

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

### "THE BIRTH OF JESUS"

For individual study or discussion

When we began our *Advent* series, we read in Luke 1:26–38 how Gabriel appears to Mary, a poor teenage girl in a rural backwater called Nazareth. The Luke passage records the birth of Jesus from Mary's perspective. In Matthew 1:18–25, the narrative of the birth of Jesus is from Joseph's perspective. Note how the preceding verses 1–17 outline the genealogy of Jesus, identifying him as "the son of David" (v. 1). When an angel appears to Joseph in a dream, Joseph is addressed as "Joseph, son of David," an important designation linking him to his crucial role in the imminent fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecy.

#### The moment of crisis: Joseph faces confusion (vv.18–19)

In today's passage, Joseph is confused and in crisis. His betrothed is pregnant with a baby that's not his. We find him contemplating a quiet divorce, not wanting to put Mary to shame. God could have chosen an unbetrothed virgin, but he chooses Mary, Joseph's soon to be wife, so that the child would be born inside David's household and lineage. Even though Joseph is not the begetter, he is not out of the picture. He still has a pivotal part to play.

- Mary's pregnancy before marriage is humiliating for Joseph. Why would Matthew begin his gospel on such a scandalous note? Read Matthew 1:1–17. How does the genealogy of Jesus hint at other "scandals" and prepare the reader for Jesus' ignominious birth? How does Matthew's genealogy underscore the upside-down Kingdom of God?
- Read John 8:39–47. In one of Jesus' many confrontations with the Pharisees, you get a hint of the rumors that follow Jesus throughout his life. What is the opinion of the church leaders regarding his birth (v.41)?

#### The moment of comfort: Joseph receives revelation (vv.20–23)

As Joseph considered the news of Mary's shocking pregnancy, he receives revelation from God assuring him not to fear. Mary's conception is the work of the Holy Spirit. This child, who is to be called Jesus, "will save his people from their sins...and they shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)." According to one commentator, "Not since the Solomonic temple (c. 950–586 B.C.) had God's presence been prominently manifest among his people. Even then, as with the tabernacle before, God's presence was mediated. Physical and ritual barriers kept sinners at a distance from God's presence, and those same barriers protected the people from God's searing holiness. With the birth of Jesus, however, all of that changed. God himself had come! Jesus spoke to people. He fed them. He traveled with them. He taught them, and he healed them. There were no layers of heavy fabric separating Jesus from sinners, nor were there any barricades limiting access to God to only a few sanctified priests. He was Immanuel in the flesh, and he had come to save his people and to bring them into right relationship with the Father."<sup>1</sup>

- Matthew gives the Messiah two names. How do they describe Jesus' person and work?
- "Son of David" is an idiom often used to describe the awaited shepherd King whom the prophets said would restore God's Kingdom on earth. Read Micah 5:2–5. In what way will his rule be distinct from the rule of other kings?

#### The moment of choosing: Joseph humbly trusts and obeys (vv.24–25)

Waking from sleep, Joseph moves from confusion to confidence and courage as he humbly trusts and obeys the angel's message. The passage simply states, "He did as the Lord commanded him" (v. 24). Joseph took Mary to be his wife and in faith names her son, God's son, Jesus.

- Joseph trusts and obeys immediately. It wasn't an easy task to obey. It came with potential trials and challenges. But Joseph demonstrates courage. He believed in faith and he acted on it. What lessons can we learn from him?

DATE: December 22, 2024

SPEAKER: Chad/Brian

SERIES: Advent

PASSAGE: Matthew 1:18-25

## RENEW: 31 Days of Prayer

### DAY 16: The Fruit of the Spirit—Goodness

**PRAYER:** Our good and benevolent King, we honor your perfect goodness in all your ways. We join the psalmist in proclaiming the greatness of your goodness, which you have stored up for those who take refuge in you. Using the words of your beloved saint, John Newton, we affirm our assurance of your goodness in the midst of a broken world: "Though troubles assail us and dangers affright, though friends should all fail us and foes all unite, one thing secures us, whatever betide, the promise assures us, 'The Lord will provide.'" We look to you in faith, trusting that we will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. By your grace and for your glory, you have rescued us so that we might display your goodness to a world full of guilt and grief. And so we humbly and boldly ask: empower us not to be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. Enliven our hearts so that we hate what is evil and cling to what is good. You have clearly revealed to us what is good: to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God. By the power of your Spirit, strengthen and empower us in every opportunity and realm where you place us, to do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Out of the goodness of your love and in your great mercy, hear our prayer and turn your face toward us. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

**PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS**  
Fellows Program, supported partner missionary

**PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS**  
Eowyn and David Stoddard, supported missionary partners, MTW

<sup>1</sup> McDowell, Catherine. *A Carpenter's Courage—Matthew 1:18–25*. December 11, 2023. <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/a-carpenters-courage-matthew-1/>