**Hope Has Come – wk 2 - The First Christmas**

**Hope – we can’t live without it. Hopelessness leads to overwhelming feelings of gloom. Special events and activities can distract and deter but cannot disperse the depths of despair in hopelessness.**

**But good news – Hope has come!**

**For 2000 years, the Jewish people awaited the promised Messiah.**

**They had been looking for a King. But that’s not what happened.**

**The First Christmas**

**Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, (contracted arranged marriage –considered husband and wife, betrothals usually lasted a year – followed by the official wedding) before they came together (married & consummated) she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.**

**20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, (the family of royalty) do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).**

**24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.**

**This is the first written account of Jesus' Birth for several years. Mark & John did not include one, and Luke came later.**

**What can we learn from this? 6 Theological Foundations:**

**1. Jesus was miraculously conceived!**

**Emphasized four times – Jesus was miraculously born of a virgin.**

**Jesus' birth was a miracle! The Messiah arrived in a womb.**

**Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.**

**Matthew says straight up, without hesitation - Jesus is a miracle baby. If you are a pure naturalist, secularist, atheist, or believe only in what is tested and observed… you’ll never be able to have faith in Jesus.**

**\*\* Is belief in miracles required to follow Jesus? Yes.**

**Jesus' life began with a miracle; he performed miracles, and his time on earth ended with a miracle resurrection and ascension.**

**Luke tells the story of the angel Gabrial's visit to Mary. Luke 1:30 And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. (it was God’s favor – it was not her merit, ability, goodness, or holy actions) 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”**

**34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. (v37 - Gabriel say that nothing is impossible for God)**

**This would have been nearly impossible to believe.**

**We are not told exactly how it happened. But it is clear Jesus did not walk out of the woods; he was conceived of a virgin.**

**BTW - Did his life begin at conception, during the pregnancy, or birth? Bible says it was at conception.**

**2. Jesus was born without a sin nature – conceived w/out a man**

**Not a result of Joseph having sex w/ Mary- as some believe.**

**Jesus' birth of a virgin was necessary – why?**

**- To fulfill the prophecy – Genesis 3:15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Isaiah 9:6 – echoes this)**

**Her offspring = her seed. Singular noun antecedent to the singular pronoun. The seed/offspring is individualized. A specific “seed/offspring” of the woman alone will crush you!**

**Matt 1:22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: (quoting Isaiah 7:14) 23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).**

**- To fulfill the requirement that Jesus was without sin**

**Heb 4:15, 7:27, 9:14, 1 Cor 5:7-21, 1 Pet 1:19, Rev 5:9, 1 John 3:5**

**Our sinful nature is a result of the sin of our fathers passed to us from a father. Jesus, born miraculously by the HS, had no earthly father and sinful nature – a perfect, spotless lamb of God.**

**3. Jesus is fully God from the eternal beginning**

**Matt 1:23 …and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).**

**He is not part God, a piece of God, half God, filled with God, an offspring of God; He is wholly the Holy GOD Almighty.**

**(Psalm 110, Matt 1:23, Isaiah 9:6, John 1:1-5, Mark 1:1, John 1:1-14, 8:58, 10:10, 20:28, Rev 1:8, 21:6, 22:13, Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15, 2:9-10)**

**\*\* The God of all creation (alpha and Omega) has come to us!!**

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**4. Jesus is fully man**

**Matt 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son…**

**He was conceived, grew, and was born in the flesh, born of a woman – flesh and blood. In every way, a man- the incarnation.**

**From the womb to adulthood – he understands you.**

**Philippians 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (He did not just seem human, he was)**

**\*Heresy of Docetism – only looked to be a man.**

**\*Gnosticism – all matter is evil – Jesus would never be flesh**

**He was not part man, or seemed like a man, or God manifesting as a man - rather God (in Christ) became fully man. = The Hypostatic union.**

**How can we know the immortal, immaterial, invisible, unapproachable, holy, and righteous almighty God? Jesus.**

**God now has a permanent face by which we can see him.**

**Jesus - fully God/fully man - in the flesh, was crucified and rose. And today sits on the throne in a glorified body for us to see.**

 **5. Jesus was born to die**

**Matt 1:21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”**

 **21 She will bear a son… Echoes Isaiah 9:6 – God took the first step.**

 **…you shall call his name Jesus… Common name- “Salvation of Yahweh”**

 **…for he will save his people from their sins.”**

**A specific people – His people. Those the Father gives him. (John 3:37 - All that the Father gives me will come to me)**

 **…for he will save his people from their sins.”**

**Born to die on a sinner's cross – mutilation for our salvation!**

**He came to save us from our sins – not to liberate us on earth.**

**He satisfies justice - 1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

**Jesus, though w/out sin, met us in our sin, to save us from our sin - the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and one day from the presence of sin.**

**From the throne, via a cradle, to the cross. Born to die for the sins of mankind. This was his ultimate mission and our ultimate HOPE!**

**6. Mary was blessed and highly favored – but not divine**

**Matt 1:24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. (had normal marital relations and kids) And he called his name Jesus.**

**5 False teachings concerning Mary – denounced by this passage.**

* **Perpetual virginity (649)- Before and after birth of Jesus**

**This verse and other mentions of Jesus' brothers and sisters. (Matt 12:46-50, 13:55-56, Mark 6:3, 3:31, Lu 8:19, John 2:12, 7:3-5, Acts 1:14, Gal 1:19, 1 Cor 9:5)**

**Sex was considered fleshly and sinful - an excess of worldly desires. This was done to perpetuate her as Holy.**

* **Immaculate Conception (1854)- Mary was born without sin**

**Truth is - Jesus alone was born without sin. (Heb 4:15, 2 Co 5:21, 1 Jo 3:5, 1 Pet 2:22)**

* **Mediatrix of all graces (1894)- mediates as an advocate before God.**

**1 Tim 2:5 - For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (John 14:6, Heb 9:15)**

* **Assumption of Mary (1950) - She ever died (a result of sin), but was taken. Ro 5:12, 6:23. By Adam, all sinned, all die, and all need salvation.**

**Each of these is an invention meant to exalt Mary in an unbiblical manner. However, Matthew denounces these.**

**Truth is - There is no other name / no other mediator / no other way!**

**It is this name that the Apostle Peter proclaims - Acts 4:11 This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 Salvation exists in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”**

**When you mess with his birth / Christmas – you mess with the gospel.**

**Cool, but what are some things about this we can walk out today?**

**3 Practical Applications: Matthew reminds us that…**

**1. Following Jesus doesn’t always mean easy**

**God never promises an easy life – even for the righteous**

**(Word gets out about Mary) Matt 1:19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.**

**Can you imagine the humiliation she would have endured? Considered an adulterer. Her reputation crushed. Lies spread.**

**She did not get her storybook wedding and life.**

**Her life, her reputation, her marriage went through the mud. Facing potential abandonment, destitution – and even stoning. What follows is scandal, a lifetime of confusion, heartache, crisis, and incredible joy.**

**Matt 1:20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, (perhaps Gabriel, the messenger to Mary – this was a dream, not a visitation) saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.**

**Joe was visited by an Angel and given the details. What she says is true! Joseph was to adopt Jesus and raise him.**

**Mary - You are going to be the birth mother of the Messiah!**

**Joe - You are going to be the stepdad to the Messiah.**

**Blessed does not mean easy.**

**Mary’s response - Luke 1:38 “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her.**

**What a great challenge for us… When God flips the script –**

**“I am the Lord’s servant – God, your will be done.”**

**2. God uses the humble and unexpected to bring about his will**

**What we know of Mary – She knew the scriptures, was a virgin, she had faith in God, was blessed and favored of God – a regular gal.**

**What we know of Joe – He knew the scriptures, was just, was humble, sensitive, selfless, and cared to protect Mary’s reputation – a reg joe.**

**Mary and Joseph - a couple of kids from a small town outside a small region. (You must have come to the wrong address) Nothing unique. But God says I choose you. Why?**

**1 Cor 1:27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (why?) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.**

**God does this to confound and humble the self-proclaimed wise and prominent. In this manner – God gets the glory.**

**Matthew 23:12 - For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. / James 4:6 “God opposes the proud but shows favor (shows kindness) to the humble.”**

**Why do we seek to put the proud in places of authority?**

**God will not bless the arrogant and proud.**

**3. To follow Jesus is to have obedience and self-denial**

**Matt 1:24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.**

**His faith was evident in his obedience.**

**M & J’s simple faithfulness to God’s word and willingness to obey was the vehicle to show God’s grace/mercy to the world!**

**\*\* In life - God does not always tell us how his plans will unfold.**

**Sometimes, God tells us what to do but not what He will do – or how. Our part is simply to trust and obey. Willing to embrace inconvenience.**

**God uses our faithfulness to accomplish his purposes.**

**Obedience =** **Doing what's right in God's eyes, not ours.**

**You say you have faith in God but do not obey his Word. ???**

**Every story in the bible begins with a moment of decision - will I obey God or run from God? The Christmas story is no different.**

**To follow Jesus is to lay down your life to pick up his life for you.**

**Christmas points to this – Matthew 16:14 Then Jesus told His disciples, “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.**