

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

Introduction

Last week we studied the prophecies about Christmas from the Old Testament part of the Bible.

We discovered that 1,600 years before Jesus was born that Jacob made a prediction that there would always be a ruler in Judah until the Jewish Messiah came.

(Gen.49: v.10)

¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;
And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.

We were able to confirm that this prediction came true at exactly the right time in history.

We also learnt that Bethlehem was going to be the birth place of the Jewish Messiah Jesus.

(Micah 5: v. 2)

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting."

The prophecies told us that there was a particular miracle involved in the birth of this Messiah.

(Isaiah 7: v. 14)

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

It was to be a "**Virgin Birth**". This was necessary because God is 100% Holy and in order to fulfil His purpose, Jesus had to come into this world through a miracle and not through the seed of a man. Finally, we discovered that Jesus was going to be a wonderful counsellor and the prince of peace.

(Isaiah 9: v. 6-7)

⁶ For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.

And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of *His* government and peace
There will be no end,
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,
To order it and establish it with judgment and justice
From that time forward, even forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Today we will discover the purpose of Christmas.

In order to do this, we will focus mainly on **v. 21 of Matthew Chapter 1.**

Matthew 1:21

²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

We live in a world today that is very multi-cultural. Last year over 10 million people visited Japan from all over the world. This will increase next year, and then in 2020 with the Olympic Games, it might be at its peak with over 15 million foreigners visiting Japan.

Also lots of foreign people live in countries that are not their own.

British people live and work in Japan and Japanese people live and work in Britain. (England)

My son works in an American school in Switzerland and the students come from all over the world.

However, in spite of the different religions and cultures, most countries celebrate Christmas.

A great effort is made all over the world with **lights, presents, and food.**

Some people don't really know why they are celebrating Christmas.

However, many of the people who do know the real reason for Christmas, that it is a celebration of the birth of Jesus, are **not really celebrating the purpose behind the first coming of Jesus.**

These people are following a **family tradition of lights, presents and food.**

Everybody enjoys seeing lots of pretty lights, receiving presents and enjoying good food, so they don't want to stop celebrating Christmas.

You can't really celebrate the true meaning of Christmas until you know the real **purpose of the Christmas celebration.**

However, it is not just knowing the purpose that matters, **but embracing that purpose and putting it into your heart.**

The receiving of the purpose of Christmas into your heart, will make the real difference in your life, this Christmas and for all eternity.

Let us discover what God's word, the Bible, through the writing of Matthew has to teach us about the purpose of Christmas.

1. God became a baby through a miracle birth .

(Matthew Chapter 1: v. 18-20.

The first thing we need to understand here is that **Matthew is a Jewish writer,** writing an account of the gospel to Jewish people.

These people understood Jewish culture and traditions, and the books of the Old Testament.

In v. 18 we are told that Mary, the human Mother of Jesus, became pregnant during the **“betrothal”** period. We need to understand what this means.

A Jewish marriage had 5 main steps. (Genesis 24)

1. **Shiddukhin** = 1st step in the marriage process. The Father of the groom selected a bride. Sometimes this was done very early on in the process when the prospective bride was a child.
2. **Ketubah** = the word means **“written”** in Hebrew. This was the **marriage contract.** There were **three conditions** that had to be agreed on in this contract.

The Groom had to promise to support his wife.

The Bride had to reveal her financial status. (Dowry)

The Bride had to give her consent to the marriage.

3. **Mohar** = Bridal Payment. This was a gift paid by the groom to the bride's family. This payment set the bride free from any obligations towards her family. (Gen.24:53)

4. **The Eyrusin = Betrothal.** This was **more than an engagement.**

It started with a ceremony. The couple exchanged items of value, sometimes rings or silver items.

The Betrothal period lasted for one year. During this period, the couple did not have any sexual relations and usually lived very separate lives.

They were actually called husband and wife during this period, which accounts for the differences in the English translations concerning the status of Mary and Joseph.

During this period, the husband built a house or extended the family home in some cases, with a separate apartment attached.

During the "1 year betrothal period", the bride was involved in making her wedding dress and lots of new clothes for her future life.

During this period the marriage contract couldn't be broken by the wife, but the husband **could divorce his betrothed wife** if she was found to be sexually active. The divorce process would be allowed because the betrothed woman would be regarded as being married, even though she had not had sex with her husband yet.

5. **The wedding Ceremony** – This took place 1 year after the Betrothal. The couple then lived together, had sexual relations, and hopefully had children at a later date.

Now we get back to our Bible passage. In v. 18.

We are told that Joseph discovered that his betrothed wife Mary was pregnant.

This would have happened sometime in the "1 year betrothal period.'

Joseph naturally thought that Mary had sexual intercourse with another man.

If this was true, then Joseph would automatically break off his agreement with Mary, divorce her, and their marriage contract would be cancelled.

While Joseph was considering what to do in the situation, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

The Angel told him that Mary had not been unfaithful to him.

Mary had not had sexual relations with anybody.

The Angel told Joseph that **Mary's conception was a miracle of the Holy Spirit.**

In other words, Mary was still a virgin, and God had done an amazing miracle.

The miracle was not about the birth of a human baby.

The miracle was about the **God of the Bible becoming a human being in the person of Jesus Christ.(The word used is Incarnation which means the Spirit God, becoming a human being)**

God became a baby and grew up in the normal way within a poor Jewish family.

He experienced everything that a person would have done at that time in history.

The **only exception was that He did not sin, because he was 100% HOLY.**

Jesus can minister to all of our circumstances, because He has experienced most of the things that we go through in life.

As we know, the people who are the most helpful to us when we have difficult times in life, are the people who have experienced the same problems but have overcome them. Therefore Jesus can help all of us in all of our life through His Holy Spirit.

So the first thing about Christmas is to understand that it is a celebration of the God of the Bible becoming a human being, through the miracle birth, in the womb of a virgin called Mary.

This is the first purpose of Christmas, **God becoming a human person.**

The creator of the whole world and everything in it, became a man for one reason.

We will now discover that reason.

2. **God came into this world to be a Saviour from sins.** – v. 21.

It is good to understand that God became a person in a miracle way, but we need to understand **WHY, God came to this world.**

The name **Jesus** will help us to understand why.

The name **Jesus** is an anglicised version of the Hebrew word "**Yeshua**".

The word means to deliver or rescue.

So Jesus came on a **rescue mission**.

His sole purpose was to rescue mankind from the **penalty and punishment of their sins**.

On a human level there are rescue missions going on every week all over the world.

Perhaps the most recent famous rescue mission that was on T.V. world-wide concerned 12 young boys, and their football coach who had to be rescued from an underground cave in Thailand.

Although all the boys were rescued with their coach, **one of the rescuers died** in the process of trying to rescue the boys.

It was a difficult rescue, and there were Christians all over the world praying for this rescue. One of the boys was a Christian.

Also, Just over two weeks ago, 320 km from the Japanese mainland, two U.S. planes crashed while re-fueling in flight.

Japanese aircraft and ships immediately became involved in trying to rescue the air crew. Also the 7th U.S. fleet got involved, plus other U.S. aircraft.

It seemed impossible that anybody could be alive, **but at least one person was rescued alive.**

Both the boys in the cave and the U.S. airmen knew they were in danger of death and they wanted to be rescued.

However, in the case of Jesus, His rescue mission was to involve "**eternal life**" for **those people who wanted to be rescued.**

The Bible teaches that God created this world and all of the nature and animals that live in this world. He also **created a man for a personal relationship with Himself** and also created a woman to support and help the man.

Sadly, through their disobedience to God's commands, mankind was cursed, and separated from God.

The curse involved death.

Eternal death was the penalty and punishment for disobedience.

(Romans 5: v.12)

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

However, God loved His created people so much that He decided to send somebody **to rescue them from the penalty of their sin, being eternal death and punishment.**

The rescue person for this mission was Jesus Christ.

(John 3: v. 16)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

We are told in the text that the rescue mission from Jesus was a **rescue from sin.**

Sin is everything that we think, say or do that goes against God's Laws.

The Bible says that we have all at some time broken God's Laws.

(Romans 3: v. 23)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

(Psalm 14: v.1.) (N.K.J.)

The fool has said in his heart,

"There is no God."

They are corrupt,

They have done abominable works,
There is none who does good.

The reason that we do wrong things in God's eyes is that we are born with a sinful nature.

Doing wrong things is automatically part of our sinful nature.

My wife and I have four children. When they were babies growing up, we didn't have to teach them to do wrong things.

They did these wrong things automatically.

Where did they learn at an early stage to do wrong?

It was not from my wife and myself. It was in the sinful nature of our children.

We only taught them to do right things.

We are all born with an inbuilt radar that tells us what is right and wrong in God's eyes.

We call it our conscience. It gives us a conviction of moral right and wrong.

We don't always listen to our conscience, but we are aware of it.

The Bible teaches that in the last days many people will not listen to their conscience, which is their moral guidance. This is happening today.

Jesus came from Heaven to rescue us from eternal death and the everlasting punishment that God will inflict upon those who reject Him.

God didn't rescue us by arriving in a space ship and inviting people to come back with him to Heaven.

That would not have solved our problem.

God did something better. He sent His Son Jesus Christ, to take the punishment for our sins, so that God's justice could be satisfied.

God would never compromise His Holiness, sin must be punished and OUR SIN, must be punished too.

Therefore, we have a choice, we can **accept God's gift of forgiveness** and **promise of eternal life** if we believe that Jesus came into this world to rescue **US**.

Or, we can **reject God's love, and His rescuer Jesus Christ.**

If we reject Jesus, then one day we will stand before Him after our death and **He will reject us, and we will receive the due punishment for our sins.**

The best Christmas present I can offer you today is forgiveness of your sins, and eternal life in Heaven, and a Saviour from your eternal punishment.

Today you need to make a choice, you can **reject Jesus** and His love, or you can **receive Jesus** and His love for you.

The story goes of two demons from hell who were thinking up ways of preventing people believing in Jesus and going to Heaven.

One demon said, "let us tell people that there is **NO PLACE CALLED HELL.**"

The other Demon said, "that will not work, there are plenty of evil people in the world."

The other Demon said "Let us tell people that there is **NO HEAVEN.** "

The first Demon said "that will not work, most people want to go to a better place when they die, so we will not be able to convince them that there is no Heaven."

Then a third Demon entered into the room and said, " I have been listening to your conversation and I have the best idea of all. Let us tell people that they have **plenty of time to consider eternal issues about death.**"

All of the Demons agreed that this was the best plan.

If you hear the voice of God speaking to your heart today about believing in Jesus and the Christian message, then you must come to Jesus today. **There is NOT PLENTY OF TIME.**

The Bible says Now is the day of Salvation.

We do not know what tomorrow brings. We do not know how long our life will be.

Decide today to believe in Jesus.

JESUS is God's Christmas present to you for ALL ETERNITY.