

Matthew 1:18-25

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Explain where I have been...

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Prayer: please join me in prayer...

Sermon introduction:

By every objective criteria Jesus of Nazareth is the most influential person to ever live!!!

Consider these facts-

Jesus currently has more followers than any other person in world history (2.3 billion).

Jesus continues to be the center piece of the world's yearly calendar. We live in the year 2020, which means that it is 2020 years after Christ's birth.

Jesus continues to shape our weekly calendar. Historically, the reason that most of the world takes Sunday off is because Sunday is the day that Jesus rose from the dead. Therefore, it became the Christian sabbath.

Over 98 nations in world history have officially called themselves "Christian nations." No other person has directly influenced this many nations.

Jesus has more cities named after him or his followers than any other person in world history (over 20,000 cities in Europe alone).

Jesus has more buildings named after him than any other person in world history.

There have been more books, songs, and poems written about Jesus than any other person in world history.

Jesus followers are responsible for the scientific revolution, the creation of universities, the creation of most hospitals, the abolition of slavery, and the liberation of woman. (Jesus Skeptic)

Renowned Yale historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote,

“Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries.” (Wellum, 25)

When we hear about amazing people we often want to know where they came from. Why? Their origins often help explain their amazing lives.

This raises the question, where did Jesus come from? What is his origin story? And why did he come to earth?

Matthew 1:18-25 is an origin story. When we learn about the supernatural events surrounding Jesus' birth, it helps explain his extraordinary influence.

This Christmas text tells us four things about Jesus origins. Let's look at each item carefully...

First, Jesus came from a virgin!

Theologians call this the virgin conception.

Matthew 1:18 (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.

Betrothal in Jewish law lasted one year, and it was much more serious than engagement. The betrothal could only be broken off by death or divorce. The man betrothed was considered the husband even though his betrothed continued to live in her father's house until the wedding day. On the wedding night the marriage was consummated, and the bride moved into her husband's house.

Matthew emphasizes that Mary and Joseph did not sleep together until the wedding night with these words, "she was found to be with child before they came together." The phrase "came together" was a Greek euphemism for sexual intercourse.

At the end of verse 18, we read that Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant before their wedding night.

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

Imagine being in Joseph's shoes.

You get engaged and six months later your fiancé says, "I'm pregnant, but I swear I'm still a virgin." What??? And then she says, "but it is ok because I have been talking with angels." Now days we would put her in an institution and prescribe strong medication.

Contrary to popular belief Palestinians in the ANE had the same perspective on the supernatural as we do. They were very skeptical, which was why Joseph was very skeptical of Mary's story.

This brings us to 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.

Fortunately, the story does not end here!

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 speaks to Joseph through an angel in a dream. The angel saves the day by explaining the origin of Mary's child. Then the

angel convinces Joseph to take Mary as his wife (which is exactly what he does in verses 24-25). He was a great man of faith.

Application:

This story helps explain the origin of Jesus. He was no ordinary baby. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin! Why?

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

The virgin conception enabled Jesus to be truly God and truly man. He had to be both (fully God and fully man) to save us.

Furthermore, the virgin conception enabled Christ to enter the world without the stain of original sin.

Objection:

Do you really expect us to believe in angels and virgin conceptions? It is the 21st century? It is the age of space travel, brain surgeries, and electric cars. Yes! Why? There is incredible evidence for God's existence. If God exists, then miracles are possible. What is the evidence?

The existence of the universe... the vast majority of scientists now believe that before the universe existed there was nothing—no time, no space, and no matter. Therefore, something outside of time, space, and matter must have created time, space, and matter. God is the best candidate.

How about the fine tuning of the universe? There are over 120 finely tuned conditions for life to exist on planet earth, fine tuning requires a fine tuner.

The odds of these conditions existing by chance is 1 out of 10 to the 138th.

The estimated amount of sub-atomic particles in the universe is 10 to the 80th. (1 followed by 80 zeroes)

How about the existence of massive amounts of information in DNA? We know that organized information/specified complexity only comes from intelligence.

How about the presence of incredibly intricate (an irreducibly complex) machines in biological systems? We know that design only comes from a designer

Etc...

The latest findings from science point us towards God, not away from God. If God exists, then virgin conceptions are possible. If virgin conceptions are possible, salvation is possible, which brings us to the second point.

First, Jesus came from a virgin!

Second, Jesus came to save us from 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.”

In the Jewish world names did not merely identify a person. In addition, names were not chosen merely because they sounded cool. Names were supremely important in the ANE, because they reflected the hopes and dreams of the parents.

God chose the name Jesus, because God sent Jesus to earth for a very specific purpose. The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew name Joshua and it literally means God saves. Jesus was sent into the world to save the world from their sins.

2020 has been a tough year. I think it is safe to say that during 2020 most of us, even nonreligious people, longed for salvation.

We long to be saved from-

Covid-19

Corrupt politicians

Unemployment

Lockdowns

Racial tension

Loneliness

Boredom

We all feel the visceral need to be rescued from our circumstances.

But all of these things are the result of sin, maybe not your specific sin or my specific sin, but the result of living in a world ruined by sin in general.

Because of sin we experience guilt, shame, broken relationships, crippling anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc....

We all need to be saved from sin!!!

Illustration:

“Rolling Stone magazine called his suicide “the day the music died.” He grew up in an incredibly dysfunctional home. He found escape in an old discarded guitar that unlocked his genius.

His blistering music, raw lyrics, and angry performances introduced a new word to the pop lexicon: grunge. By 1993, his band had recorded two mega hit albums. Kurt Cobain was the biggest rock star on the planet.

Yet he could not shake the angst of a tortured childhood. He shot up heroin to kill the pain. In an attempt to create the family, he never knew as a child, he got married. But his rocker wife was also hooked on heroin, and they fought viciously.

His screaming fits with his band, Nirvana, became tabloid fodder.

By now his wife was running scared. She flew to Los Angeles to kick her drug habit, and begged Kurt to do the same for their baby's sake. He checked himself into a clinic where a psychiatrist said that he was a seething volcano, relieving his childhood traumas as if they had just happened.

When he got out, he promised to let go of the past. He flew home to Seattle, locked himself in his guesthouse, and took his own life.

Kurt had so much to live for. Within ten years he had sold 50 million albums. Rolling Stone ranked him the twelve-best guitarist of all time, and MTV listed him as the seventh greatest singer in pop history.

Therapy, money, drugs, sex, fame, and power could not save Kurt Cobain.

Only Jesus could have saved Kurt Cobain. If Jesus has the power to save someone like Kurt Cobain Jesus can save anyone from their sins.

You may not be as messed up as Kurt Cobain was, but all of us are sinners. Apart from Christ, sin ruins our lives, enslaves us, and alienates us from God.

Only Jesus can save us from the destructive effects of sin.

Matthew 1:21 (ESV) — 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

How does baby Jesus save us from our sins? He grows up and dies on the cross in our place and then he rises from the grave victoriously. Explain gospel....

But not everyone is saved from the consequences of sins. You must ask Jesus to save you!

Dave, how do I know that what you are saying is true? In other words, how can I trust the Bible? This brings us to the third point...

Jesus came from a virgin
Jesus came to save from sin

Third, Jesus came to fulfill prophecy!

Marry is pregnant! Joseph wants to divorce her, but an Angel appears in a dream encouraging Joseph to marry her. Why does all of this happen?

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 bare a son. Matthew quotes from this prophesy in Matt. 1:23.

Here is what I want us to see, Jesus birth fulfilled very specific prophecies. Why does this matter?

Fulfilled prophecy is proof that the Bible is the word of God.

Maybe you are not sure about the truthfulness of Christianity. Right now, you are wondering if you can trust the Bible when it talks about virgin births, God becoming man, Christ dying for sins, and bodily resurrections. I get it, these things are hard to believe.

Yet, fulfilled prophecy is proof that the Bible must be trusted. How? No one knows the future but God, the Bible predicts the future, therefore the Bible is from God. If it is from God, it must be believed.

One scholar writes,

“There are **191** predictions in the OT about the coming of Christ, including his ancestry, the city in which he would be born, that he would be born of a virgin, precisely the time in history when he would die, and so on.” (Stroebel, 131)

These prophecies are very specific. How specific?

1000 years before Christ, **Psalm 22:16-18** says that his hands and feet would be pierced, that his bones would be out of socket, and that others would cast lots for his clothing.

500 years before Christ, **Zech. 12:10** says that Jesus would be pierced with a lance.

700 years before Christ, **Isa. 53:2-12** specifically describes twelve distinct aspects of Christ’s suffering on the cross.

The specificity of the prophecies is astounding; they describe where Jesus would be born, how he would be betrayed, how he would specifically die, plus many other things.

Peter Kreeft, the prominent Boston College philosopher, wrote,

“If you calculate the probability of any one person fulfilling, sheerly by chance, all of the Old Testament Messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, it would be as astronomical as winning the lottery every day for a century. Even if Jesus deliberately tried to fulfill the prophecies, no mere man could have the power to arrange the time, place, events, and circumstances of His birth or events after His death.”

(Reflections on the Existence of God, Simmons, 223-224)

The OT contains roughly 2,000 predicative prophecies, many of them are very specific, unlike the vague prophecies of Nostradamus. There are prophecies about the rise and fall of nations that can be easily verified by anyone with an encyclopedia.

Application:

There are many reasons to take the truth claims of Christianity very seriously, fulfilled prophecy is just one of them. We don't believe the Bible on blind faith—we believe the Bible because of the evidence for its truthfulness.

If the Bible contain thousands of fulfilled prophecies the Bible is the word of God. If the Bible is the word of God, the Bible must be believed—both the bad news and the good news.

What sort of good news? This brings us to the last point...

Jesus came from a virgin

Jesus came to take away sins

Jesus came to fulfill prophecy

Fourth, Jesus came to be with us!

Let's go back to verses 22-23...

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, and Joseph's response....

So that God could be with us. God is everywhere present (Ps. 139) but God manifests his presence to Christians. It gets even better; God dwells inside of Christians.

It makes sense that God created the universe... he is God.

It makes sense that God sustains all things... he is God.

It makes sense that God knows all things... he is God.

It makes sense that God will judge the world someday... he is God.

All of this make sense... but what does not make sense is that God would want to be with us. The incarnation is one of the most astonishing miracles in the Bible.

Why in the world would Jesus leave the fellowship of the trinity???

God took on flesh, to be with us.

2000 years later, He is still with us!!! Listen to how the gospel of Matthew ends.

Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV) — 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Jesus took on flesh to be with us.

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 help you escape.

When you are depressed, God is with you to fill you with Joy.

When you need someone to talk to God is with you to listen.

If you're a Christian God is always with you, therefore you have nothing to fear.

Conclusion:

Matthew 1:18-25 tells us about the origin of Jesus.

Jesus came from a virgin

Jesus came to take away sins

Jesus came to fulfill prophecy

Jesus came to be with us!

The events surrounding the birth of Jesus help explain the extraordinary influence of Jesus.

How will you respond to the most influential person to ever live?

Let me leave you with something to ponder.

Over the year's historians have made two lists.

List one- the most influential people who ever lived.

List two- all those people who claimed to be God.

There is never overlap on these lists. Why? The people that claim to be God are crazy, therefore they never have much influence over people. But not Jesus, he is on both lists.

He claimed to be God and people believed him and as a result he became the most influential person to ever live.

Jesus is not merely a mythic figure designed to make us feel warm and fuzzy around Christmas time.

Jesus is the living God who came in the flesh. How we respond to his origin story this Christmas affects our eternal destiny. Let's pray...

Communion connection... Jesus came to take away sins.