

A Name Like No Other
Session 4 (Evangelism Session)
December 24, 2023

The Salvation Expressed in God's Name

The Point: Everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved.

Session Passages: Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25

Isaiah 7:14

Connection to The Point: God promised a Child who would be with us.

The setting for Isaiah 7:14. The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was given during what is known as the Syro-Ephraimite War (about 734-732 BC). At the time, Assyria was resurgent under the leadership of Tiglath-Pileser III (ruled 744-727 BC) and had begun to move westward from Assyria toward the region of Israel and Judah. King Pekah of Israel (ruled 752-732 BC) formed an alliance with Aram (Syria), Askelon, and Gaza against the encroaching Assyrians. They invited King Ahaz of Judah (ruled 735-715 BC) to join the alliance, but he refused. So, King Pekah of Israel and King Resin of Aram joined forces and besieged Judah (2 Kings 16:5; Isa. 7:1). Their goal was to remove Ahaz from power and install a puppet king who would bow to their wishes. The Lord sent Isaiah to Ahaz with a word of prophecy that the coalition of kings would not be successful against Judah (Isa. 7:3-9). Through His prophet, God encouraged Ahaz to ask for a sign, but Ahaz refused under the false pretense of not wanting to “test the Lord” (vv. 10-13). God saw through Ahaz’s motives (v. 13), and Isaiah foretold the downfall of the king and his house. Because Ahaz feared Assyria more than the Lord, he called for Tiglath-Pileser’s aid against the coalition (2 Kings 16:7-8).

The purpose of Isaiah 7:14. Old Testament prophecy often has near-fulfillment and far-fulfillment aspects, like viewing two mountains together with the closer mountain being lower than the far mountain. Some refer to this as the *shadow* [of things to come] and the *reality*, where the first meaning foreshadows a greater, future meaning. Isaiah’s prophecy is the perfect example of this because it spoke to the time of Ahaz, but it is quoted in Matthew to describe the time of the birth of Jesus, God’s Messiah (Matt. 1:23).

Therefore (v. 14). In light of the fact that God had asked Ahaz to request a sign and the king had refused (vv. 10-13), God chose through Isaiah to give His own sign to Ahaz. Ahaz greatly displeased God by not being obedient to His words.

A sign (v. 14). A sign is a “symbol, action, or occurrence that points to something beyond itself.”¹ Through Isaiah, the Lord encouraged King Ahaz of Judah to ask for a sign that the Israelite-Syrian alliance besieging Judah would fail, but the faithless king refused to do so (vv. 11-13). The graciousness of the Lord is seen in His allowing the type of sign Ahaz could ask for: “it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven” (v. 11).

See (v. 14). The word *see* (*hinneh*) is a common interjection used over a eight hundred times in the Old Testament. It was a call to pay attention to something important that was to follow.

Virgin (v. 14). The news that Isaiah had for Ahaz was that a *virgin* (*almah*) would be pregnant with child. Isaiah’s prophecy does not reveal the identity of this woman. The word *almah* in Isaiah typically means a young woman of marriageable age. The word does not require in the near-fulfillment of this prophecy that the woman in Isaiah’s time would be a *virgin* who would have a child. However, in quoting this passage (Matt. 1:22-23), Matthew clearly indicates that the women referred to is a virgin who would through the working of the Holy Spirit conceive and bear a Son who is God’s Messiah (see vv. 18,20-21).

A son (v. 14). Isaiah's prophecy does not reveal the identity of this *son*. This son may refer to a future king of the Davidic line and indicate that God was still with the kings of the Davidic dynasty in the midst of threats like that of the Israel-Syria coalition and the Assyrians. "Such a sign would give hope to a king who trusted God but would be a constant threat to one who followed his own strategy."² Another possibility is that this *son* refers to Isaiah's son Maher-shalal-hash-baz, whose name means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil." The name along with the Lord's words spoken through Isaiah foretold of the impending destruction of Syria and Israel (8:1-4). It was a call to faith for Ahaz to trust the Lord. However, Ahaz failed to trust in the Lord and through Isaiah the Lord predicted the downfall of Ahaz and his house (7:16-25; 8:6-10). The faithless Ahaz appealed to the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III for help (2 Kings 16:7-9). This is not surprising, given the nature of Ahaz's kingship (vv. 2-4). Assyria defeated Syria in 732 BC and Israel in 722 BC. Judah survived the Assyrian assault and remained until 586 BC when it was decimated by the Babylonians.

Immanuel (v. 14). This name means "God is with us." In the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy, the child the Lord commanded to be named Immanuel (Matt. 1:23) would bring salvation to the world as God's Son and Messiah, Jesus (John 3:16).

Matthew 1:18-21

Connection to The Point: Jesus is the promised Immanuel, who came to be with us in order to save us.

The Setting for Matthew 1. Matthew, a disciple of Jesus who was once a tax collector (Matt. 9:9), wrote his Gospel some time between the mid-50s and mid-60s of the first century, about thirty years after the death and resurrection of Christ. The Gospel was written to a primarily to a Jewish audience. The location where it was written is unknown, but Jerusalem or Antioch of Syria have been suggested. Matthew began his Gospel with a genealogy of Jesus Christ from the patriarch Abraham to Joseph, "the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus who is called the Messiah" (1:1-17).

The Purpose of Matthew 1. The focal passage details the entrance of Jesus Christ into the world, explaining the extraordinary events surrounding His birth and the purpose for His coming.

The Theme of Matthew 1. The theme of these verses is incarnation. Jesus, who is fully God, became fully man through the working of the Holy Spirit that led to His birth while His mother, Mary, was still a virgin. The incarnation was the first step in the divine plan that ultimately led to Jesus being the atoning sacrifice for the sins of those who through faith will trust in Him for salvation.

Birth (v. 18). The word used for *birth* (*genesis*) is the same word used of "genealogy" in the first verse of Matthew's Gospel. The incarnate Son of God would come into the world in the same way every person does. As Isaiah had predicted, hope would come as this child was born into the world (Isa. 7:14; see Luke 2:10-11).

Jesus Christ (v. 18). The word translated *Christ* (*christos*) is not the last name of Jesus but a title meaning "anointed one." *Christos* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mashiach* which is transliterated as "Messiah."

Mary (v. 18). Mary was a young woman of marriageable age, and no reason is given as to why God chose her to be the mother of His Messiah (Luke 1:26-38). It was an act of God's grace. Even so, she demonstrated her strong character and faith in God by her complete trust and submission to the Lord concerning His plan for her to be the human mother of God's Son, Jesus (v. 38).

Engaged (v. 18). The word *engaged* (*mnesteuo*) refers to the first-century Jewish practice known as betrothal, which was as binding as the actual marriage. The betrothal would usually last about a year and during that time the engaged woman would remain with her parents until the marriage was official and ready to be consummated. During the

betrothal period, Jewish law required the couple to remain chaste, as evidenced by the phrase “before they came together.” This restriction would challenge their relationship when Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant before the marriage had been consummated (v. 19).

Pregnant from the Holy Spirit (v. 18). Though Mary knew that she was pregnant by a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35), Joseph did not know that at this time. God had revealed to Mary that she would have a child even though she had not yet had sexual relations with a man (vv. 31,34). This passage contrasts greatly with the crude pagan tales of deities physically coming down to earth to have sexual relations with human beings (the false Greek god Zeus for instance). Matthew’s Gospel matter-of-factly states that Mary was pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. This was important because Jesus had God as Father and Mary as mother. He was fully human, but at the same time, He was fully divine. The virgin conception explains how Jesus is God incarnate, the Word made flesh (see John 1).

Her husband (v. 19). Even though Mary and Joseph had not yet been officially married, because they were betrothed Jewish law still considered Joseph as Mary’s husband. If Joseph did not want to marry Mary, it required a certificate of divorce to legally end the relationship.

Righteous man (v. 19). That Joseph was a righteous man indicates he was “law-abiding, upright in character, and generally obedient and faithful to God’s commandments.”³ The Jewish law gave him two options when he discovered his wife was pregnant before the couple had consummated their marriage. He could either put Mary to public shame, which could include stoning (Deut. 22:13-27), or he could divorce her privately. Joseph did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; rather, he favored the choice to divorce her privately.

Considered these things (v. 20). Joseph took the time to deliberately think through the events that had transpired and what his actions should be.

Angel of the Lord (v. 20). Angels are created beings whose purpose is to serve the Lord God by delivering messages and carrying out His will. The Hebrew term is *malak* while the Greek term is *angelos*. Both words mean “messenger.”

A dream (v. 20). God actively communicated with Joseph through dreams during the events surrounding Jesus’s birth (Matt. 2:13,19,22). In those dreams an angel, a messenger of God, communicated God’s will to Joseph (vv. 13,19-20). Also, God spoke to the wise men through a dream warning them to travel by a different route back to their homeland to avoid King Herod (v. 12).

Joseph, son of David (v. 20). By Joseph marrying Mary, the child yet to be born would become Joseph’s legal son as well as a son of David (see vv. 1-17).

Don’t be afraid (v. 20). Joseph had many reasons to fear at this point. His betrothed wife being pregnant before their marriage would bring public ridicule and shame. His failure to divorce her would most likely have been viewed as confirmation that Joseph and Mary had acted in a sexually immoral manner before they were officially married. The angel reassured Joseph that Mary’s pregnancy was part of God’s plan. The reason Joseph did not need to fear was that the child had been conceived in her by the power of the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son (v. 21). This is a direct allusion to Isaiah 7:14.

Jesus (v. 21). The name *Jesus* is a version of the Hebrew name “Joshua,” which means “Yahweh saves.”

Save his people from their sins (v. 21). The Old Testament description of Messiah includes the idea that the Messiah would save people from their sins (Isa. 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-31). However, this was not the predominant first-century view of what the Messiah would do. Many Jews held the belief that the Messiah would liberate Israel from

Roman occupation and rule. More than once Jesus had to deal with this misinterpretation of who He was as Messiah (John 6:15; Acts 1:6-8).

Matthew 1:22-25

Connection to The Point: Because Jesus is God, the One who is with us, we can look to Him for salvation.

The prophet (v. 22). Matthew used Isaiah 7:14 and the dual fulfillment of that prophecy to explain the birth of Jesus. Written about seven hundred years prior to the birth of Christ, Isaiah's prophecy had spoken to his own time about the birth of a child as a sign of God's deliverance of the people of Judah, and now the virgin birth was a sign of the coming of the promised Messiah. The quotation in Matthew's Gospel reflects closely the wording of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament written between the third and first centuries BC.

Virgin (v. 23). Much debate has centered on the use of the word *virgin* in the text. The Hebrew word (*almah*) refers to a woman of marriageable age, but not necessarily a virgin. Most times, it did refer to a virgin, but not always ("young woman," Prov. 30:19). The Septuagint used the Greek word (*parthenos*) which exclusively indicates no prior sexual relations (Matt. 25:1,7,11; 1 Cor. 7:25,28,34). Isaiah used a word that was broad enough to see its near-fulfillment in a child conceived through normal sexual relations in his own time and a virgin birth in the time of Jesus. The former's mother was a young woman but not a virgin, but Mary was both a young woman and a virgin. Twice this passage emphasizes that Mary had not yet had sexual relations (Matt. 1:18,25). The virgin birth is a crucial doctrine because it indicates the full deity and full humanity of Jesus. His Father was God and His mother was Mary.

Immanuel (v. 23). Though Isaiah 7:14 revealed that *Immanuel* would come during the prophet's own time, that was not the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy. A greater *Immanuel* would literally be "God is with us." This verse emphasizes the full deity of Christ, something never true of the first Immanuel (Isa. 8:3). Only Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 9:2-7, which emphasizes the deity of the coming Messiah.

When Joseph woke up (v. 24). God had used the dream to communicate His plan to Joseph. This would happen again when Joseph was warned to flee to Egypt with his family (2:13).

He did as the Lord's angel had commanded him (v. 24). This passage had previously described Joseph as a righteous man (v. 19), and Joseph's actions demonstrate that he was indeed righteous because he submitted to God. The proof of a person's righteous character is his or her obedience and surrender to the will of God. Both Joseph and Mary submitted to God's will concerning the roles they were to play in the birth of Jesus, God's Messiah (for Mary see Luke 1:38).

He married her (v. 24). Joseph completed the legal process of moving from engagement (betrothal) to marriage. Their time of engagement ended and rather than divorcing Mary as he had planned to do (v. 19), he completed the process of marriage with one exception.

Sexual relations (v. 25). One of the highlights of the marital process is the consummation of the marriage, but Joseph did not have *sexual relations* with his wife, Mary, until after the birth of Jesus.

Until she gave birth (v. 25). Mary did not remain a virgin perpetually. After the birth of Jesus and the time of purification, Joseph finally consummated the marriage. Matthew 12:46 mentions a time when "his mother and brothers were standing outside wanting to speak to him." Mark 6:3 names Jesus's brothers—James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. It also mentions the fact that Jesus had sisters. This indicates that Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus, and they were Jesus's half-brothers and half-sisters.

Named him Jesus (v. 25). Joseph obeyed God by naming the child *Jesus*. He did not choose a family name or even a name that he might have desired. Rather, he obeyed the command of God through the angel (v. 21). The angel had informed Joseph of the reason the baby was to be named Jesus—“because he will save his people from their sins” (v. 21). They named Jesus eight days after His birth, at the time of His circumcision (Luke 2:21; see also 1:59-60). Joseph consistently obeyed God, and God used him as Jesus’s adopted father.

1. David R. Beck, “Sign,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [HIBD], gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1470.
2. “Immanuel,” in HIBD, 793.
3. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 58.