveness, grace, and victory.

- This is why the virgin birth is such a big deal. It shows us that salvation cannot just be a product of man. It takes God to supernaturally do what man cannot naturally do. And Jesus' birth, which is really a turning point in all of history, reveals the means of salvation.
- Another similar account happened in Scripture with the birth of Isaac. Abraham was promised that out of his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. The problem was that God waited for Abraham and Sarah to get very old; well pass the child bearing years. Abraham thought he needed to help God out a bit, so he has a child with Hagar – Ishmael. This was not the plan of God and it caused a lot of headaches for Abraham and Sarah.
- God waited until Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100 years old before this child came. In other words, this child (Isaac) was miraculously born too. The beginning of the line that would eventually produce the Messiah came about by a work of the Lord. A reminder that salvation comes through Jesus alone.

We see God confirming this word in a number of ways. Through history (genealogy), through dreams (5 times in the first 2 chapters of Matthew God speaks to people through dreams), through angels, through Scripture (over and over again in Matthew we see the term, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken...*

But lastly, we also see God speaking to us through His Son which has been given to us to reveal God – Immanuel God with us.

**1:22-23 - *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."***

Here's this key phrase used in Matthew – ***that it might be fulfilled***. Matthew repeats this over and over to show clearly that Jesus fulfills all that the Old Testament Scriptures prophesied of the Messiah.

- There are over 300 prophecies of Jesus in the Bible. The majority of them were fulfilled at the time of His ascension.
- Professor Peter W. Stoner who authored "Science Speaks" stated that the probability of just eight particular prophecies being fulfilled in one person is 1 in  $10^{17}$  power (i.e. 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000). The eight prophecies used in the calculation were:
  1. Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; fulfilled in Matt. 2:1-7; John 7:42; Luke 2:47).
  2. Messiah is to be preceded by a Messenger (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; fulfilled in Matthew 3:1-3; 11:10; John 1:23; Luke 1:17).
  3. Messiah is to enter Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; fulfilled in Luke 35-37; Matthew 21:6-11).
  4. Messiah is to be betrayed by a friend (Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14; fulfilled in Matthew 10:4; 26:49-50; John 13:21).
  5. Messiah is to be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; fulfilled in Matthew 26:15; 27:3).
  6. The money for which Messiah is sold is to be thrown "to the potter" in God's house (Zechariah 11:13; fulfilled in Matthew 27:5-7).
  7. Messiah is to be silent before His accusers (Isaiah 53:7; fulfilled in Matthew 27:12).
  8. Messiah is to be executed by crucifixion as a thief (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53:5, 12; fulfilled in Luke 23:33; John 20:25; Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27,28).
- This statement was validated by the American Scientific Affiliation

The Scripture being fulfilled is from Isaiah 7:14. It was a prophecy made during the reign of king Ahaz, one of Judah's worst kings. It's a dark period in Israel's history, but it's at that time that one of the most wonderful prophecies would be given and it would all point to the hope of all nations – the Promised One, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And it's at a particular dark time for the Jews that Jesus comes into the world. There's been no prophetic voice speaking for God for almost 400 years. People are wondering if God is done with them. The Romans were wielding their power and making life hard for the Jews. But it's at this time, in the midst of difficulty and

darkness that light shines through – the Immanuel has come. The people can experience God with them!

- Those are 3 of the most beautiful words – **God with us**. God is love is pretty amazing too, but God could have loved us from a distance. He didn't need to come and reveal Himself in this way. But God chose to be with us, to show us the way, and not just show us the way, but be the way!
- The incarnation is so amazing because God was willing to come to us and make Himself like us.
- Again, the virgin birth is of utmost importance because it's through the virgin birth that we understand Jesus came in complete divinity. He was fully God, sinless and perfect. Yet He was born of a woman, He took on humanity. He never ceased being God and never ceased being man. It's a great marvel and mystery. He added humanity to His deity.
- Being fully God He could walk on water, calm the storms, raise the dead. But being fully human He experienced hunger, pain, sorrow. He was tempted. He can sympathize with us in our weakness, but being God He can help us to be overcomers.
- He is God with us, our help and fortress.

**1:24-25 - *Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, <sup>25</sup> and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.***

Joseph comes out of his sleep and moves in obedience and faith. He may not know how this is all going to play out, but he's heard from the Lord and that's enough. He took Mary as his wife.

He still will have to live with people doubting their own purity, and upholding of the law. He'll still hear the accusations, but Joseph is like the unsung hero of the Christmas story. He takes Mary as his wife, simply because it was the Lord's command. Again, the joy of being a part of what God is doing is going to be far worth whatever persecution he may have to endure.

We're told that Joseph ***did not know*** Mary until after Jesus was born. This is a Hebrew euphemism for sexual intimacy. In other words, Joseph went through a few cold showers in his day, but the day did come when Mary and he were no longer virgins. There's a common teaching, especially within the Roman Catholic church, that says Mary remained as a perpetual virgin. A simple reading of God's Word would say otherwise.

Matthew 13:55-56 tells us Jesus had at least 4 half-brothers and 2 half-sisters, which shoots down this false Roman Catholic doctrine.

“What a wonderful list of names we have for Jesus! The Bible is full of them. He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, the Ancient of Days. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Anointed One, the Messiah. He is our Prophet, Priest, and King. He is our Savior, the Only Wise God. He is our Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He is the Lord, the Almighty. He is the Door of the sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. He is the Lamb Slain from before the foundation of the world. He is the Logos, the Light, the Light of the World, the Light of Life, the Tree of Life, the Word of Life, the Bread that came down from heaven, the Spring which, if a person drink of it, he will never thirst again. He is the Way and the Truth and the Life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is our Rock, our Bridegroom, our Beloved, and our Redeemer. He is the Head over all things, which is his body, the church. But above all, he is “God with us,” Immanuel, and he came from heaven to earth to save us from our sins.”<sup>4 2</sup>

#### Application Points:

1. Why Mary? Was she special? We don't know much about her character, who she was, we just know she was given great grace to carry the Son of God. It's not that she was more deserving than another, she was just shown grace. It's the same for all of us. None of us are worthy to be saved and forgiven, but this is the great grace of God.
2. Have you relied solely on Jesus as your salvation. Have you opened your heart to Him and seen that you can do nothing to better yourself before God. We need Jesus. He has come to save His people from their sins.
3. Perhaps you're going through adversity and hardship at this present time. Sometimes the Lord will allow that because He's birthing something great out of it. Keep trusting Him and living for Him, and see what He will do. He's God with us, He'll not forsake us, He'll see you through!

<sup>4</sup> Parts of this chapter are taken from James Montgomery Boice, *The Christ of Christmas* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 27, 33–38; and *The King Has Come* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1992), 55, 60–61.

<sup>2</sup> Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (pp. 27–28). Baker Books.