

All age Christmas service

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[0 : 0 0] Matthew chapter 1 verse 18. This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

Because Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, 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. All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet.

The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took Mary home as his wife.

But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son, and he gave him the name Jesus. Thank you, James, very much for reading that Bible story to us.

[1 : 2 7] A true story all about the birth of Jesus Christ, and in particular about the two names that are given to Jesus at his birth.

Now, these two names are really important for us to understand who Jesus is, why he was born on earth, so I thought we'd spend a few minutes at thinking together about what these names mean.

Now, back then, at the time that Jesus was around, names were really important. Really important because they didn't just tell you what you were to call people, but they also told you a little bit about what the person was like.

Names told you about the person. They had meaning. And just for us to sort of get into the mood of understanding names, and what they mean, we're going to play a quick game and see how much you guys know about what names mean.

Now, I've asked three volunteers to come up. So that's Garth, if you come up here and sit, well, stand or sit in that left chair, and Matilda, and David.

[2 : 3 2] Let's just put you here. You might stand up, I think, and if you get tired, you can have a seat. Garth, you go there. Matilda, you stand in front of there. What I'm going to do is I'm going to suggest one of the meanings of their names.

And you have to guess which one it refers to. Does that make sense? Yeah, pretty easy. Okay. Now, the first meaning is this. One of these names means strength in battle.

Okay? So as you're looking here at Garth and Matilda and David, who do you think is really strong, someone who's reliable in battle? Just have a think for a moment.

Everyone made a choice? Okay. Hands up who thinks Garth means strength in battle. Garth, you're not very strong, obviously. Hands up who thinks Matilda is strength in battle.

Okay. About seven. And how much thinks David is strength in battle? Okay. It is Matilda.

[3 : 41] Very strong. Okay. Now, the second meaning is this. It is garden. Okay, that's right. Garden. Outside the back of your house.

So anyone, just Garth or David, particularly horticultural, green fingers, can make a decision. But perhaps, Matilda, you can sit down for the moment so we know you're out. Okay. So, garden.

Garth or David? Hands up for Garth. Okay. Hands up for David. Okay. You were right.

It is Garth. Well done, Garth. Have a seat. Your name means garden. Now, finally, well, we know it's David. Does anyone know what David means? Say again? Beloved.

Absolutely. Loved by God. Well done, you. Okay. Everyone, thanks very much, Garth. Thanks, Matilda. Thanks, David. Can you grab a seat? Great. That's just a simple game to think about names, think that they have meanings.

[4 : 36] I'm not sure if you noticed it when the passage was read out, but Jesus has given two names. So if you look up on the projector, you can see in verse 21, he's called Jesus.

I guess that's an obvious one. And we'll think about what that means in a moment. And then if you look down to verse 23, you'll see he's called Emmanuel. So we have these names, which have got these meanings.

So let's think about what these names mean, what they tell us about Jesus. First, Emmanuel. Let me read again from verse 23. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Okay? They tell us. Emmanuel means God with us. Jesus. In other words, Jesus, he's no ordinary baby. Jesus is a very special baby because he is God himself.

God himself being born on earth. Jesus is God. What an amazing baby. What a special baby. Let me just say, if anyone's here is a little bit sceptical about the virgin birth, do remember that God had predicted this would happen 700 years earlier.

[5 : 46] So we just heard that prophecy read out from Isaiah. And if God is God, God's the creator of the universe. Creator of the heavens, the earth, creator of animals, ducks and geese. He is creator even of all babies.

Of course God can produce a virgin birth. Now anyway, Jesus being God, he doesn't look much like God at the moment, does he, in a manger? But when he grows up and becomes a man, it becomes really, really clear that Jesus is God.

So perhaps someone can throw out some things that they know about what Jesus did when he grew older. Any of the kids? Adults, if you want to join in. Just throw out anything that Jesus did when he grew older.

Things you've been learning in Sunday school. Alex? Oh, that's right. Yes, so when he was 12, he was in the temple. That's right. Because the temple is his father's house.

Excellent. So that must have made the parents think he was a little bit different. Yeah. David? He walked on water. Excellent. People can't normally do that, right? That's a bit different. Anything else?

[6 : 52] All a bit tired this morning, aren't you? Well, let me tell you, later on in Matthew, we read lots of things. We read about Jesus healing the sick. But go on, go on, show up one more.

That's brilliant. It's brilliant. He claims to be God. There we are. He said it straight up that he's God. He healed people who were sick with just a touch. He calmed the storm, the winds and the waves of just a word. He fed loads of people, thousands of people with five loaves of bread, two fish.

He even brought people back from the dead, back to life. The things Jesus did were absolutely amazing. The sort of things that only God could do with God being with us.

You look at his life, a perfect life, never sins. Think about his teaching, marvellous teaching, his life, his miracles, his teaching. It's really clear that Jesus is God with us.

Just as the name Emmanuel tells us. Okay, so that's the first thing. He's Emmanuel. Jesus is God with us. Now, let's look at this second name. Verse 21.

[7 : 56] It's Jesus. Let's think about what that means. Let me read verse 21 to you again. 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.

The name Jesus means saviour. Someone who saves people or rescues people. And Jesus is given this name saviour because he saves people from their sins.

That's what the angel tells us. Jesus will save or rescue people from their sins. Now, again, to help us think about what this means to be a saviour, to be a rescuer. We're going to have another game.

Perhaps this one is for the younger ones. Although adults, you can help the really young ones if you want. You'll see that around the room I've put a picture of someone who rescues. So just over there is a policeman.

Can you see that? At the back there is a fireman. And behind the left there for you is doctor. Now, as I say, this is a game for the younger ones.

[8 : 56] In a moment, I'm going to give you a situation which you're going to need rescuing from and I want you to run as fast as you can to the person who will rescue you. Okay? Does that make sense?

I'm going to give you a situation you're going to need rescuing and you're going to have to think, do I need the fireman? Do I need the policeman? Do I need the doctor? Okay. Ready? Who would you go to if your house was on fire?

Go. Well done, everyone. Fire. Excellent. Okay. Good start. No one's gone to the doctor. Good.

Now, who would you go to if someone was burgling your house? Excellent.

Very good. This is too easy. Last one. Who would you go to if you were feeling unwell or ill? Run. Keep going, George.

[9 : 58] You're almost there. There we are. All well. All safe from the fire. All rescued from the burglar. Great. Give them a round of applause and kids, if you come and sit back down. That's it.

Rescue your kids too. Great. Well, that was a very simple game just to think about what it means to be rescued, who are the right people for the rescue. And I want us to see that Jesus is another rescue person, similar to a fireman, similar to a doctor, similar to a policeman.

And he is someone that actually all of us need to run to right now. Now, you might think, what, wait a minute. I mean, we're not in a building that's on fire. At least I hope not. Some of you might not be feeling perfectly fine, not ill.

You think, I don't need to be rescued. Well, here again, what the angel says. You're given the name Jesus because he'll save his people from their sins.

That's why we need to go to Jesus. Because we need to be rescued from our sin. Now, sin is an old-fashioned word, but it's a very important Bible word. And very simply, it means turning our backs on God.

[11 : 09] So, if God's here, then to sin is just to turn our backs on God. To live our lives as if he wasn't there. To ignore him. To forget about him. And it's something that we all do, isn't it?

Day to day. Whether we're young or old, child or adult. All of us, we've turned our backs on God. At times we've ignored him. At times we've forgotten him. And we've not lived in a way that pleases God.

So, some of us will have been unkind or spiteful to our friends. Some have not helped our mums and dads. And when they've asked us to, we've not shared our toys with our brothers or sisters. We just don't love God or people as we should.

We've turned our backs on God. We are, what the Bible says, sinners. We are sinful. And, the Bible says, we're in trouble. God's not pleased about that.

You can imagine it. God doesn't like having his people turn their backs on him. And God says, because he's a good God, he must punish us. He must punish all that sin. So, we all need rescuing.

[12 : 10] But, the good news is, it's really good news, that Jesus has come to earth to rescue us. To rescue us from our sin. And to bring us back into relationship with God. So, we can be friends with God.

And have the most amazing life there is. Both in this life and in the life to come. So, that's the second name. Jesus. Saviour.

Because he saves us from our sins. Jesus. Okay, two names for Jesus. Emmanuel. And the second one, being Jesus. Very quickly, who can tell me what Emmanuel means?

Yep, Alex. God with us. Jesus is God himself. And what does Jesus mean? David. God saves. God's our saviour. He saved us from our sins. And just like you were running to the fireman, if there's a fire, well, all of us need to run to Jesus to rescue us from our sin.

So, do remember that today. If you're eating your turkey, unwrapping presents, if you haven't done, this is what Christmas is all about. God with us. God with us to save us so we can be friends with God.

[13 : 15] Let me pray for us all. Dear God, thank you so much for coming to earth 2,000 years ago in the person of Jesus. We do thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving us from our sin, for dying for us so we could be forgiven.

Please help us by your Holy Spirit to run to Jesus for rescue if we haven't done so already and to stay with Jesus if we have. And we ask it in his name. Amen.