

God Made Flesh

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Preacher: Jeremy Martinson

- [0 : 0 0] Okay, and you can turn to the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew today. And chapter 1.
- And we are going to be in verses 18 through 25. Gospel of Matthew, chapter 1, verses 18 through 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. 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 you 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.
- [1 : 1 0] 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. Thanks, Coy.
- Father, we are grateful to have your word. We're grateful to have it in our language. We're grateful to have your Holy Spirit with us and in us to help us understand the things from this particular text that you have for us today.
- We so desire to continue centering our thoughts on Jesus and all that he is and all that he has accomplished for us.
- So would you please help us as we turn our attention to your word, help those who listen to listen actively and to compare the things that they are hearing with other portions of Scripture to see, like the Bereans, whether these things are true?
- And would you please help me as I continue to worship in the preaching of your word to be faithful? Guard my heart and my mind, and please take away anything that is unhelpful or distracting so that we just hear those things that you have for us today.
- [2 : 2 4] We ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks. Amen. If you wake up tomorrow morning and your house is cold, who will you call?
- Okay, good, good, good. You will call someone who knows something about a furnace, right? HVAC, maybe that's Mike Diley. What if you wake up and you don't have any hot water?
- Okay. Or maybe you would call Lainey's, right? You could call Lainey's 8 to 8 at a regular rate, I think is theirs. What if you have no Wi-Fi? Okay, I was going to say, you're not, I don't think you're probably calling Mike for that one.
- Maybe you would. What if there is something strange in the neighborhood? Who are you going to call? Some pepper! Good, very good.

What if you are walking in a winter wonderland with your sweetie, and you realize that you want to be married? You are going to call Parson Brown, right?

[3 : 41] That's how the song goes. You better call Parson Brown and not the snowman, because the snowman is not going to be able to help you. What if your snowblower won't start? Corey.

What if you have a question about interest rates? Amy or Ray, right? Okay. What if your problem is more serious than heat or hot water or a high interest mortgage?

What if your real problem is sin? That is our real problem, you know. Our real problem is sin.

Sin is the reason why the world is the way that it is. Thanks to Adam's rebellion in the Garden of Eden, we all have a sin problem.

And the scripture makes it clear that that sin has passed from generation to generation to generation, all the way down to us. Some of us have already passed that on to our children.

[4 : 50] And if you are a child here and God gives you children someday, you will pass that on to them as well. How do you solve a problem like sin?

Who could you call for help? Because here's the thing, right? Even if you could stop sinning today and never ever sin one more time, that would be wonderful.

What are you going to do about the sin that is already in your past? Like if your water heater bursts, you can replace your water heater with a new water heater.

But that's not your whole problem, right? You also have to clean up the mess that the burst water heater has made and repair whatever damage all that water in your basement has done.

Sin is like that. Sinners like us need a savior.

[6 : 04] We need someone who is strong enough to deal with our sin problem. But listen, our savior can't be an angel or an avenger.

We need a real flesh and blood human being. Someone who is like us. But hear this also.

Not just anyone will do. I love all of you, but I can't pay for anyone else's sin. Why not? Well, you know me.

I've got my own sin problems to deal with. So I can't help you deal with your sin problem before God. Sinners need a savior.

Someone who is like us in our weakness. But unique in his sinlessness.

[7 : 14] Matthew introduces us to a man named Joseph. And Joseph is a critical, critically important character in this drama of redemption.

But ironically, Joseph has no speaking lines. Josie, I wonder if you are writing anyone into your drama who is a main character but has no speaking lines.

It's not what we would normally expect. Look at verse number 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place 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.

And her husband, Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

[8 : 22] I met Lois when we were 15 years old.

And just a few weeks after meeting her, I told her that I was going to marry her someday. That's a little aggressive, isn't it?

But in God's kindness, we did get engaged a few years later. And then we got married six months or so after that.

This is how engagement and marriage typically works in our culture. We need to understand a bit of the culture of the ancient Near East if we are going to make sense of this story.

And engagement was different. And engagement happened typically when the boy and the girl were still children. And it was an arranged marriage between their parents where their parents would get together and basically commit that their children, who were still kids, would get married one day.

[9 : 35] This is what they called engagement in the ancient Near East. And then when the girl typically becomes a teenager, the couple would become betrothed.

And like engagement in our Western culture, betrothal is the last step, the last period of time before marriage.

Betrothal is much more significant, much more weighty, much more meaningful than engagement in ours.

Here's why. If you get engaged in this culture and you decide you do not want to marry that person, you can give back the ring.

Typically, I think that's the way that works, right? You can give back the ring and while it's going to hurt, you can walk away. And that's okay.

[10 : 38] There's nothing legal about your engagement. It is mostly a traditional thing that we do in our culture. But betrothal in the ancient Near East is legally binding.

It can only be ended by divorce. Now, if you get engaged in our culture, we would consider you what?

What do you call it if you're engaged? Yes. Sorry? Yes, dating. What's the title that you get when you become engaged? A fiancé.

That's right. You become a fiancé. Now, in betrothal in the ancient Near East, when you become betrothed, you do not become a fiancé.

You actually become husband and wife during your betrothal. But, despite having those titles during your one-year betrothal, the couple does not live together or participate in the physical privileges of marriage.

[11 : 51] And so, we can understand how Joseph might feel when he learns that his betrothed wife, Mary, is pregnant.

He is her husband, legally. But he is not the father of his wife's baby.

Even in our culture, this is scandalous still, isn't it? Just imagine what Joseph would feel in that culture.

Humiliation. Anger. Jealousy.

Shame. He is, the scripture tells us, a just man. He is a man who does what is right.

[13 : 05] And he is stuck between a rock and a hard place. He knows that God's law cannot be disregarded. He knows that he cannot overlook Mary's indiscretion or sweep her behavior under the rug.

To do so would be tantamount to lying about himself and to say, Yes, that child is mine. Shame on us. And so, Joseph, being a just man, resolves to end their betrothal legally by going through the process of divorce, but doing it quietly, we would call it settling out of court in order to spare Mary from public humiliation.

Isn't it wonderful when God graciously gives us time to consider our decisions? And isn't it good for us to give one another time to make decisions, to offer prayer, to offer counsel, to offer shepherding, but also to give time and space to one another to make decisions?

Look at verse 20. Love that about Joseph, this just man.

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.

[15 : 05] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. The angel assures Joseph of this. Things are not as they seem. Mary is not unfaithful.

In fact, she has been very faithful. Your wife is pregnant. But not by the participation of a man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Things are not as they seem. When I was in first grade at Park Christian School, I memorized Psalm 139 from the New International Version.

I want to share one verse from this particular version with you. This is Psalm 139 in verse 13. It says this, For you created my inmost being.

[16 : 28] You knit me together in my mother's womb. Now, these words are true of every baby.

God put you together inside your mother. But this week, I realized this verse is also true in a very special way of baby Jesus.

The Holy Spirit made the preexistent Son of God into a human baby inside of Mary's womb.

The Holy Spirit knit Jesus together, the psalmist tells us. Blood and bones and a belly button and lungs and lips and legs and a head and a heart and two hands and a tongue and toes and a nose.

The Holy Spirit knit together the body of Jesus inside of Mary's womb so that the preexistent Son of God could become a man.

[18 : 13] This is what we mean when we mention the word incarnation.

The Holy Spirit enfleshed God the Son. He gave the Son flesh. We read about this in John chapter 1, don't we?

The Word became flesh. How did that happen? Matthew and Luke both tell us the Holy Spirit did that. But remember, Jesus was conceived without the help of a human father.

This is good news for us. This means that unlike every other baby who has ever been born on earth, Jesus does not inherit Adam's sin problem.

Jesus is fully human. He is like us in our weakness. But because he is conceived by the Holy Spirit, he is unique in his sinlessness.

[19 : 34] He is the angel speaking to Joseph. He will save his people from their sins.

All this, Matthew writes, 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 up 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.

The angel assures Joseph, things are not as they seem. Mary's pregnancy is supernatural.

[20 : 44] It is miraculous. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. Her baby is the final and full fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Her son is the promised one who will save his people from their sin.

So then the question is this. Let me say that again, because that was terrible grammar. So then this is the question. If Joseph wasn't necessary in order to conceive Jesus, then why bother with Joseph at all?

That's a good question. If you look back at the first 17 verses of Matthew 1, if you have your Bible still open, you can see that there. First 17 verses of Matthew 1, if you're anything like me, this is what happens.

Oh yeah, that's a lot of names. I am not going to read all of that. And we skip over to verse number 18. But if you were to read this genealogy, you would notice that this goes all the way from Adam to Joseph.

But in case we skim over this, which I suspect we do, the angel made sure that we don't miss a critically important fact and the answer to the question, why bother with Joseph at all?

[22 : 38] Why include him in the story at all? Why write about him in Matthew? Why not just leave it with Luke's gospel, what we had last week? And the answer is in chapter 1 in verse 20.

Look what the angel says. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David.

What is this? This carpenter in Podunkville, Nazareth.

A town overrun by Gentiles and Roman soldiers. One of those piratey type towns that you might think about. The type of town that people would say, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

And everyone would agree, the answer is, of course not. Joseph is a descendant of King David.

[23 : 47] He has royal blood in his veins. So when Joseph takes Mary as his wife, though Jesus is not his son physically, Jesus becomes his son legally.

And through Joseph's humble obedience to God's word, through the angel, Jesus becomes a descendant of David.

a descendant from the tribe of Judah, a descendant from Abraham. But he becomes a descendant of David and Judah and Abraham without inheriting the sin problem of Judah and David and Abraham.

He becomes Joseph's son legally, but he is not Joseph's son physically. Though he has no spoken lines in this drama of redemption, Joseph becomes the means, in other words, the way that God uses to fulfill Isaiah's ancient prophecy.

A prophecy to send a child who will become king forever more. This is Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6.

[25 : 35] For to us a child is born, to us a son is given. and the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

All the first readers of this text must have pondered these words. Who is this that Isaiah is writing about? Of the increase, verse 7, 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 righteousness from this time forth and forevermore the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The story of Joseph in Matthew chapter 1 highlights the work of the Holy Spirit to incarnate the Son of God, to enflesh the Son of God and ironically the Spirit's work is physical work.

Jesus has a body because of the Holy Spirit and Jesus used that body to perfectly obey God and then Jesus went to the cross where as Peter writes in chapter 2 he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree.

[27 : 32] and so I wonder is Jesus your Savior?

He came to save his people from their sins. Have you been saved from your sins? Are you trusting in Jesus because he is like us in our weakness but unique in his sinlessness?

he is infinitely qualified to take to save you from your sins. Repent repent and believe in Jesus.

Followers of Jesus let me remind you things are not as they seem.

I wonder if you need this reminder like Joseph did. Joseph certainly felt humiliated betrayed rejected but the angel assures him of God's purposeful involvement in his painful circumstances.

[28 : 56] perhaps you are like Joseph and you feel angry at the abrupt turn that your life took.

Maybe Joseph felt angry. God is always working for his glory and the good of his people.

I won't tire of reminding you of that because I need to be reminded of that. Not even sin that makes you so very angry thwarts God's plans for you.

Joseph may have experienced fear about the future shame about what others would think of him.

Do you ever feel fear and shame? Things are not as they seem. God is for you in Christ.

[30 : 19] God has not forgotten you. God will not abandon you. And through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit God is with you.

Our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ he is Emmanuel God with us. Let's pray.

Father thank you for giving us this opportunity to consider this text from Matthew chapter 1. Blessed Holy Spirit thank you for this supernatural miraculous work that you did in fleshing the pre existent the one who always existed with the Father giving the Son of God flesh and bone and blood we acknowledge that if it was not for this work Holy Spirit that you did our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ he could not be the lamb slain from before the foundation of the world he needed a body to lie down and he needed blood to be poured out for the sin of his people

Holy Spirit thank you for the work that you did to incarnate the Son of God help us help us as we wrap our minds around this even in some way help us to consider again in a fresh way all that we have received through the wonderful work of you our Father and you Lord Jesus and you blessed Holy Spirit we are so grateful and humbled to receive not only your word but the forgiveness of our sins thank you for granting us life and repentance and giving us the wonderful gift of faith so that we can respond by believing again and again and again that you are for us in Christ please help us as we continue in our time of worship it is in the name of the Lord

Jesus that we pray amen amen