

## Christmas 2009 – Matthew 1:18-25

### Introduction

- A. Is Jesus *really* the son of David?
- B. If so, then why such a strange ending to an otherwise very normal genealogy (Matthew 1:16)?

#### I. Verses 18-19

##### A. Jewish Betrothal

- ✓ As a betrothed couple, Joseph was already called Mary's "husband" and the only way for Joseph to break this betrothal was to "divorce" Mary. On the other hand, as a betrothed couple, Joseph and Mary were not yet living together. So if, during this time, Mary was found to be unfaithful in not saving herself for Joseph, it was *expected* that Joseph would divorce his wife in a public trial. After all, under Old Testament Law, infidelity was punishable by the death sentence. But since the Romans no longer allowed the Jews to enforce capital punishment, it was assumed that divorce was the new minimum requirement of the law.

##### B. Mary was with child "*before* they came together".

- ✓ Joseph is a righteous and law-abiding man, so he knows that he *must* divorce his wife. ***But in Joseph's case, to divorce Mary would also mean to disown Mary's unborn child.*** And this will mean that the baby boy growing in Mary's womb could not rightfully be called "the son of David". He could not be the promised one, the Messiah, the one who brings the fulfillment of all God's promises.

#### II. Verses 20-21

##### A. "Joseph, son of David"

1. The angel does not say "Joseph, son of Jacob" (1:16), but "Joseph, son of *David*"! It's as though the angel says, "Remember who you are Joseph. Remember what God said to *your* forefather, David, long ago. Remember... and so "do not fear to take Mary as your wife." Why is it so very important that Joseph, *son of David*, takes Mary as his wife? Because to take Mary as his wife is also to accept and to adopt *her* unborn child as his own – as the next "son of David" in the chosen line. And so the angel also says that it is *Joseph* who is to name *Mary's* son, and to name a child is take him as one's own (cf. Isaiah 43:1).
2. Joseph obeys the angel (read verses 24-25) and so thus far Jesus qualifies to be the one who will bring the infinite blessings of salvation to his people! His lineage is the lineage of the Messiah. But *is* he the Messiah? Why should it be him, any more than all those who came before him? And why should he come by his lineage in such an abnormal way?

##### B. "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."

1. Scriptures

- a. **Genesis 1:1-2 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**
- b. **Psalm 104:30 – When you send forth your Spirit, [the animals] are created, and you renew the face of the ground.**
- c. **Ezekiel 37:13-14 – Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people... And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live.”**

2. The Holy Spirit is infinitely powerful to create life – whether by natural means, or by means of a miracle. And what we celebrate at Christmas is a miracle the like of which makes even the creation of the world to pale in comparison. So what does it mean when a real, live, “flesh and blood” human baby is conceived in the womb of Mary, and yet his conception is not by Joseph, or by any other man, but *from* the *Holy Spirit!* The answer: It must mean that while he is truly one of us (having flesh and blood, developing in the womb, being born as a baby), he is also at the same time completely *other* than us! Because *none* of *us* have ever been conceived from the Holy Spirit!

C. “You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

1. The Old Testament Hebrew word for Jesus means “Yahweh is salvation” – *God* is salvation. Over and over again the Old Testament proclaims that salvation through men is utterly in vain. Only God can save.
  - a. **Isaiah 45:21-22 – There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.**
  - b. **Isaiah 60:16 – I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.**
  - c. **Isaiah 43:11 – I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.**
  - d. **Psalm 130:7-8 – O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.**
2. And yet in commanding Joseph to name the child Jesus, the angel says not that God will save His people from their sins, but that *Jesus Himself* will save his people from their sins! What else can this possibly mean but that this child whose conception is from the Holy Spirit is Himself Yahweh – the one who saves? The true meaning of the virgin birth is – Yahweh, a baby boy, lying in a manger. This is *such* a mystery that the angels and all the redeemed in heaven will never, ever cease to marvel at it and stand in worship and awe. It can *never* be comprehended. Never. But looking back, we can see that it was *foretold*.

III. Verses 22-23

A. Prophecy

1. 730 years earlier, Ahaz (a descendent of David) was king in Jerusalem. He was a wicked king who worshipped idols and stubbornly refused to listen to God’s

prophets. When the king of Damascus and the king of Samaria threatened Jerusalem, King Ahaz decided to go to the king of Assyria for help. But God wanted Ahaz to place his trust in Him for salvation and deliverance, not in men – and least of all not in the idolatrous, pagan king of Assyria. So the Lord spoke to King Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah:

2. **Isaiah 7:10-12** – “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.”
3. Ahaz was being a hypocrite. He didn’t want to ask for a sign because his mind was set on getting help from Assyria. So the Lord said to Ahaz, the king:
4. **Isaiah 7:13-14** – **Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the [maiden] shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**
5. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is “maiden” ever used of a married woman and so it generally *assumes* virginity. In fact, there is another word that Isaiah could easily have used to refer to a married woman. But just as “maiden” is not the word for a married woman, neither is it the actual word for “virgin” – that’s a different word that Isaiah could also have easily used. So we could say that “maiden” almost requires the idea of virginity, though virginity does not seem to be the main point (like it would be of the actual word for “virgin”). So why does God use a word here that is so ambiguous and out of the ordinary? What does it mean? Well, in the days of King Ahaz the maiden who gave birth to a son was apparently *not* a virgin. We don’t know who the maiden was or who the child was, but we do know what God said to Ahaz:
6. **Isaiah 7:16** – **Before the boy [Immanuel] knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.**
7. Immanuel. God is with us. But that *can’t* be all there is to it! Why didn’t Isaiah use the word for a married woman? Why did Isaiah use the word that everywhere else assumes virginity! And why leave the maiden and the child of Ahaz’s day so anonymous? In addition to all this, while the child’s name “God with us” is encouraging because it means the destruction of the two kings that Ahaz dreads, it obviously doesn’t let Ahaz off the hook for his refusal to trust in God. Because right after assuring Ahaz of the destruction of the two kings, Isaiah goes on to say:
8. **Isaiah 7:17** – **The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”**
9. Ahaz himself would be attacked and conquered by the very one in whom he trusted! Is God still with them in this?!? Judah still faces destruction. The royal descendents of David still face humiliation and exile! The Immanuel of Ahaz’s day was just a sign, but he was not the actual presence of God among His people. So the son of this married woman *can’t* be the final fulfillment of the sign – otherwise it will end up being just a vain and empty hope! Indeed, Isaiah will go on to say that the whole land belongs to Immanuel (Isaiah 8:8). And the prophesy in Isaiah 9:6 *can’t* be just a coincidence:

10. **Isaiah 9:6** – For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

#### B. Fulfillment

1. The maiden and son in the days of King Ahaz were a type and pattern foreshadowing a maiden and son who were yet to come – over 700 years in the future. Isaiah’s prophecy was not finally fulfilled in the days of King Ahaz, but 730 years later when a virgin maiden named Mary conceived from the Holy Spirit and gave birth to a son – Yahweh, a baby boy, lying in a manger.
2. **Isaiah 7:10** – “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”
3. What could be deeper, what could be higher, what could be more impossibly miraculous than a virgin who is found to be with child from the Holy Spirit? What could be deeper and higher and more impossibly miraculous than a baby boy – who will save his people from their sins? Yahweh in a manger. And so Matthew writes:
4. **Matthew 1:22-23** – 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 Immanuel” (which means, God with us).
5. Jesus is the son of David, and yet at the same time he is God – *with us!* Jesus is, indeed, the promised Messiah. *He* is the one who brings the *blessings* of salvation to His people.

#### Conclusion

- A. God told Ahaz to ask for a sign, deep as Sheol or high as heaven. Why? Because he wanted Ahaz to know that he should place his trust in God for salvation. But Ahaz didn’t want a sign, because he was determined to do things his own way. This Christmas season, we celebrate the truth that God has given us a sign. It is deep as Sheol and high as heaven. And this sign tells us that “there is salvation in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Anyone who will not believe in the face of such a sign will not believe though Jesus Himself should appear to them in all of His glory.
- B. “You shall call his name Jesus,” the angel said, “for he will save his people from their sins.” Jesus did this by growing up to die on a cross. It’s why he was born. As Yahweh, who took on flesh and blood as a son of David, Jesus could die in our place and for our sin. And He could rise again from the dead, victorious over death. All who will repent of their sin and trust in Jesus will be saved from God’s wrath and share in Christ’s victory over death. God has given us a sign. It is deep as Sheol and high as heaven. As those who have *believed*, let us rejoice in Jesus, Son of David, *Immanuel*.