

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus' Identity: "God With Us"

Focus Passage: Matthew 1:18–25

Other Passages Referenced: Genesis 2; Deuteronomy 22:21; 2 Kings 23; Isaiah 7;

Sermon Recap

Names are important. In the Bible, your name was linked to your identity in a way that names seldom are today. In Scripture, naming events communicated important information about who your authority was and what your priority/purpose was. For example, in Genesis 2, God gave Adam authority over the animals and that authority was demonstrated in Adam's naming of the animals. In 2 Kings 23, we see the victorious king rename the defeated king. In doing so, the victorious king demonstrated his authority, power, and ownership over the conquered.

Naming also communicated about priority and purpose. Scripture records several occasions when God changed someone's name according to the call He had on their lives. The LORD renamed Abram, Abraham—from "exalted father" to "father of multitudes." The new name indicated a new priority/purpose God had for Abraham.

In Matthew 1:18–25, an angel tells Joseph that Mary is pregnant with a son and when he is born, Joseph is to name him Jesus (Hebrew, *Yeshua*), which means, "YHWH Saves." The LORD God Saves! As we answer the question, "Who is this Jesus?" we find He is the God who saves! Simply put, Joseph and Mary can't name Jesus whatever they would like, because they have no authority over Jesus. Jesus is God himself who came to save his people and rule with authority as King.

Beyond authority, Jesus' name communicates his priority/purpose. His priority was expressed in his name—The LORD saves. His mission was to save his people from sin, which was their greatest and most deadly enemy. We all need a savior. We all need the God who saves! Joseph's obedience illustrates the personal costs to his reputation, financial position, societal position, and faith community position. Even though Joseph was described as "righteous," he understood his need for a savior and complied with the command of the angel. Following Jesus takes courage to count the cost, to confess our sin, and to comply with King Jesus. The key to courage is found in another of Jesus' names that was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14—*Emmanuel*, which means "God with us."

Interpretive Helps

- "The virginal conception has regularly been understood as a way by which Jesus could be both fully human and fully divine. His father, in essence, was God, through the work of the Holy Spirit; his mother was the fully human woman, Mary. As fully God, Jesus was able to pay the eternal penalty for our sins (v. 21) for which finite humanity could not atone. As fully human he could be our adequate representative and substitutionary sacrifice."¹
- Although Joseph and Mary were not given the authority to name the child born to Mary, it was the father's responsibility to name the child at the time of circumcision, when the baby was 8 days old.

¹ Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 58.

Joseph accepted the role of Jesus' earthly father by naming Him with the name "Jesus," as the angel had commanded him. "The child will therefore legally be Joseph's son and thus legally son of David."²

- The law demanded that an adulteress receive the death penalty (Deut 22:21). However, the Jewish community of this time often did not carry out the death penalty; instead, they punished adulteresses through public disgrace.³

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Discuss how it went as everyone tried to take steps of obedience to what they sensed God saying to them.
3. What is the meaning of your name?

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ Matthew 1:18–25

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. When Joseph found out that Mary, to whom he was betrothed, was pregnant and not by him, what was his first assumption?
4. How does Matthew explain the miraculous conception of Jesus in Mary's womb?
5. Although we often talk of the virgin birth of Jesus, it is more precise to speak of His miraculous virginal conception; He was supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit. In contrast to His conception, Jesus' birth was actually a completely ordinary and human experience. Mary endured labor pains and pushed as Jesus passed through the birth canal and had to have his umbilical cord cut from the mother's placenta. His conception points to His God-nature while His birth to a human mother points to His human-nature. The quotes below from Wayne Grudem explains why both natures were essential:

"Jesus was like us in every respect but one; he was without sin. ... Jesus had to be fully human to serve as our perfectly obedient representative. His representative obedience as a man in contrast to Adam's representative disobedience ... If Jesus wasn't fully human, his obedience in our place would be meaningless ... If Jesus weren't fully human, his death in our place would be meaningless ... The eternal Son of God took to himself a truly human nature. His divine and human natures are forever distinct and retain their own properties even though they are eternally and inseparably united together in one person ... If Jesus wasn't fully God, he could not have borne the full penalty for sin for the whole world. And if he didn't bear the fully penalty of sin for the world as a sinless man, there would be no valid payment for anyone's sins, and nobody could be saved."⁴

How do these truths about the fully divine Jesus becoming incarnate as a newborn in Bethlehem encourage you? Does it impact how you think of Christmas?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. It's one thing to say, "Jesus is the reason for the season" or "Merry Christmas," but how could you incorporate the true story of Christmas into your gospel witness: that the almighty Creator God willingly, lovingly, and humbly allowed Himself to be born into human life to save us from sin and

² Craig Blomberg, [Matthew](#), vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 59.

³ John D. Barry et al., [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Mt 1:19.

⁴ Wayne A. Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: 20 Basics Every Christian Should Know* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 68–70.

death? Give it a try now. Write down how you would tell the gospel by starting with the story of Jesus' birth as God in human flesh. Include what that says about God, about our need for a Savior, and how salvation was made possible.

2. Consider where you need the courage of Immanuel—"God with us"—to count the cost ... to confess your sin ... to comply with the King.

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES:

- The Chapel will host the Community of Faith Mission's homeless shelter from January 10 – 17. You may find more information and a sign-up [here](#).
- Other opportunities to serve during the Christmas season at the Chapel, with Grove Christian Outreach, and The Salvation Army, can be found [here](#).

Further Resources – Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Recommended Book: *Christian Beliefs: 20 Basics Every Christian Should Know* by Wayne Grudem
<https://www.amazon.com/Christian-Beliefs-Twenty-Basics-Should/dp/0310255996>