

16-12-01 AM - ALL AGE - It's a Boy - Warwick Grant

- Matthew 1:18-25

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Date: 16 December 2001

Preacher: Warwick Grant

[0 : 00] This is the 10am service at Holy Trinity on the 16th of December 2001.

The preacher is Warwick Grant. His sermon is entitled It's a Boy and is based on Matthew 1.18-25.

Christmas is such an exciting time, isn't it boys and girls and grown-ups? Yes, there are people out there. That's great. We have special celebrations at church like this one and there's a carol service tonight.

And we have special songs that we sing. That was one that was an old Christmas carol which was sort of jazzed up a bit. That was great. And we have special types of food sometimes. We put up a Christmas tree. Where's our Christmas tree? There it is.

And we also give and receive gifts, don't we? We do all these special things at Christmas time. But today, I thought we'd spend about 15 minutes thinking about how Christmas started.

[1 : 10] How did all this Christmas stuff start to happen? What actually happened at the very first Christmas? Well, to do that, we need to go back to God's special book to us, the Bible.

And in the Bible, we can see and read how Christmas began. Now, if you've got a Bible near you and you'd like to follow, we're going to be looking at the reading that Gillian just read for us.

And it's on page 783. Page 783. If you don't have a Bible, don't stress. You'll still be able to follow just fine. Okay, and this is Matthew's story about Jesus, chapter 1, and we're going to kick off at verse 18.

Let me just read verse 18 and 19. Okay, well, we've heard there about a couple of people called Joseph and Mary.

Now, you've probably heard of them before. Now, they were going to get married. So, it was a really exciting time. But when we think of weddings, we think of how weddings happen in Australia, don't we?

[2 : 37] Well, in her time and in Joseph's time, weddings were done quite differently because it was a Jewish wedding. Let's compare what we do in Australia with weddings to what happened at the time there in Israel.

Well, in Australia, when a man and a lady want to get married, they become engaged. And later on, they have a formal wedding ceremony, often in a church like this.

And afterwards, they have a party. And the party's called a reception. And at the reception, they invite a whole lot of their friends. And all their friends bring them presents, normally a toaster.

And they end up with about 39 toasters. They keep one of them and return the rest of the shop or else keep them to give to other people as wedding presents. Isn't that right, grown-ups?

But in Israel, not only did they not have toasters, but they didn't have weddings the same way that we do. There were three stages to a wedding, a Jewish wedding.

[3 : 39] Let me tell you what the three stages of a Jewish wedding was. Often, the marriage was arranged. So, even when Mary and Joseph, they could have been just little kids. And their mums and dads got together and said, we want our son and our daughter to get married.

Now, it could have happened like that. Often, it did. We don't know if that was the case with Mary and Joseph. Well, the second stage was that the couple were betrothed. Now, this is much more serious than what we call engagement.

This was a legally binding contract. The man was already known in the betrothal as Mary's husband. But Mary still lived with her own mum and dad.

So, they were formally together, but she still lived with her parents. And the betrothal period lasted for about one year. And the third stage was a public wedding ceremony, like we have in church.

And people formally say, I want to be committed to this other person. Well, Joseph and Mary, they were in stage two. They were in their betrothal stage at this point.

[4 : 44] So, they were legally bound to each other, but they still had the public ceremony to go. And it was at this time that Mary became pregnant with Jesus.

Now, imagine how would Joseph have felt. He was soon to marry Mary, but she already had a baby growing inside of her. Now, originally, it seems that Joseph didn't realise that this baby inside of her was from God.

And he was, the Bible tells us, a righteous man. You can see that in verse 19. That means he kept the letter of the Jewish law very well. And if he'd wanted to follow the letter of the Jewish law, he could have insisted on publicly disgracing Mary and invoking the prescribed penalty for a woman who had been unfaithful.

And if you look in the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament, that was actually stoning to death for a woman who'd been unfaithful. By this time, however, things were a bit more moderate.

And instead, a divorce was permissible. So, Joseph just planned to just quietly divorce Mary, but not have her penalised in any other way. And Joseph had said, that's what I'm going to do.

[6 : 00] I'm going to quietly divorce Mary, and we'll just forget all about it. But listen to what happened. This is fantastic, this bit. I'll read the next two verses. Joseph says, Have you ever seen an angel?

I never have. But I have heard some people that have seen angels. And I believe that they're true. They're in the Bible. And the Bible tells us that they're creatures from God, made by him, and they're often used by God as his messengers.

And that's exactly what happened to Joseph here. And you'll notice also that this angel appeared in a dream. So Joseph was asleep. He was having a dream. And in his dream, he saw an angel from God with this message.

So God communicates with people in all sorts of ways. And that's the way he communicated to Joseph. Now, the angel said four things. Let's look at the four things that the angel said.

The first one was, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. So he was saying, it's okay. You can get married to Mary.

[7 : 34] Don't worry about it. Go ahead with it. And why was it okay? The next bit tells us. The angel goes on to say, For the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

So the baby in her tummy was actually from God. And we see here that the Holy Spirit was the agent in Jesus' conception.

Indeed, if conception is the right word to use. Now, some people find this unbelievable. They say, How can a woman such as Mary have a child without even being with a man?

It's just not possible. It just doesn't happen. It's ridiculous. Well, who are we to say it's not possible? We're talking here about God, aren't we?

God can do anything. In Mark chapter 10, verse 27, we read, For God, all things are possible. So a baby started growing in Mary's tummy.

[8 : 38] How it happened, we may never know. But be assured, friends, that this was God's initiative. The Holy Spirit of God began this. Two more things the angel told Joseph.

Let's look at the last two things. In verse 21, the angel says, She will bear a son. So Joseph's told, It's a boy. Even before the baby was born, they knew it was going to be a boy.

Now, girls and boys, when a mummy and daddy are expecting to have a baby, and the baby's still in the mummy's tummy, the doctor can do tests to actually work out whether it's a little boy or it's a little girl that they're going to have.

And many of you know that my wife and I are expecting to have a baby in a week or so. And we've decided that we don't want to know whether it's a little boy or a little girl. We want to be surprised.

We know it's not a giraffe or a hippopotamus or an elephant. We know it's either a boy or a girl. And we're told there's only one. So I'm reassured about that. And it's a little boy or it's a little girl.

[9 : 45] But we don't know. We don't know. But some mummies and daddies, they like to know. And they say to the doctor, Oh, look, we'd like you to tell us if you could whether it's a little boy or a little girl. Now, only a few weeks ago, I said to our doctor, he's called an obstetrician, I said to him, Look, we don't want to know whether it's a boy or a girl, but can you tell us, Do you know whether it's a boy or a girl?

And he said, No, he didn't. And I thought to myself, After all the money I've paid you, you don't even know whether it's a boy or a girl. Can't you even tell me? That was sort of obstetrician, are you?

I'm just joking. He's actually really good. But if we go back to verse 21, we see that the angel tells Joseph that Mary's going to have a little boy. So they know beforehand it's a boy.

He didn't have to go to a doctor, did he? God revealed it to him at that point. Well, the very last thing that the angel told Joseph and Mary, sorry, Joseph actually, was the name of the baby.

Now, I reckon that would have saved Mary and Joseph one gigantic headache. What name should we give this baby? They were told, You are to name him Jesus.

[11 : 00] Now, all of my wife, and we've been looking at different books for babies' names. You can even get on the internet and there's reams and reams of pages of babies' names.

I've got a book here, 20,001 Names for Baby. I don't think we'll need that many, but there's a lot of names in that book. And it's such an important decision.

What name do you give to a baby? Because, well, later on in life, they can change it if they want to. One of my friends actually didn't like one of his names. And when he became a grown-up, he changed it.

He can do that. But most people keep their name for their whole life. And it's such an important decision. But the name Jesus is a beautiful name.

It's the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua. It's the same name in a different language. And the name basically speaks of God's salvation.

[11 : 58] The name can mean something like God is salvation, or the Lord is salvation, or the Lord saves. Jesus' name looks forward to his mission to rescue people from the consequences of their sins, especially death.

So boys and girls and grown-ups, whenever you hear the name Jesus, whether it's at Oasis or in church, just remember, that name means God saves.

God saves. Have you allowed Jesus to save you? I wonder how Mary would have felt.

I mean, she would have been a pregnant lady, and that causes a bit of discomfort. But knowing that she actually had God's son in her, that would have been pretty special. She was a specially chosen lady for this job, and her son was going to bring forgiveness and a relationship with God for all those who trust in him.

Well, let's keep going with our reading, and we're on verse 22. I'll read it out to us. All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet.

[13 : 13] Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us. Well, Matthew, who wrote this story, and it's a true story, this gospel that we read today, he quotes from an Old Testament prophet called Isaiah, and he lived a few hundred years before Jesus.

He quotes from Isaiah 7, verse 14. And while Isaiah was writing about a specific situation in the past, he was also looking forward to the birth of Jesus, the special baby born to Mary.

And we see that one of Jesus' titles is Emmanuel, which beautifully sums up what Jesus was, God with us. Let's look at our final two verses.

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. He took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had born a son, and he named him Jesus.

So Joseph obeyed God's message, married Mary, and was obedient to God, basically. Some people of Joseph's time may have disapproved with that.

[14 : 28] They may have said, you should do the right thing, you should do what our law says. But Joseph knew that he had to obey God. And Mary, we're told, remained a virgin right up until after Jesus was born.

And we know that they had children, Mary and Joseph, after Jesus' birth. We see that in Matthew 12, verse 46, for example. So that's Matthew's account of the events leading up to Jesus' birth.

And since then, many, many more babies have been born. And I'd like to introduce you to yet another baby. And this little baby is only three weeks old.

Now, I'm not sure where she is. Right on cue? No. There she is. I'd like to introduce you to little Lwendal Anderson.

Lwendal is only three weeks old. And her parents are Tim and Charita. And they've come all the way from Brunswick, especially for us this morning. So thank you, Tim and Charita and Lwendal, for coming to visit us.

[15 : 35] And little Lwendal is only three weeks old. Just as we look at Lwendal, just want us to remember that 2,000 years ago, God became a tiny baby like Lwendal.

And that little baby was Jesus. The God who made the entire universe, the stars, the planets, the galaxies that are spinning through space, became a little baby that I could hold in my hands.

He did that to show us how much he loved us and to rescue us from our sinfulness. And like Lwendal, Jesus would have cried. That's how babies expressed their needs.

Like this baby, Jesus would have got hungry. Like this baby, Jesus would have soiled his nappies. Like this baby, he would have got tired. And like this baby, he would have been completely dependent on his parents.

But it shouldn't surprise us, should it, that God in his love for us was willing to reduce himself from the God of the universe, which he still was, to become a tiny, vulnerable little baby.

[16 : 47] He left the splendour of heaven because he wanted to rescue us. Jesus grew up and in the end, he carried out his rescue mission by dying on a cross to take the penalty for our sins and rising to life again.

Another amazing demonstration of God's love, providing rescue and forgiveness for all who trust in him. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

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