

**Matthew 1:18-23**

What is Christmas Eve about? Of course in the Christian church the answer is easy – it is about Jesus. I have chosen to concentrate on six verses out of Matthew this afternoon to answer who Jesus was and is and therefore, what Christmas is about.

**Slide** Please open your bibles to Matthew chapter one, verse 18.

**Slide** “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.” Mary did not become pregnant in the normal way, but by the Holy Spirit who is God.

**Slide** “And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.” Mary is dealing with this miraculous event of her pregnancy, but to be pregnant outside of marriage was sin in first century Israel and would have brought shame on her and her family. Joseph had to be shocked, but instead of making a public example of Mary, which could have included having her stoned to death, Joseph decided to separate from her secretly for even though he had to be deeply wounded he loved Mary. If Mary had explained to him that her baby was of the Lord, he was not accepting it at least at this point. This reminds me that today, for you and I, we need to seek the truth of any situation before we pass judgment and before we act.

We continue in verse 20, **Slide** “But when he (Joseph) had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.’” This answered the question as to whether Mary had been telling him the truth about how she came to be pregnant. Since Joseph was the

typical man he would have begun to problem solve and try to figure out how to deal with this and how to avoid any embracement for Mary and him – damage control. God’s angel begins to answer what Joseph was to do next.

**Slide** “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” Now here in verse 21 we find several incredible facts. First, only a son could be fitted into the genealogy foretold in the scriptures to be the king of the line of David who would rule forever. Joseph and Mary now know from the very beginning the baby will be a boy. They are to call him Jesus. The name Jesus is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name **Slide** *Yēšûa* meaning “Salvation”. So why didn’t Matthew, who was writing to a Jewish audience record the name as *Yēšûa*? I believe there are a couple of reasons. First because Israel was a hub of several major trade routes and even though Israel’s national language was Hebrew the trade language was Greek. Hebrew is a poetic language, but Greek is a technical language and God knew that the scriptures would come under attack quickly and be attacked until the end of history at the return of Jesus and the scriptures had to be able to withstand these attacks and be proven true to every generation. Finally at the time of Jesus’ birth it was common for Jews to have both their Hebrew name and a Greek name.

What is important is the meaning of the name. Today in America we name our children because we like the name and we are not concerned with the meaning of the name. Do you know what your name means? My name, William, means protector. This is important to me for as I have grown closer to Jesus as my Savior I have come to know I am the protector of my family and now that my children are grown I am the primary protector of my wife and I am the patriarch of our extended family. As a missionary I was the protector of the new believers and new churches and as a pastor I am the protector of the Holy Word of God. *Yēšûa* means

“salvation” so as we look at the end of verse 21 we could read **Slide** *Yēšúa* or “salvation” **will save His people from their sins.** From the very beginning God is letting Joseph, Mary and anyone else involved know that Jesus’ future and His mission is the salvation of people. Which people? If one examines the structure and verb tenses of this sentence it is also future in its inference. Meaning God is not talking about the historical people the Jews, but those who will come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, as God incarnate, both Jew and Greek and here Greek means all people who are not Jewish.

Here in this one verse God lays out who Jesus is and what His mission for is His life and what the result of Jesus’ life will be. Those who believe in Jesus will be reconciled back to God the Father because they will be considered righteous by the righteousness of the perfect Christ. **Slide** This then is the greatest gift a fallen sinner could ever receive.

God reaffirms who Christ is and what His role here on earth was and is as the inspired Matthew quotes the prophet Isaiah. **Slide** “Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,’ which translated means, ‘GOD WITH US.’” My beloved, God created everything, His creation “man” fell in the Garden and was separated from Him because of sin. God sent Jesus to reconcile mankind back to Himself, to have a relationship with His creation. **Slide** “GOD WITH US” for Christ the man was put to death, but Christ the Son of God, God very God was resurrected, defeating death, Satan and atoning for the sins of His people – His people are those who put their trust in and believe in Jesus as God.

Do you believe? This evening is the perfect time to let go and let Jesus into your heart. Do not wait - come to Jesus and celebrate His birth and your spiritual birth!