

Watchnight

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. My name is James. I'm on staff team here. Let me pray for us before we start.
- Father, may the light of the gospel shine warmly in our hearts in a bleak midwinter. In Jesus' name, amen. Well, what is in a name?
- And you might remember Frank Zappa, if you're older, slightly older 80s rocker, who infamously named his kids the one kid Moon Unit and the other one Dweezil.
- Can you imagine being named that, perhaps? And you might remember Dale Carnegie. He wrote a super influencing book back in the day, a published bestseller.
- And the name of the book was How to Win Friends and Influence People. And what did he say in it? He said the sweetest sound in the English language is a person's name.
- [1 : 0 1] So James, Andrew, Douglas, Josh, your name. That's the sweetest sound. So what is in a name? Well, we'll go and look and consider that later.
- But Christmas is also a time of romance, isn't it? So we think of kissing under the mistletoe. And this evening I heard about how someone had proposed to their fiancé at Christmas.
- They'd made an advent calendar. It was quite ingenious, I thought. And the 24th had a ring behind it. You had to wait a little while to get there, but you got there in the hand. And it's this romance that we find the setting of our passage this evening.
- So if you'll join with me, keep your Bibles open and look down at verse 18. I'll just read it for us there. This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about.
- His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph. But like every good romance, there is a hurdle that needs to be overcome before the lovers can get together.
- [2 : 0 6] And we read there in verse 18 again. But before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. And you can imagine all the hurt that Joseph felt, all the confusion.
- Why is this happening? What on earth is God doing? Mary, what's going on? And then we read, because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the Lord and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.
- And here Joseph displays all the qualities that attracted Mary in the first place. He's someone who's devout. He loves the Lord.
- But not just devoted to rule keeping, he is kind and considerate to her. So he wants to not make a fuss, not bring her into disgrace.
- He cares for Mary. And it's at this point in the story that God steps into the story to intervene, to get our lovebirds back together.
- [3 : 1 3] So we pick up the story, verse 20. But after this, he had considered this. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

What's the angel saying there? Well, firstly, he's reminding Joseph that he is in David's line. He is a son of David.

And we remember that the son of David is a shorthand to remind Joseph of this great king that was going to come, who is going to bring restoration and peace and salvation, who would rule forever.

He's reminding Joseph that this king is coming, and this is the king that he's meant to be looking for. And then next, the angel saying that what is this baby that's in Mary is none other than the son of God.

He's born of the Holy Spirit. And it's perhaps helpful to comment here that if you're someone who's wondering about whether these things really happened or not, what's going to determine whether we believe these events is not so much the evidence themselves, but what we think about God, if we believe in God or not.

[4 : 37] Because if anything, God by definition is God of the supernatural and the natural. He's God of everything. And so we carry on with the story.

Verse 21. 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.

And all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

And so having met the angel of the Lord, order is restored, and the romance is rescued. And a Joseph, obedient to the angel, does all that the angel of the Lord has told him to do.

And we read that at the end there, verse 24. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and he took Mary home as a wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son, and he gave him the name Jesus.

[5 : 48] So what's in a name? What are we to make of these true accounts? Well, here's a couple of observations. They're not terribly profound, but something to think over at this Christmas season.

And we're going to look at the names that Jesus is given in this passage. So first, we notice there in verse 18, Jesus the Messiah.

And that's really a title. That's the first name or title, Mr., Dr., Professor, Messiah, that we're going to look at. And that is that Son of David title, that Jesus is God's King, who's going to rule and reign forever, who's going to restore all the bad things in the world, who's going to bring everlasting peace, joy, who's going to make the world new again, who's going to make it.

Fantastic. That is what it was to be the Son of David, that great Messiah King that was going to come. And Matthew's here is saying that Jesus is this King that was going to rule and save the world.

And then we go and we see Jesus' name in verse 21. And she will give birth to her son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he'll save his people from their sins.

[7 : 21] And Jesus literally means, the name means, God saves. And what's that telling us is that God is not distant or not interested in the world.

It's not that God has stepped away from the world, but that God is invested in the world, in saving and rescuing his world.

And we remember that, don't we? How God saved Noah through the flood. And then how God saved his people out of Egypt.

And then how God has saved his people in many ways, and in various ways, all throughout the Old Testament, continuously, in little ways, in big ways, and ultimately how God saved his people in sending Jesus.

It's not just that he saves his people, but he saves his people from their sins. And the sins, that's the Bible word for really, for all the times that we've hurt and disregarded and ignored God, of hurting and hating one another, and of being hurt and hated in return.

[8 : 35] So you might remember G.K. Chesterton, the author famously once was asked, Mr. Chesterton, what's wrong with the world today? And he replied, well, I am. I am what's wrong with the world.

And what he is saying there is, he cannot help but sin, but ignore God and hurt and hate others. And so if the world was ever going to be saved, if he was ever going to be saved, then God was going to have to do it.

He couldn't do it himself. And if you don't believe me, well, come back at me in a week's time when all the in-laws and the brothers, the annoying siblings have gone, and you've finished fighting over the dishes and being disappointed with the present.

I can't believe I've got socks again. It's ridiculous, outrageous. They should know me by now. We are hopeless and helpless. We cannot help but grumble and complain and ultimately sin.

So if we're going to be saved, God is going to have to save us. And then finally we have that last name of Jesus in verse 22. And the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[9 : 54] So while Jesus lived, it was well attested that Jesus did all sorts of things that only God could do. Remember how he fed the 5,000?

How awesome it would be to have Jesus on Christmas Day when you've got all your in-laws about. Great, fantastic. Jesus done it. He was also a good guy to have at a wedding.

We remember the wedding at Cana. Jesus loved to party. Jesus, there's no wine. What did he do? He turned the water into wine. He saved the groom's blushes.

And Jesus also went on to ruin a lot of funerals. Didn't he? Don't we remember that? We think how he raised the widow of Nain's son. He had compassion on that widow.

He had lost everything in the world. And then how he goes to his best friend's funeral. He weeps there, Lazarus, only to raise him to life again in the very next moment.

[10 : 56] This is how the apostle John describes all the things that Jesus did. He said, well, John, who knew Jesus so intimately and so well, writes, Jesus did many other things as well.

If every one of them were to be written, I suppose the whole world would not have room for all the books that could be written.

And sometimes we think, well, having God around, having God with us, well, that would be a bit of a drag, wouldn't it? God would be a bit of a party pooper.

He would be a damp squid. He had a wet blanket. He would be the nerd in the corner who would just spoil everyone's fun. And what Matthew is telling us here is exactly the opposite.

Having God with us is the greatest news that we could ever hope to hear. He's our only hope. He'd be the best person and the greatest gift that we can ever get at Christmas.

[11 : 59] So what's in a name? Well, quite a lot. And we've heard three names here. The Messiah, Jesus, God saves, Emmanuel, that tell us that God loves us.

He loves us so much that he sent his son to die for us. And Jesus gave up his life that we might have life to the full. So what about you?

I don't know where you might be tonight spiritually. Sometimes life is tricky. We might be wondering what's going on in our lives.

If God is there, what's going on? It just seems so bizarre. We might not know what is going on in our lives, but we can know the God who does know and who has shown us that he loves us and cares for us and has acted most fully and finally in his son in our lives.

So in a couple of moments, we're going to be celebrating communion. And communion is really where Christians get together as a family and they remember and they celebrate Christ's death. And it might be that you're here tonight and you might come up and take communion for the first time, trusting totally and fully that Jesus died for your sins, that you might know God and know the joy of being known and loved by God.

[13 : 33] It might be that you might be someone who has known God for a long time and recently you've been drifting. Life's just been busy and you've kind of drifted away. And it might be that you could come up this evening and take communion and say, Lord, I'm going to live for you fully and wholeheartedly from now on for the rest of 2019 and all the years to come.

And it might be that things are going really well and that the last year has been great spiritually and you can come up, take communion and rejoice in all the good things that Jesus has given you.

All the good things that God has given you in his son. Let me pray for us. Father, we thank you for this great gift, Jesus.

We thank you that you sent your son, that he saves us from our sins, that he is God with us, and that he is that promised king who will rule and reign forever, our Messiah.

in Jesus' name, Amen.