

God With Us

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[0:00] Please turn your Bible to the Gospel of Matthew.! Matthew chapter 1.

And we'll be considering this morning, verses 18 through 25. In less than a week, we will be celebrating Christmas.

And although December 25th is not the day on which Jesus was born, it is still the time that we reflect on his birth and the fact that he was born and how he was born.

And when we reflect on the Savior's birth, we come face to face with one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith, which is the virgin birth.

We reflect on our confession that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and he was born of the Virgin Mary. But as important as this confession is to the church, it is one of the most disputed doctrines that we have.

[1:11] And that's because there are people, including some in the church, who deny that Jesus was in fact born of the Virgin Mary. They say that Jesus was actually born the same way we were born.

No differently, they say. They say Jesus had an earthy father just as we have had an earthy father.

And brothers and sisters, if that is right, if that is true, that Jesus was born into this world in the same way we were born into this world, then Jesus himself would need a Savior.

Jesus himself would, like the rest of us, need to be rescued from his sins. And he would need a mediator between him and God like the rest of us do.

But the good news this morning is that Jesus was indeed conceived of the Holy Spirit. And he was indeed born of the Virgin Mary. And he is the Savior of the world.

[2:17] And this morning, as we prepare to celebrate Christmas, I want to help us to reflect upon the truth of the virgin birth.

But not just the truth of it in the fact, but also to understand the meaning for all who put their trust in Christ.

So this morning we are reading Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 through 25. Please follow along as I read. Now 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.

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

[3:39] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

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. Amen. Let's pray. Lord, how overwhelming it is to read your word.

How overwhelming it is to read the truth that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

[5:00] And Lord, how precious is this truth to those who believe. And yet, Lord, there are those who spurn it, doubt it, and even outrightly reject it.

Lord, I pray this morning that you would work in the preaching of your word to cause those of us who believe to believe with even greater conviction. And those of us who, whether present or watching my live stream, who do not believe, oh Lord, have mercy on them and open their eyes to believe the wonder and the amazement of the Son of God who came to this earth in a unique way to live a unique life and to die a unique death.

God, only you can do that. So with the open, blinded eyes and with your unstopped deaf ears to hear the gospel and to believe on the Savior.

We pray and ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen. As you consider this account of the birth of Christ, I'm trusting the Lord will help us to see that through the birth of Christ, God came to sinners so that sinners could come to God.

So I pray that you see this morning. And friends, if you see that, you'd be amazed. If you see that, your heart would be overwhelmed. And so to help you to follow along this morning, I have organized my thoughts around two very simple points.

[6:58] And my Christmas gift to you this morning is a very short message. I pray I fulfill that gift. Two points.

And the first one is, number one, Christ brought God to sinners. Now to see how Christ did this, we need to have, we need to get an overview of what the Bible teaches.

We need to get this broad understanding of the Bible as a whole. The Bible tells one story.

And that story is about God. The story is not about us. We are incidental. We don't go in the Bible looking for ourselves. We go into the Bible looking for who it is about.

It is one story that can be broken down into four parts. And they are creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.

[8:03] That's the storyline of the Bible. And it's all about God because he is active in each one of those parts. Creation. In the beginning, God created the world and created man to rule over his creation.

Fall. Through the rebellion of Adam and Eve, all mankind fell into sin and was separated from God. Redemption.

Redemption started with the first proclamation of the gospel that we find in Genesis 3, 15, this proclamation that God made when he said, the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent.

And redemption continued with the law. It continued with the sacrificial system. It continued with the prophets. prophets. And that proclamation of the gospel was fulfilled, that redemptive proclamation was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross and defeated Satan and defeated death.

the new creation is the period from the resurrection of Jesus up until the return of Christ at the end of the world when he will judge the world and he will usher in a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

[9:24] That's the storyline of the Bible and it's all about God. And these are not clean and neat parts. They have some overlapping in them.

So for example, the fall did not destroy creation. The fall marred creation. It damaged it. And so for example, we human beings are still made in the image of God even though that image has been distorted and defaced by sin.

And through redemption, although redemption has come and the new creation has begun, the effects of the fall are still very real.

They continue. And that's why we have injustice and suffering and corruption and violence and betrayal in relationships and all manner of evil because the effects of the fall are with us even though the new creation has begun.

But the Bible tells us amazing story of the love of God and his dealings with a rebellious world in these four parts. Creation, fall, redemption, and new creation.

[10:43] Now when we consider Matthew's gospel and in particular the way Matthew begins his gospel, we notice that Matthew begins in verse 1 with a genealogy.

He begins in verse 1, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. That's verse 1 of Matthew's gospel.

Now the first reading of that it seems unusual. It's unusual because it's saying that Jesus had two fathers. And we all know that you could only have one biological father.

But more than that, it's saying that Jesus had fathers who he was born centuries after. That's an impossibility. It's an impossibility for your father to be dead and then you to be born. And so clearly Matthew's not referring to Jesus as the biological son of David or the biological son of Abraham.

[11:51] Instead, he is speaking about Jesus as the covenantal son of Abraham and the covenantal son of David. God had promised to Abraham, he said to Abraham, I am going to bless all the nations through you.

I'm going to give you a son and through that son I will bless all the nations of the world. And later in the gospels, Jesus himself and the apostle Paul actually say that the gospel was proclaimed to Abraham in that promise.

That Abraham had the gospel preached to him when God gave him that promise of a son who would bless the world. and God made a similar promise to David.

He makes his promise in 2 Samuel chapter 6 verses 12 and 13 where he promises David that he was going to give him a son who was going to build a house for his name and that the throne of that son would last forever.

And the New Testament writers under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tell us that Jesus is that promised son. he is the promised son of David who built a house for God's name, the church whose kingdom will last forever.

[13:13] And so Jesus is the promised son through whom the world will be blessed. That's the promise to Abraham. And he's the anointed king who would build a house for God's name and whose kingdom will last forever.

showing that he is the heir of David, the heir of that promise made to David. So Matthew's whole point in this genealogy that he gives us from verses 1 to 17 and chapter 1 is to show readers that Jesus is this promised covenantal son of Abraham and son of David.

And so this morning we begin in verse 18. Matthew goes on to give us the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. And in verses 18 through 21 he tells us that all of this he gives us the account of the birth of Jesus and then in verse 22 he tells us that all this took place to fulfill what the prophet had spoken what the Lord spoke through the prophet and the prophet he's referring to is Isaiah who prophesied these things some 700 years before they actually took place.

Now let's follow closely what Matthew is doing. Matthew wrote his gospel would have been around 20 to 30 years after the death and ascension of Jesus and he is making the case that Jesus is God incarnate he's the second person of the Godhead who came to this earth as the promised covenantal son of David and the promised covenantal son of Abraham that he's the Messiah.

Now why is that important? Why is it important for Matthew to begin his gospel in this way to argue this point to substantiate this particular point?

[15:25] Why does it go to these links? Why doesn't it just start in verse 18 and say here's the account of the birth of Jesus? Well the reason is this is so important because if Jesus is not whose scripture declares him to be at birth then his death is meaningless.

it is nothing more than a gross tragedy. In fact his death would be no more meaningful than the death of the two thieves who died on either side of him.

if Jesus is not this person that Matthew is telling us that he was that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit that he was born of the Virgin Mary and that God had prophesied through the prophets that it's going to be this son this son of Abraham this son of David if Jesus was not he then his death would be meaningless and so Matthew is trying to help us to understand that the birth of Jesus is no ordinary birth.

Scripture declares him to be the son of God in human flesh. Scripture declares that he took the place of sinners taking their sins so that they can be forgiven by God and they can receive his righteousness.

Now in order to show that Jesus is this unique savior of the world Matthew goes to great lengths to show how he was conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit and not in an ordinary way where he would be conceived by through the conception of a man.

[17:26] Now let's notice how he does that. He tells us in verse 18 that it was discovered that Mary was pregnant and clearly Mary would have had to do some explaining to Joseph.

You know that. And she did and she told him how the angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she would conceive a son and the son would be conceived by the Holy Spirit and that's exactly how it happened.

But when we look at verse 19 we're able to see I mean Joseph obviously loved Mary a whole lot. So he handled her.

He loved her incredibly. He did not want to put her to shame. He decided he was going to just divorce her quietly, not put her through the public spectacle. But he didn't believe her.

he didn't believe Mary's story that she indeed was pregnant with a child through the conception of the Holy Spirit.

[18:38] And the only conclusion could be that Mary had somehow been unfaithful and the reason he would have had to divorce her is because in those days the process to marriage was in two stages.

First you had what they call the betrothal stage which was legal in the sense that not like an engagement today where you could break it off. It was legal and that's why you had to divorce her. But during that betrothal stage which would be about a year to two years sexual relations were not permitted. And so he would have known he was a righteous just man.

He didn't engage in intercourse with her. And so here she is pregnant and he struggled with that, wrestled with that and he decided the best thing to do is to put her away.

Not put her to shame but to put her away quietly. We see the righteousness of Joseph in the fact that he still pondered these things.

[19:46] Imagine he wrestled with this so much and we see in verse 20 it says but as he considered these things behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

And that angel told him Joseph don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife because the child conceived in her is indeed of the Holy Spirit.

And the angel told Joseph Mary's going to have a son and you are to name him Jesus. And here's why. Because he will save his people from their sins.

And that's what his name means Savior. He will save his people from their sins. Matthew tells us in verses 22 and 23 all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet behold the virgin shall conceive and be our son and they shall call his name Emmanuel which means God with us.

Now this is a very interesting observation I want us to see. who are those who are to call his name Emmanuel.

[21:06] Joseph was told by the angel you to call him Jesus. You to give him this name Jesus. But God through the prophet Isaiah said the child will be called Emmanuel.

So who are those who are to call the child born of Mary Emmanuel. Who are they? Let me try to explain who they are.

The miracle and the meaning of the virgin birth are communicated in this precious name Emmanuel. Emmanuel. Which plainly means God is with us.

It means that through the virgin birth God came to us by the power of the Holy Spirit in the person of his son. It means that God this holy God in love became a perfect man to bear our blame.

My blame and your blame. redemption and it means that redemption that had been promised for thousands of years was now fulfilled that God and sinner could now be reconciled.

[22:28] And notice the movement of grace in this process of redemption. God comes to us. We don't go to God.

We didn't go to him. He comes to us. God because left to ourselves none of us would ever go to him. And left to ourselves we'd always be apart from God.

And friends one of the fundamental realities and truths of the Christian life is that it doesn't matter what you would recount as your salvation experience.

Understand this. In your salvation experience God came to you. Not only did he come to us as sinners broadly in the person of his son but he came to us personally in salvation for every single one of us who has come to believe.

he comes to us that is the move of divine grace.

[23:43] it comes to us that we might say Emmanuel God is with us. But I come back to the only question who are they who call him Emmanuel?

Who are they who are supposed to call him Emmanuel? Now here I'm not talking about those who repeat the word Emmanuel. Those who recited the way we recited the verses a while ago.

Not like that. I'm talking about heartfelt conviction heartfelt confession. Who are those from heartfelt conviction and confession especially at this time of the year can say Emmanuel?

Who are those who call him Emmanuel? I'll tell you who they are. Those who call him Emmanuel are those whose eyes have been opened truly opened truly opened by the grace and mercy of God to see the birth and the person of Christ as the son of God.

God came and the God came to sinners as God came to sinners. Those whose eyes have been opened the same way Joseph's eyes were opened. Joseph's eyes were opened by divine grace.

[25:09] And those who are able to call him Emmanuel were able to do it by the same means by which Joseph was able to move from putting Mary away and to accepting what the angel had said.

Friends, we call him Emmanuel. No other way if we have true heartfelt conviction about who he is. And only God can do that. Only God can enable us to stand in the face of a skeptical and doubting and mocking world and say, I believe the virgin birth.

I believe he was born of the Holy Spirit. Friends, only the Holy Spirit can open our eyes to give us the conviction to shout that to the world in the face of all their mocking.

It is those who will call Emmanuel. And with the conviction of knowing that God has drawn near, that God has come to us. Those who he should have run away from, those who he should have poured his wrath upon, he has come to them in mercy and grace.

[26:30] Those who he should have just written off and started afresh. No, he sent his son. Didn't send an angel, didn't send a message, but he sent his son and he came in the person of his son to those who do not deserve it.

Friends, only God can open eyes and hearts to believe that truth. Do you know it's harder for us to believe the virgin birth than really it was for Joseph?

I mean, Joseph had far more reason to believe the virgin birth and the angel appeared to him, knew Mary, knew her well, but it is only through the mercy and the grace of God that we thousands of years later can say with conviction, I believe it, he's Emmanuel, God has come to us in the person of his son.

Do you know that scripture doesn't argue this point? Scripture doesn't argue it and neither should we, scripture simply states it. Matthew says it, he says, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way.

Scripture simply states it and we should simply state it and we should trust the sovereign grace of God to open hearts to believe that Jesus Christ is God's son born of a virgin and when they do they too will say Emmanuel God is with us.

[28:21] Do you believe the virgin birth this morning? And if you do it's no small thing, it's no small thing friends because it means that the God of the universe has opened your heart.

The God of the universe has opened your eyes. Jesus said to his disciples, blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear. And the point was not all eyes were seeing and not all ears were hearing.

And I said to you this morning, blessed are your eyes that you see and your hearts if you believe, if you do believe the virgin birth.

And if you don't believe this morning, my prayer for you is that God will do for you what he's done for us, the rest of us who believe, that he'll open your heart, that he will open your eyes.

But not only did Christ bring God to sinners, to the virgin birth, this passage also teaches us that Christ brings sinners to God through the virgin birth.

[29:32] And this is my second and final point. Christ brings sinners to God. When Christ was born, God in Christ drew near to sinners and was with us.

But that was not enough. Sinners still needed to be brought to God and reconciled to him. And this reconciliation is foreshadowed and proclaimed in the name that was given to Joseph to call this

child, Jesus.

It was foreshadowed in that name. He will save his people from their sins. That is what it means. That's the explanation that we get in verse 21. For he will save his people from their sins.

this purpose of saving his people from their sins, this is the heart of the mission of Christ and it is the heart of the message of the New Testament.

This is what the New Testament is all about. This is the apex of it. This is the heart of it. Christ saved his people from their sins and he did it by dying on a cruel cross as a substitute for their sins.

[30:58] He took their place and bore their sins and endured God's wrath for those sins. And thereby only he could save them from the wrath of God to come.

God's And so in the virgin birth, we see Christ brought God to sinners, Emmanuel, and we see that Christ through his substitutionary death on the cross brings sinners to God, Jesus.

He saves his people from their sins, all of them, past sins, present sins, and future sins.

And so this morning as I close, I ask you again, are you able to call the one born of Mary Emmanuel? And not because you just know that name and you can say it around Christmas time, but because you truly believe he is God's son, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, who in his birth and in his person brought God to sinners and sinners to God.

And if you are, what a wonderful testimony of amazing grace that is. That you who once were blind now can see. and it is amazing grace because sinners like us can only see Christ as God enables us to see.

[32:50] And if you hear this morning and you're not able to call the one born of Mary Emmanuel because you truly do not believe, my heart breaks for you this morning.

And I urge you to cry out to God for mercy and for grace to see the Lord Jesus Christ, to see the wonder and the beauty of the Savior who has come into this world, the one who reveals the Father and who brought him to sinners and who brings sinners to him.

No other way. It's an exclusive claim. He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him.

And the reason he is this unique way, this is why he is this unique person with this unique birth, with this unique life, with this unique death, because there is no other way.

And brothers and sisters, I pray that more than being able to see the Lord Jesus as Emmanuel and to call him Emmanuel, we need to know him as the Lord Jesus, the one who saved us from our sins.

[34:26] sins. And he didn't save us from our sins by writing a big check and just getting rid of the sins or dealing with it by some abracadabra kind of way.

No, he did it by coming, living, and dying in our place. Friends, Jesus not only died for us, he lived for us.

we can only fulfill the law through the fulfillment of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. And I pray that we would be amazed by that.

I pray that in the midst of our celebrating Christ this Christmas, maybe be sobered by it, because he came to die. That was behind it all. And the truth is, that sober us when we realize that.

It was never to be just memorialized in a manger, memorialized with sentimental value. No, he came to die.

[35:38] And so while Christmas is a celebration, it is a sober celebration, because it's a reminder that our sins brought God's Son to this earth, to walk among sinners, and then to die in their place.

And again, if you're here as an unbeliever, oh, I pray, first of all, see that God has brought you here. See that the sovereign God who has been at work in your life to bring you into this world and to put you in the family that you are in and to decide so many other things of your life that you had no choice in, it's brought you here this morning.

As much as you made a decision to get up and get dressed and do all that you did, the sovereign Lord has brought you here this morning, and I pray that you would hear this amazing story of the grace of God.

And it matters not who you are, it matters not what you've done. There's some who think that their sins are too great, too many, too serious.

I want to assure you they're not. Jesus is a sufficient savior. It matters not who the sinner is. I think of the words of Fanny Crosby's song, to God be the glory.

[37:11] That line that says, oh, perfect redemption, the purchase of blood to every believer, the promise of God, the vilest offender, the vilest who truly believes, that moment from Jesus upon you seat.

Right in that moment. Not after you go and do some good things, not after you go and kind of build a track record, no, right in that moment, you receive a pardon. And it's only possible because the perfect son of God came to this earth, lived, and died.

And he died a unique death just as he had a unique birth. And he receives all who come to him in saving faith. And so I pray for you this morning, if you don't know the Savior, come to him, lay your sins at his feet, and trust him.

for your salvation. And if you do, Christmas will take on its greatest and highest meaning ever. Let's pray. Father, we are so grateful this morning for the good news of the gospel.

The good news of the gospel that Jesus Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit. God, I pray for you to be forgiven and reconciled to you.

[38:39] He lived a perfect life and died a substitutionary death on behalf of every sinner who would ever believe. So that those who put their trust in him will be forgiven and reconciled to you.

Oh, Lord, I pray, would you cause all who hear this good news this morning, be able to say with conviction, Emmanuel, God is with us.

May they be able to say Jesus, Savior. He saves his people from their sins. Lord, work in every heart and every life, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.