

The Gospel of Matthew

Week 2 – The Birth of Jesus

Transition: We began our study of Matthew last week by looking into Jesus' lineage. For a Jewish reader (to whom Matthew is primarily directing his gospel account), the rightful heir to David's throne had to be established through his proper descendance from David's line as prophesied. The genealogy does this very thing. Matthew's opening shows that Jesus was legitimately qualified to be king of Israel.

Context: Once Matthew discloses Jesus' lineage, he then informs his readers about Jesus' unique birth. Although Luke's gospel covers the birth of Jesus more fully, Matthew includes some things that are not found in Luke's gospel. (Neither Mark nor John include anything about Jesus' birth in their gospels.) As brief as it is, however, it is abundantly clear that both Joseph and Mary are very special people and even more, that God is in full control.

Opening Question:

- Do you dream much? Do you typically remember your dreams? Have you ever had a dream that affected you? If so, share the story. What is your view of dreams in general? (What are they? Do they have a purpose?)
- Does your name have a meaning? If so, what is it? Were you given the name because of what it means? Have you ever named anyone or anything? How did you arrive at the person's/pet's/thing's name?

Scripture/Storying: Matthew 1:18-25

Discipleship Questions:

- What do you think life would have been like for both Mary and Joseph as Mary's pregnancy (while being unwed) became more and more obvious? (Remember, they lived in a small town.) How do you imagine they were able to endure it?
- Share a time when you did your best to live honorably while enduring a hardship that was not of your own making. How did you endure it? What do you recommend to someone who might be enduring a trial right now?
- God sent an angel to reveal His will to Joseph through a dream. In what ways has God made His will known to you? Share a story with the group, including how you responded.
- What does the name Jesus mean? How significant is it? How do you think this name might have affected Mary and Joseph over the years as Jesus was growing up?
- What does the name Immanuel mean? How significant is it? How do you think this name might have affected Mary and Joseph over the years as Jesus was growing up?
- How critical is Jesus' being born of a virgin? Explain your belief.
- What does this passage reveal about the character of God to you? Of the character traits mentioned in your group, which one(s) have the most meaning to you today? Why? How might focusing on that character trait influence your living for Christ this week?

Prayer time: Pray that we will all take faith-steps of trust in God as He reveals His will for us this week.