

Christmas According to Matthew

“Just Man”

Matthew 1:18-25

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Peter LaRuffa / Dec. 12, 2021

I. We need to understand the significance of Jesus' virgin birth. Without it, we'd not have a Savior in Christ!

Matthew 1:18 “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.”

The fact that Jesus was born of a virgin isn't just a “fun fact” or secondary circumstance surrounding His entrance into the world. It's just as serious as His substitutionary atoning death, His resurrection from the grave, His ascension into heaven, and His return. All of these stand or fall together!

A. The virgin birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecy concerning the Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

B. The virgin birth means Jesus has a sinless human nature.

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...”

Remember—it is Adam that is credited with the Fall of Man. Therefore, if Jesus had a human father, He would be a sinner just like us, and wouldn't be the sinless Savior we desperately needed!

II. Even when we're wronged, Christians respond in a way that reflects the grace of our Savior.

Matthew 1:19 “And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

Initially, Joseph would've thought Mary's pregnancy was the result of a sinful act on her part. So, why would a “just” man not want to see sin punished under the full weight of the law as God has prescribed?

Deuteronomy 22:23-24 “If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴ then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.”

The word “just” refers to the fact that Joseph has been “justified.” He was a just man, not because of his impeccable record of obedience, but because of his faith in God. Joseph was a believer. Therefore, he sought to deal with the matter in a way that honored God, and showed compassion to Mary.

John 8:7 “And as they continued to ask Him, He stood up and said to them, ‘Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.’”

Since Joseph was “just,” and the recipient of God’s favor, his initial response was one that reflected the compassion he’d received from One much better than himself.

III. Christmas starts at the manger, but points straight to the cross. Jesus was born to save us from our sins!

Matthew 1:21 “She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Jesus is a form of the Hebrew “Joshua,” or “Jeshua,” or “Jehoshua,” which means “Jehovah will save.”

From the very beginning of Christ’s earthly life, even before He was born, His purpose was crystal clear: “He will save His people from their sins.”

Jesus’ very name fulfilled the latter part of Isaiah’s prophecy! In Joseph’s dream, the angel references the Son saving His people from their sins, and then goes on to instruct Joseph to name Him “Jesus,” meaning “Jehovah will save,” which therefore means God is with us in Christ!

Matthew 1:22-25 “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.”

Questions for Personal Reflection and/or Community Group Discussion:

1. If you were Joseph’s friend, how would you counsel him to handle having learned his fiancée was pregnant? How do you think you would’ve counseled him when he told you about the angel’s message in his dream?
2. Recall the last time you were sinned against. How did you respond?
3. Recall a time when you were treated better than you deserved. How did that feel?
4. How can you extend mercy instead of exact justice towards someone in your life right now?