

Christ Born

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[0 : 00] Can you turn back tonight for a little while to Matthew chapter 1 into the passage that we read together? Very well known passage to us that speaks about the birth of Jesus.

Now, for I think most of us here, we would recognize that birth, even though we might not remember our own, birth is a fairly significant event. It's a hugely important event in the life of the individual concerned and obviously in the life of the family that involved and usually in the community. It changes everything for people. Those of you who are new parents here will know that, that it really changes everything and turns your world upside down.

And you may know that as an uncle or an auntie or a cousin or a friend of the family of those who have had children. Well, in the universe there was never a birth like Jesus Christ, absolutely and completely unique, of infinite significance. Now, I don't, I'm not, I don't tend by any means to be irreverent in saying this, but if there was a notional Twitter feed on the significance of births, then Christ's would trend all the time, hugely more than any other birth, hashtag virgin birth. It's absolutely significant, absolutely important.

Unparalleled in the history of the universe is the birth of Jesus Christ. And I simply want to say two things about the birth of Jesus tonight. Much of this you'll know, but I hope that by the spirit of God as we're singing and praying, they'll apply it to our lives and there'll be, there'll be developmental thoughts for the young people identity later on. And the first thing is, and they're two very obvious things. The first thing is that his birth was expected. Okay. His birth was expected. Now, for most of us, particularly for those who are close to someone who is pregnant, then, you know, the birth is expected.

We've got nine months to wait and we know that it's going to happen. I know that's not always the case, but it's usually the case. And so when the birth comes, it's not a great shock. You know, we've had that time to get our mind and our thoughts around that.

[2 : 33] And that was no different for Jesus. Jesus too was in the womb for nine months. His birth was expected at a natural normal level. The New Testament speaks about Mary as the expectant mother. And we speak in these terms, don't we, of the expectant parent, because this is something that's expected. But I don't, I'm not really talking about the natural expectation here of the birth of Jesus, but rather, also, it was spiritually expected. Jesus' birth was spiritually, particularly for those who were in the know. You know, for those who knew the teaching of the Old Testament, who knew about the promises of the Messiah, and we've spoken quite a lot about that in the last little while. This birth of Jesus was the most expected and most clearly anticipated birth in history. So there was a great deal of excitement. I know there's a lot of, there was, we'll go on to speak a little bit more about what wasn't expected about Jesus' birth, but certainly he was a child, spiritually speaking, and in God's purposes, he was an expected child. In chapter one here, it speaks of the word of prophecy. In verse 23, Matthew takes this passage from hundreds of years before in the Old Testament and says, All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. So he was the fulfillment of a sign, and he was, he was the fulfillment of prophecy that Matthew draws into this birth narrative from the prophecy of Isaiah hundreds of years before. He was a fulfilled sign.

He was a sign that he was the Messiah who was to come. This in Isaiah, the prophecy was originally given to King Ahaz, who was an evil king who had broken the covenant with his God and with his people, and who was leasing, who had become, who had abandoned trust in God and who put his trust in other kings and in human alliances to gain his power. And Isaiah was prophesying against him and reminding him that God, if he trusted in God, God would send a deliverer. That was what God would do. This was, they were God's people. If you just trust in me, I'll send you a

deliverer. But Ahaz wasn't to follow God and to follow the prophecy of Isaiah. Now, however we understand the immediate application of that prophecy as it was given to Ahaz, which is, there are multiple different suggestions to that. Clearly here Matthew finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ, that this is a sign, that this is a miracle, that this child who is born of a virgin, which is significant and we'll go on to say a little bit about that, but that is the sign and he will give birth to something, we'll call him Emmanuel means God's with us. So this is the divine initiative, the divine redeemer, the Messiah that was expected, the Messiah they looked for, he was coming and this was the fulfillment in Jesus Christ. This is a fulfilled sign. He was also a long awaited son. If you look at, if you turn back to Matthew, the very first verse in Matthew chapter one that we read together, it says, a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. He's often called the Son of David.

He's also often called in its kind of LinkedIn with that, the Son of Man. In fact, it was Jesus' favorite self designation. He liked calling himself the Son of Man, but he was also the Son of David and the Messiah that the Old Testament people were looking for was always going to be a Son of David, was always going to be the greater David, was going to be a better King than David and was going to have a throne that lasted forever.

The long awaited King, with this everlasting Kingdom, we spoke about it this morning. Remember I was saying there's quite a neat dovetail between Daniel's prophecies of a kingdom and the coming of Jesus? Well, here we have this long awaited Son coming. Now you see that Old Testament hope, someone at the door, that Old Testament hope, someone coming. Okay, Old Testament hope of an everlasting Kingdom. If you maybe want to put up Genesis chapter 12, 1 to 3, can we have that on the screens? Hello, wake up, up there. See, you can go up there and you can fall asleep, no one sees you. The Lord said to Abraham, go from your country, your people in your father's house to land I will show, I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and I will make your name great and you'll be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you, I will curse all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. So right from the very beginning of this nation as though there's a promise to Abraham that all the nations of the world will be blessed through his seed and that is a great hope that we know and recognize. But also in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and verse 16, the promise given to David, your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me, your throne will be established forever. So we have these Old Testament promises that were never fulfilled in their own lifetime but is fulfilled in this long awaited Son of David who is going to come and to be the King of Kings. And even if you look at the following chapter, the chapter about the Magi, the wise men who come, they're coming to see the birth or to meet with the King of the Jews, the Messiah who has come. They knew the Old

[8 : 45] Testament, they knew what was believed by the people and they were coming to worship him. So Jesus coming was expected and it was really big news, it was really significant news and it was a longing fulfilled that we see in Jesus Christ's birth. And we also see, and lastly in this first bit, we also see that it was confirmed in the genealogies.

The genealogies are important. Now you may be looked at the genealogies and think, why on earth are there genealogies in the New Testament or in the Bible? What's the point of them? They're actually great apart from being very difficult to read because of the names. But there's one here in Matthew and there's also one in Luke chapter 3. Now if you took just five minutes at some point to look at them, critically, you would find they start upside down. One starts one place, one starts the other. All the names in them are different and one ends with Adam, one starts with Abraham and one ends with Jesus and one starts with Jesus. And they seem to be hugely contradictory. But the Jewish people were meticulous about their origins. They were meticulous about their genealogies. We probably don't know much further than our great grandfathers if we even know that and we probably don't have a family tree. They were absolutely meticulous about genealogies.

It was so important to them. Roots were so important to them. Tribes were so important to them. Genesis were so important. Beginnings were so important. There's simply, it's impossible to conceive that Matthew and Luke, when they had written these genealogies, didn't realize and didn't know that they were completely contradictory. It wasn't a mistake. But what we realize is ultimately that both of them have David and Abraham as very central. The two promises that we were looking at on the screen there as well. And that Matthew's genealogy is really the genealogy of Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. And that comes down through the line of Solomon, one of David's sons. And

the Luke account is generally regarded as being Mary's genealogy that comes through the line of Nathan, another son of David.

So you've got these two different, obviously then there's different names. They dovetail at some points. They come together. But the interesting thing with that then is, isn't it, that legally and also genetically, Jesus is the son of David, comes down the line of the kings on both sides. It's a double whammy. He's definitely the fulfillment of prophecy.

And we see this beautiful reality, this stylized reality that's given to us in the genealogies that Jesus is the expected one. He's the expected one that comes down both these lines. And he is the Messiah that has always been prophesied and predicted.

[12:07] And just as a little aside, very briefly, in the genealogies, we have some interesting names in them. And we have some women in them, which was hugely unexpected and not the normal form of these legal genealogies. We have Rahab the prostitute. We have Bathsheba, who slept with David while he was busy murdering her husband. We have Ruth, who did not belong to the people of God, and then we have Mary herself. And I think these inclusions, not just sex of these people, but also the background of these people and the nationality of these people are a reminder of what Jesus was coming to do.

Revelation 7, verse 9, at the end of the New Testament, after this I looked in there before me, it was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were wearing palm branches in their hands. So there's almost just generally included in these genealogies a reminder that Jesus wasn't just going to be a local Jewish Messiah, but he had come to take people from every nation and from every tribe and from every people and from every background. And in Galatians 3, verse 28, says again, there's neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, for you're all one in Jesus Christ. And the genealogies just gently whisper towards that, that this is no local deity. This is the King of kings and the Lord of lords that we spoke about this morning, the great Redeemer, whose kingdom will not come to an end to which we belong, as Christians today. So his birth was expected. But can I say that his birth was also secondly, it was unexpected. And I think that just comes across very clearly from the account. You know, it's a sign. Now a lot of people deny the reality of the virgin birth. They say, well, you don't need to believe in the virgin birth to be a Christian. That may or may not be the case. I'm sure that is the case. But it is not recorded as myth. And it certainly isn't some kind of account of a dubious liaison between a heavenly being and between an earthly woman. It is clearly dictated as a miraculous event, a sign, a supernatural event. You know, some say that virgin doesn't need to be translated as virgin, it can be translated as young woman. There wouldn't be much of a sign and simply a young woman becoming pregnant. I mean, that was happening all over the world. Not much of a sign, not much miraculous, not much declarative about that. But here clearly Matthew takes this interpretation of the word and applies it to Jesus. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to us. That is the sign that is given. It's not myth, but it does introduce us to a saviour who will be a saviour in the miraculous and a saviour through the miraculous. It is not procreation that happens when Jesus is born. It is creation. It's an act of creation by

God, the Holy Spirit. It is not simply procreation as we know it. It is a breaking in to our humanity with the supernatural. And it opens up the door to us of a saviour who is supernatural.

You know, really the great problem that people have with the virgin birth is because they have a presupposition that is materialistic, that miracles don't happen. So they don't believe in the Jesus that walks in water and they don't believe in the Jesus that turned water into wine. And they don't believe in the Jesus from which there was 12 basketfuls left over from loaves and fishes. And they don't believe in a resurrected saviour. It's a different, you see it's coming from a presupposition that can't accept the miraculous.

But when we come with our understanding from Scripture in the eye of faith that this is the God of the universe, then it doesn't become a problem for us. A redeemer is a redeemer of miracle. And you sit here tonight as a Christian because of that, because he has broken into your experience in mind and has brought us to spiritual life. That is his act, miraculous act, his great sovereign act that he breaks into our lives. The virgin birth is unexpected, but it speaks of a redeemer that we need a redeemer outside of ourselves.

[17:28] It couldn't simply be the child of Joseph and Mary. The redeemer needed to be from outside of ourselves. It's a bit like the astrologers this morning that we were speaking about who

said, well, no one can answer, no one can tell you the dream you had unless it was the God's, someone from outside. And so we have a redeemer that the virgin birth speaks about is one we can't produce. We can't produce this redeemer. It's a new start. When Jesus is born of a virgin, it's a break from humanity's derivation from Eden, from Adam and Eve, from the first Adam who was our representative and who fell and through whom all of us inherit original sin, but from whom we all sin ourselves. So this virgin birth helps us to understand as fully God, but also fully man, the divine child created in the womb. But as we saw last week in the incarnation, fully human, you know, comes into our fallen world, God in the flesh.

Now that was unexpected. They didn't pick that up at any level from Old Testament prophecy. That was God's unique involvement in this Old Testament prophecy that they simply didn't expect. And often that people today don't expect because isn't it true that people have their own ideas of who God is? And I'll say a little bit more about this in a minute, but they can't conceive of a God who was born of a virgin, who was born, who was in the womb for nine months, who was born, who cried utter dependence on his mother for her milk. That was unexpected. As was him being, and this is kind of broadening a little bit from your, although it comes into this passage, I guess, he was born into poverty. Now that wasn't expected either. See the Messiah that they were looking for was a king. He was going to, he was going to reign on the throne of David. He was bound for greatness and kings are not born generally speaking through a line of succession into poverty. But Jesus wasn't born in a palace. There was no pump. He had no home. He was born into shame and more than that born into scandal and alleged illegitimacy. Now we have no concept of the scandal that would have pursued Mary and her family right through her life. That's Mary.

That's the one that had a child before she was married. He's illegitimate. That would have stayed in the small town gossip probably right through her life. He was a refugee.

And from the moment he was born, as you see from some of the prophecy and revelations, some of the pictures and revelation, from the moment he was born, there was the mouth of Satan just at her womb to eat him up. He was under threat of death from the moment he was born. So unexpected. Born into poverty. You know Philippians 2 speaks about that, doesn't it? That he emptied himself. And that's so far from the cruel, capricious, disinterested, moralistic God that people have made up and that people love to hate, isn't it? Isn't it important that we tell people about the kind of God we have, the kind of saviour that we believe in so that the virgin birth is important. I'm not saying that we immediately go in and try and explain the virgin birth to people who are not Christians, but it's the background, it's the foundation that gives us more and more confidence. So say in a minute, in our God, because of the kind of God, the commitment of our God, the love of our God, the grace of our God, that he was willing to leave what he left in order to take human flesh. So in conclusion, very briefly, what difference does this or at least ought this to make in our lives? Virgin birth, something that you think is any relevance beyond maybe some of the theological fine tuning we've spoken about tonight? Well, in one word I hope it does, but that's not the one word, that's four words. The word is confidence. I hope that the virgin birth and the truth of that brings confidence into your

[22 : 41] Christian life. It's a really important thing to have confidence. Now any of you here who are sports people will know that. I'm sure it's true in the world of education and politics and everything, everything that we do. That confidence, but it's early in the world of sport it makes a great difference, doesn't it? People can have a lot of gifts, a lot of abilities, but if they lack confidence, their play really is affected badly. It's amazing how much confidence can change your abilities and at least the way you see the game and the way you play the game. And I think the virgin birth is one doctrine that gives us great confidence. It should deepen our faith in who our God is and what He has come to do. I want you to stop and I want you to think about it. I want you to go home and pray about it and ask God to help you consider why this is such a great and significant truth that this Christ was expected and was part of God's plan for us, you know, for us, for this great kingdom, this kingdom that is eternal that never ends. It's for us, but

He's also unexpected and His glory and that God would do this, that He would be born of a virgin and He would live this life in order to be a redeemer. As your roots are fixed more firmly in this water, in this living water, in this truth, you will be nourished and you will be stronger and you will have more confidence in God because you will have a relationship with Him that is built on knowledge, on the knowledge of the kind of beginning He had for us as a Savior which of course was pre-existent. Confidence in God's plan. You know, what we've seen both from this morning and

this evening is the tremendous dovetail between Old and New Testament and how it all has one clear message, one consistent message. 66 weeks over thousands of years with one central, clear, repeated plan and theme. Can we have the last verse up? Ephesians 1 verse 4. That's why you have confidence because He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. We are part of that plan. We are part of this kingdom, part of this movement that Jesus Christ has ushered in and in Him we are secure, not because of what we do, not because of our abilities, not because of our faithfulness, but because of His faithfulness and because we are chosen in Him. And the question is, are you chosen in Him? Because it's open to us all as we look at it and we come to Him for salvation and security as we saw this morning. Where is our, in whom is our future? Hope. You know, are we bedded in that kingdom that's everlasting? All the other ambitions, all the other youthful desires, all the other plans, all the other homes, all the other paychecks, all of these things, they come and go. But there's this solid, secure, everlasting kingdom that we can be rooted in and belong to and can be the foundation for a fruitful life for us in Christ and through Christ. So God's plan should give us confidence. And you know, we're battered a lot of the time, aren't we? We don't know the future, we don't know what tomorrow holds and sometimes we're broken by the events of the day, but in Him we're part of that kingdom and that breeds confidence.

But also confidence, I think, in the person of Jesus, he's sufficient to good Savior, you know? He's God, but he's also man, humanity. You know, he can understand us, but he's not just able to understand us, he's also God. So he's able to redeem us. It's like, you know, the Virgin, Bers, speaks about a great God. A God is man, mankind, human, but we're God who's God who redeems us. You know, there's no other God that takes this initiative.

There simply isn't another Savior. There's nowhere in history where God comes down and takes the initiative to redeem us as we have in Christ. This is the act of costly love, humbling Himself to be a redeemer. So we build confidence, I think, in the person of Christ, to worship. So we come together tonight and we worship Jesus Christ and we obey Him as believers because He's Lord, because He's good. You know, we saw that last week, didn't we?

[27 : 54] We obey Him because He's good and because His laws are good and because He loves us. And sometimes that's a real battle because He's tearing out a sinful, cancerous heart and that's tough. But also, He's sufficient for us to imitate. He's much more than someone we just imitate, you know. We trust and we believe in Him as Lord and Savior. But also we imitate His humility. You know, Philippians 2 speaks about that. We should have the same nature, the same mind as Christ. So we should be humble. So we should be confident and confidently humble. It's an oxymoron, maybe, is it? But it's the great way of the Christian, is it?

We can be confidently humble. That's a beautiful paradox because very often confidence in this world is associated with cockiness and with putting others down. But the Christian confidence is a gentle, paradoxical, humble confidence because there's really a confidence in the person of Jesus. And so our confidence should lead to us being humble as Christians, both before God and with one another. But it should enable us just to be confident in this person.

And I hope that you will go from here tonight more confident because of the virgin birth and what it speaks of and what it means. And that your steps tomorrow will have a confident air about them because of the kingdom that He has ushered you into, that everlasting spiritual kingdom which life and death and disease and illness and darkness and blackness can't take us from. It was a good kingdom. Blessed and glorious. Amen.