

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

The Man Who Raised Jesus

Matthew 1:18-25

December 16th, 2018

Main Point

As we continue our study of the Christmas story, we will take a look at a good man in a difficult spot. Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, must have taught Jesus valuable lessons on how to live in this world.

Getting Started

Today's ongoing study of the Christmas story highlights Joseph as a man of faith and obedience. Joseph demonstrated deep faith that expressed itself in decisive obedience. He took God at His Word and followed through on what the angel of God told him in a dream. It took courage for him to take Mary as his wife. Faith in and obedience to God is the theme of Joseph's life in this story. May it also be the theme of our lives as we celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas season.

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Matthew 1:18-21.

What catches your attention most in this very familiar account of the birth of Jesus?

What do you learn about Joseph from these verses?

What did Joseph resolve to do when he learned Mary was pregnant? How did the angel interrupt his plans?

How did Joseph's desire to put Mary away secretly speak to his personal righteousness?

Why do you think the angel of the Lord specifically told Joseph that Jesus "will save His people from their sins"?

Joseph could have easily made life extremely difficult, or even dangerous, after it was revealed that Mary was pregnant with a child that wasn't his own. Instead of seeking to shame her, which would be a jealous reaction we could understand, Joseph cared enough for Mary to do this secretly. He thought of Mary's well-being and the well-being

of her child more than he thought about his need for justice. Joseph's actions communicated his righteousness better than his words could have.

While the people of Israel were looking for a deliverer, many of the people of Israel only thought about a Messianic deliverer in terms of political liberation. Jesus did not come to deliver His people from Rome, He came to deliver them from the tyranny of sin. The angel told Joseph that Jesus would deliver Israel from their sins in order to communicate the kind of Messiah Jesus would be.

Have a volunteer read Matthew 1:22-23.

Why did God choose a virgin to have His Son?

What did that communicate?

What does it mean for God to be with us?

What does this communicate to us?

Have someone read Hebrews 4:14-15.

How is Jesus' identity as Immanuel, God With Us, confirmed in these verses?

Why was it important for Him to become like us and be born as a baby?

In theological terms, why is the incarnation crucial to the gospel message?

God promised through Isaiah that "The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). When this sign came to pass, it would signal to Israel that God was bringing deliverance to His people. Perhaps one reason that God chose a virgin is because that is an unmistakable miracle. God did the seemingly impossible through Jesus by delivering us from our sins, and He wanted us to be sure that we knew the coming of the Messiah was an unprecedented and miraculous event.

God has always been with us, but not in the way He came to be with us in Christ. John writes, "The Word became flesh and took up residence among us" (John 1:14). Jesus permanently took on human flesh. The second member of the Trinity became a human being because He wants to be with us. God wanted us to relate to Him, and to know that He loves us as His own children. So, the Son of God became a man. The incarnation communicates God's love for us in ways that words alone cannot do!

Have a volunteer read Matthew 1:24-25.

When did Joseph act on the dream God gave him? What did he do in response to the divine revelation?

Why do you think the angel of the Lord specifically told Joseph that Jesus "will save His people from their sins"?

What do Joseph's actions communicate in these verses? What things did Joseph do in response to the dream he had?

What can you surmise about the faith of Joseph from Matthew 1:18-25? What does this tell you about his relationship with God?

James writes, "Show me your faith without works, and I will show you faith from my works" (James 2:18). Nowhere does the Bible record Joseph saying that he loved God, but we can clearly see that Joseph did. Joseph went ahead and married Mary, refrained from sexual relations with her to assure that everyone would know the child was a miracle child, and Joseph named the child Jesus just as God instructed him to do. This obedience communicates Joseph's righteousness and faithfulness to God.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The hymn, "Trust and Obey" was written by John H. Sammis in 1887. The meaning of this hymn is self-explanatory as Sammis illustrates the rewards of trusting God's word and obeying God's will. Below you will find the lyrics to this powerful hymn. Read Ask God to transform you into a person of deep faith and quick obedience.

1 When we walk with the Lord
in the light of his word,
what a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will,
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain:

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

2 Not a burden we bear,
not a sorrow we share,
but our toil he doth richly repay;
not a grief or a loss,
not a frown or a cross,
but is blest if we trust and obey. [Refrain]

3 But we never can prove
the delights of his love
until all on the altar we lay;
for the favor he shows,
for the joy he bestows,
are for them who will trust and obey. [Refrain]

4 Then in fellowship sweet
we will sit at his feet,

or we'll walk by his side in the way;
what he says we will do,
where he sends we will go;
never fear, only trust and obey. [Refrain]

Prayer

Help me obey you first and fast when you speak to me dear God. Please kill in me any hesitation to do what you ask. Convince my heart that You are good and that what You ask of me is for your glory and eventually my benefit. Help me to trust and obey You today in all areas of my life!

Commentary

1:18. As Matthew launched the account of Jesus' birth, note that he was careful to highlight the title "Christ"—the title he used in the preceding passage that demonstrated Jesus had the right to claim deity. Watch for Matthew's use of this title throughout his Gospel. His purpose in writing was to make the case for Jesus as the promised King.

To understand the significance of some statements in this passage, it is necessary to understand the Jewish marriage customs of the day. The bride and groom went through a period of betrothal or engagement. In that culture and time, betrothal was virtually as binding as marriage. In this waiting period, Mary was found to be pregnant. Matthew was careful to protect the virtue of Mary and the supernatural origin of Christ.

Why is it so important that the Christ, the promised king, be born to a virgin? The virgin birth is more than a miracle to draw attention to the unique nature of this child. Because Mary was a virgin, only God could have been the father of Jesus, making Jesus the one and only God-Man in all the universe. God's plan would have been impossible if Jesus had been anything less.

1:19. A betrothed couple was as good as married, and breaking off the relationship was seen as divorce, even though the couple had not yet been married. It also helps us gain a better perspective of the emotional state of Mary and Joseph when we realize that she was probably in her teens at the time of these events. The minimum marriageable age in Israel was twelve for women and thirteen for men. To remain unmarried as late as one's twenties may have been cause for social embarrassment.

1:20-21. Mary, initially fearful of being an unwed mother, accepted God's revealed intentions for her. And Joseph, initially not all that sure himself about the "virgin birth," was originally thinking divorce, albeit quietly and with no public scandal. But when Joseph was approached by God through the angel, he accepted his role and did precisely as he was instructed by God. He kept Mary a virgin until after Jesus was born, after which their normal marital relations produced other children who were the half-brothers of Jesus. And Joseph, as the legal heir to the throne, named their son "Jesus" as he was told. Mary and Joseph learned that the only way to follow God was to "trust

and obey” His word. The character of these two young adults reminds us that God fulfills His purposes by using people of strong character and unquestioning obedience.

The name “Jesus” chosen by God for His Son (1:21) was, in that day and for centuries before, a common name with special meaning. Jesus is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew “Joshua,” meaning “Yahweh is salvation.” Jewish boys for centuries had been given this name Jesus with the frequency of today’s John or Mike. This reflects, in part, the hope of Jewish parents for God’s salvation from centuries of oppression under a succession of world powers. God’s choice of such a common name, when He could have chosen something unique, also emphasized that Jesus came in a way that identified with “the average Joe.” He came in love to become one of us, that we might be drawn to Him and become one of His. Jesus was approachable and touchable. He was one of us. “We do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus did everything to build bridges to us.

Yet, while the name Jesus was common, only this child was qualified as the God-Man to save His people from their sins (1:21). Jesus came at the strategically appointed time to seal the eternal salvation of all whom the Father had chosen.

1:22-23. In these verses Matthew provided the first of many direct quotes from the Old Testament, and the first of many Old Testament prophecies fulfilled by the earthly life of Jesus. These Old Testament quotes and prophecies show, in part, the linkage and unity between the Old and New Testaments, helping us understand how God was preparing the way for the Christ from centuries past. They also validate the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah, strengthening our faith in Him. And their perfect fulfillment in Jesus gives us confidence that God is faithful and mighty to keep His word to us today.

Matthew is quick to support the doctrine of the virgin birth, and his quote in 1:23 is from Isaiah 7:14, originally written by the prophet Isaiah over seven hundred years before Jesus’ birth. This verse in its original Old Testament context seems to be referring to a child who was to be born in that setting of Isaiah’s day, rather than centuries later. However, Matthew’s inspired revelation fills the original statement out to its full intention. God is never so clearly present with His people as He is through His virgin-born Son, the Messiah of Israel. Jesus is Immanuel! The linguistic components of the name Immanuel and their individual translations—Im = “with,” anu = “us,” and el = “God”—make it clear that Isaiah’s original prophecy could refer in its fullest sense only to the promised Messiah. This name of Jesus is a strong argument for His deity.

1:24-25. The dream that had begun for Joseph in verse 20 ends in these verses with him waking and choosing to obey everything the angel had told him to do. This fine man had learned to “trust and obey.”

Adapted from www.smallgroup.com.

