

Christmas 2014 ~ Matthew 1:18-25 The Purpose for His Birth

For this morning we are in Matthew chapter 1, our focus will be on verses 18 through 25. But we have presented to you the entire chapter of Matthew chapter 1 in order to set up the scene for us for our message and study for this morning.

Matthew wrote his gospel to present to the Jews their promised coming Messiah. And Matthew, in order to do this, began his gospel - the first seventeen verses lists the ancestry of the Christ through Joseph. In Luke chapter 3 we have the ancestry of Christ through Mary. If you did not know it by now, both Mary and Joseph were of the house of David. And Matthew is presenting the ancestry of Christ through Joseph in order to prove to the Jews that Christ is *Yeshua Hamashiach*, Jesus the Christ is the promised coming Messiah legally.

In other words, you can share with a Hebrew or Jewish person all of the rest of Matthew's gospel that presents Jesus as the Christ in fulfillment of prophecy, and they will not accept it until you prove to them first that Jesus came as the legal heir and fulfilled the legal requirement to be the Messiah and to be the Christ. So in the first seventeen verses Matthew presents the ancestry of Christ through Joseph proving that Jesus Christ is the legal heir to the throne through Joseph himself.

I point out to you there are various sections in this chapter that we have listed for you, but I point out to you in Matthew 1:2-16 as he presents this ancestry to us, emphasize the cadence that is involved in presenting this lineage or this list of names. Ancestry is established through the man not through the woman. That is why it says, **Abraham produced Isaac; and Isaac produced Jacob; and Jacob produced Judah and his brothers.** That is the cadence that is found all the way through the lineage and that is how it is presented in Jewish Scriptures in order to go from Abraham all the way up leading to Joseph, who is the husband of Mary.

There are also five women listed in this list, this lineage, which is very unusual, since women are not included in the lineage to prove genealogies. The fifth woman that is mentioned is in verse 16, **And Jacob produced Joseph the husband of Mary.** I have to include this detail because I know it is there, I know that the English translations say that Joseph was told to take Mary as his wife, when in reality she was already his wife. You see the word *as* in your English translations is in italics whenever these various phrases come up. "Joseph do not be afraid to take Mary *as* your wife." No, it is, "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife." She is already his wife when the angel appears, and we will explain that in a moment.

But in verse 16, **And Jacob produced Joseph the husband of Mary, from out of whom was born Jesus, the One being called Christ.** The term *from out of whom* is not masculine, it is feminine. In other words, Joseph is the husband of Mary, but it is out of Mary was born Jesus the one being called the Christ. Joseph was not Jesus's father. Jesus was not conceived by Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit in Mary. Therefore when Matthew lists the lineage and ancestry of the Christ, the Messiah, when he comes to verse 16 to show that Joseph is the legal father, and he will become the legal father of Jesus when he pronounces his name at his dedication in the temple. When Joseph becomes his legal adopted father then Jesus will be in the

legal line to accept and receive Messiahship, and the King of Kings, and the king of David, and his throne.

So there needs to be an explanation. The cadence goes all the way through from man to man, few women mentioned. That is to show that the Lord has come, because four out of the five women are Gentiles, they are not Jews, and they are women of ill repute, prostitutes of the Gentile world that God saved and brought into the genealogical line of the Messiah. Matthew did that to show that the Gentiles are included. That would probably rankle a few of the Hebrew and Jewish people to see the Gentiles are involved in the lineage of the Christ. But also women of ill repute are also part of the Lord's lineage and in his family. But coming from Mary and not from Joseph - so the cadence skips over from the man to the woman. It is not from out of Joseph that Christ has come, but from out of Mary and that involves an explanation.

Therefore verses 18-25. In verses 18-21 is The Predicament of Joseph. And verse 18 starts out, **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was this way.** You see, he has to explain this is the how the birth of Christ took place, which is why it is from Mary and not from Joseph. The Jew would wonder in their mind, that is a very strange presentation of the lineage of Christ. But there are three things in Joseph's Predicament that he had to deal with.

1) The first are his social circumstances.

For after His mother Mary had been betrothed or engaged to Joseph, after she became betrothed, **before which time they came together, she was found having a child in her womb from out of the Holy Spirit,** as a source. So here are his social circumstances. After they became betrothed or engaged, not the same kind as our engagement. In the Jewish social structure when two people became what we would know of as engaged it is really in the Hebrew *kiddushin*. The *kiddushin*, the pledge of purity, the one year that they had to wait before they actually consummated their marriage, began with a betrothal, began with an engagement time. And like I said, they had to wait an entire year before they could come together as husband and wife. But at the beginning of this betrothal they legally became husband and wife. It required a divorce to break the engagement, what we would know as the engagement. It was during this pledge of purity - and that is what it is for, you wait an entire year to make sure that she is not pregnant so that she is pure at the time that the marriage is consummated. It is during this engagement time that Mary is found to be pregnant. And you can imagine amongst the Jews - and we are going to emphasize that to you in a moment - among the Jews for a girl to go through her pledge of purity for a year and then wind up being pregnant; obviously, she committed immorality in the eyes of the Jewish people. And the social circumstances that Joseph and Mary had to go through were very difficult. This is the *kiddushin*, the one-year pledge of purity.

The marriage is called the *chuppah*, which is why you see sometimes - you see films of Jewish weddings - at the end of the wedding ceremony they throw two wine glasses onto the floor, break them on the floor, and stomp on them and say, "Chuppah!" That is the sign that the marriage has been consummated.

So this was during this *kiddushin*, **before which time they came together, she was found having a child in her womb from out of the Holy Spirit.** Emphasize to you again, here is the second point is that she was found to be pregnant, she did not declare her pregnancy. It was that she was found during that time, obviously she began to show. And it was discovered. She never said a thing to anybody. She never told Joseph all that happened. **And this was from out of the Holy Spirit.** So the social circumstances that Joseph found himself in. Remember that up till now Joseph does not know how she became pregnant.

2) That brings us to the religious circumstances.

In verse 19, **Joseph her husband, being righteous, and not willing to publicly expose her, he decided to send her away or divorce her privately.** He being a righteous man he had to handle the situation according to Scripture. In Deuteronomy 22:23-24 it gives, under the law, what people are to do with a woman who has been either raped or committed sexual immorality on her own. It was either forced on her or she participated in sexual immorality. If she participated voluntarily she was to be put to death. If she was raped and it was forced on her then whoever raped her would be put to death, but she would be held as innocent. Well Joseph being a righteous man he goes to the Scripture as to how to handle the situation. He cannot figure out, because she is not talking, he cannot figure out if she was raped or she did this purposely with somebody. The Jews by the way - I forgot the guy's name, right off the top of my head - but the Jews in society said it was a Roman soldier from the Roman guard that got her pregnant. They even had a guy picked that she committed immorality with supposedly. That is very interesting. Joseph does not know. Do we stone her and put her to death? Or do I do according to Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 1? That is, give her a writing in divorcement and send her out on her own. He decides on the second. To not make her a public example, or to expose her publicly, and to have her stoned in a public trial; but he decided to send her away privately.

3) But now the spiritual circumstances.

And after he had considered these things, notice the aorist participle. And I emphasize to you, and those of you that have studied from the Greek course will appreciate it even better, emphasizing the aorist participles, which most English translations do not emphasize. They emphasize a present tense not a past tense. It is after Joseph considered all of these things. He had already come to a decision of what he is going to do, he is going to send her away and divorce her according to Deuteronomy 24:1. **And after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him according to a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, you should not fear to take alongside of you Mary your wife (not as your wife, but your wife); for the One which has been conceived in her is from out of the Holy Spirit.** This is the first time that Joseph knows what happened. Can you imagine? Mary did not even explain it. She did not say, "Now wait a minute, Joe." I am sure they were on a friendly first name basis by now. "Joseph, I really did not commit sexual immorality, the Holy Spirit came upon me." I could see it. Joseph would have gone, "Right, okay, this is all God's doing, right?" But this is the first

time when an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph and tells him. Now that is fantastic about Mary, all this time she just keeps quiet. She knows what happened. She knows, "Nobody is going to believe me." Even when Joseph goes through his considerations as to what to do she does not say a word. She lets the Lord take care of it. An angel intervenes and tells Joseph, verse 21, **"And she will give birth to a Son, and you will call His name Jesus; for He Himself will save His people from their sins."**

So then Matthew in his commentary in verses 22 and 23 says that all of this happened that it might be fulfilled in Isaiah 7:14 when it says, **"That a virgin shall be with child in her womb and shall give birth to a son and they will call his name Immanuel, which is being translated the God is with us."**

Verses 24 and 25 tells us that Joseph, **after he had been aroused from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord gave commandment to him and he took alongside of him his wife; and he was not knowing her**, notice the imperfect tense: continuous in the past; he had no sexual or physical relationships with her, **until which time she gave birth to her Son, the Firstborn; and he called His name Jesus.** We emphasize to you *until*. He was not knowing her *until* she gave birth to her Son, the firstborn. Because in Matthew 13:55-56 it tells us that Mary and Joseph did have physical relationships after the birth of Christ. The Lord's half brothers and sisters are listed in Matthew 13:55-56, His brothers and He had sisters, plural. That all plays into the narrative by the way of the birth of Christ.

I draw your attention back to verse 21, the purpose for His birth. The purpose for the birth of Christ. **You will call His name Jesus**, which in Hebrew is *Yeshua*, which means *Yahweh saves*. **His name will be Jesus; for He Himself will save His people from their sins.** Emphasize to you the word *from*. We know the Scriptures teach us that Jesus came to be our Savior and to die on the cross so that we might be forgiven of our sins. But this text says purposely that He came to save us from our sins. It emphasizes deliverance. It emphasizes separation from the source of sin itself.

We know in I John 3:8, **The devil is the sinner from the beginning. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy (or more literally *loosen*) the works of the devil.** He came specifically to free and to loosen people from the very source of sin, the devil himself. That is what salvation is. Salvation is literally deliverance from a spiritual power that dominates a person's life that causes them to rebel against Christ, and not surrender to Him.

We saw in Romans 8:2 in our Monday night study that, **The law of the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus**, that is the very Spirit of the life of Jesus Christ that came into me, **has freed me from the law of sin and death.** Something happened in me when His Spirit came into me that separated me from the very source of sin that was dominating my life and causing me to walk my own way and not surrender to Christ. Freed me.

In our study in Colossians 2:11-13 that we have been studying on Sunday morning, Paul called this salvation, first of all, he called it *circumcision*. Not physical and human circumcision but a circumcision of the heart, where the old life is cut away. There is a separation and a

deliverance. He also called it *baptism*. Where a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit, that is, in the sense that a person is cleansed once the spirit of Christ comes into their life. And He is now their identification, when a person has been saved from their sins.

All of this takes place at the spiritual birth. We are baptized. We are circumcised. We are saved from our sins. Not just being forgiven of them, we are separated from the very spiritual source that causes the sins. Even though we continue to be a sinner, sin no longer lords it over us. Paul said in Romans 6:14 that sin shall no longer dominate and lord over you. Sin still rules and reigns in my physical body, but it no longer lords it over my spirit and over my soul where Christ dwells. That is the salvation that takes place. It is not religious, it is spiritual. When a person receives the Spirit of Christ, when they are born of the Spirit of Christ, they are saved from their sins, from the sins dominating and lording it over their life.

Now let me make this statement to you. This was the purpose for His birth. Let us remember He was born to come to be the Savior of the world to save His people from their sins. That is the purpose for His coming. The purpose of one's life dictates one's lifestyle. Did you catch that? The purpose for one's life dictates a person's lifestyle.

I can remember a time in my life, in younger years I wanted to be a baseball player. My whole life was rearranged to accomplish that purpose: what time I went to bed, what food I ate, how I exercised. The decisions I made about life, how it would affect that goal, that purpose in life. The same with Jesus. The purpose for His birth was revealed in three ways:

1) In the way he was born. He was born lowly. Luke 2:7 tells us that he was born in a cave where the animals were kept. He was placed in a feeding trough - for the animals. We were told because there is no place for them in the inn. He would not have accepted it had there been a place. He chose the low road because He was coming for the purpose of presenting Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. Therefore He was born in a lowly condition.

Good example of this and how the people misunderstood, just like today people misunderstand the coming of Christ, the birth of Christ. "The King has come!" We even sang songs where the world is to celebrate the coming King of Israel. Except when He came He did not come as the King of Israel. And all the people said, "Messiah is here. Now He has come to free us from the Roman bondage and from all the hardships of life. Now we His people will rule on earth forever." And as He rode into Jerusalem on that last week that He died remember, He rode in on a donkey and people were singing the hallelujah chorus to Him of the Messiah riding into Jerusalem; because they thought He was riding in in order to set up His headquarters and His kingdom on earth and to take over. Not realizing He was riding in on a donkey, not a white horse. He was riding into Jerusalem as the sacrifice that would be given for the sins of the world. They did not understand that. And once a week played out and He was crucified, His disciples and His followers and His believers were shocked. All of their hopes were dashed. They thought He was coming to take over the world and to free them. They misunderstood.

Just like when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness when Satan came to tempt Him. He says, "Throw Yourself down off the Temple and make a grandstand because God has promised that He is not going to let anything happen to You." Or showing Him all the kingdoms of the

world saying, "If you will worship and bow down to me I will give you all the kingdoms of the world." And Jesus refused it. Rejected it. See the world reaching out at Him, trying to pull Him in, saying, "You are a king. You are God's Son, the King of Israel so set up Your kingdom on earth. Here, take the kingdoms of the world and reign. Come." It is the same way the world offers to us.

2) In the way that He came. His lifestyle was also showed in the way that He lived. This is the hard part. We saw from Isaiah 49:4 in our study that Messiah before He came looking forward says, **I have labored for nothing, uselessness, and worthlessness I have exhausted my strength.** In the human it appears that He failed during His first coming. Very few people received Him. I emphasize His family life.

In John 7:3-5 it tells us that his half-brothers would taunt Him. When people rejected Him they taunted Him and said, "You lost all Your followers. You need to go into Jerusalem and get some more people."

In John 8:41 the religious leaders told Jesus, "We be not born from out of fornication." You see, the Lord's reputation and Joseph and Mary for those thirty-three years was that He was born as an illegitimate child, out of wedlock.

Now here is a good one, Psalm 69:8. Psalm 69 has to do with the suffering of the first coming of Messiah. In Psalm 69:8 it tells us, this is the Messiah speaking, **I am become a stranger to my brothers and an alien to my mother's children.** Can you imagine being the Christ and living with half-brothers and half-sisters and them telling you, "We know who our father is, who is your father?" They taunted him for thirty-three years.

Even his mother and brothers coming to show up at one of His teachings to take Him home, they thought He was mad. "Oh, He has really flipped now, thinks He is the Messiah." But He chose to live a lowly road.

3) And thirdly, how He died. How he was born, and how He lived, and how He died. He died, he suffered, was mocked, and was beaten. He submitted to that. And then He died a shameful death. Was spit upon and mocked while He was on the cross. And then when He died it seemed that it was the end of a failing ministry. His human family had rejected Him. His nation Israel had rejected Him, His own people. And even the handful that He had at the end were scattered because of the shame of the death on the cross. It appears to be a failure. But of course we know that He rose from the dead. We know that He ascended up into heaven and sent His Spirit to indwell other believers.

But let me say to you as we remember the birth of Christ and His purpose for being here, that because of that purpose - the way He chose to be born, the way He chose to live, the way He chose to die, was all in line with fulfilling that one purpose. He would not take the temptations from the world to leave that path.

May I suggest to you that we too are on our first time through? You see Jesus is coming back. He will be on a white horse, and we are going to be ruling and reigning with Him upon the

earth. Finally there will be victory. Finally the triumph will set in. But right now we are going through our first time through just like Jesus did. We live under the same conditions. The world still tries to reach out to say, "Look what I have to offer you. Get off of the path" - the purpose for which you are here - "and take what the world has to offer."

There was an old commercial, I know it was a beer commercial, but I do not know which one it was. But it went something like this, "Go for all the gusto because you only go around once in life." And that seems to really invade and permeate people's thinking. I only have one life to live, do you think I am going to give it up to follow Christ? There are so many things that I want to do. There is so much the world has to offer. I only have one time through in life. That is not true. We are coming back. We are actually going to pass through twice. This is not the time to rule and reign.

As one preacher said, which is false teaching, one preacher says, "Go for the good life now. Go for your best life now." That is the same thing Satan told Jesus, "Look what the world has to offer. You are giving it all up to sacrifice Yourself to free people from their sins but look at what the world has to offer."

This is our first time through. We live under the same conditions that Jesus did, except we have His Spirit living in us. We too are passing through. Sometimes it seems like our life is a failure. You do not know how many times I would sit at my desk - never on Sunday morning, but usually during the week, sit at my desk and just cry. People are not following the Lord. People are not being saved. People who come sometimes on a regular basis get knocked off by Satan, and they get caught up in sin, and carried away. And it is a failure. You do not know how many times that I have said either to Patty, or to Stephanie, or one of the kids - whoever is in the room that gets the effects, receives my expressions of frustration at the time - "This is useless. This is for nothing. Some people might get something out of it every once in a while. But what good does it do?" Spiritually, it is a tremendous amount of good. Humanly, there is a tremendous amount of failure.

But just like in my own life, and the same with the Lord, and all the other servants that have followed after the Lord, is that usually the Lord takes that spiritual ministry of His Spirit in later years to bring it back to people's memory and to work it out in them over a lifetime of years. Most of it is not for now. It is being stored away in the old spiritual storage tank, so that God's Spirit can use it as time goes on. Even now, I remember things that one of my mentors told me, you know back in 1970. The Holy Spirit still brings it to my mind. "Oh, that is what he meant."

It looks like a failure. It looks like we are not accomplishing anything. It looks like there is not anything spiritual about us. But in reality God's Spirit working in the spirit realm, in our spirit, is doing a tremendous work. The human side of life is failing, but the spiritual side of work God is energizing and one day we will be set free.

And as we begin in Romans chapter 8, when we get away from the holiday break and we start our Monday night study in Romans chapter 8, it is going to tell us that all of creation is groaning, affected by sin, waiting for the redemption of our bodies. "We too groan," Paul says. It is a difficult life because all of life in creation is affected by sin and we are not free from that

yet. But one day we will. That is the day when most, if not all of God's work that He has been doing inside of us, in the inner person all of His work will be brought to fruition, and then we will rule and reign with Him.

And then during our second time through, if you want to go for all the gusto, we are going to be ruling and reigning with Him here on the earth, serving Him. Satan will be bound for one thousand years. Then we will rule and reign, but it is not now. And Satan is constantly trying to bait us, "You only have one time through. You better not surrender your life and give up your life for Christ now. Look at all you are giving up." What are you giving up? Nothing. Christ gave up everything, so that He might accomplish the purpose for His life.

It is up to us, even at this time of year we determine what is my purpose for being here? Is it true that Christ created me and brought me into this world at a certain time in history? That He has a specific purpose for me in His kingdom? And to experience Him and to represent Him to everybody around me? For His glory and for His Spirit to move in my life and through my life to minister to others, even though it looks like that ministry and that relationship is failing? It is not failing.

We will see in a few weeks in Isaiah 55 that God says, "I will send out My Word, it will not return to me void. It will accomplish the purposes for which I sent it." And most of those purposes will not be realized until the second coming of Christ, but they will be fulfilled.

Let's close with prayer.