

THE DIVINE BIRTH OF JESUS: UNUSUAL EVENTS MATHEW 01:18–24; LUKE 02:21

Introduction

The coming of God's Son into the world was one of the most phenomenal events in all of history. It necessitated and caused some very unusual events.

- I. His birth was of the Spirit (v. 18).
- II. His birth created a predicament (vv. 18-19).
- III. His birth necessitated a special revelation (vv. 20-21).
- IV. His birth was a fulfillment of prophecy (vv. 22-23).
- V. His birth stirred a great obedience (v. 24).
- VI. The Child was named Jesus (Luke 2:21)

I. *Mathew 01:18 The Birth of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' birth was of the Spirit. Never before had a man been born "through the Holy Spirit," but Jesus was. A person either accepts the evidence of Scripture at this point or rejects it. The Scripture is clear in what it says: "Before they came together, she [Mary] was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit." It is a matter of faith and trust in the *God of love*.

- who is revealed in Scripture as caring for man with an eternal and perfect love.
- who set out to save man from his sins (v. 21).
- who caused the greatest event of human history: God's *becoming one with man* – "God with us" (v. 23). (See *Immanuel*, Mathew 01:23; *Virgin Birth of Jesus*, Mathew 01:23.)

MATHEW 01:18–25 THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE DEMANDS ON MARY AND JOSEPH

Jesus' birth was one of the most convulsive and disturbing events in all history (see Lk. 2:1-24).

1. There was Mary's pregnancy – the idea of her being an unwed mother (Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:26f). Who of that day would ever believe her story? Required was a willingness to be available to God regardless of embarrassment and the opinions of family, friends, and neighbours.

2. There was Joseph's discovery of Mary's pregnancy (Mt.1:19). The shock of Mary's infidelity and of personal embarrassment was more than Joseph could bear (Mt. 1:20). Required was a willingness to forget self completely.
3. There was the child, the Son of God Himself, being born in a smelly manger (Mt. 1:25; Lk. 2:lf). Required was a willingness to be humble.
4. There was the family having to be uprooted and moved to a foreign nation, Egypt (Mt. 2:13f). Required was a willingness to obey at any cost.
5. There was the slaughter of all children under two years of age (Mt. 2:16f). The heavy weight of feeling some responsibility was bound to attack Joseph and Mary. Required was a willingness on their part to bear anything.
6. There was the visit of the wise men showing that the foreign relationships of nations were affected (Mt. 2:lf). Required was a willingness to bear the pressure of responsibility and the demands of being in the limelight.
7. There was the uproar of Herod's household traumatically affecting the lives of both Joseph and Mary (Mt. 2:7-8, 15-16, 22). Required was a willingness to stand against all odds. □

MATHEW 01:18 MEANING OF 'CHRIST' AND 'MESSIAH'

The word for "Christ" and "Messiah" is the same word: *Christos*. Messiah is the Hebrew word, and Christ is the Greek word. Both words refer to the same Person and mean the same thing: *the Anointed One*. The Messiah is *the Anointed One* of God. Mathew says that Jesus "is called Christ" (Mt. 1:16); that is, He is recognized as the Anointed One of God, the Messiah Himself.

In the day of Jesus Christ, people feverishly panted for the coming of the long-promised Messiah. The weight of life was harsh, hard, and impoverishing. Under the Romans, people felt that God could not wait much longer to fulfill His promise. Such longings for deliverance left the people trusting. Many arose who claimed to be the Messiah and led the trusting followers into rebellion against the Roman State. The insurrectionist, Barabbas, who was set free in the place of Jesus at Jesus' trial, is an example (Mk. 15:6f).

The Messiah was thought to be several things:

1. *Nationally*, He was to be the leader from David's line who would free the Jewish state and establish it as an independent nation, leading it to be the greatest nation the world had ever known.
2. *Militarily*, He was to be a great military leader who would lead Jewish armies victoriously over all the world.
3. *Religiously*, He was to be a supernatural figure straight from God who would bring righteousness over all the earth.
4. *Personally*, He was to be the One who would bring peace to the whole world.

Jesus Christ accepted the title of Messiah on three different occasions (Mt. 16:17; Mk. 14:61; Jn. 4:26). The name Jesus shows Him to be man. The name Christ shows Him to be God's anointed, God's very own Son. Christ is Jesus' official title. It identifies Him officially as: Prophet (Deu. 18:15-19), Priest (Psa. 110:4) and King (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

These officials were always anointed with oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit who was to perfectly anoint the Christ, the Messiah (Mt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10-11; Lk. 3:21-22; Jn. 1:32-33). □

II. *Mathew 01: 18–19 The Righteous Joseph*

Jesus' birth created a predicament – the predicament of Joseph's life. The words “a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace” show a deeply troubled spirit. Joseph was literally torn between obeying the law (exposing Mary to the authorities) and his love for her. He struggled, for he was perplexed, troubled, and disappointed. His imagination ran wild. He felt deceived, experiencing jealousy and rage. Mary had committed whoredom against him. Yet he cared for her and loved her deeply. He did not want Mary to be hurt. He wanted to divorce her quietly and secretly. (See *Betrothed*, Mathew 1:18.)

Thought 1. Jesus' birth creates a predicament for every man. Imagine the emotions and the hurt Joseph felt when he discovered that Mary, his fiancée, was pregnant. Imagine the thoughts that must have flooded his mind! What a predicament Jesus' birth created for Joseph! Jesus' birth creates a predicament for every man in that every man is now forced to make a decision about Christ and *His claims*.

Thought 2. There is no room for gossip and censorious judgment among God's people. In Joseph's mind, Mary's sin was great. She had committed whoredom

against him. Yet, he cared and truly loved her. It was this love that helped him in his treatment of her: “Love covers over a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). A person who truly loves others cannot be critical, judgmental or censorious. The person who loves will not talk, gossip or criticize. He will get alone with God and pray about the problem just as Joseph did.

Mat 7:1-4 *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?”*

Gal 6:1 *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

Eph 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Col 3:12 *Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

1 Pet 4:8 *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

Thought 1. Believers are not to be unequally yoked together. Joseph was a just man; Mary was a virtuous woman. Both were godly. Believers should be careful in selecting their companions for marriage.

2 Cor 6:14 *Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?*

Thought 2. There is real wisdom in taking time to confirm one’s decision to marry. It is much better to delay and be sure than to rush and be sorry.

Thought 3. A waiting period before marriage is wise. It gives God time to melt and mould the couple into one being spiritually – much more time than in a quick marriage. It also allows more time for a couple to grow together before being married. Spending time growing together prevents a multitude of heartaches and much pain.

III. *Mathew 01:20–21 Joseph, Son of David*

Jesus' birth necessitated a special revelation. Joseph did just what he should have done: he got alone with God to think and pray through the predicament. Because of his godly dependence and obedience, God met his need. God gave Joseph a special revelation. God's purpose was fourfold.

1. To give assurance to Joseph. When the angel called Joseph "son of David," Joseph was shocked. He was wakened to a glorious call. He was chosen by God as a son of David to be the earthly father to "The Son of David," the Messiah! All Jews knew the prophecies that said the Messiah was to be of the line of David. Joseph knew them; but to hear himself addressed as "Joseph, son of David," quickened his attention and alerted him to an extremely important message. It indicated to some degree a divine call. Remember: Joseph was only a humble carpenter.
2. To guide Joseph.
3. To explain the predicament.
4. To reveal the destiny of the promised child. (See *Jesus*, Mt. 1:21; *Salvation – Mission of Jesus*, Mt. 1:21.)

Thought 1. There is a right way to confront traumatic experiences. Joseph demonstrated the right way. He got alone and "considered this thing" (v. 20). Being a just and godly man, he got alone with God; he shared his thoughts with God. He probably wept as a child pouring out his soul to God. Believers often weep when facing terrible trials.

Heb 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

John 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you."*

James 5:13 *Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.*

Psa 91:15 *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.*

Isa 65:24 Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.

Thought 2. There is a way to conquer criticism, murmuring, and censorious judgment. It is to do what Joseph did: hush, keep quiet, and get alone with God to discuss the matter.

Thought 3. God met Joseph when he took time to get alone and to think. The right frame of mind is essential in order to hear and receive the message of God.

Thought 4. The believer who gets alone with God and thinks through the trials confronting him will be met by God. God will give assurance and guide the believer (Mt. 6:33; Phil. 4:6-7; Jn.16:13; Rom. 8:13; Heb. 13:5).

Thought 5. A person is to say “yes” to God’s call. Joseph received the call of God, and he accepted God’s call and was obedient. Most people reject God’s call.

Mat 20:16 “*So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*”

Thought 6. *The vast majority of persons called by God are from humble stations in life. Joseph came from a humble station in life, and so did Christ.*

1 Cor 1:26-27 *Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

Thought 7. His name was Jesus. God chose His name and instructed that He be called by that name. Every person should know and call upon the name “Jesus.”

Thought 8. Jesus’ mission was to save. God gave Him His mission, His purpose for living. God gives the mission — the purpose for every person’s life, who looks to God as Jesus looked.

Mat 20:28 *Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Luke 19:10 *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.*

John 20:21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*

MATHEW 01:21 JESUS (IESOUS)

The name Jesus means Saviour; He will save. The Hebrew form is *Joshua* (yasha), meaning Jehovah is salvation; He is the Saviour. The idea is that of deliverance, of being saved from some terrible disaster that leads to destruction (see Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8:3; Gal. 1:4; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25). □

MATHEW 01:21 SALVATION: THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” Mathew 01:21

The statement “He will save his people from their sins” is full of meaning.

1. The word *save* or *salvation* means to deliver. It is Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who saves.
2. The words “His people” are significant. It infers that all people are not “His people.”

John 10:26–27 But you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

3. The words “from their sins” mean that Christ saves His people from:
 - the power of sin
 - the bondage of sin
 - the guilt of sin
 - the consequences of sin(Gal. 1:4-5; 4:4-7; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25; Tit. 2:14.)

In Rev. 14:4, Christ is said to redeem believers “from among men [worldly men]”. In Heb. 7:26 where Christ is said to be “set apart from sinners”. The believer is called to separation: to live away from, above and over sin; to conquer sin; to live victoriously over sin. (See 2 Cor. 6:17-18; Rom. 12:2; 1 Jn. 2:15-16.) □

IV. *Mathew 01:22–23 The Birth of Jesus Christ*

Jesus' birth was a fulfillment of prophecy. (See *Prophecy*, Mathew 1:22.) Mathew stresses two prophecies in particular.

1. There was the prophecy predicting His virgin birth. (See *Virgin Birth of Christ*, Mathew 1:23.)
2. There was the prophecy predicting His name: Immanuel. (See *Immanuel*, Mathew 01:23.)

MATHEW 01:22 PROPHECY

The basic elements of prophecy are given here.

1. Prophecy is “the Word of the Lord.” It is not the word of men. The future is revealed by God, not by men.
2. The prophet is but a messenger – not the spokesman.
3. Prophecy must be fulfilled. It will always come to pass. □

MATHEW 01:23

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD

*“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” – which means, “God with us”. **Mathew 01:23***

Four convincing things about the virgin birth of Christ are:

1. The concern and great pains to which Mathew went in pointing out the supernatural birth of Jesus. He said very pointedly, “This is how the birth of Jesus Christ [not just Jesus, but “Jesus Christ, the Messiah] came about.”
 - a. “Mary...was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit” (v. 18).
 - b. “What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit” (v. 20).
 - c. “All this took place to fulfill [the prophecy]... ‘The virgin...will give birth to a son. They will call Him Immanuel... ‘God with us.’” (v. 22-23)
 - d. “They will call Him Immanuel...God With Us” (v. 23)

Matthew was not interested in giving a detailed account of Jesus' birth. His concern was simply to draw the reader's attention to two important facts.

First, the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah's birth were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Second, the Jews needed to know that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, especially those who misinterpreted the Old Testament prophecies and who were not expecting the Messiah to be virgin born. One of the slanderous reports facing the early Christian believers was that Jesus was born out of wedlock.

Isa 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

Isa 9:6 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Luke 1:31 *You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus.*

Luke 2:7 *And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.*

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Rom 8:3 *For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.*

Gal 4:4-5 *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*

Phil 2:6-7 *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

1 John 4:2 *This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.*

2. The simple profession of Mary that shows shock and amazement: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (Lk. 1:34).

3. Note the mystery of life about which man knows so little.

***Eccl 11:5** As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.*

***Psa 139:13-15** For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

4. Note the mystery of godliness.

***1 Tim 3:16** Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. (see Ga1.4:4; 1 Jn.1:1-3)*

***Heb 2:14-17** Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — And free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.*

***Phi12:5-7** Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, But made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.*

***2 Cor 5:19** That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

***John 14:9** Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

***John 10:33** "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." □*

MATHEW 01:23 JESUS, IMMANUEL, SON OF GOD

Immanuel means God with us. He is God manifest in human flesh. The word “Immanuel” is not a name or a title. It is a descriptive term. It characterizes a person. Jesus is Immanuel: God with us, God revealed in human flesh (see Isa. 1:26; 9:6; Jn. 1:1, 14; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Jn. 1:2). □

V. *Mathew 01:24 Obedience of Joseph*

Jesus’ birth brought about a great obedience. Very simply, Joseph obeyed God. Despite the predicament – despite the appearance of things – Joseph obeyed. He did exactly what God said. Imagine how difficult it must have been! Mary was pregnant, yet they were not married. How much gossip had been there? What would have been the reaction of the neighbours? How much pain Joseph and Mary might have experienced while giving them a reply? Would people believe the story of angels and of a virgin birth from two people whom they knew so well? What a situation! Yet, Joseph did exactly as God said – despite all. What a lesson for great obedience on the part of every believer!

John 14:21 “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

John 15:10, 14 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love...You are my friends if you do what I command.

Heb 5:8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered.

Thought 1. Joseph acted as God wants a man to act.

- 1) He was merciful and gentle and tender toward one who had hurt him so much.
- 2) He forgave as one who had been forgiven. He had the attitude that is needed by believers when a loved one or a fellow believer is found in sin.

Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

Eph 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

Eph 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

IV. *Luke 02: 21 Naming of Jesus Christ*

There was the unusual naming of the child. The child was named by God Himself.

1. The child Jesus was named by God before He was conceived in the womb (Lk. 1:31).
2. The name Jesus (iesous) means Saviour or He will save. The Hebrew form of the name is Joshua (yasha), which means *Jehovah is salvation* or He is the Saviour. The idea is that of deliverance, of being saved from some terrible disaster that leads to destruction (see Jn. 3:16). (See Lk. 9:23; Rom. 8:3; Ga1. 1: 4; Heb. 2:14-18; 7:25.)

1 Tim 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men – the testimony given in its proper time.

Titus 3:4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

3. There was the ceremony of circumcision. (See *Circumcision*, Phil. 3:3) ■

PHILIPPIANS 03: 03 CIRCUMCISION

Before Christ, circumcision was the physical sign that a man was a follower of the true God. It was the sign that a man believed the promises that God had made to Abraham and Israel (see Gen. 17:10-14; Rom. 4:11). God never intended circumcision to have any value other than being a sign. It was not to bring righteousness to any man - not even to Abraham (Rom. 4:9-10). It was given only as a sign - a sign of the faith that a man already had in God's promises. Righteousness was imputed to the man because he believed God's promises; then the man was circumcised as a sign of his faith in God (see Rom. 4:11).

However, many abused God's purpose for circumcision.

1. Some made circumcision a substitute for true righteousness. A man was thought to be safe and secure in the arms of God if he was circumcised. Believing God and loving men had little to do with being a child of God.

Many forgot the circumcision of a pure heart and became Jews of the circumcision in name only. Circumcision became merely an external and physical sign.

2. Some used circumcision as a way to divide and categorize people.

A great wall of division was thrown up around the uncircumcised (cp. Acts 10:1; 1 Sam.17:26, 36; 2 Sam. 1:20). Any man who was uncircumcised was thought to be *cut off* and *far off*, not only from those thought to be the people of God (the Jews and the circumcised) but from God Himself. (See Acts 10:1-33.) An uncircumcised man was looked upon with bitter contempt. In the mind of the Jew, God was thought to love only Israel, despising and rejecting all other people (the Gentile nations).

3. God has done away with circumcision as a sign of righteousness since Christ has come (Gal. 5:6; 6:15; Col. 2:11). Righteousness is now of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter of rules and regulations (see Rom. 2:25-29; 4:8-12, 23-25). The truly righteous man is the man who is God's *inwardly* - the man whose spirit has been *recreated* into the very nature of God. God's very own righteous nature is implanted into the very nature of man when he is *born again*. A man *born again* by the Spirit of God is God's "new creation" (Jn. 3:3f; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 1:4). □