



The Awkward Situations of Christmas

[Matthew 1:18-25](#)

Second in a 3-part series titled: *Awkward Family Christmas*

Pastor Matt Friend – December 9 & 12, 2021

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– OUTLINE –

Today's Big Idea:

Christmas reminds us that God is in charge, even when life feels like it's spinning out of control.

Three Takeaways:

- #1 – Stop trying to comprehend it all... Trust Jesus today.
- #2 – Stop trying to control it all... Surrender to Jesus today.
- #3 – Stop trying to change it all... Be satisfied with Jesus today.



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– NOTES –

Introduction:

What does a perfect Christmas look like to you? In your imagination, if you could spend Christmas *anywhere* with *anybody* doing *anything*, what would that look like?

We all set high expectations for Christmas, don't we? We want everything to be perfect. We have images in our minds of children playing, church bells ringing, and people smiling. But often it's not that way. It is supposed to be, as the song says, "the most wonderful time of the year" and the "hap-happiest season of all." Yet for many, Christmas is a very difficult time because of any number of hard situations.

For you, maybe it's a recent sickness, or the memory of a loved one who has passed, or a divorce, or unusual loneliness, or a painful memory, or the awkwardness that comes with gathering with people you may not totally like.

I don't know what your Christmas will be like, but I can make you one guarantee: It will not be as perfect as you imagine. It will not be unending peace, harmony, and joy. The first Christmas wasn't that way, and your Christmas won't be either.

Text:

[Matthew 1:18-25](#) (NIV)



Teaching the Text

The theme of the book of Matthew is to prove that Jesus is the continuation and fulfillment of the whole biblical story about God and Israel, specifically that Jesus is the Messiah from the line of David. Matthew shows us that Jesus is no mere human, but is God in the flesh, “God with us.”

God inspired this text in the Holy Scriptures to describe Jesus’ unique, divine, and virgin conception. This passage’s primary purpose is to lay the foundation for the work and worship of Jesus Christ to be further explained throughout the Gospel of Matthew. It sets up Matthew’s theme that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the line of David who will bring salvation to His people.

These short verses in Matthew 1 answer two questions:

- How can Jesus die for the sins of billions of people? The answer: *Because He is no ordinary man. He is the God-man.*
- Why should Christians fall down and worship Jesus, as they did in [Matthew 28:17](#)? The answer: *Again, because He is no ordinary man. He is the God-man.*

Last weekend we studied [verses 1-16 of Matthew 1](#), examining the genealogy of Jesus. It’s no accident that verse 18 begins by mentioning the “birth” of Jesus, except this is one unlike any mentioned in Jesus’ family tree. This is a unique, divine, and virgin birth. Many times we can tell what the author is trying to emphasize in a text by the repetition used.

- “Before they came together” ([v. 18](#))
- “Through the Holy Spirit” ([v. 18](#))
- [Verse 19](#) makes it clear that Joseph wasn’t Jesus’ natural father.
- “Conceived... from the Holy Spirit” ([v. 20](#))
- “Virgin will conceive” ([v. 23](#))
- “Did not consummate their marriage” ([v. 25](#))



Jesus, as the virgin-conceived and virgin-born child, is the continuation and fulfillment of the whole biblical story about God and Israel. Specifically, Jesus is *God with us*.

Matthew 1:18...

Joseph and Mary were an ordinary couple, at least on the outside. Mary was a young lady, probably no older than 16. Joseph was a small-town man. Nazareth is still a relatively tiny town in the hills of northern Israel. In Joseph's day, the population is estimated to have been around 500, similar to the towns of Burnsville, Matewan, or Clay. Joseph likely knew the owner of the local bakery. He knew which neighbors complained about what. He knew who could be trusted and who couldn't. He knew the all streets and mountain trails. Joseph was a hard-working, blue-collar man—not a great land magnate, or a great merchant. He didn't have the privileges of nobility, but was a carpenter, a trade he apparently passed down to Jesus and Jesus' younger brothers.

As a side note, the Greek word for *carpenter* can be translated as a woodworker or stonemason. Joseph likely did both. Tradition said he worked in the major Hellenistic city and commercial center of Sepphoris which was within walking distance of Nazareth. Due to a nearby rock quarry, the Romans built a large city there. Because most Jewish boys went to work each day with their father, Jesus probably spent many days in Sepphoris. The regional capital, Sepphoris, was under construction during this time, and it was within walking distance of Nazareth.

Joseph and Mary were “betrothed.” We can think of this as an engagement, though, their engagement process was different than ours.

- For us, marriage is a 3-step process: engaged, ceremony, consummation of the wedding night.
- For the Jewish people at this time, marriage was a 4-step



process: parents would pick a spouse for their child, sign a contract (parents and sometimes the couple), a year later they would have a ceremony, then wedding night.

Matthew picks up this true story during that one-year period between the contract and their ceremony. They were “pledged to be married.”

It was during this time Mary revealed to Joseph that she was pregnant. Imagine what he thought! Imagine what he felt! He must’ve felt his whole world crashing down.

Matthew 1:19...

Joseph was a God-fearing man. At that time, to be under the Mosaic Law, (at least) meant that Joseph had to break off the engagement. In Jewish culture, this was still considered to be a divorce.

Thankfully, though, he was also a compassionate man. According to [Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#), Joseph could’ve had Mary executed for cheating on him during this period. Though there’s little evidence that this was still being practiced at that time, it was a possibility.

Nevertheless, Joseph is such a kind man that he doesn’t want to disgrace Mary. He loves Mary. He decides to break off the engagement as quietly as possible and to retain as much of Mary’s dignity as possible. May God give us more empathetic men like Joseph!

Matthew 1:20...

The angel comes to Joseph in a dream and says, “Do not be afraid.” This is significant, for those words “Do not be afraid” appear more in the Christmas narrative than just about any other event in the Bible. The first Christmas didn’t arrive in a time of great peace but in an atmosphere of crippling fear.



The angel told Joseph to marry Mary. Mary hadn't indeed cheated on him. That baby was immaculately conceived through a miracle by the Holy Spirit. What a relief Joseph felt!

Matthew 1:21...

The name Jesus is a Greek name. In Hebrew, it's translated Joshua or Jeshua or Yeshua, which means "Jehovah will save" or Yahweh will save."

What is the Bible mostly about? One of the big themes is "God saving His people from their sins." Saving us from our sins is one of the most repeated promises of the Old Testament: [Isaiah 40:2](#); [53:6](#); [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#); [Ezekiel 36:25-27](#); [Daniel 9:24](#); [Zechariah 13:1](#). God creates, sin breaks, Jesus saves, Jesus transforms, and God restores.

Matthew 1:22-23...

Again, Matthew shows us how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament promise of the coming Messiah. (You can read about it in [Isaiah 7:14](#).)

The name *Immanuel* reveals the heart of the Christmas story. It's a Hebrew name that means, "God with us." It is a promise of incarnate deity, a promise that God Himself would come as a human infant. If we could condense the truths of Christmas into three words, it would be, "God with us."

Matthew 1:24...

Think of the huge commitment this was! It cost Joseph much to obey God. Not only did Mary have a bad reputation, Joseph was also taking on that bad reputation for himself! Nearly everyone in town from that point forward thought negatively of Mary and Joseph for one reason or another. They thought poorly of



Joseph as either the guy who got his girlfriend pregnant or the guy whose girlfriend cheated on him with another guy; nevertheless, Joseph married her anyway.

What an example of trust and obedience!

When I think of Joseph, two words come to my mind: *quiet obedience*. Did you realize that not one word from Joseph is recorded in all of Scripture? If you've seen a children's Christmas play, usually the cow has more speaking parts than Joseph. Everything we know about Joseph comes as a result of what he does, not what he says. God spoke and Joseph obeyed. Joseph obeyed the Lord, married Mary, adopted Jesus, and became His dad.

Matthew 1:25...

Out of respect for Mary, and so that there would be no question that Jesus was conceived and born of a virgin, Joseph and Mary did not consummate their marriage (they did not have their "wedding night") until after Jesus was born.

It's important to note here: Mary did not remain a virgin for the rest of her life. After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph had a normal physical relationship as husband and wife. They produced at least six other children. The New Testament gives the names of some of Jesus' half-siblings. Two of them wrote letters that are now in the Bible (James and Jude).

Today's Big Idea:

Christmas reminds us that God is in charge, even when life feels like it's spinning out of control.

Big Idea Expanded:

Christmas reminds us that God is in control of all of life's circumstances, and we are not. Christmas reminds us that God is



sovereign, and we are not. Christmas reminds us that God is in control of time and eternity—not us. Christmas reminds us that God has a plan even when we don't. Christmas reminds us that God is writing the beautiful story of our lives, even though we may currently be in the most chaotic chapter.

According to biblical scholar Mark L. Strauss, “The narrative is permeated with the theme of divine purpose and providence. The dreams of Joseph carry the story forward, confirming his Anointed One and bringing his salvation plan to pass... Through it all, God is orchestrating events, inaugurating his plan of salvation.”

Let's remember who the first readers of Matthew's Gospel were: the early church in the midst of Jewish persecution and on the brink of Roman persecution. The sovereignty of God in the Christmas story would've felt like a warm blanket to them, and it is still intended, after all these years, to feel like a warm blanket to us. The truth of God's providence and sovereignty—the fact that He ordains all things and knows all things for His glory and our good—was never intended to function as a hammer. Instead, it is the Christian's pillow.

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Why Do These Three Things? Because...

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