

“So, What’s So Special About Christmas?”

Isaiah 11:1-2/Matthew 1:18-25

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Teaching Aim: To recognize the importance of the promised Messiah and see the miraculous way in which God brought about His birth. To examine the response of Joseph to the heartbreaking news of Mary’s pregnancy. To understand the significance of the virgin birth to our salvation. To realize that Jesus truly is Immanuel, “*God with us*” and He will be with His people until the end of the ages! (**Isa. 7:14; Col. 2:9; Matt. 28:18-20**)

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (*BIBLE STUDY*)

Part I: The stem of Jesse and the coming birth of Jesus (Isaiah 11:1-2; Matt. 1:18-21)

1. The prophet Isaiah did not speak, like the prophet Jeremiah, of a lush green tree with many decorations worshiped by the pagans; he spoke of an ugly stump with a single shoot growing out of it. (See **Isa. 11:1; Jer. 10:1-5**) What was this broken stump symbolic of? What did the single shoot represent? What can we learn about Israel’s Messiah from **Isa. 11:2**? Why should this prophecy be an encouragement to every believer who puts his or her trust in Jesus?
2. What significant information can we learn about Jesus from the genealogy listed in **Matthew 1:1-17**? Since the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews in A.D. 70, who is the only person “*alive*” who can prove His right to the Davidic throne? (See **Matt. 1:5-16; Luke 3:23-38**)
3. What is the difference between a modern engagement and a Jewish “*betrothal*” (**vs. 18**)? The Jewish betrothal required a family agreement, bride price, a public announcement and a year of separation until the marriage was consummated. Where do you think Joseph and Mary were in this process of betrothal when the angel arrived? What was the significance of “*the bride price*”? What was its twofold purpose? What price did Jesus pay for His bride, the church? (See **Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5**)

4. The year of separation for a betrothed couple was to be a time of preparation, purity and complete commitment to one another; it was to be a time of testing. What unexpected event occurred during this one-year period? Why would this be particularly troublesome to Joseph? According to **verse 18**, had Joseph and Mary engaged in an immoral sexual relationship before Mary became pregnant? How do we know? What was so unusual about this pregnancy? (See **Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21-23**)

5. What do we learn about Joseph's character from **verse 19**? What thoughts come to mind when you hear that a person is "*a just man*"? What would have happened to Mary if Joseph had turned her over to the Jewish authorities for the sin of sexual immorality? (See **Deut. 22:23-24**) At the time of his dream, Joseph was thinking seriously about the option of divorcing Mary quietly before two or three witnesses because of what appeared to be marital infidelity (**vs. 19**). Had Mary been unfaithful to Joseph or did it just appear that way? What kind of emotions do you think Joseph went through as he heard the news? How would you have reacted if you thought your fiancé cheated on you? What would it take to convince you otherwise?

6. How did God choose to communicate with Joseph (**vs. 20**)? What can we learn about Joseph from the unusual title the angel greeted him with? Why might Joseph be "*afraid*" to take Mary as his wife now? What "*unprecedented*" news did the angel deliver to Joseph?

7. Joseph is promised "*a Son*", though not his own (**vs. 21**). What is the meaning of the name "*JESUS*" and what can we learn about the Child's unique mission from the name? (See **John 14:6; Acts 4:12**) What Old Testament character had the same name as Jesus (only in the Hebrew form)? Note: This character also led his people into the Promised Land? (See **Josh. 1:1-2**) What "*Promised Land*" will Jesus lead His followers into?

Part II: The Virgin Birth and Joseph's obedience to take Mary as his wife. (vv. 22-23)

1. What is a Messianic prophecy? (Hint: Search online) What were some of the most famous Old Testament Messianic prophecies (**vs. 22**)? (See **Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 17:19; 49:10; Num.24:17; Psa. 45:6-7; 102:25-27; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-8; Jer. 31:15; Hos. 11:1; Mic. 5:2**) Why should the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy be an encouragement to every Christian today? (See **Isa. 46:9-10; 48:3**)
2. What Old Testament prophecy did Matthew quote in **verse 23**? How do the events surrounding this prophecy relate to both Isaiah's day and the birth of Christ? (See **Isa. 7:10-17**)
3. What is the meaning of the name "*Immanuel*" (**vs. 23**)? What does this name reveal to us about the person and work of Jesus Christ? (See **John 1:1-4,14; 20:26-29; Phil. 2:5-11**)

Part III: The significance of the name and ministry of Jesus. (vv. 24-25)

1. How did Joseph respond to the angel's message (**vs. 24**)? Have you ever responded to the leading of the Lord in your life? If so, when? What did the Lord lead you to do? If you could do anything in ministry, what would it be? What do you see as the biggest obstacle to using your spiritual giftedness for the Lord?
2. Why was it risky for Joseph to take Mary home as his wife when she was already several months pregnant (**vs. 24**)? What are some ways that culture has changed since the days of Joseph and Mary when it comes to sexual immorality? What can we learn about Joseph's character from his courageous act of love toward Mary and his continued sexual purity until the baby Jesus was born?

3. Write down as many names and titles for Jesus as you can think of from the Bible. (*Hint: If you have a computer, try searching online for "The Names of Jesus".*) What can we learn about Jesus and His ministry from each of these titles and names?

4. Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? If not, why not receive Jesus (the greatest Christmas gift ever) in prayer right now? If you are a Christian and have strayed in your faith, why not repent (change direction) and turn back to Christ today? *Merry Christmas!*

MINER'S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Jesus is the promised Messiah; the single shoot that rises from the stump of the cut off tree of Israel and Judah!
- The genealogy of Christ in **Matt. 1:1-17** verifies Jesus' rightful place in the kingly line of David!
- Since the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Jesus is the only person "*alive*" who can positively identify Himself to be in the kingly line of Judah. (See **Matt. 1:1-18**)
- Since all of the other genealogical records were destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, Jesus is the only one who can ever qualify to be the Messiah!
- Joseph was a man of deep character; he loved Mary and loved God enough to risk the alienation from family, friends and even the synagogue to do what was right in God's eyes!
- The "*virgin birth*" is essential to our salvation.
- The sinless life of Christ was just as important to our redemption as his death, burial, resurrection and ascension!
- The name "*Jesus*" means "*Savior*" (or "*Yahweh saves*") and reveals His mission on earth!