

Matthew 1:18-25
Jesus: The God Who Was Born

Scripture Focus

Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verse

Matthew 1:23

TDM Competency

Live Biblically: Understand and apply biblical principles to all areas of life.

Overview

Viewing the conception and birth of Christ from Joseph's perspective is a unique way to look at this text. However, the text requires that we see these events through the eyes of Joseph. He was the first man to confess with His mouth, "Jesus." Joseph knew that naming this child Jesus was more than a name, but rather a statement of faith that this Jesus was indeed the Savior sent by God to bear God's wrath in the place of man. Joseph forsook his reputation that he had spent a lifetime building in order to obey God and confess Christ as the God who was born and the God who saves.

Theme

Jesus came to save us from the penalty of our sin, the wrath of God. We are to respond to Him in humble faith regardless of personal suffering that comes as a result of such a response.

Desired Learner Response [Aiming at the Heart for Life Transformation]

To understand that Jesus is the Son of God. To learn why the virgin conception is an essential doctrine in Christianity. To respond to Christ in faith without any regard for their lives.

Note to Teachers: This lesson is included near the conclusion of this Jesus series in order to give perspective to your students. The Jesus they have studied for the past several months is the God who was born. Such a revelation is astounding and should invoke the highest praise within the believers in your class.

Outline

- I. A Righteous Reaction (vv. 18-19)**
- II. A Recognition of Revelation (vv. 20-23)**
- III. A Receptive Response (vv. 24-25)**

Lesson

I. A Righteous Reaction (vv.18-19)

v. 18

"Now" - After demonstrating that Jesus had the proper lineage to be the Messiah, Matthew records the story of Jesus' birth. The most incredible story ever told is that God was born. More than a fulfillment of a family tree, Jesus' lineage demonstrated that He was the fulfillment of the promise of a Savior God had given to the prophets. The Jews all looked for the coming Messiah. They anticipated the

coming of One who would deliver them from bondage. In most of their views, the bondage was not that of sin, but rather of military and political bondage. The average Jew in the first century would have looked for a savior who would deliver them out of a weak and unimposing status and into a strong and politically powerful status.

“after...before” – The practice of engaged couples in Judaism was that the engagement was a legally binding relationship. In most cultures today, marriage is not legally binding until there is public declaration and private consummation of the relationship. During the engagement period of Jewish couples, although they were legally connected, they abstained from sexual relations and from dwelling in the same house for one year. Matthew records the period of time between the engagement and the intimate union of Joseph and Mary in marriage. This period is emphasized to negate any idea that Jesus was a product of Joseph and Mary.

“found with child” – Mary’s pregnancy had become obvious. It was becoming physically evident that she was pregnant. Man’s perspective of Mary was that she was pregnant the only way a woman in the first century could have been pregnant, namely by intimate relations with a man. But Mary’s pregnancy was not normal, it was supernatural.

“Holy Spirit” - That Mary was His mother reveals that Jesus was fully human. That He was conceived by the intervention of the Holy Spirit reveals that He was also fully God. Jesus was not half man and half God. The Holy Spirit’s work in the conception of Christ is an essential doctrine in Christianity. Jesus, through the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit, was perfectly sinless man. To deny the Virgin Birth is to:

- a) Reject the authority of Scripture because the virgin birth is clearly presented in the Old Testament and New Testament. Once you undermine the authority of Scripture you have no place on which to stand for the assertion of any other doctrine essential to our faith. If part of the Scripture is wrong, then all of the Scripture is suspect at best.
- b) Deny the supernatural birth of Christ because the New Testament presents the birth of Christ as a miraculous event.
- c) Undermine the foundation of the gospel because our salvation depends on Jesus being fully God and fully man. Only God can forgive sins, and only sinless not guilty man can take guilty man’s place on the cross in a substitutionary death.
- d) Have no way of explaining the deity of Christ. Without the Holy Spirit intervening in Mary’s womb, Jesus would have been merely a man.

The virgin conception of Jesus is an essential doctrine to our faith. One cannot have a biblical view of the gospel and salvation without a biblical view of the virgin conception.

v. 19

“Husband”: Joseph thought he had certainly been betrayed. The classification of “husband” indicates that in Joseph’s mind and in the eyes of the law, Mary had made a solemn vow to Joseph.

“just” – Joseph had a reputation of being a man that honored the Lord. Such is stated regarding Joseph to demonstrate that Joseph was willing to sacrifice his reputation (the most valuable treasure for a Jewish man in the first century) in order to obey the Lord.

“not wanting” – This statement is quite amazing. Joseph had every legal right to divorce Mary from the perceived unfaithfulness on her part. But Joseph did not want to divorce her and make a public mockery of her. He had the legal right to do it, but his desire was to honor the Lord and protect

Mary's reputation, even though from his vantage point his reputation was ruined. Some of the people would have accused Joseph of breaking his vow of abstaining from sex, while others would have mocked him for being engaged to a woman who cheated on him. Either way, Joseph was publically humiliated by the pregnancy of Mary. Even so, from his heart he demonstrated meekness (strength under control) and sought to both honor the Lord and care for Mary.

Ask: How would you have felt if you were Joseph?

Ask: What is the difference in how Joseph acted and how we often act when someone betrays us?

Ask: What is the last reaction you had that misrepresented Christ? Do you need to seek reconciliation with someone due to that reaction?

II. A Recognition of Revelation (vv.20-23)

v. 20

"Son of David" served as a reminder to Joseph and to every reader of Matthew's Gospel that Joseph was in the line through which God promised David a Savior would come. Joseph, although not Jesus' natural father, was his legal father, so in the line of David stood Joseph, thus fulfilling the prophecy that through David's family line would be a kingdom that knew no end.

"afraid" – Joseph had every reason to fear. The penalty of marital unfaithfulness was stoning. In the eyes of their community, Joseph and Mary would have been admitting to breaking their engagement period vow if they were married. It would appear to their community that they had been sexually intimate with each other if they continued in their relationship and were married. So the angel addresses Joseph's concerns by saying, "do not be afraid."

"Adultery has always been considered a crime of a very heinous nature. In Egypt, it was punished by cutting off the nose of the adulteress; in Persia, the nose and ears were cut off; in Judea, the punishment was death by stoning, Lev 20:10; Ezek 16:38,40; John 8:5. This punishment was also inflicted where the person was not married, but betrothed, Deut. 21:23-24 . In this case, therefore, the regular punishment would have been death in this painful and ignominious manner. Yet Joseph was a religious man-mild and tender; and he was not willing to complain of her to the magistrate, and expose her to death, but sought to avoid the shame, and to put her away privately." (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

The angel also told Joseph why he need not fear. The child in Mary was not through an adulterous rendezvous of Mary in the night or through any other circumstances that Joseph would have ever considered. The child conceived in Mary was not the result of sin, but rather the result of the supernatural work of a Holy God. The child in Mary was God.

"Of the Holy Spirit" is more than a statement communicating the means by which Christ was conceived, but also a theological assertion that Jesus was of the same nature as the Holy Spirit. The child in Mary's womb was the God-man.

v. 21

"Jesus" is a name that means the Lord saves. Many little boys were named Jesus in the first-century Jewish culture. It was a name as common then as John is today. Prior to the virgin conception of

Christ, parents named boys Jesus in order to say, “We believe there is coming a day when the Lord will send a Savior.” Jesus was the first and only boy named Jesus who fulfilled the promise of God for a Savior. He was not to be named Jesus as the hope of a future fulfillment of prophecy, but rather He was to be named Jesus as the actual One who alone could fulfill the prophecy to save.

“save” – The reason for God coming as the God-man was to save. At the moment of conception all people possess a sin nature (Ps. 51:5). Since mankind is sinful to the core, all men commit sinful acts motivated by sinful desires. Jesus was the only person born without a sinful nature; therefore, He committed no sinful acts and had no sinful motives. He came not to be saved for He had nothing from which to be saved. He healed, taught, preached, etc., but He came as the Savior to save man. Jesus came to save people from the wrath of God, which is the just penalty of their sin. His birth pointed to His cross.

v. 22

“all this was done” – Notice that the specifics surrounding the conception of Jesus were clearly revealed to be an exact fulfillment of that which God had spoken through the prophets. Quoting Isaiah 7:14, Matthew reveals to his readers that God was fully in control, even though from Joseph and Mary’s perspective things were very stressful and overwhelming. Jesus fulfilled that which the prophets told.

“Matthew repeatedly uses the phrase might be fulfilled (2:15,17,23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54; etc.) to indicate ways in which Jesus, and events related to His earthly ministry, were fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy. The basic truths and happenings of the New Testament were culminations, completions, or fulfillments of revelation God had already made (from The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Copyright © Moody Press and John MacArthur, Jr., 1983-2007).

“virgin” can also mean young woman, but never means a young woman who is not also a virgin. The word is most often translated virgin even in secular Greek literature. The virgin conception includes the protection against any sin being transferred to Christ. He was the perfect Son of God and the perfect Son of Man.

“Immanuel” – Jesus is God and He is here with us! Up to this point in history the Jews viewed God as sovereign over all things, but also completely unapproachable. The incarnation, God becoming man, demonstrated that God did all that was necessary to remove the curse of sin upon every man, the curse that separates all men from God. Immanuel was not just a name celebrating His presence with man, but also the purpose of His presence, namely to be a man that He may be the perfect substitute for all men on the cross, thus suffering the wrath of God, which is the just penalty against man’s sin.

Ask: What is the difference between the community’s response to adultery in our day versus that of Joseph’s day? **Note** that sadly adultery has become common in our culture but is just as offensive to God today as in any other day. It is also much more readily looked over today than it was in the first century. Jews held a high view of marital faithfulness due to their belief that marriage was instituted by God and was a covenant between man and God.

Ask: Why was it so important for Joseph to follow the Word of God rather than even his own compassionate plans? **Note** that even our very best plans must be regulated, edited, dictated, corrected and determined by the Word of God.

III. A Receptive Response (vv. 24-25)

v. 24

“did” – By faith, Joseph did what God commanded through the angel. It is incredible to observe the faith of Joseph in this text. Without any regard for his reputation or standing in the eyes of the community, Joseph took Mary to be his wife. He would forever be the recipient of the false accusations of man. Never again would he be considered by the community as Joseph the man who was just.

Joseph, by faith, forfeited the high regard in which men held him so that he could be faithful to God who came to save Him from wrath. Verse 19 says, “was minded to put her away secretly.” The word “minded” asserts that Joseph was firmly convinced and determined that putting Mary away secretly was exactly the right course of action. Joseph’s will and mind were radically changed by the revelation of God. He went from determined within himself to put Mary away and not make a public spectacle of her to publically uniting with her in marriage and willingly receiving the scorn of men for doing so.

v. 25

“know her” – He kept Mary as a virgin until she gave birth to Jesus. Joseph did not know Mary intimately. All doubt as to the conception and nature of Jesus is removed in these verses. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was the perfect God-man.

“he called His name Jesus”: By calling the baby Jesus, Joseph gave a public affirmation of Jesus’ deity and purpose to save us from our sin. Joseph’s private conversion took place as he turned from his will and plans to God’s will and plans. Joseph put his faith in Jesus as his savior and demonstrated such faith by looking at a little baby and declaring “Jesus,” meaning the one God sent to save His people from their sins. Joseph was one of those people to whom Jesus came to save. Never before had a man looked at a baby, named Him Jesus, and been transformed by the power of the gospel.

Ask: What else did Joseph need to act in a way that was totally opposite of his original plan? **Note** that all he needed was a correcting word from God.

Ask: What do we often do when we hear the Word taught or read it rather than immediately obeying it?

Ask: Why is it important for believers to be immediate doers of the Word as we hear the Word? **Note** that such a response demonstrates complete trust in God and a selfless interest in our own lives.