

What Child Is This?

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[0 : 00] Well, please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to the book of Matthew. Book of Matthew, this one week break in between our series and Philipians.

We're pausing just for one week to go through the Christmas story this morning on the Sunday before Christmas. And so this morning we'll be in Matthew chapter 1 and our text will be verses 18 through 25.

And I always encourage you to please, I encourage you to have a Bible open in front of you. There's Bibles, copies of God's Word in the seat backs in front of you if you didn't bring your own. And if you don't have a Bible at all, take that one home.

It's our gift to you. We want you to have a copy of God's Word available to you. So when you found it, Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 through 25, let's please stand in honor of the reading of God's Word if you are able.

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.

[1 : 11] 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.

She will bear a son, and he 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. Father, as we look to this familiar story, we ask God, would you give us eyes of faith and hearts of faith?

Would you give us fresh eyes to see this story in all of its beauty and all of its glory? And God, we ask that you would show us Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

[2 : 24] Would you please be seated? I had the opportunity last Saturday to give a brief gospel presentation at the German Christmas market here in All in All.

This is now the third year that I've had that opportunity, and I look forward to it every year. But every single year is a challenge because I am allotted two minutes. Two minutes to share the gospel. And each year, as I prepare and think about cramming this glorious story into just two minutes, I remember, I think back on the story of Charles Spurgeon.

I'm not sure exactly where I first heard this, but he shares a story of an occurrence that happened early on in his ministry. He said, One day in 1857, a day or two before preaching at the Crystal Palace, I went to decide where the platform should be fixed.

They didn't have microphones and amplification like we do. It had to be positioned just right to maximize his voice. So he said, I went to decide where the platform should be fixed, and in order to test the acoustic properties of the building, I cried out in a loud voice, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

[3 : 43] He said that out in one of the galleries, there was a workman who knew nothing of what was being done. He heard the words, and they came like a message from heaven to his soul.

He was smitten with conviction on account of sin, put down his tools, went home, and there after a season of spiritual struggling, found peace and life by beholding the Lamb of God.

It's an encouragement for me, whether in two minutes or 42 minutes, we believe that the gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.

But what stood out to me this year is, as I thought and I prepared and I got ready for that moment, and those two minutes as I prepared to share, I thought about just how familiar so many people are with the story of Christmas.

Probably a few thousand people came through over two weekends there, and you really couldn't escape it if you walked through. There were manger scenes set up all over the place. There were Christmas hymns being sung over the speakers.

[4 : 48] There were musicians there playing these familiar Christmas songs. The whole thing was called the Christ Kindle Marked, Christ Child Market. Everybody there was so near to the story of Christmas.

But here's what I told them. Just because you're familiar with the story of Christmas, I don't take it for granted that you truly understand the message of the gospel. Just because you're familiar with Christ, I especially don't take it for granted that you have faith in Christ.

I feel that same burden as I prepared to preach this familiar story this morning of the birth of Jesus. I would be willing to bet that everybody in this room this morning, as we come close to Christmas this year, just a few days away, I would be willing to bet that at least all of you on some level are at least familiar with the story of Christmas.

You've heard these words before. You're familiar with the story of Christ's birth. You've seen the baby in the manger. You've heard and you've sung these Christmas hymns, maybe for years and for years and for years.

But please, don't make the fatal mistake of confusing familiarity for faith. There is an eternity of difference between familiarity with Jesus and faith in Jesus.

[6 : 09] As we look again to the birth and the wonder of Jesus this Christmas, don't make that fatal mistake. I want to spend our time this morning looking once again to this familiar story of Jesus' birth.

And I want to ask the question, who is this child in the manger? Who is this child that we still talk about and sing about and celebrate some 2,000 years later after his birth?

Who is Jesus? We need to understand this and be reminded of this once again so that we might know him and trust in him and love him and worship him and honor him as he deserves this Christmas.

Who is this child? Who is this child? We get answers in three places here in Matthew chapter 1. Three places where we get answers to that question.

Who is this child? First, the circumstances of Jesus' birth show us who he is. The circumstances surrounding his birth story, they teach us a little bit about who he is.

[7 : 16] Look there with me again to verse 18. Sometimes new parents, as they have a new child, bring a new baby into the world, I've been in conversations before, they like to share the birth stories.

Have you ever had those conversations? You share the stories of how your child came into the world. But listen, I have yet to see and to hear a story that matches this one. The birth of Jesus Christ begins with a scandal.

Matthew tells us Mary, his mother, was betrothed to Joseph. That betrothal period was a little bit like an engagement period, but it's much more legally formal than that.

Mary and Joseph, they were legally bound together to be married. So all of the legal, all of the official, all of the procedural agreements were set.

You really didn't call off a betrothal for just on a whim like we might call off an engagement today. There's really only a few ways out of a betrothal, death being one, divorce being another.

[8 : 21] And so Mary and Joseph are set to be married, but that marriage was not yet officially official, and they had not yet consummated their marriage. And that's an important detail because here's the scandal.

Matthew tells us before they came together, Mary was found to be with child. It's a scandal. No way around it.

In fact, this was grounds to call the whole thing off. Under Jewish law, Joseph had full grounds to call the thing off. In fact, adultery was legal grounds to stone the guilty party.

And yet it says, Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, he resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he thought about all of this, as he processed, something unusual happened. It says, as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. And he gave him some marriage advice. He said, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife.

[9 : 25] Why? For that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes as we read our Bible, we can kind of get used to things like this, angels speaking and divine encounters, revelation.

We should recognize this is anything but normal. This is not a normal occurrence. Most people do not hear from angels. This is an incredibly unusual and unique experience.

And the message that he gives is almost even more strange than that. He says, this child in the womb of your betrothed isn't the result of infidelity. This isn't some tragic mistake.

It's not the result of sin. This is the work of God. This is the product. This child in the womb of Mary is unlike any other child that's ever been born.

He will be both God and man. He will be born of the Spirit of God without an earthly father. He'll be carried in the womb of the virgin but he'll have this divine nature.

[10 : 30] He'll be fully divine and yet fully man. I assume that you've heard that before but ask yourself again do you fully grasp the importance of why that matters so much?

Why do we make such a big deal about this virgin birth and why does it matter that the baby in the manger is born of God and born of a virgin? And the answer to that question it has everything to do with who Jesus is and why Jesus has come.

And we sing about it often in the song Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery and the dawning of the King He the theme of Heaven's praises robed in frail humanity in our longing in our darkness now the light of life has come look to Christ who condescended took on flesh to ransom us the eternal Son of God became man took on human flesh in order to redeem us it goes on Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery He the perfect Son of Man in His living in His suffering never trace nor stain of sin see the true and better Adam come to save the hell bound man Christ the great and sure fulfillment of the law in Him we stand this child is born to be the second Adam

He's born to be the true and better Adam you think about the story of Adam and Eve in the garden Adam in the garden failed in the garden of Eden Adam failed and was kicked out of the garden he was cursed he was sentenced to death and separation from God but not only him it's Adam and all those who he represented it's Adam and every child who's ever been born of Adam it's Adam and every human who's ever been naturally descended from the line of Adam we are all born under Adam's curse we all inherit Adam's guilt we all inherit Adam's natural separation from God we all inherit Adam's natural sin nature you want to know why you sin it's because you are born a sinner in Adam every child who's ever been born has been born in Adam except for one the angel says there's something different about this child this child isn't born of ordinary means he isn't born with Adam as a father he doesn't inherit Adam's guilt he doesn't inherit Adam's curse he doesn't inherit Adam's sin nature this child is the head of a new and better covenant this child is the head the beginning of a new and better human race if this child succeeds then all that he represents succeed if this child conquers then all who are counted in him conquer if this child lives perfectly then all who are included in him are reckoned as if they have lived perfectly praise God he's the true and better Adam never trace nor stain of sin where the first Adam disobeyed and failed the second Adam has come and has lived perfectly where the first Adam led us out of the presence of God the second Adam has come to bring us back into the presence of God where the first Adam allowed the serpent to deceive and to destroy his bride the second

[14 : 22] Adam has come to finally crush the head of the serpent and to defend and redeem his bride for as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners so by with the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous these unique circumstances around Jesus birth are significant because they tell us that this child is the God man the true and better Adam the hope of life for all who have been cursed with death not only this second second Jesus' lineage teaches us who he is Jesus' lineage teaches us who he is you might notice as you look up above our passage there's a long list of names right up there in verses 1 through 17 I've preached on this long list of names before but I spared you this morning of having to have me read this out loud to you this year but I want you to know this isn't just filler information here he's not just trying to meet his word count here as he writes the gospel of

Matthew this is a genealogy of this newborn child and it tells us who he is I know over the past several years there's kind of been a rise of different companies that do ancestry type of research maybe you've done some of that before I know some of them are getting in some trouble right now for losing their data so if you've done it you might want to look into that but I think it's clear that a lot of people are interested to know where they come from and to have a sort of sense of belonging and identity and ancestry genealogy it kind of gives us a little bit of that rooted sense of identity Jewish culture was very interested in genealogy and for them it had everything to do with belonging and identity only the point here isn't just to trace a family tree the point here is to trace a promise actually multiple promises here

Jesus' lineage shows us that he is the fulfillment of the promises of God ever since Genesis 3 15 God has been promising that he would send someone to restore what sin has broken ever since Genesis 3 he has promised that he would send somebody who would crush the head of the serpent ever since Genesis 3 in the fall in the garden God's people have looked forward to and longed for and expected someone who will come the seed of the woman who will come and restore what's been broken in the fall when will the Christ come here Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 tells us this is the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David the son of Abraham every single Jew would have known the significance of this sentence this child is not just an ordinary child

Matthew says he is the Christ he is the fulfillment of the hope of Israel he is the one that we've been waiting for he is the promised Messiah the long awaited king in delivery he's the anointed one he's the Christ he says he's the promised son of Abraham and we're getting ready to preach through Genesis next year this will be sort of a preview for you in Genesis chapter 12 we'll be there in August Genesis chapter 12 God made a covenant with Abraham he made a promise he promised that he would make out of Abraham a great nation and he promised to bless him and promised to make his name great so that he would be a blessing and he said I will bless those who bless you and those who dishonor you I will curse in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed this covenant it was incredibly significant for the

Jewish people it marked out their identity it marked out their hope it marked out their belonging to the people of God to be a son of Abraham was to be a child of God but now Matthew is showing us that all of this all of these promises are found in Jesus he is the promised seed of Abraham this child Jesus is the heir of all of the promises God made to Abraham this child Jesus is the true fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant it's in him that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through faith in him it's in him by faith in him that one is included in the people of God it's in him he is the true son of God it's in him that all nations all peoples of the earth can be called sons and daughters of God as his kingdom that's the true promised land for all of

[19 : 41] God's people Jew and Gentile alike it's his life and his death and his resurrection and all the many benefits of the gospel that are held out and offered to the world that's the blessing for the nations it's in Jesus that we find our identity our hope our belonging to the people of God he is the Christ the son of Abraham not only this he says he's also the promised son of David son of David 2nd Samuel chapter 7 God makes another promise another covenant with David and David wanted to build God a house he wanted to build a temple for the Lord but the Lord responded and said no no no you're not going to build me a house guess what I'm going to build you a house here's what he promised when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body and I will establish his kingdom he shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever

I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a son he promised David your throne will be established forever only what happened as we as we look through this list of names Solomon came and went Rehoboam came and went Abijah came and went Asaph came and went Jehoshaphat came and went Joram came and went Uzziah came and went you thought I wasn't going to read those names I couldn't resist some of these guys were decent leaders and some of them were okay kings but all of them were sinners and all of them died none of them met up to this expectation of a forever king not one of them met up to the longing and expectation of fulfillment of this promise I will give you a kingdom forever Matthew says this child in the manger he is the promised king the point of this long list of names is to link this child's legal claim to the throne of David to show he is the fulfillment of all the promises of God he is the one that Isaiah announced to us a child is born to us a son is given the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called wonderful counselor mighty

God everlasting father prince of peace of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forever more he's the one that that Daniel saw the one who came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man who came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away and his kingdom is one that shall not be destroyed Jesus is the promised king we sing another song at Christmas come thou long expected Jesus and second verse goes like this born thy people to deliver born a child and yet a king born to reign in us forever now thy gracious kingdom bring church we get to rejoice at Christmas time that we look back and realize the king has come

Jesus is the promised king he has come already to defeat our greatest enemy he has come already to establish and to inaugurate his kingdom and we look forward to the time as we pray and we sing come thou long expected Jesus when the king will return to finish what he begun he will return to establish his kingdom in full to finally defeat our enemies to finally establish peace to finally bring us home exactly as God has promised Jesus' birth story tells us who he is his birth family tells us who he is and lastly we see here that his name tells us who he is third the names of Jesus tell us who he is you know each time that Amanda and I had a baby on the way three times now we got three boys every single time we wrestled we toss out this name or that name we discuss what we wanted to name our children because the name is important it's representative of who they might be I think I still have a list on my phone of notes of what we might name our children even the first two we didn't know if they were going to be a boy or a girl so we had to have boy names picked out we had to have girl names picked out and we spent a lot of time discussing the names of our coming children Mary and Joseph didn't have that problem did they they were told exactly what to name their child two names here actually and just like with the genealogy these aren't just empty names these names hold within them promises of God held out to you this morning church Jesus verse 21 and Emmanuel verse 23 the name Jesus literally means savior means deliverer verse 21 says she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus why for he will save his people from their sins as we look to the manger and we see the baby

[25 : 44] Jesus this baby in the manger is born to be the savior of the world what we celebrate at Christmas is the beginning of the answer to our greatest problem I don't know what you would consider to be your greatest problem this year whether it's stress or financial issues or health issues or family issues whatever it may be we need to understand that our greatest problem is none of these things these are far downstream from our true greatest problem our greatest problem yours and mine is our sin not just our sin but the result of our sin is God's wrath against our sin we need to know that left to ourself our greatest problem is God's holy wrath his justice and his holiness when that's paired with our sin and our guilt that is a problem for us but here the angel says here is hope for sinners like me here is a savior for sinners like you here is a a deliverer he's

Jesus for he will save his people from their sins how will he do it in the most unthinkable way God himself comes to save us from the wrath of God God himself becomes man God himself comes to live in our place and to perfectly fulfill all the requirements of the law that you and I have failed and failed and failed because none of us can do it and then God himself has come and has suffered and died in our place God himself saves sinners by God bearing the wrath of God against our sin this is the gospel God himself becomes sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God therefore as Paul says in Philippians 2 God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the father there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved only the name of Jesus and everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved I wonder what you think of when you hear the name Jesus I wonder if it's just familiar to you if it's just normal and ordinary to you or I wonder if you hear the name Jesus and you say that is my salvation Jesus is the first name verse 22 gives us a second name for this child finally we see his name is Jesus and second his name is Emmanuel look there to verse 22 verse 22 it tells us all of 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 this is the second name Emmanuel God with us

some 700 years before the birth of this child think about that 700 years before this baby was born the prophet Isaiah was talking about the birth of this child prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son and prophesied that they would call his name Emmanuel let me just walk you through the story of the Bible real quick here ever since the garden when Adam and Eve were cast out of the presence of God mankind has needed an answer to this problem we cannot be with a holy God our sin has distanced us from a holy

God our sin has separated us from God we had it for a moment in the garden and it is gone and yet by his grace as we read through our Old Testament as we lead up to the coming of Christ we see by his grace God has continuously made a way and made a way and made a way to be with his people in part God was with Israel in the pillar of cloud and of fire he guided them through the wilderness and out of exile God made a way to be with them in the tabernacle and his presence dwelt there especially within this tent as they journeyed on their way to the promised land then when they got there God was with them God was with them in the temple in a more stable in a more lasting way this was really the pinnacle of God's presence with them in the Old Testament but even then we know this was not enough all of these were wonderful but partial offerings of the presence of God the problem of sin still remained the need for reconciliation with a holy

[31 : 21] God still remained all of the limitations of place and people and physical restraints still remained even the temple as glorious as it was it served both as a reminder of God's presence but also of his distance our sin still separated man from God but now Matthew says now Emmanuel has come God with us has come this baby in the manger Paul says in Colossians 1 is the image of the invisible God and in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things whether on earth or in heaven making peace by the blood of his cross at

Christmas we look and we recognize Christ our savior has come he is Emmanuel God with us he is

God and sinners reconciled this is what we celebrate at Christmas church God has come to us no longer is his presence with us restrained by sin he has paid for our sin that curtain in the temple is torn in two we have access to him by faith in Christ no longer is his presence with us limited to just one particular people he has come for the nations he has come for you no longer is his presence limited to one particular place he can be known and he can be worshipped in all and in Pakistan and in Jordan and in Kenya and in Taiwan and Uzbekistan and no longer is his presence something that we only wait for in the future he has come and you may know him and his presence with you right now and by knowing him now we can look forward to the time that John saw in his vision behold the dwelling places of

God is with man he will dwell with them and they will be his people for God himself will be with them as their God friend have you heard these things before do not pass over this incredible truth this Christmas as something routine as something familiar don't lose your wonder at this truth God has come to be with us Charles Spurgeon preached a Christmas Eve sermon 170 years ago December 24 1854 let me quote him and just listen to the wonder in his words so the virgin mary called her son Emmanuel that there might be a meaning in his name God with us my soul ring these words again

God with us God oh it is one of the bells of heaven let us strike it yet again God with us oh it is a stray note from the sonnets of paradise God with us oh it is the the lispings of a seraph God with us oh it is one of the notes of the singing of Jehovah when he rejoices over his church with singing God with us tell it tell it he has not lost that name Jesus had that name on earth and he has it now in heaven he is now God with us believer he is God with thee to protect thee thou art not alone because the savior is with thee put me in the desert where vegetation grows not I can still say God with us put me on the wild ocean and let my ship dance madly on the waves I will still say Immanuel God with us mount me on the sunbeam and let me fly beyond the western sea still I would say God with us let my body dive down into the depths of the ocean let me hide in its caverns still I could say as a child of God God with us I am in the grave sleeping there in corruption still I can see the footmarks of Jesus I can see the footmarks of Jesus and the footmarks of Jesus.

He trod the path of all his people and still his name is God with us. If you are struggling this Christmas with worry and anxiety, look to Christ and remember God is with you.

[36 : 19] If you are struggling with some lingering sin in your life, whatever that may be, friend, look to Christ and remember God is with you. He has come to save sinners like you.

If you find yourself spiritually sluggish this Christmas, look to Christ. God is with us. And if you find yourself far from God this Christmas, friend, look to Christ.

God has come down to you so that you can be near to God and not just know about him and be familiar with him, but to truly know God.

But it's in Christ and only in Christ that you can know him. So look to Christ this Christmas, church. Behold the Lamb of God this Christmas who taketh away the sin of the world.

Look to this child and behold the true and better Adam who has lived perfectly in your place to save ruined sinners from what our sin deserves. Behold in the manger the promised seed of Abraham.

[37 : 29] Behold the promised King of David. Behold the Christ. Behold Jesus the Savior of the world. Behold Emmanuel, God with us.

Look to Christ and let his name be praised in your hearts, in your families, in this church, in this community, in the world this Christmas now and to eternity.

Let's pray. Father, we praise you for Emmanuel, God with us. Lord, we praise you for Christ, for his coming, for his humility, for his mission to save sinners.

Lord, we pray that if there are any who have joined us this morning who do not know Christ by faith, would you give them the gift of faith right this moment?

Cause them and lead them to call out to you for saving mercy and to know that they will receive it in full if they only look to Christ in faith. We pray, Father, would you be exalted as we remember you this Christmas.

[38 : 34] We love you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.