

Matthew 1:18-25

Prayer: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

Several years ago, a guy who was too short to play in the NFL earned the starting quarterback job for the Seattle Seahawks. He was picked 12th in the 3rd round of the draft and 75th overall. Coaches thought that there were 74 guys who were more valuable than Russell Wilson. They were wrong.

No one noticed him at first but then he started turning heads. First, he stole the starting quarterback job from a guy who made close to five times what Wilson made. Second, he led the Seahawks to an 11-5 regular season record with some impressive come from behind wins. Third, he tied Peyton Manning's record for most touchdowns in a rookie season. Fourth, he was named team captain as a rookie. Fifth, he went to the pro bowl as a rookie and tore it up. Sixth, he took his team to the Super bowl two years in a row.

This year people were talking about him as the MVP for a while.

When most people, including myself, noticed how special Russell Wilson is they want to know his origins. Where did he come from? It turns out that he won state three times in high school, was class president, then played at UNC, pro base ball, Wisconsin, MBA, solid family....

Learning about Wilson's origins helps make sense of his success.

Matthew 1:18-25 is an origin story. When 1st century Jews heard the claims of Jesus they probably wanted to know his origin. Look with me at 1:18 "Now the birth of Jesus took place in this way" the Greek word translated birth is literally origin or genesis.

Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote this story to explain the origin of Jesus. But it is not just any origin story it is an origin story designed to give us a theological explanation of what happened. We learn four things from this origin story-

First, Jesus came from a virgin!

Theologians call this the virgin conception. This story is told from Joseph's perspective.

How does Joseph respond to the virgin conception? He wants a divorce!

Matthew 1:18-19 (ESV) — 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. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

The average age for betrothal for the female was 12 and for male it was 18. Betrothal in Jewish law lasted one year and it was much more serious than our engagement. The betrothal could only be broken off by death or divorce.

The man betrothed was considered the husband although the women lived in her father's house until the wedding day when the women moved into her husband's house and the marriage was consummated sexually.

Matthew emphasizes that they did not sleep together until the wedding night by writing "she was found to be with child before they came together". "Came together" was a Greek expression for marital intimacy.

At the end of verse 18 we read that Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant.

I'm sure that many things went through his head- anger, betrayal, shame, jealousy, etc...

No doubt Mary tried to explain that an angel of the Lord appeared to her (Luke 1) telling her that the Holy Spirit caused her to conceive and that she was still a virgin. But imagine being in Joseph's shoes.

You get engaged and six months later your fiancée says to you that she is pregnant but she swears she is still a virgin. What??? And she explains that an angel appeared to her. Now days we would put her in an institution and prescribe meds. Miracles were not common in Palestine. In fact, it has been several hundred years since anything miraculous has happened. Contrary to popular belief Palestinians in the ANE had the same perspective on the supernatural as we do.

Lets pick up in verse 19.

Matthew 1:19 (ESV) — 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

How does Joseph respond to the virgin conception? He wants a divorce!

How does God explain the virgin conception? He gives a dream!

Matthew 1:20 (ESV) — 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.

God still appears to people in dreams. I know of three people who have had very specific dreams from God that have come to pass and altered the course of their lives.

God speaks to Joseph in a dream through an angel. The angel saves the day by explaining to Joseph where this child comes from and by convincing Joseph to take Mary as his wife (which is exactly what he does in verses 24-25).

It is also important to note that twice in this passage we read that the child is conceived by the Holy Spirit ruling out the possibility of Mary getting pregnant by another man.

Why was it so important for Joseph to respond to this dream by marrying Mary? When Joseph took Mary as his wife and named Jesus this implied that he had officially adopted Jesus placing Jesus squarely in the Davidic line (v. 20 “joseph son of David”). This was important for many reasons.

*Joseph wants a divorce
God gives a dream*

Application:

This story explains the origin of Jesus. He was no ordinary baby. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin! Why did God do it this way?

The virgin conception enabled Jesus to be fully God and fully man. He was the Son of God and the son of David and he had to be both to save us.

The virgin conception makes possible the union of two natures in one person!

The virgin conception teaches us that we can't save ourselves! Salvation had to come from God.

How do you expect me to believe in angels and virgin conceptions in the 21st century??? One of the greatest miracles is the existence of stuff/the universe!!! Three explanations...

First, Jesus came from a virgin!

Second, Jesus came to take away sins!

Matthew 1:20-21 (ESV) — 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."

The name Jesus literally means God is salvation or God saves. In the Jewish world names did not simply identify a person. And names were not chosen because they sounded cool.

Celebrity baby names (5 worst according to a website)

Zuma Nest Rock

Bronx Mowgli
Apple
Moxie Crimefighter
Pilot Inspektor

Names were supremely important and they reflected the hopes and dreams of the parents. God chose the name for Mary's son because he would be the savior of the world. But what would he save us from? Look at verse 21 again. Notice carefully what the angel says. "...and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Most people, even non-religious people, admit that they need salvation...

salvation from a life of boredom,
salvation from sickness,
salvation from loneliness,
salvation from depression,
salvation from their boss, their kids, or their spouse.
Salvation from painful relationships.

Everyone agrees we need salvation in some form or another but where does salvation come from?

Education
Doctors
Counselors
Food
Entertainment
Money?
Drugs, sex, and rock and roll?
Exercise and diet?
Therapy???
Medication???

None of these things will save us biblical speaking.

We need salvation from sin. Salvation in the Bible is rescue from danger or serious calamity. The worst danger and the most serious calamity is being an object of God's wrath due to our sins.

Our greatest problem is not boredom, loneliness, and sickness. Our greatest problem is that we are sinners awaiting the judgment of God.

Application:

Anything you look to besides Jesus for salvation will leave empty and wanting more. We all know this deep down inside but it often does not keep us from going back to our false saviors.

Illustration:

False saviors don't work!!! (Levi- body building, water sports, motorcycles, a new girlfriend, etc...)

Jesus came to save us from our sins! Who gets to be saved? Those who admit they need saving!!! Those who confess that they are in desperate need of a savior. Etc...

*Jesus came from a virgin
Jesus came to take away sin*

Third, Jesus came to fulfill prophecy!

Mary is pregnant and an Angel appears in a dream encouraging Joseph to marry Mary. Why does this happen? Matthew tells us...

Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV) — 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).

Roughly 700 years before the birth of Christ the prophet Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son. Isaiah clearly had the Christ in mind because of the context of Isaiah 8 and 9.

Here is the important thing to see, God promised a Messiah and God delivered a Messiah. God was able to do this because he knows all things, he controls all things, and nothing happens outside of his control. God can and must be trusted to do what he says he is going to do.

Application:

Maybe you are not sure about Christianity. You may be thinking how do I know that all this stuff about Jesus being born of a virgin, dying for my sins, and rising from the grave is true???

Proof that the Bible message about Jesus must be trusted is found in fulfilled prophecy.

"In all the writings of Buddha, Confucius, and Lao-tse, you will not find a single example of predicted prophecy. In the Koran (the writings of Muhammad) there is one instance of a specific prophecy- a self fulfilling prophecy- that he, Muhammad himself, would return to Mecca. Quite different from the prophecy of Jesus who said that He would return from the grave. One is easily fulfilled, and the other impossible to any human being." (Kennedy, 2)

The OT contains 2000 predicative prophecies and many of them are very specific unlike the vague prophecies of Nostradamus and others. There are prophecies about the rise and fall of nations that can be easily verified by someone with an encyclopedia.

Furthermore, the Bible contains hundreds of prophecies about Christ and some are very specific and impossible for Christ to self fulfill.

A skeptic may say, "These are easy to explain away because the Bible was written after these things happened." The vast majority of Scholars (Christian and non Christian) agree that books like Isaiah were written well before Christ.

You owe it to yourself to consider these things because if the Bible does contain thousands of fulfilled prophecies that means the Bible is the word of God and must be believed and obeyed. Life and death are at stake...

*Jesus came from a virgin
Jesus came to take away sins
Jesus came to fulfill prophecy*

Fourth, Jesus came to be with us!

Lets go back to verses 22-23 again...

Matthew 1:22-23 (ESV) — **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).

All this took place- the virgin conception, the dream, Joseph’s response....

so that God could be with us. But how can God be with us when we are sinful and he is perfect? This is why Jesus came. He came to take care of our sin problem so that God could always be with us. God is everywhere present (Ps. 139) but God is present with us to bless if we are Christians.

Having God with us makes all the difference in the world.

Illustration-

Being in Greece with a translator (Going from airport to hotel, walking through rough parts of Athens, going to restaurants, riding on the subways, and getting around in general....)

Reading a book with Heidi by my side...

“Presence is a delicious word- because it points to one of our truly great gifts. Nothing else can take the place of presence, not gifts, not telephone calls, not pictures, not mementos, nothing. Ask the person who has lost a lifelong mate what they miss the most; the answer is invariably ‘presence’. When we are ill, we don’t need soothing words nearly as much as we need loved ones to be present. What makes shared life- games, walks, concerts, outings, and a myriad of other things- so pleasurable? Presence.” (Fee, 9)

Application-

When you are afraid God is with you to protect.
When you feel Guilty God is with you to forgive.
When you are weak God is with you to provide strength.
When you are lonely God is with you to provide companionship.
When you are tempted God is with you to provide a way of escape.
When you are depressed God is with you to provide you with Joy.
When you need someone to talk to God is with you to listen.

If you're a Christian God is with you so you have nothing to fear.

Even though it may seem like God is a million miles away, if we are Christians he is always present with us.

God wanted to be present with you so much that he sent his son to suffer and die in your place! Wow!!!

God wants to be with you all the time!!! But I'm so sinful!!!

Conclusion:

*Jesus came from a virgin
Jesus came to take away sins
Jesus came to fulfill prophecy
Jesus came to be with us!*

The story explains the origin of Jesus. How will you respond to this story?

When Joseph hears about the origin of Jesus he believes the angels message and obeys.

Will we respond like Joseph?

Here's the thing about Jesus!

He is not a religious option among many that gives meaning to life.

He is not someone designed to make us feel warm and fuzzy around Christmas time.

Jesus is the only true and living God who has come in the flesh. How we respond to this origin story will affect where we spend eternity. Lets pray...