

## Matthew 1:18-25 ▪ Born to Save

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Advent; Jesus' Virgin Birth; Miracles

A meditation on the birth of Jesus shows us it is a miraculous and merciful event

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Intro: Tozer said that what comes to mind when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The same can be said about the word "Christmas". What comes to mind when we hear that word says something very important about us.

- For some, Christmas is part of American culture and tradition. Trees, decorations, gifts, family. Endless Christmas movies and music, ugly sweaters, awkward Christmas pictures.
- Others hear the word Christmas and the manger scene, carols, the first chapters of the Gospels are what comes to mind.

Andreas Kostenberger in *The First Days of Jesus*:

"If Jesus were to be completely removed from the equation, Americans could continue to celebrate Christmas without hardly any interruption."

- › I want to ask: Is that accurate for you? If Jesus was removed from Christmas could you celebrate without interruption? Would removing Christ from Christmas change anything about this time of the year? Or could things go on with hardly any interruption?

*In other words, how Christ-centered is your Christmas?*

- As we go through this passage, we will see that if we take Christ out of Christmas we remove two critical things: the miraculous and God's mercy.

The birth of Jesus is a *miraculous* act (18-20)

- Now to be more precise, these verses are not the actual birth story; it's the announcement of Jesus's birth.
- When Joseph finds out, Mary would have been about 4 months along.

**Nature: Virgin Birth**

- The virgin birth is central to the Christian faith. Historically if you grew up in a tradition that cited Apostle's Creed...Jesus was "conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary".
- A person can't be a Christian and deny the Virgin Birth; doing so means you deny the person of Christ.

- The previous 17 verses are a genealogy; it gives the record of Jesus's *earthly* origin.
- The Virgin Birth shows us the *heavenly* origin of Christ.

The NT affirms both—

**Romans 1:3–4 ESV**

“concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,”

The virginal conception shows us that One person can hold two natures.

I wonder if the average confessing Christians were asked how many natures Jesus has, how many correctly can answer. We live in such a “practical” age, where some wonder what it really matters.

It matters! The great aim of being a Christian is worship. We can't worship one we don't know.

- From Mt 1:18-2:23 (birth and infancy story) is built on five OT texts.
- OT ref #1

**Isaiah 7:14 ESV**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Now if you own Either a RSV or NRSV Bible, Is 7:14 reads a bit different.

English Bible Family Tree:

KJV grandfather

Tyndale: great grandfather of English translations (1535)

RSV is parent of ESV and NRSV. ESV is the conservative brother; NRSV is the progressive sister.

**Isaiah 7:14 NRSV**

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

- Now a young woman having a child is nothing out of the ordinary. There were a lot of teen Jewish mothers; women married very young—Mary probably included.
- But a virginal conception...that only happens by a miracle.

- › The virgin birth not only informs us of the nature of Jesus—it also opens our eyes to see the God of the miraculous.
- › Mary is told that very thing in Luke.

**Luke 1:37 ESV**

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”

Apply: In addition to teaching us about the very nature of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth also reminds us that *nothing is impossible with God*.

John Frame gives us 5 doctrines the virgin birth informs us.

(quoted from Kostenberger *First Days of Jesus*)

1. Scripture—if it errs here how can we trust anything else it says?
2. Divinity of Christ—This is how God enters the world.
3. Humanity of Christ—God becomes one of us; takes on real humanity, real flesh.
4. Sinlessness of Christ—Jesus is not born “in Adam” so he can become a new head of a new humanity.
5. Grace: Here we see God’s willingness to intervene with his saving grace. The grace is found in the name *Immanuel*—God with us. Grace is not an abstract idea; God’s grace comes to us in a person.

The birth of Jesus is a *merciful* event (21-25)

- It’s worth our time to look at Joseph a bit. When he found out Mary was pregnant, he faced a huge dilemma.
- First, by all appearances it would look like Mary was unfaithful already before they tied the knot.

Betrothal:

We need to push aside all our ideas of modern dating, since a Jewish betrothal looked nothing like it.

- For starters, the groom’s parents typically picked the bride.
- Betrothal was a contract that could only be broken by death or a divorce (the man was already considered a husband—even though the woman would still remain in her father’s house; and they would remain sexually pure)

We see Joseph as the ideal godly man

- Just/righteous (v19) = law-abiding. This plays a huge factor in his thinking.

- It meant the Joseph will wrestle with his moral dilemmas *through the lens of scripture*.

*We get several marks of a righteous, godly man*

1. Godly men keep the balance of justice and mercy (v19). Joseph planned to seek a quiet divorce not to *shame* Mary .

- This meant that he would sign the papers, but not have her brought publicly to trial for adultery.

Joseph had a few options

1) Bring her to trial and possibly have her put to death; shame her and her family—act with the full force of the law.

2) Act out of mercy; spare her life and shame.

Apply: Men, which would you choose? Godly men hold the balance between justice and mercy.

2. Godly men offer swift obedience (v24).

- God sometimes has a way of quickly changing our plans, doesn't he? That's the case with Joseph.
- After Joseph is given a command by the Angel of the Lord, he obeys.

When we were raising our little kids we given the advice: treat delayed obedience as disobedience.

In other words, don't use the threat: "I'll count to 10, or don't make me raise my voice"

In Joseph, we don't see a man with delayed obedience, but swift obedience. He's mature in his faith.

3. Godly Men maintain purity.

- Even though the betrothal period lasted up to a year, it was expected that the couple maintain their sexual purity.
- Because of his own purity, Joseph does not have to ask the question: is the baby mine?

Apply: He is an example of how godly men need treat women, even think about women.

Joseph—A righteous man who seeks to cover the shame of his bride; offers complete obedience and maintains his purity. It seems like not just a good example, but a foreshadowing of what his adopted Son's life would look like.

- Now we get a genealogy that Bible readers can be tempted to skip over (1-17)

- Its main purpose is to trace Joseph’s line to show how Jesus as his adopted son was still a legal heir to the Kingly line.
- But Matthew’s genealogy also goes out of the way in a few places to show Israel’s checkered past.

—Several illicit relationships are mentioned: Judah & Tamar (v3), David and “the wife of Uriah”. (v16)

Apply: One thing I’ve discovered about church people in general is that some end up with very checkered pasts.

Not all church people are the Joseph type. Many are covered in shame of their sin—some try to ignore it, hide it.

For some this is far from the “Most Wonderful Time of the Year”.

For some this is a painful time—your life is broken; you are keenly aware that it’s tied to your sin, your bad choices.

### › The birth of Jesus is a merciful event

#### **Matthew 1:21 ESV**

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

We use the word “save” in a variety of ways. The child was saved from the burning building. My friend’s advice saved me a lot of money.

Jews wanted to be saved politically—from a Roman rule. So you would think after a Jewish Royal genealogy you would get that type of savior.

### › Yet the Gospel tells us that our greatest deliverance needs to be from sins.

Jesus was born for this; it’s his mission.

#### **John 3:17 ESV**

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

This salvation is *multifaceted*:

—Saved from eternal consequences of sin

—Saved from guilt and shame of sin

—Saved from the presence and power of sin

J.C. Ryle - “Happy is that person who trusts not merely in vague notions of God’s mercy and goodness, but in Jesus.”

Apply: Take Jesus out of the Christmas story—all we are left with is happy holidays.

*We lose a God who is merciful to sinners.*

Conclusion:

We get a great lesson from Jesus’s great ancestor, King David.

Back in the genealogy, an illicit relationship is mentioned (1:6)—almost a side, passing comment

David’s Son, King Solomon was born from the wife of Uriah.

David was a wife-stealer, and a life-stealer. He abused his power. Let his passions get ahead of him.

Where does he go?

Where does he run?

To mercy.

**Psalm 51:1–2 ESV**

Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your steadfast love;

according to your abundant mercy

blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

and cleanse me from my sin!

There is a final picture—tied to our Advent theme of today: Joy

**Psalm 51:12 ESV**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Mercy leads to joy.

Let's close with two calls of faith.

1. Run to and receive mercy. If you've never experienced the joy that comes from having Jesus's saving grace, run to him today.

› **The only way to have true and lasting joy is to run first to mercy.**

2. Remember and renew. For those who have had Christ for years—remember his mercy; renew your joy in him once again.