

He's the One!

Jesus Came to Save Us from Our Sins

Matthew 1:18-25

Doug Pabody

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name "Immanuel" (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25)

Who is Jesus and why did He come to earth? Our passage this morning clearly answers those most crucial of questions; questions that are a matter of eternal life and death. Last Sunday we looked at the human lineage of Jesus in the first 17 verses of Matthew 1. He is a descendant of Abraham and King David through Joseph, the legal human guardian of Jesus. Matthew now tells us something most extraordinary. Jesus not only descended from David, but from God Himself. This morning, we turn to the dramatic story of His divine "lineage."

A Crisis Pregnancy Discovered (v.18)

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit."

An explanation of Jewish marriage customs of the day would be helpful.

First, there was the betrothal period, called the Kadusha. The parents of a young man would choose a young woman to be engaged to their son. The young man was typically around 18 years old, but it was not uncommon for the young woman to be pledged in marriage by age 13. A binding contract was drawn up between the families that could only be broken by a formal divorce. The betrothed are referred to as "husband" and "wife," but they do not yet live together. There are no sexual relations yet. Sexual unfaithfulness during the betrothal period was considered adultery.

The mohar or bride price is paid by the groom to the bride's father. The money helped pay for the wedding festivities which could last a week. It was also a form of insurance in case the groom died or decided to divorce the bride.

Then, after a period between 6 months and a year, there was the wedding ceremony, called the Chuppa. The groom leads his friends in procession to the house of the bride. The bride and bridesmaids then follow the procession back to the groom's house where the wedding supper is held. In a specially prepared chamber, the couple consummates the marriage union.

It was during the betrothal period, before Joseph and Mary had had sexual relations, that Joseph discovered that his beloved Mary was pregnant. Matthew tells us right away that Mary had not cheated on Joseph. This was the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God. Just as Father, Son, and Spirit had been active in the **creation** of the world, they are now active in presenting the **Savior** of the world. But Joseph does not yet understand what we know. He naturally comes to the devastating conclusion that Mary is not the woman he thought she was and that she has been unfaithful.

A Husband's Heart Revealed (v.19)

"And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly."

I wonder why God didn't tell Joseph ahead of time what was going on. It would have saved him a lot of pain and turmoil. But isn't that how God usually works? We learned in the Job series to not focus on the "why" question in our trials, but remember the WHO! The pain of betrayal (or what he thought was betrayal) revealed the kind of man Joseph really was.

"How could I have been so wrong about Mary," Joseph wondered. "She is the last person I would have suspected of such treachery!" And imagine if Mary then offers as her defense that **GOD** did a miraculous work within her, he would have thought she had blasphemed on top of her immorality.

But the pain uncovers a heart of mercy. The Bible says he was unwilling to put her to shame. He would not disgrace her through a public divorce so determined to handle the matter privately and quietly. In last week's message, Pastor Mark mentioned Tamar who was also in a "crisis pregnancy." When her father-in-law, Judah, heard that Tamar was pregnant out of wedlock, he cried, "Bring her out and let her be burned (Genesis 38:24)." Crisis doesn't make a person, it reveals a person. When you drop a tea bag in boiling hot water, it brings out of the tea bag only what was in the tea bag to begin with.

Let me ask you, beloved: what is squeezed out of your heart when you believe you have been betrayed? Do you respond more like Joseph or Judah? Do you act in meekness toward those who have shamed you? Do you give them the benefit of the doubt and think as well of them as possible, believing it may be better than what it appears to be? Do you hurry to expose them

publicly, or mercifully cover their shame as you are able? In any event, do you acknowledge that God is somehow working it together for good?

The Angel's Explanation Given (v.20)

"But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'"

God directly communicates with Joseph through an angelic messenger. God had used both angels (Gen.16:7-14; 22:11-18; Exod. 3:2) and dreams (Gen.20:3; 31:10-11; Num.12:6; I Ki.3:5; Job 33:14-16) to communicate before.

The angel of the Lord reminds Joseph of his identity (son of David), addresses his fear (to take Mary as his wife), and reveals the work of God behind the scenes (that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit). The Scriptures do EXACTLY the same thing in your life. They remind you of your identity in Christ (who you are and WHOSE you are), speak to your fears, and show you the hand of our God at work in the midst of life's pain.

God reveals to Joseph what he needs to know and when he needs to know it. While God never owes us an explanation, He has always revealed to His people what is necessary to know and accomplish His will. It is certainly true today. The Holy Spirit of God takes the God-breathed word of God, to reveal to the child of God, the good and perfect will of God, accomplished always in the power of God, and all for the glory of God.

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be conceived this way? It was the only way for Jesus to fully partake of our human nature, and yet escape the corruption, pollution, depravity, and ruin of sin. Jesus Christ, conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit, is fully God and fully man. As Paul said to the Galatians, "...when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." How is a sinful person justified, declared righteous, by the Holy One? Only through One who can mediate between God and man; the God-man, Christ Jesus the Lord!

Jesus' Mission Announced (v.21)

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

The name "Jesus" is significant. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. In the long form, Yehoshua, it means "Yahweh is salvation." In the short form, Yeshua, it means "Yahweh saves." There are two Joshuas in the Old Testament who are used as types of Christ in the New Testament. The first is the Joshua who succeeds Moses and leads the people of God into the Promised Land (Hebrews 3, 4). The second is Joshua the High Priest, contemporary of Zerubbabel, who rebuilds the temple (Ezra 2:2; 3:2-9; Neh. 7:7; Zech. 6:11-13). Mary's

"Joshua" (our Jesus) is the greatest of all! He will bring the salvation promised by God (Yahweh is God's covenant name) throughout the Old Testament.

But from WHAT will He save His people?

The Jews waited for centuries for their Messiah to come and save them from their enemies, to restore their economic prosperity, their political sovereignty, and their military supremacy. They longed for Messiah to cleanse their land of defilement and reign in righteousness and restore justice.

There was no expectation that Messiah, who would sit on David's throne, would give his own life as a ransom. After all, kings take the lives of their enemies, not redeem them! And even more shocking and scandalous, this king would redeem his sinful people by hanging naked and mutilated on a Roman cross! It was more than a Jewish mind could bear! What would require such a sacrifice of God's Son in human flesh? Our sin!

The burden of my heart is that you understand that Jesus came to save us from our sins! People want to be saved from many things: poverty, disease, divorce, pain, shame, failure, death. And they want God to save them. But many, even in good churches, do not understand that their greatest need is to be saved from sin.

Every person descended from Adam and Eve is born into this world S.I.N. positive. The condition is terminal 100% of the time. Death is the certain outcome and there is no cure apart from salvation in Christ.

But I have discovered that people want to be saved from the consequences of their sin, but not from their sins. They want to be saved IN their sins, but not FROM their sins. Christ purchased for His people freedom; not freedom TO sin, but freedom FROM sin.

Let me illustrate. When I was around 8 years old, I was swimming in Lake Chautauqua in western New York State. I suddenly realized that I had drifted too far from the dock and I could no longer touch bottom. I panicked and was soon too exhausted to swim back. I called out to my Aunt Sally, an excellent swimmer, and she saved me. How did she do it! She didn't leave me in the lake with a snorkel or scuba gear. Saving me was more than helping me to breathe a while longer in the lake; it was getting me out of the lake. I didn't just want to be saved IN the lake; I wanted to be saved FROM the lake. I wanted to be "sanctified," so to speak; set apart from the lake and to where my family was enjoying lunch on the beach. Many people want a spiritual snorkel to be saved from drowning in their sin, but they want to stay in the "lake;" they want to continue in sin.

That is not the message of the Gospel, Beloved! First, Christ saves us from the guilt of sin by the merit of His death. But second, Christ saves us from the power and dominion of our sins by the merit of His resurrection. Many people only want the first half of the Gospel; salvation from the penalty of sin but not from the power of sin. Don't say you are saved from drowning if you

are lying in the bottom of the lake. And do not say you are saved from sin and still be lying in your sins unchanged.

In essence, we need to be saved from ourselves. The Jews thought Messiah would come to save from enemies without. Jesus came to save us from our greatest threat; our sin within. Sin is basically saying that I want to be my own king, live life as I see fit, and not bow to God's righteous rule. Even though Joseph was a just man, he was still a sinner who needed to trust Christ to save him from his sin. Some of you are living lives full of notorious sin. You have dishonored God and hurt many people. You are sucking lake water by the gallon. Christ came to save you from your sins! Then there are others who may be respectable, admired, generous, and loved by many. But you are still a sinner who needs to be saved. All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way (and away from God). And our way is ALWAYS the way of death. But the Lord has laid on Christ our sin that we might be saved from it!

Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled (v.22)

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:"

Salvation was the plan of God before the foundations of the world were laid. Jesus offered Himself for our sins before people were ever on the earth. All of the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ. The birth of Christ fulfilled a prophecy given through the prophet Isaiah 700 years before Christ was born!

Notice the phrase, "what the Lord had spoken by the prophet." That phrase gives a clear definition for the inspiration of the Bible. It is the Word of God revealed through human instruments, in this case the prophet Isaiah. God used the individual personalities, vocabularies, writing styles, and experiences of human authors to reveal HIS Word. The Word of God is completely trustworthy, is authoritative, and has power to change you when you believe and obey it.

Beloved, the coming of Christ into the world was not an afterthought. The truths and events of the New Testament are fulfillments of what God had spoken of through the many centuries of OT history, even though that revelation was "veiled," even to those who recorded God's words. Just do not miss this point. ALL of the Old Testament points to Jesus Christ. As Pastor Cory Johnson spoke at Kids' Church about Jesus after His resurrection, Jesus said to His disciples, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

Later he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be

fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead..."

God's Heart Revealed (v.23)

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."

This sign was given to Ahaz, King of Judah, seven centuries before Christ was born. Ahaz was in serious trouble. An alliance was formed against him from two other kings. Isaiah the prophet admonished Ahaz to trust God for deliverance and to ask God for a sign. Sadly, Ahaz ignored the word of the Lord through the prophet and ignored the sign. He didn't need God's help, he thought. He formed his own alliance with a pagan king but to his own destruction. The warning to Ahaz is the same warning to people today. Don't put your trust in yourself. Only God can save you from sin and judgment. Salvation is not a do-it-yourself work. It is so big a job that God came all the way from Heaven to accomplish it. He did not send a representative. He came Himself. Jesus Christ is Immanuel, "God with us!"

See the heart of God revealed in saving us from our sins. It was not enough to save us from the penalty of our sins and the power of our sins. God came to save us from the presence of our sins one day. From the creation, man and woman were created to live in the presence of God. God made us to be with Him. Even after the fall, God gave the Tabernacle and Temple that His people might be in the presence of God, even if it was just the High priest on the Day of Atonement. The heart of God has always longed for His people to enter the perfect love and unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit. He wants to be with us! He wants us to be with Him!

Remember the near-drowning story? My Aunt Sally did not just give scuba gear to keep me breathing, or take me to an off-shore platform where I was free from the lake's strong currents. She put herself between me and death and carried me to another place entirely: a place of safety, of family, of refreshment, of rest, and of love. And that is God's longing for His people. That is the gospel of salvation. In the Book of Revelation, the Apostle describes what it will be like to live with God, free from the presence of sin: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'"

As Matthew Henry said, "in nature, we see God as God above us; in the Law, we see God as God against us; but in the gospel, we see God as Immanuel, God WITH us," now and forever!

A Saved Life Demonstrated (vv.24-25)

"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus."

Joseph is a great example of what a saved life looks like. It is not a perfect life. Freedom from the power of sin is a life-long process of growth and change. Repentance is a lifestyle. We must confess and turn from sin daily as we grow in Christ-likeness. But the saved life, while not perfect this side of heaven, will always be marked by two things we see in Joseph's life: **TRUST AND OBEDIENCE**. Joseph must have believed what the Lord said about Jesus because he immediately obeyed the command of the Lord. That's the Christian life in a nutshell: believing the word of the lord and obeying it in the power of the Holy Spirit. I surrender the throne of my heart to the One who alone is worthy to reign and rule there, King Jesus. Sin says, "Not Thy will, but MINE be done." The saved person cries, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

And while Joseph felt relief and joy to know the truth about Mary and the baby within her, he now had the opportunity, as a believer in Jesus Christ, to suffer for his name. Joseph in taking Mary as his wife would now take on her shame. People will soon figure out that the baby was conceived during the betrothal period. Joseph's reputation would be tarnished, even though God knew he was righteous. He would himself be a picture of Jesus, taking on the accusation of sin, though innocent of the charge. He would be a living illustration of what Jesus would do for us in saving us from our sins. You see, a counterfeit believer falls away when asked to suffer for Christ. A genuine believer rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer for His name.

APPLICATION

Jesus came to save His people from their sins. Do you long to be saved from the penalty, the power, and, one day, the presence of your sins? Seek the Lord while he may be found. Repent from your sins and put your trust in Christ alone to save you. Come to the front and there will be people here to lovingly and gently point you to Christ.

Believer, is your life marked by a robust belief in Christ through obedience to His word? Are you growing in His likeness? Are you a faithful ambassador of King Jesus? Is there a relationship or situation where you have been ashamed to suffer for His name? Come to Him this morning. Repent of your self-serving, self-promoting, self-justifying ways. Rejoice anew that Jesus has come to save you from your sins!

© College Park Church

Permissions: You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce this material in any format provided that you do not alter the content in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. Please include the following statement on any distributed copy: by Doug Pabody. © College Park Church - Indianapolis, Indiana. www.yourchurch.com