

December 10, 2023 by Steve Brandon



Christmas in Matthew

Matthew 1

1. Jesus was Truly Man (verses 1-17)

2. Jesus was Truly God (verses 18-25)

I remember reading an article by Kevin DeYoung a few years ago about the preacher's dilemma during Christmas. I have not always followed his counsel. But I plan to this year. I want to read the entire article for you. The article is entitled, "Pastor, Don't Get Cute this Christmas."

I know the feeling.

Christmas comes around every year. The same songs. The same texts. The same story. Most of the time I love the familiar rhythm of Advent and the comforting routine of tradition.

But as a pastor, I also know that sense of desperation: "How many more Christmas sermons and holiday homilies can I possibly come up with?" And I rarely do a full four-week Advent series. The poor brother who does an Advent series every year for 40 years is going to preach at least 160 sermons on Christmas. I sympathize with the temptation to novelty.

But don't do it, pastor. Don't get cute at Christmas. Your people need regular meat and potatoes, not the newest eggnog recipe. Stay away from props and video clips. Put to death the Star Wars tie-in you've been really excited about. Don't worry about preaching the same truths and the same themes. They don't remember last year's sermon anyway. Go ahead and tell them the old, old story one more time.

That means the Christmas Eve service should not be about the evils of shopping or the dangers of busyness. We can leave behind clever clichés like "Wise Men Still Seek Him" or "Have Yourself a Mary Christmas." There's no need to focus for 40 minutes on what exactly was the Star of Bethlehem, and if you are going to talk about the Magi, don't make it an academic lecture on Persian astrology. Let's spare our people the usual harangue about how Protestants have ignored Mary for too long (even though, I've heard that sermon and read those articles every year since I was a kid). Let's not get caught up in the dating of Christmas or debunking the supposed parallels with Mithras.

Are any of these things wrong in themselves? Of course not. I've touched on these themes in a number of messages over the years. But let's keep the main thing the main thing.

There will be unbelievers at your Christmas Eve service. And struggling saints. And weary souls. And wayward sinners. And stragglers who have ventured into a church for the first time in a long time. They need to hear about Jesus, about the Word made flesh, about the only begotten Son sent from the Father, about the one who fulfilled ancient prophecy, about the one who came to save his people from their sins.

Dear pastor—and I'm reminding myself as much as I'm reminding you—our people don't need us to find something new. They don't need empty spiritual bromides. And they don't need us to brandish our cultural bona fides at Christmas. Our people need the gospel. They need the Trinity. They need to hear about the miracle and the majesty and the mystery of the incarnation. Hunker down in Matthew 1 or Luke 2 or Isaiah 9 or Micah 5 or John 1 or in any text that will lead you to lift high the name of Jesus. Don't be cute or clever. Just preach Christ.

Your people will be glad you did. And looking back years later, so will you. [\[1\]](#)

This is what I plan to do this Christmas season. I'm not planning to be cute or clever. I'm not planning to come up with some sort of new slant on Christmas. I'm planning to tell you the story of "the miracle and the majesty and the mystery of the incarnation."

I plan to do this by looking at each of the gospels to see what they teach about Christmas. This week, we will look at Matthew. Appropriately, my message this morning is entitled, "Christmas in Matthew." Next week, we will skip Mark, because Mark doesn't tell the story of the birth of Jesus. Mark picks up the story at the baptism of Jesus. So next week, we will look at "Christmas in John" focusing on John, chapter 1, which tells the story of the incarnation. Then, on Christmas Eve, we will look at "Christmas in Luke." Both morning and evening, because Luke tells the story in two chapters. Luke, chapter 1 in the morning. Luke, chapter 2 in the evening.

So let us begin with "Christmas in Matthew." I want to begin by reading the first half of Matthew 1. This is how Matthew begins his gospel:

Matthew 1:1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Ram, and Ram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz

the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations.

Believe it or not, this genealogy is the beginning of the Christmas story. These words bring us into history. They show us that Jesus was a real human being, descended from Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Judah, descended from David and Solomon and Hezekiah and Josiah, born of flesh and blood.

See, these names in the genealogy were real people. Jesus didn't appear out of thin air, dropping in from heaven. Jesus came to in time and history. Jesus came into the world in the same way that all of us came into the world, through a woman.

This is my first point: The Genealogy shows us that

1. Jesus was Truly Man (verses 1-17)

This is the reality of Christmas. That when Jesus came to dwell among us, he was a human being. He was one of us. Now, if you noticed in verse 1, Matthew mentions two important people of the genealogy: David and Abraham.

Matthew 1:1

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Of all of the people given in this list, these two stand out as prominent and important for us to consider this morning.

1. David

The fact Jesus was "Son of David" shows that he had royal blood. This is a bit foreign to us in the United States. We elect our rulers by vote. If you are more than 35 years of age, and if you were born in the United States, you may become the leader of our country. You simply need to convince enough people to vote for you, and you will become the most powerful person in the world.

But this isn't the case in other nations of the world, including Israel during the days of Jesus. In other nations, when the king dies, his son becomes king in his place. When the new king dies, his son becomes king. There is no vote. The next in line becomes a king. Now, of course, there are hostile takeovers which destroy the dynasty. But this is how it works under normal circumstances. In these nations, ancestry is all important, rather than votes. And the ancestry here in Matthew chapter 1 shows Jesus to be "son of David," that is, of royal blood.

The Old Testament prophesied that when the Messiah would come, he would come from the line of David.

2 Samuel 7 is the key passage in the Old Testament where this is made clear. The LORD comes to David and says, "When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13). This is often called, "The Davidic Covenant," the promise that God made with David, that his kingdom would be forever. This meant that the Messiah would come from the line of David, something that Matthew points out here in chapter 1.

The Jews knew this very well. We see this in Matthew, chapter 2, when the wise men come from the east to worship the king of the Jews, who had just been born, they asked the Jews, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2)? The reply comes in verse 5. They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel'" (Matthew 2:5-6). Bethlehem was the town of David. The ruler would come from his line.

Further in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question. He said, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David" (Matthew 22:42). The Messiah would come from men. The Messiah would come from David.

But that's not the only prominent person in this genealogy in chapter 1. We also see Abraham mentioned.

2. Abraham

Matthew 1:1

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Now, of course, if you are a "son of David," you are also a "son of Abraham," because David was a son of Abraham. Yet, Matthew takes some pains point this out because it's another category for us to see Jesus. "Son of David" identifies Jesus as having royal blood. "Son of Abraham" identifies Jesus as having Jewish blood. Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation.

You see this in Genesis 12, when the Lord appeared to Abraham, while he was in his own country, Ur of the Chaldees. "Now the LORD said

to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'" (Genesis 12:1-3).

The LORD told Abraham to leave his home country and go to a land that the LORD would show to him. In that land, the LORD would make of Abraham a "great nation!" The LORD would bless Abraham. The LORD would protect Abraham. Through him "all the families of the earth would be blessed."

It's only right that the Jews feel themselves to be a special people, blessed of the LORD. Because, that's what the LORD promised to Abraham: great blessing! When Abraham heard these words, he left his homeland, and went to Canaan, as the LORD directed him. The LORD made of Abraham "a great nation," and God's hand was upon the people of Israel.

But nowhere is the blessing of God greater, than when Jesus came. Because it was through him, that "all the families of the earth was blessed." Because, his death provides the way of escape from our sins. We see this in verse 21.

Matthew 1:21

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

This is what we celebrate during Christmas! That Jesus came to rescue us from our sins! Of course, that's the rest of the story of Jesus, that he would come and live a perfect life for us and die in our place. But right here in the genealogy you see that he was a man, able to die as a man for men.

Now, there is much more that could be said about the genealogy, like Matthew's structure into 3 groups of 14 generations, like the character of the men in the genealogy, some of them were pretty shady. The women mentioned in the genealogy, some of them were abused women. One of them was a foreigner. It simply shows the humanity of Jesus. But we lack time this morning to look more deeply into the genealogy.

The main point of the genealogy is this: The genealogy shows us that Jesus was Truly Man. And now, we turn to the second half of Matthew 1. In verses 18-25, we see the birth of Jesus. And the birth of Jesus shows us that,

2. Jesus was Truly God (verses 18-25)

Let's read Matthew's account of his birth.

Matthew 1:18-25

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 Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 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.

In the spirit of not being cute or creative, I simply want to walk through the story, looking at the events of the story.

Event #1: The betrothal

Matthew 1:18b

When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph...

Here were two young people, who were planning to be married. They were "betrothed." We don't use that word today. The reason is because our society is different than that of the first century. So, when this word is used, you might think "engagement." Mary and Joseph were "engaged" to be married. But, this engagement was different than our society. It was much more serious!

Today, people readily break engagements without any problems from the law. Nothing is technically binding in a legal way until the marriage day. In the Jewish culture, when a couple was betrothed, they were legally married, even before the marriage day. We see this in verse 19. Joseph is called, "her husband" before the actual wedding date. Also, in order for Joseph to call off the wedding, he had to "put her away" or "divorce" her.

So, how is it that they became "betrothed"? It would be nice to tell the story that they were high school sweethearts. She was a cheerleader and he was the star quarterback. They were homecoming king and queen. It would be nice to tell the story of how they loved and adored each other and that they had a very romantic dating time, when Joseph won the precious heart of Mary, which led to their engagement and future marriage.

However, the scenario probably went like this. It started, not with Mary and Joseph, but with their parents. Both sets of parents were probably quite religious. Joseph seems to have been raised in the faith, for it is said of Joseph that he was a "righteous man". It is certainly the case that Mary was a righteous woman as well. Her parents must have taught her much about the Lord. Listen to her words in Luke 1, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:46-49).

Mary's parents would have looked at the little boy Joseph growing up and Joseph's parents had looked at the little girl growing up. Mary's parents had spoken with Joseph's parents and had determined that Mary and Joseph would make a good and profitable marriage for each other. An agreement was signed. A dowry was paid. Joseph and Mary were legally betrothed, and the marriage date was set.

According to the Jewish custom, Mary and Joseph had to wait a year before they were married. In our country, we have various lengths of time between our engagements and our marriages. You can meet someone today, get on a plane, fly to Las Vegas, and get married tonight. In our culture, there are times when couples wait more than two years to get married (perhaps one of them needs to finish college first). But in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day, the custom was one year of waiting. The purpose of this time was to demonstrate the purity of the wife. If she had a child during this time, it would demonstrate her unfaithfulness and the husband could call off the marriage.

This is why it was a big deal when "she was found to be with child" (verse 18). She was pregnant. This leads us to the next event in our story.

Event #2: The pregnancy

Matthew 1:18c

...before they came together she was found to be with child.

The natural assumption was that she was unfaithful to Joseph and that she was involved in an immoral relationship, through which a child was conceived. The social stigma at this time must have been great. In our society, the stigma has been reducing over the years as more and more children are being born out of wedlock. I remember that society used to frown upon it much more than it does today. Some of you probably remember when our society scorned births outside of wedlock even more than I remember. Yet, it was probably even more so in the time of Mary and Joseph.

Event #3: Joseph's intentions

Joseph was intending to do the right thing.

Matthew 1:19

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

When a righteous man found out that his wife had been unfaithful during the betrothal, the godly thing to do would be to divorce her. That is what the law required in such a case. That was the righteous thing to do.

But Joseph had another desire within him, which was also in accord with the spirit of the Mosaic Law. As exact and demanding as the law was, it always stressed mercy to the helpless. For instance, you simply need to read the laws in Exodus 21 and 22 to see how the law required mercy to those who were weaker and helpless (i.e. the orphan and the widow and the foreigner).

So Joseph was "unwilling to put her to shame." That is why he "resolved to divorce her quietly." Joseph wanted to divorce her because he was righteous, according to the letter of the law. But he also wanted to do it "secretly," because he didn't want "to put her to shame," in accordance with the spirit of the law. Joseph could easily have put her away and shamed her. According to Deuteronomy 22, he could have publicly defamed her (verse 14), held a trial, and had her stoned (verse 21). But Joseph wasn't seeking revenge (which a public disgrace would be). He wasn't seeking to "get even." He was attempting to be gracious and kind to Mary, while doing the thing that was prescribed of him in the law.

Certainly, this would have come with "much prayer and thought." His heart was fully intent upon doing this. He was ready to act. But then, comes the supernatural twist to the story.

Event #4: God's intervention

God intervened by sending an angel of the Lord to Joseph to tell him the true story, the part of the story that he couldn't have known apart from divine revelation. It's the part of the story that makes Christmas special.

Matthew 1:20-21

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."

The supernatural act of the Holy Spirit had already been mentioned in verse 18 with words I skipped,

Matthew 1:18

...before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit

Here is the argument of the angel. "This child in Mary's womb is not as the result of immorality, Joseph. Mary has not been unfaithful to you. Rather, Mary has conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Joseph, it is OK for you to take Mary as your wife. Even though the whole purpose of the betrothal period is to check for unfaithfulness, even though it looks as if Mary has been unfaithful, she has been faithful. It is OK to take Mary as your wife.."

Now, Let me ask you seriously. Does this sound just a little far-fetched and unbelievable to you? Would you have believed this story? "Your wife to be will have a child, but it isn't because of immorality, it is because the Lord has intervened in history to produce the first child without a human father." Somebody might have said, "Now that's a new one. I've never heard that before."

Perhaps it was like the top ten excuses that people gave for not having their homework done.

10. My Mother wanted to Display it on the Fridge.
9. I was Abducted by Aliens and They took It.
8. My Dad mistook it for a Letter and Posted it to China.
7. I had to burn it in the Fireplace to keep myself Warm.
6. It flew out the Window of the Car.
5. I thought I'd do it Tomorrow because I'll be Older and Wiser Then.
4. I did my Work. It's all Up Here in my Head.
3. I didn't do it because I didn't want to add to your Workload.
2. My Hand fell Asleep and I didn't want to Wake It.
1. My Cat ate it knowing that I'd Blame the Dog.

Who is going to believe any of these things? Who is going to believe Joseph? I think that we can often get dulled by the repetition of this story of the virgin birth that we forget the fascination of it. We hear it over and over and over and over again.

I remember explaining what the Christmas story was about to a man from another country, who didn't really know what Christmas was about. I read to him from this very passage and saw how amazing (and unbelievable) this birth was, because I was reading it as if through this man's eyes. As I read to this man, I thought to myself, "who would believe this?" Joseph did.

Perhaps what made this believable to Joseph was probably the fact that this wasn't the first time that Joseph had heard this far-fetched story. He probably heard it from Mary beforehand. In Luke's account of the virgin birth of Jesus, we see that the angel appeared to Mary before she conceived a child by the Holy Spirit. "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus...The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God" (Luke 1:31,35). Perhaps Mary told Joseph about this beforehand.

Any engaged couple speaks about plans for the future. Engaged couples talk about all kinds of things: how the house will be run, who will do what, how will we make final decisions, what will our goals be, what are our dreams. In one of these discussions, Mary must have mentioned this to Joseph.

So how did Joseph respond? This is so encouraging. Joseph obeyed the angel in everything.

Matthew 1:24-25

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

Joseph obeyed in everything. When Joseph took Mary as a wife, what did it mean for him and for his reputation? It destroyed it! The most self-protecting thing for him to do would have been for him to have divorced Mary secretly. Then, he would be clear of all charges and would have kept his hands free from apparent sin. But to take her as wife probably meant that he himself would face disgrace. He could try to explain that the child wasn't his and that he was innocent of the entire matter, but in the world's eyes, he would still be seen as sinful. People would surely have claimed that it was either his child, conceived out of wedlock, or another man's child.

We know very little about Joseph's life, but we do find out that Jesus lived with this reputation of being a child born out of wedlock. In John 8:41, we see Jesus in discussion with the Jewish leaders, who insinuated that Jesus was "born of sexual immorality." If Jesus faced such a spoiled reputation, Joseph certainly would have faced it as well.

Thus, to take Mary as his wife, would only be to face mockery and rejection from the world. What is encouraging here is that Joseph seems ready to hear God's Word and then respond, no matter how high the price. We ought to learn from a man like Joseph. "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Joseph was ready to take the scorn of the world. I believe that Joseph was willing to take the scorn because he understood that the birth was a supernatural birth. This leads us to our last event.

Event #5: The Virgin Birth

All of the events thus far, have been leading to this event. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is clearly the focus of these verses. Look at how often Matthew refers to it- four times in these eight verses.

Matthew 1:18

...she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:20

...that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:23

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son...

Matthew 1:25

...but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

It is especially apparent that Matthew goes out of his way to make it clear that the birth of Jesus was by a virgin, who remained a virgin. The focus of these passages is the virgin birth. Similarly, in Luke's account, he mentions the virgin birth four times as well (see Luke 1:27, 31, 34, 35).

The birth of Jesus was extraordinary and miraculous and important. However, in all of scripture, the only other place in which this is

mentioned is in Isaiah 7:14, which is quoted here in Matthew. Mark didn't write about it. John didn't write about it. It isn't mentioned in the book of Acts. Paul didn't write about it. It has led some to believe that this doctrine is not important and not essential.

May I offer to you, church family, that this is a very important doctrine? It is easily understood why this is mentioned only a few times in Scripture. Mark didn't write about it, because he didn't write about the birth of Christ. John didn't write about it, because he didn't write about the birth of Christ, either. It isn't mentioned in the book of Acts, because Acts records the evangelistic mission and messages of the church. Paul didn't write about it, because he wrote about the problems that the church faced. During Paul's time, the issue of the virgin birth of Christ was not an issue. Had it been an issue, I am sure that Paul would have written about it.

It is worthy to note that the virgin birth was unanimously embraced in the early church. Of course, there were non-believers and skeptics who denied this miraculous birth, but not within the believing community of the early church. Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch in 110 A. D. wrote about the virgin birth of Christ as a commonly known and accepted fact within the church. Irenaeus (~170 A. D.) Tertullian (~200 A. D.) spoke of it.

It is included in the Nicene creed, as an essential doctrine, in 325 A. D, which we read today. "I believe in Jesus Christ, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." The virgin birth is included in the Apostle's creed (created during the 4th century), "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, Born of the virgin Mary."

Though accepted in the early church, in recent years, this doctrine has come under great attack. German rationalism in the mid 1800's really started the ball rolling with this regard. It has come into modern, liberal, Christian circles. They questioned everything supernatural. Thus, with regard to the virgin birth, doubt was cast upon it, because it was supernatural.

We need to remember that life of Jesus is saturated with miracles. Jesus healed blind men. He healed deaf men. He healed men with withered hands. He raised people from the dead. He fed multitudes. He rose from the dead. It shouldn't surprise us that His birth was miraculous. I cannot explain it to you. How can you explain how Jesus healed these people? How can you explain how Jesus fed multitudes? How can you explain how Jesus rose from the dead? You cannot. If you can explain it, it isn't miraculous.

Many in the liberal circles today have sought to explain the supernatural by mere natural phenomena. Thus, by attempting to explain many of them, they have no longer become miraculous (i.e. unexplainable). So also with the birth of Jesus Christ. It was a miracle. We simply need to accept it, believe it, and embrace it.

So, why? Why did all of this take place? Matthew answers that very question in verse 22.

Matthew 1:22-23

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).

Matthew took efforts to point out that the birth of Jesus had to be this way. It was prophesied. This verse is right along the lines of Matthew's purpose writing his gospel. He wrote his gospel to Jews, who held to a high view of Scripture. Over and over and over again, he show how what happened in the life of Jesus was the fulfillment of Scripture.

In the genealogy in Matthew 1, the Scriptures were fulfilled in bringing the Messiah from the line of David. The Jews to whom Matthew wrote knew that the Messiah would come from David's line.

In chapter 2, we see that the birth of Jesus followed the prophesy of Micah 5:2, as Jesus was born in Bethlehem. In chapter 2 verse 15, we see that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt, that the words of the prophet might be fulfilled saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Herod slaughtered the babies in Bethlehem that Jeremiah's weeping words might be fulfilled (Matthew 2:18). Jesus moved to Nazareth so "that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene" (Matthew 2:23).

So, what was the fulfillment here in chapter 1?

Matthew 1:23

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

Immanuel is a Hebrew word. That's why Matthew translates it for his Greek readers. Emmanuel literally means, "with us God."

This is the great mystery of Christmas. That God, himself would come to dwell with us and live with us. This comes back to my second point, Jesus was Truly God. This is what took place in Mary's womb! God entered there! As much as Jesus was truly man, Jesus was also truly God. The early church wrestled with this. That's why they wrote in the Nicene Creed:

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made."

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

Jesus, our "God with us." Being God, he is able to save.

Matthew 1:21

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

The only way that God could save us is to have a sinless man to be our representative to undo everything that Adam, the first sinless man did. The first sinless man committed sin with his wife and brought all of us into sin. The virgin birth had to come so that Christ would not inherit the sinful nature from Adam. Rather, Jesus could begin anew and start afresh. Jesus was "God with us" and "able to save."

He lived among us perfectly. He had to be the God man to do so.

What can wash away our sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). It's impossible for all of your good works to take away sins. It's impossible for all of your sacrifices to take away sins. But Jesus can take it away, because he was the God man. He was man, so he could die for men. He was God, so that his sacrifice would be pure.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell:
Jesus, our Emmanuel.

This is Christmas in Matthew.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 10, 2023 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/pastor-dont-get-cute-christmas/>