

What's in a Name? Everything!

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- [0 : 00] If you've been with us these last couple of Sundays leading up to Christmas, you're very much aware that we have been looking at the significance of names. Most importantly, the name of Jesus.
- But if you take a look at your Bible in Matthew chapter 1, it is an introduction to the story of Jesus. And immediately, we meet Jesus.
- And there's three titles that are given to his name. We read that he is the son of Abraham. He is an heir of Abraham. He is Jewish.
- He is a part of the Jewish line. We also read that he is the son of David, which was the kingly line within all the tribes of Israel.
- So what Matthew is telling us, that the Messiah, which is the third name that he's giving, he's called Jesus Christ.
- [1 : 05] He is the anointed, the Messiah, the one who will save his people, must come from the seed of Abraham and the seed of David.
- You will notice when we look at verse 18, it says, now the birth of Jesus Christ. The writer actually does not use the common word for birth.
- But he uses another word, which means the origin. The origin. There's more than just a birth. There is a story behind the story.
- The story that we read here is from Joseph's perspective. And it's a very interesting one. Because Joseph is a man in the line of David.
- His family line traces all the way back to the throne of Israel. If one were to prove that he had a right to that throne, it is him.
- [2 : 23] Jesus Christ, who would be adopted by Joseph and be his legal son, fulfilled the prophecy that Jeremiah once preached.
- In Jeremiah 23, 5, 6, he said, I will raise up to David a righteous branch, a king who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.
- In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. Well, what's interesting, if you've been with us these last couple of weeks, if you just look at the genealogy that we see in chapter 1, we note that the final third of the line of genealogy were not too kingly and the second third were not too noble.
- In fact, these people, this family line of Joseph, were so ignoble that God punished them and took the throne away.
- You see, this is the funny thing about the time that Jesus arrived. People at that time knew that there was a promise, a promised redeemer who was going to come to save the people.
- [3 : 48] And they all hoped it would be a king like David who would overthrow the Roman occupiers. But what's interesting and what history has certainly proven is that God knew that a man, no matter how kingly, no matter how righteous, no matter how wise, no matter how just, would be able to save his people.

If anything, the line of Joseph, within whom we find the wisest man who ever walked, we find sincere men.

In his line were the greatest warriors. Some were the richest of men of their time, who were surrounded with some of the greatest, godliest prophets, who even with the law before him, none could deliver the promises from God.

You see, God knew and understood that for his people to be saved, they would need more than a king. They would need more than a prophet. They would ultimately need more than a man.

Who could ever save God's people from their sins? Verse 23 of Matthew 1 tells us, Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.

[5 : 46] Emmanuel means God with us. From the very beginning of time, God knew the only person or being that could save man from the wrath of God was God himself.

God incarnate. God born of the flesh. The one who we celebrate on this Christmas Eve, this Christmas day.

Now what is that supposed to mean for us? I want us to get a little, a brief look into the man Joseph who sits here before us.

This is a man who is a part of the kingly line. He is a part of that line that the throne should rightfully belong to him.

And on this Christmas day, an angel appears before him. And this angel who appears isn't some small, cute, little Cupid type of angel.

[6 : 59] The angel that appears before him is a messenger of God. And he brings the whole presence of God before him because that's who he represents.

This isn't a calm scene. This would be a glorious, frightening scene.

For this angel appears in authority because that's the one he speaks for.

Now what's interesting is when the angel appears to Joseph, Joseph had a plan.

Joseph actually had a righteous and just plan. What was the plan of Joseph, you ask?

[7 : 57] Joseph's right and just plan was to divorce Mary. That was the plan that Joseph had.

The question you can ask is how can Joseph's plan to divorce Mary be a righteous plan? Well, if you take a look at verse 19 of Matthew chapter 1 in describing Mary's husband, it says, And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

This is Joseph's situation. He has betrothed Mary. He has asked Mary to be his wife. And as all engaged couples, they begin knowing each other.

They begin to plan the celebration. The wedding families begin to come together. And when it uses the term in the Jewish term, in the Jewish terminology, the culture of the day, to be engaged is akin to marriage without sharing the marriage bed.

As I've said, they started to begin mending the families. And they start to begin to come together. So Joseph, we don't know much about his background.

[9 : 23] But like any groom-to-be, is excited about his wife. The woman who will bear his child.

Except he finds her to be with child. That is not his. That is not his. How heartbroken you would be.

To pledge your life to someone. That you will marry them. And before you get married, you find that she is pregnant.

I would think it would be quite normal for Joseph to feel heartbroken. To feel devastated.

To feel unsure. He would be looking at this woman and say, I don't know you. Who is this woman that I pledged to wed?

[10 : 38] The Gospel of Luke tells us a lot of what's going on in Mary's heart. But the Bible doesn't tell us much about what's going on in Joseph's heart. But it does tell us enough to know about him the type of man that he was.

We know that he is betrothed. And in that culture and society, it was like almost being married. In fact, they were so close that Matthew uses the term husband of Mary.

And that in order to end the engagement, a certificate of divorce would be needed to end it. And here is Joseph knowing that he has been, that he has never been with his wife-to-be finds evidence of a child.

Joseph was a righteous man. The Scripture tells us he was just. And Joseph would want a righteous wife. If Mary was unfaithful before they married, would she continue to be unfaithful when they were married?

You see, Joseph had every moral, emotional, and legal right to end their engagement.

[12 : 07] In fact, how crushing that would be to return back to your friends.

I'm no longer with Mary. What shame, humiliation, rejection he would feel. But it's interesting, once again, we, Matthew uses the term, and I call your attention to, it says, a just man, an upright man.

Why would a just and upright man want a scandalous marriage? The scandal, the shame. Today, those things don't seem to be very important in our culture today. But in a first century closed Jewish community, that is the type of shame that lasts with you for a lifetime.

He had every right to end this marriage. In fact, if someone came to see me for counseling in such a situation, I would most likely counsel the same.

But we read that Joseph, and we see that he's also kind and merciful. He had every right to expose Mary to public disgrace, to public shame. He could easily blame her.

[13 : 36] Look at her, the unfaithful one. I'm the good one. But he chose to have a quiet divorce, to preserve her dignity.

In his mind, it was the sensible, right, and merciful thing to do. This was Joseph's plan. And I'm sure there's a struggle that is going on in his heart.

And there before him appears this angel, a powerful being with all authority before him. And this angel who appears before Joseph is saying, Joseph, wait.

There is a better plan. But it is a plan that comes with a cost.

It is God's plan. God often does that with us, does he not? How many times have we made plans?

[14 : 55] But God in his wisdom, his grace, and his love has circumvented those plans. Mostly for our protection.

At the time, we don't see it. It bothers us. We had a plan. Joseph's plan is to avoid the shame and having to be wed to a woman who he cannot trust.

But God makes himself known in his life and says, Joseph, I have a better plan. Maybe when you had your plans, you knew you wanted them.

But you also knew that Jesus has a plan for you. Yet you resist him. You argue him. You fight him off. He keeps calling.

You keep resisting. You know the plan that he has for you is from him. But you keep asking yourself this question.

- [16 : 03] Can it really be better? But when the reality hits, when you look back on your life and you look back on your plans, things really aren't all that great.
- But you find security in the fact that it was your plan and no one else's. Now, I want you to see where the angel begins with Joseph.
- He says, Talk about a reminder of all the worldly plans that he should have.
- Yet the night that Jesus will give birth, he can't even find a comfortable place for her. Do not fear, says the angel, to take Mary as your wife.
- Tell me we don't need to hear that. Do not fear. When we are confronted with the reality of Jesus Christ in our life, some of us need to hear, Do not fear every minute of every day.
- [17 : 37] Some of you, you need that reminder maybe every day, maybe every month, maybe every couple of months. But you need to hear from God, Do not fear.
- This is why. And this is what the angel reveals to Joseph. Things are not what they appear. Mary, this woman who is pregnant, did not cheat on you.
- She is still a virgin. In fact, the Holy Spirit has come upon her and impregnated her with the Son of God. Isn't that what we need to hear sometimes?
- Sometimes we need to hear, Do not fear. It's not going to be what you think it is.
- Some of us, we resist God because we think it will redirect us in ways that will be no good for us. We'll have to give up fame, money, popularity, whatever it will be.
- [18 : 44] There is a cost. There is a cost. But what God offers is so much more. So the angel says to Joseph, Do not fear.
- Mary is still yours. And into this marriage, this new marriage, the one that you wanted to end, you will take this child as your own.
- For Jesus is conceived by the Spirit of God. And you will adopt him into your royal line.
- For from that line, the deliverer will come. You see, in this line, Jesus is both the Son of God and the Son of David.
- And notice the term that they use. Emmanuel. God with us. It's interesting that Matthew uses that term two other times in his Gospels.
- [19 : 54] The first time, it's at the beginning. The second time, it's actually in the middle. In Matthew 18. It's verse 20. It says, Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with you.
- Many people think that it is a promise that if two or three believers come together to pray, God will be with them. That is not what that verse is actually talking about.
- What that verse is actually talking about is a judicial decision must be made upon God's church. And faithful men and women of faith will come together and pray for the purity of God's church.
- And God promises to be with you. Emmanuel. Emmanuel. The next and the final area where Matthew uses this term is actually in Matthew 28 verses 19 to 20, which everyone should know is the Great Commission call.
- This is the final instructions that Jesus Christ gives his disciples on earth. He is going to leave them. He is going to ascend up to heaven. And then he gives them this command.
- [21 : 12] He says, Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.
- And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Let's be honest. 2020 feels like the end of the age, does it not? Most of us are spending time with our family, just in the house, but we can't be with other family members.

Some of us are alone. We're not able to be with our kids. Some of us are not able to be with our parents. We're not able to be with our extended brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews. But there's this promise that we can hold on to.

I am with you always to the end of age. I don't know.

[22 : 29] Maybe this is the first time that you can ultimately claim that Jesus will be with you for Christmas. Maybe this is the time that you recognize that your plan is not working.

But there is a plan that Jesus Christ offers you. And it comes with eternal life. The apostle, Paul, tells us that if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

It's to confess that we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, just like the angel told Joseph. And we believe this truth in our heart.

And that he lived a perfect life for 33 years. And then he was unjustly crucified on a cross by these Roman occupiers, the people that God's, all of God's people hoped that Jesus would overthrow.

And on that Friday, they buried him, which we call Good Friday. And three days later, on that Easter Sunday, God raised him from the dead, demonstrated that he had power over death and that he is the Son of God.

[23 : 56] And he is the one who has the power to forgive sin. I often find when people have bad plans, those plans are a burden.

Take off that burden and give it to Jesus. Matthew 11, 28 simply tells us, come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

This is what Christmas is. This is the day the child showed up to take off our burden. He came to put his rescue plan in action to save us from our sins.

So my prayer is what I echo what Jezel read to us today, her exhortation, that we would really see Christ in Christmas and that we would be as Joseph would be, that we would put our plan aside and accept God's plan for us and pray, Emmanuel, God with us.

[25 : 41] Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I pray that we would celebrate this Christmas with the understanding and the knowledge that as this birth came, this was the long-awaited promise that you came to be with us, to remove our sins, to remove the block that we have between us and God, to take away the burden of our sin, which is like a weight on our back.

We make plans to remove it, but these plans just cause more weight. And it's only until we can confess you with our lips that you are Lord, you remove that burden.

my prayer is that you would understand these simple truths today and call out to the Lord and accept Jesus' plan for you as Joseph did, as he rightly submitted himself to Jesus, this angel who said, do not fear, for I am with you.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen.