

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS
Matthew 1:18-25

Intro: The passage before us this morning is such significant passage, and it touches so many important Biblical truths, that, if you believe these verses, you will not have trouble with anything else that you will read in the NT!

The passage deals mainly with Joseph -- and with the Lord's dealing with him in connection with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to have known him. He must have been just as wonderful a man as the virgin Mary was a most wonderful woman!

Our text tells us:

- 1) That he was a saved man, and that he was living for the Lord.
- 2) That he loved Mary very much -- but that he loved the Lord even more!
- 3) That he had one great fear in his life -- and that was the fear of doing something that would displease the Lord!
- 4) That he believed the OT, and that he was open to the Lord, and teachable.
- 5) That he lived by the OT, but he was not a legalist. He was a man of mercy.

Let us go over the text to make sure that we understand it, and then come back to look at the outstanding details which will give us the message of the birth of the Lord Jesus -- which we remember especially at Christmas.

(Survey the text.)

I want to draw your attention to five words -- which summarize the meaning of this passage -- and, to help you remember them, I have chosen five words which begin with the letter, S.

They are:

- 1) SOVEREIGNTY -- the sovereignty of God.
- 2) The SON -- Mary's son.
- 3) SALVATION.
- 4) SINS.
- 5) SCRIPTURE.

Let us look at them in this same order.

I. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

We see this all through the passage. While we are concerned with Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, yet we realize that through these 8 verses we are seeing the hand of a sovereign God -- that He is the One Who is greater than Joseph and greater than Mary -- and

that His supremely powerful hand is to be seen in every detail relating to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Note God's sovereignty in:

- A. What happened to Mary -- the way in which she came to be "with child" (v. 18).

There is nothing like it in all of history -- and yet one of the first promises of redemption was that the Redeemer would be the seed of the woman. And in our chapter Matthew quotes from Isa. 7:14, "the virgin shall be with child."

And Luke tells us that even Mary said to the angel, Gabriel, ^{when he said} that she would "conceive in" her "womb, and bring forth a son" (Luke 1:31), "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). And Gabriel answered:

"The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Nothing could be more the act of a sovereign God than this.

But then, look at . . .

- B. What happened to Joseph.

Look at the way in which "an angel of the Lord" appeared to him after he had painfully decided to put Mary away -- and Joseph's mind was changed!

And then, still thinking of Joseph, note . . .

- C. What Joseph did -- three things in verses 24, 25:

1. He took Mary as his wife.
2. He did not know her until after the birth of Jesus.
3. He gave Jesus the Name that the angel said to give to Him: "Jesus."

If you and I had known Joseph and the godly person he was, we would realize that all three of these actions had to be prompted and carried out by the power of a sovereign God overruling in Joseph's heart.

Christmas is a time for us to recognize again the great truth of

the sovereignty of God -- a truth that seems to be coming more and more to the forefront again in these days when even the Church seems to be focusing entirely too much attention on man and what he is doing!

But let us go on to our second word:

II. The SON of Mary -- Who was He?

Two things need to be said from our text:

- A. He was a man, a true, real human being, born of Mary -- and He was given the Name, JESUS.

It is true that He did not have a human father, but He did have a human mother. He was a human being -- perfect, sinless (as the NT clearly teaches), but, nevertheless, a man.

- B. He was also what He had been eternally: GOD -- and this is brought out by the second name that is given to Him in our text, a name which comes from the OT prophecy of Isaiah, IMMANUEL, meaning, "God with us."

The real message of Christmas can mean nothing less than this -- that in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth you have One Who in One Person combines perfect humanity with perfect Deity. We cannot settle for anything less than this and still be true to the Scriptures.

And notice: to safeguard this truth, both Names were given to our Lord by God Himself -- not by Mary, nor by Joseph, nor even by the angel!

The third word:

III. SALVATION.

As Spurgeon says, commenting on this passage, this was His main work: "He shall save His people . . ."

Here is a word and a truth which needs to be revived -- the word, SALVATION.

Listen carefully to the messages you hear today. Many times you are not really hearing the Gospel when you think you are.

The Lord did not come:

- 1) To help us put it all together.
- 2) To integrate our personalities.
- 3) To make us successful.
- 4) Or, primarily, to solve all of our problems.

He came to "save his people from their sins."

And the word "he" is especially emphatic in the text -- "He" came to do it for "His people" all by Himself. Salvation is not a work done by God in cooperation with man, but salvation is entirely, 100%, a work of God!

As we remember the birth of Jesus Christ at this Christmas time, we need to get back to this truth again.

And let me comment on the words, "his people," for a moment.

Thayer, who has written one of the best Greek lexicons, has this comment to make. He links the term, "his people," to the similar expressions, the people of God, or the people of the Lord, in the OT. And he says this: that "his people" means --

"the chosen people of God,"

"the people whom God has chosen for himself, selected as peculiarly his own."

And everyone of us who is saved knows that this is true -- that we would never have chosen God, we would never have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, IF GOD HIMSELF HAD NOT CHOSEN US AND MOVED UPON OUR HEARTS SO THAT WE WOULD ACCEPT CHRIST AS OUR SAVIOUR!

And the reason why this was absolutely necessary is brought out by our fourth word:

IV. SINS.

Christmas is the time when we remember that Jesus was born to be our Saviour, our Deliverer, from our sins.

This means that the main issue in salvation is our deliverance from the penalty of our sins, which is death -- ETERNAL DEATH!

It means that a saved person's life is going to be changed. He is not going to sin the way he used to -- the power of sin in his life has been broken by the Lord Jesus Christ.

This means total and eternal forgiveness.

And this means that some day, when the Lord returns, we are going to be delivered from even the possibility that we will ever sin again.

The great issue in our salvation is our "sins." Unless this is what brought you to Christ, you probably are not saved! Oh, that the Lord would enable all of us to see this in a

much deeper way at this Christmas season. And may He enable some to see it for the first time -- that you might be saved!

But we have one other word:

V. The SCRIPTURES.

The message of Christmas bears testimony to the absolute truth of holy Scripture -- down to the very words that were used in the OT.

Verse 23 is taken from Isaiah's prophecy (7:14), but they are not the words of Isaiah. They came "through the prophet", but they were "spoken by the Lord." Do you see that?

And, as unbelievable as it seemed at the time, this prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter!

This is why I do not hesitate to teach and preach the Scriptures, and to encourage you to believe every word that you read in this most wonderful of all books. IF CHRIST HAS NOT COME, THE BIBLE COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE THE WORD OF GOD. But since He did come, ANY OTHER VIEW OF SCRIPTURE IS COMPLETELY INADEQUATE.

The OT and the NT are absolutely one in their message -- that man is a hopelessly lost and helpless sinner, under the judgment of God, and that there is only one hope for salvation -- and that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, the virgin-born Son of God!

Concl. and Appl.: I am talking to two kinds of people this morning:

- 1) Those who are saved.
- 2) Those who are not saved.

Those of us who are saved are saved, not because we are better than others, but because the Lord has saved us -- and we have put our trust in Jesus Christ -- where even the faith has been given to us by God.

Those of you who are not saved can be through the power of Jesus Christ, and in Him alone. Turn to Him. Believe in Him. He is the only Saviour. He will forgive you. He will cleanse you. He will save you from your sins -- and only He can do it. He does not ask you to help Him. He promises to do it all! Will you trust Him?