

The Saving Name of Jesus Matthew 1:18-25

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. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

*²³ "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

(which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

First: God Works His Will Through People. 18-21 & 24-25

This is an astounding thought but, evidently, it is not only good for the people who are hearing the gospel, but for us as well, to be invested in God's redemptive work on the earth.

From the very beginning of human creation, God has called on people to work with him in the expansion of his kingdom.

Genesis 1:28- And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

It isn't just that we pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10) but we also invest our lives in its establishment.

ILL – The new Matrix movie continues the redefining of reality and in this, it only mirrors the Gospel. There is a reality that is not temporal and by virtue of its existence before time, and after time (as we know it), it is THE reality. Your calling and my calling are to bring that truth to bear on the minds and hearts of people whom we know.

- a) Joseph first appears in the Bible in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, Joseph's lineage is traced back to King David.

When Jesus was an adult, people often referred to Him as the “son of Joseph” (Luke 4:22; John 1:45; 6:42), although the gospel writers were careful to maintain that Jesus’ true Father was God, with Joseph being more of a foster father or stepfather.

- b) According to Luke, Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, the wife of the priest Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah, who was himself part of the lineage of Aaron and so of the Tribe of Levi. If Mary was related to Elizabeth was on the maternal side, then she, like Joseph, was of the royal Davidic line and so of the Tribe of Judah,

IMP: Some in the Roman Catholic Church view Mary as a Co-Reemptress or Mediatrix in which Mary serves as an essential co-redeemer with Jesus. But in the *Magnificat*, (Mary’s song magnifying God when Elizabeth recognized she was pregnant), Mary confesses herself a sinner: Luke 1:46-47 - *My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*

Understanding that God has *a-priori* claim on our lives and that, by our salvation, he invites us not only to enjoy heaven but to work with him here and now, brings forever into the present. God has redemptive intentions for your mind, heart, emotions, body, vocation, marriage, unmarried life, widow, or widowhood, parenting, schooling.

“There’s not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not exclaim, ‘Mine’!”
- Abraham Kuyper (Dutch politician, professor and pastor)

God intends first, to engage you and then your world.

Genesis 18:19 - *For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.*

One profitable exercise in your CGs would be to list all the things Joseph did in this passage. How exactly did he invest in God’s saving plan?

For instance – vs 24- *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him...*

And then make it personal, “How are you investing in God’s work on earth?”

Just the fact that God invites us into this work ought to be a motivating marvel to us. Who would not get involved?

Vs 1-17 demonstrate how God works his divine plan through humans. You might think it is scary for God to rest his plan on fallen humans but,

Second: God's Will, Will be Done.

Four hundred years earlier, Micah wrote

Micah 5:2 - But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

This is the prophecy the wise men in Matthew two, known as 'Magi,' (wise men) used to find Jesus.

Of course, Joseph and Mary live in Nazareth and there is no reason, especially with Mary as far along in her pregnancy as she was, for them to go to Bethlehem, 98 miles away.

MAP of route from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, five miles south of Jerusalem.

Luke 2:1-2 - *In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when^[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

- a) A census counts people for taxation purposes
- b) Romans laid claim to the family estates of ancestral homes in all subjugate areas
- c) Caesar August ordered 3 censuses: 8BC, 2BC, 6AD
- d) He needed to pay for doubling the size of Rome, stretching it from Great Britain to India. He included Italy, Greece, Spain, Gaul (France, Belgium & Germany), North Africa, Egypt, Asia Minor, and the Near East

The census brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, only for a specific and temporary period and it was an incredibly specific way to fulfil prophecy.

Galatians 4:4 - *But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son...*

How did God accomplish this? The same way he sent Paul to Rome (last week).

Proverbs 21:1 - *The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

How many times in the OT have we seen this? Let's look at two examples: one of God hardening a king's heart and the other of God softening a king's heart

- God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that the ten-plague contest would take place

Joshua 2:9-12 - *"I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.¹¹ And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath."*

Romans 9:17 – (Quoting Exodus 9:16) *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."*

- God softened Cyrus's heart to free Israel from their 70-year bondage

Go from Joshua to Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra

Ezra 1:1-3 - *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing: ² "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. ³ Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.*

APP: These things are important because they are very practical to us. If God oversaw and ordained Joseph and Mary's life, he does the same for yours.

Look at the 'will's' and 'shall's' in our passage:

- 1 – 21a – *She (will) bear a son*
- 2 – 21b – *You (shall) call his name Jesus*
- 3 – 21c – *He (will) save his people from their sins*
- 23a – *The virgin (shall) conceive and bear a son*
- 23b – *They (shall) call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)*

(The "will's" and "shall's" are in parenthesis because they are not in the original Greek. It's as though God simply said, v 21a – "She bear," v 21b – "You call" and 21c – "He save" because God saying it meant it was as good as done.

Theological point: If God knows something in the future, it must come to pass otherwise God knew something incorrectly. So, if God says something will happen, it must happen, first because God knows it is going to happen and secondly because God ordains it to happen

(according to his foreknowledge). There is a sense then, in which foreknowledge is ordination because there is no past, present or future for an omnipresent, omniscient God who knows everything in the present tense.

- How does the passage begin?

V 18 – Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place this way.

- How does the passage end?

V 22 – All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet

Of course, the birth of Jesus took place “this way.” God ordained it so.

In other words, whatever happens in our lives happens because God knows it. And if God knows it, it happens as part of God’s over-arching plan for us and the world.

Once again, this brings the eternal into your temporary life. Every day that you live, forever is being worked out in you.

Because He is God, God uses both good and evil, joy and sorrow, easiness, and difficulty, to accomplish his will. And sometimes, it is all-the-more glorious for the long-way home.

Romans 8:28-30 - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

- 1 – Our glorification is ‘as good as done’ as our justification
- 2 - What is the comprehensive ‘good’ in this passage? It is glorification.
- 3 – But the good is not just the end but the means, as well.

This does not mean that everything that happens is good, but knowing that it is working out for good, changes the way we endure the bad.

ILL – Alabama vs Auburn – 24-22 in four overtimes. When I watch the replay of the last quarter and four overtimes, my heart is at rest because I knew the outcome.

ILL – In 2019, Tua Tugaloa replaced Jalen Hurts as the Alabama quarterback at halftime in the championship game against Georgia. Tua rallied the team but in the final seconds of regulation, the Alabama kicker missed a 37-yard field goal that would have won the game. Georgia scored a 51-yard field goal for 3 points in overtime and then Tua took a sack for a 16-yard loss before

the final play of the game in which he hit DeVonta Smith for a 41-yard, game-winning touchdown. Afterward, Tua said, *"I just needed more room to throw the pass."*

One of the great joys of our lives as Christians is finding, seeing, and experiencing the good when everyone else is complaining about the bad.

Third: All of This Points to the Saving Name of Jesus. 21

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

In the same way that:

- a) She will bear a son - and she did.
- b) You shall call his name Jesus - and they did.
- c) He will save his people from their sins - and He does.

Again, because God said it, it must come to pass.

'Jesus' is the Greek form of 'Joshua,' originally, 'Hoshea' (Num 13:8, 16) and means, 'Yahweh saves' or 'Yahweh is salvation' from the verb, 'yasha' meaning 'rescue, deliver' or 'save.' Acts 4:12 - *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

(Moses changed 'Hoshea' to 'Jehoshua' (Num 13:16; 1 Chron 7:27) or 'Joshua.' After the Babylonian exile, the name assumed the form 'Jeshua' from which we get the Greek, 'Jesus.' It was a popular Jewish name in first-century Judea and this is why Jesus is often called, 'Jesus of Nazareth' (Matt 21:11; Mark 1:24; Luke 18:37; John 1:45; 19:19; Acts 2:22)).

The point is that if you have trusted Jesus or will trust Jesus to save you from your sin and God's wrath, he will do it. Just as assuredly as he was born in Bethlehem, he will most certainly save you.

This is what it means when Matthew says, *"He will save his people from their sins..."*

The stark and harsh reality is that not everyone is saved, only Jesus's people.

This book is about the Narnia stories, not my personal beliefs, but it's impossible to discuss Narnia and not talk about faith, and the reader may reasonably wonder where I now stand. Well, I stand with Puddleglum. I'll try to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia. I remained a practicing Christian for many years, but in the end – with relief as well as regret, and regret as well as relief – I stopped believing in God. Each of one of us has to make their own peace with this world. And if there is a God after all, I'll go with Job and say we can only wonder at the awesome power that made this amazing universe – and I'll go with Lewis, and say a loving God won't turn us away.

- Katherine Langrish in *From Spare Oom to War Drobe*

We can debate whether Lewis said that, but it is, in fact, because God is loving that he will turn you away.

ILL – Like distinguishing Abraham from everyone else in Mesopotamia or distinguishing Isaac from Ishmael or Jacob from Esau or calling Israel out of Egypt, only those who trust in Jesus are saved...and you are most definitely saved.

Conclusion:

One of the great things about Christianity is that it is rooted in history. Everything the Bible says about Jesus's birth came to pass as God prophesied. And as Matthew crosses the bridge from the past – Jesus's birth – to the future – the reason for Jesus's birth, history teaches us that God does what he says, as he says, without qualification.

It's not just a matter of re-writing or denying history. It's a matter of going back and changing it. Only if Jesus is not born in Bethlehem as God prophesied, will we not be saved. But he was. And we are. And that gives us a reason to sing.

Community Groups.

- 1 – Read the text.
- 2 – How do the first 17 verses of Matt 1 demonstrate that God accomplishes his will through people?
- 3 - Do you find this worrisome? Humbling?
- 4 – How did God use Mary to accomplish the birth of Jesus?
- 5 – How did God use Joseph to accomplish the birth of Jesus?
- 6 – Where have you seen God use you to accomplish his will?
- 7 – Read Luke 1:1-2 and list all the working parts God coordinated in the birth of Jesus?
- 8 – What kind of confidence does this give you in God?
- 9 – Read Exodus 19:6 and Joshua 2:9-12 and discuss why God hardened Pharaoh's heart?
- 10 – Read Ezra 1:1-3 and discuss why God softened Cyrus's heart?
- 11 – What do the 'shall's' and 'will's' of Matt 1:21-23 teach us?
- 12 – Why does God simply knowing something in the future, mean it must come to pass?
- 13 – How do verse 18 and 22 serve as 'book-ends' for the prophecy about Jesus?

13 – What does all of this mean for verse 21?

14 – How does the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem provide me with security about my salvation?