

Born to Die to Give Us Life

Matthew 1:18-25

Introduction

What can Jesus' birth teach us?

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Exposition

I. The Scandal (Vv. 18-19)

Verses 18-19 detail the scandal of Jesus' birth. Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph. Mary, a virgin, is "found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit." I want you to take a moment to reflect on that statement. This is a completely unique event in the history of the world. Never happened before. Will never happen again. A virgin is "found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit," the details of which were explained by an angel that only appeared to a few people. Can you imagine trying to have this conversation with someone? Can you imagine trying to explain the seemingly unexplainable? Can you imagine doing it in a culture where honor and shame are major factors in your social status? A virgin is found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. To the ancient and modern mind, this is a scandalous thought.

Joseph, the man to whom Mary was betrothed, is a law-abiding Jew, who also loves his soon-to-be wife enough that instead of dealing with this situation in a public manner, seeks to divorce or break off this engagement with Mary in a private manner, to not allow her to be publicly put to shame and disgrace. Obviously, the implication here is that some people would think that there was infidelity. Yet, as we will see, a visit from an angel prevents Joseph from following through with the divorce.

With all of this noted, however, the supposed scandal of Jesus' birth would follow him around for much of his public ministry. In John 8, when Jesus was confronting the Pharisees about their lack of faith in him and telling them that they were not children of Abraham because they did not believe as Abraham did, the Pharisees responded to Jesus and said, "We are not illegitimate children. The only Father we have is God himself." What the Pharisees were saying about Jesus was that they "knew" the story of his birth. He was an "unplanned pregnancy." In fact, he might not even be sure who his father is.

Mary and Joseph would likely also bear the weight of these accusations, but obeying God was more important. Even if it didn't make sense to their friends and family at the time, they trusted God and His Word, which leads us to verses 20-21...

II. The Surety (Vv. 20-21)

These verses teach us about the surety of God's Word. Notice the promise in verse 21: She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

We looked at this verse last Christmas eve regarding how there is a sure promise of God's grace for our sins. The passage does not say that Jesus "might" save his people from their sins, but instead, it says that "he will save his people from their sins." Jesus was born to die to give us life!

Who are his people? Those who place their trust in Him! There is no hint of uncertainty. There is no question about the effectiveness of Christ's death. He will most certainly save His people, those who flee to Him for refuge. All who trust in Jesus Christ can be assured that they have been saved from their sins. What a promise!

T.S. – But how can we be sure that Jesus is able to do what is promised? How can someone born of a woman save sinners from their sin? What is it about Jesus that allows us to have this kind of hope? We get a glimpse of the answer to this question in verses 22-25...

III. The Steadfastness (Vv. 22-25)

These final verses pull back the curtain and allow us to see some of the mystery of God's work of salvation. Verses 22-23, in particular, tell us that "All **this** took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").

You see, the conception of Jesus was not like every other conception in the world. As Matthew draws from Isaiah 7, we are told that the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whose name will be "Immanuel," which means, "God with us." In other words, the virgin birth of Jesus was God's plan from the beginning. This was planned. And God's Word prophesied of it. And God's Word did not fail. What His Word foretold, came to pass!

Now, as we think of this event in history, we need to think deeply about its implications. First, we ask, how does a virgin conceive? Well, the answer is clear. Naturally, virgins do not conceive. Yet, what is going on with Jesus is not based upon the pattern of nature as we know it. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and conceived Jesus in her womb without any contribution from a physical father. This is miraculous. It is supernatural. It is impossible apart from God's powerful work. The only way that Mary could become pregnant as a virgin was through the supernatural work of God.

Thus, the story that Matthew 1 is telling us is that our only hope in this world depends upon God's supernatural intervention. It depends on His miraculous work to do the impossible. Apart from His work, the world would be doomed. But God intervened. God came to us. God the Son took on flesh, becoming human, born as a baby, demonstrating God's love for sinners.

Conclusion

God keeps His Word. He has intervened in the world according to His plan to save us from our sins and give us life through the life and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of Mary, the Son of God.

Application

- 1) Jesus is not only able to sympathize with our feelings of shame, but he is able to break its power in our lives (Hebrews 12:2 – For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.). Jesus knew what it was like to be ridicule. Jesus knew what it was like to be bullied by self-righteous people. Jesus knew what it was like to have people try to embarrass him because of his family story.
 - a. The Shame of Your Family
 - b. The Shame of Your Circumstances
 - c. The Shame of Your Sin

When you come to Jesus, you are not coming to someone that does not know your pain and suffering. Nor are you coming to someone who will shame or dishonor you. You are not coming to someone who is unable to sympathize with your weaknesses and struggles. He knows your weakness. And he still loves you and invites you to Himself. He came for you.

- 2) You can know for certain today that your sins are forgiven because of Jesus. You don't have to wonder if Jesus will turn away your request for forgiveness. He came for the purpose of saving His people from their sins.
- 3) You cannot save yourself. While the virgin birth teaches us several things, one of the most important things that it teaches us is that we need God to intervene in our lives. It took the supernatural work of God to bring Jesus into this world to save us. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary's virgin womb. Humanity cannot provide its own salvation through its natural means. We need the supernatural work of God. This is why Jesus came into the world.

Quit trying to save yourself through your own natural efforts. Instead, embrace, put your faith in the Holy One who came to save you. Who supernaturally stepped into our world to redeem us. To save us from our sins that we cannot save ourselves from.