

Matthew 1:18-25

The Time the World Began to Begin Again

Opening with Don Russell's Ultimate Christmas Ornament

Can you guess what I have in my hand? What about now? Who would have thought that what I showed you first would have turned into this? This final piece, though it looks like one piece, is comprised of over 34 different pieces that have been glued together and lathed to form this beautiful piece of craftsmanship.

This Christmas ornament is the ultimate Christmas ornament because it shows that beauty can come from Chaos. This is the story of Scripture not only here in our text but all throughout. In the beginning we see God overcoming chaos and bringing order. (Genesis 1:1-2) Should we expect anything less than God being able to take the tattered and frayed cords of our lives and weave a tapestry of his intervening, ever reaching, and all consuming grace?

READ TEXT

There is no stable, no manger, no inn keeper saying there is no room, instead all the focus is centered on the Savior and his special arrival. And it's that special arrival that we get to look upon today with awe and wonder to see what our God has done for us. This text tells us of the time that the world began to being again, and from it we learn how God did it and why he did it. Let's look at the text together:

the how:

1. God Sent His Son

First notice the change in the text. If you take a quick glance over to the left of your Bible you will see this long list of begetting. But here we see this is the account of the *birth of Jesus Christ*. "Birth" is a heavy indicator. The narrator is slowing us down and causing us to focus. We have not been concerned with any other birth in the lineage, what is so special about this one? This one birth is the most important birth in all of history. The how behind this one's coming is the reason for our worship. So what is it that makes this birth so special? The Bible tells us.

Look at verse 18. Imagine the scandal that must have happened as Mary, the betrothed to Joseph, is found to be pregnant. Could you imagine what the Hebrew ladies club must have thought when Jesus was born and they started counting months? And then imagine poor Mary and Joseph trying to tell the story that the angels told them.

Matthew is clear to emphasize the timing of these events. Mary and Joseph are betrothed and have not yet consummated their marriage. While they are betrothed and awaiting the final consummation of the marriage, Mary is found to be pregnant. But it is how she becomes pregnant that is the absolute wonder and amazement of God!

Look at the latter part of verse 18. The Holy Spirit is the way the virgin conceives. The Holy Spirit? Why would he desire to be involved in something like this? Let's stop just a moment, because I think we have too, and gaze at the beauty of the Trinity in this passage. Some suggest the Trinity is a teaching that the Church imposes upon the text, but just from reading this text we can see the teaching of the Trinity rise from the passage itself. Look closely to see how God chose to reveal himself. God chose to reveal himself through the Son, Jesus, who is said to be Immanuel, God with us. But how is all of this carried out? The Holy Spirit. Father, Son, Holy Spirit all involved in salvation.

Let's go back to the Holy Spirit to see the reason that he takes such a pivotal role. I think often, for anyone used to hearing this passage, you may think that the Holy Spirit's involvement is Matthew's way of copping out. But of course, though Matthew nor the Angel who announced knows exactly how any of this happened, God knows the reason that the Holy Spirit has come upon Mary and the power of the Most High overshadowed her. Luke emphasizes this to such a degree that he tells us that the Holy Spirit's involvement is the reason that the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God. (Luke 1:35)

Something so significant as this makes us do our best to determine what clues from the text tell us the significance of the Spirit. What does the Bible reveal to us about the Spirit? We know the Prophets prophesied at the prompting of the Spirit. So the Spirit was carrying the Word of the promise of God along to his people through the Spirit as they longed for the Lord to bring salvation. But even more significant is a point that we have been prepared to see by Matthew 1:1. Matthew 1:1 leads us back to Genesis, and when we go back to Genesis one of the first characters that we see is the Holy Spirit. What is the Spirit doing? Causing creation. Now, in Matthew, what do we see the Spirit doing? Causing creation. Why is this significant?

Just as in Genesis as he is creating and giving life, so we are to understand the Spirit's work here to bring the eternal Son of God into the earth he created as he becomes something that he has never been - human - so that he can rework creation (from within the creation thus transcending his own transcendence). The Spirit who fulfilled the will of the Father and the Word of the Son is here at this

pivotal moment of history almost beginning all over again but it is not beginning entirely as in starting over because this new work of God is right in the middle of the old creation that has been damaged by the Fall. God is mending brokenness and making it new. God is coming in the midst of brokenness to raise our humanity up to his divinity.

This is what is going on. It is not so much him stooping, though we do see God stooping down to us, as it is him raising us up to be with him. He is born both like us and above us. Jesus was born of the flesh to undergo corruption, but born in this way, from a virgin, to heal corruption. Notice the line of the Messiah - murders, adulterers, all sinners. Why emphasize such a ragamuffin group? All to reveal the fathomless riches of his mercy and love.

Jesus united man with God and made a way of communion with God and man. If not for his reaching towards us, if not for his coming to us, we would not know him, we could not know him. We were corruptible, he is incorruptible. We were darkness, he is light. We were bound by death because of disobedience. He has come like us except without sin so that he could shatter sin's hold on us.

Here is where the good gets better. How did mankind fall? What started the whole ball rolling? Remember who the serpent came to? A virgin - Eve who, along with her husband, was disobedient. As a result, death spread to all men because all sinned. But look at how life has come to all men - through a virgin, through the offspring of the virgin's womb. The offspring of the first woman's womb saw the depths of the fall when Cain killed Abel. But look at the offspring that came from this virgin's womb - Jesus the one who came to love, heal, and forgive.

Jesus was born of Adam's race so that mortality might be swallowed up by immortality. Christ is recapitulating the world to himself. That is, Christ is undoing everything Adam has done. Christ has come to make all things new. Christ has come in the middle of the reign of death to offer life. The first Adam came to life, the Last Adam has come to give life.

This is why the virgin birth is so vitally important. It isn't about Mary and Joseph, it is about Jesus. And what does this text teach us about the one who is coming. Look at verse 21 and 23.

the why:

2. The Son Has Come to Save

They call him Jesus. Jesus is the Hebrew name for Joshua. Joshua was famous for crossing the Jordan River and conquering the land of Canaan. But look closely, Joshua is not the reference. Instead we see salvation from sin. Joshua didn't save anyone from sin. This reference lines up closer

with Psalm 130:8 than the person Joshua. Let me read it to you. Psalm 130 says, *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than the watchmen for the morning, more than the watchmen for the morning. 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.* (Ps. 130:3-8)

His people (v.21, does not say Israel) needs saving from sin. Not poverty, not political oppression, not physical ailments. His people need saving from sin, and all who have been saved from sin are his people!

Sin is a serious problem. Look at what comes next in the passage in Matthew. The virgin conceiving is the way for God to be with us - Immanuel! Sin is what removes man from the presence of God. Isaiah 59:2 says, *Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.* Isaiah says this after he has said in 1:18, *though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson. they shall become like wool.* How will these things be? How will we be saved from sin?

Matthew takes us to Isaiah 7:14. Who is he? Isaiah 9 tells it all:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

(Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV)

God with us become the theme of the book of Matthew. Matthew invites us to come and meet our King, a King who is none other than God himself - Jesus our Immanuel.

This Jesus who came to be with us promises to always be with us even to the end of the age (Matthew 28).

See how much he loves us? God sent his Son, they called him Jesus. He is the one who shares both God's nature and our nature - fully God and fully man in one Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to us who were far away to bring us back to him. Spring has arrived to heal the ground. The Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing in its wings, this is the time the world began again.

Are you a part of this new world? Are you trusting in this Jesus for salvation? The Jesus who is both God and Man, both the eternal second person of the Trinity and the first born of all creation?