

God of the Impossible , Pt. 1

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- [0 : 0 0] Matthew chapter 1, beginning at verse 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.
- And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, 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.
- She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.
- Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.
- He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus.
- [1 : 2 0] That is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Praise team, thank you for that beautiful music. Thank you to our string trio.
- Marvelous. Josie, Joseph, Elise, thank you so much. Amen. Thank you, choir. Amen. Amen. I'm still waiting for my solo.
- Daniel and Prakash keep holding out on me. Yeah, yeah, I don't want to hear it, man. I don't want to hear it. I don't want to hear it. I'm saying, you know, you just... He said, I can do it tonight.
- Hey. Amen. Amen. Sometimes a woman is given the unbearable news from her doctor that she's unable to have children.
- That is a bitter pill. And the anguish of her heart for such a woman is terrible. It's real.
- [2 : 3 5] Worthy of our understanding and support. But then for some of them, some of them, the impossible happens. And they conceive and give birth to a healthy baby.
- Man, the joy of that moment is beyond comparison. And all who hear about that are happy for her and for her husband. Some will say it's a miracle.
- And even her doctors might say the same thing. Medical science has no answer for why it happened. It should have been impossible.
- Maybe it was a miracle. Maybe it was not. But it happened. And we don't know why. The virgin birth is not like that, though.
- Mary was not told she cannot have children. She did nothing to have a child. Her story is either a hoax, a legend, or an example to us that God can do the impossible.
- [3 : 4 7] What say you? What say you? What kind of God do you believe in? First of all, I want you to notice here, we're going to cover two out of four points today.
- First of all, let's be honest. The virgin birth was a scandal. Ladies, I can imagine that many of you have read this situation existentially, meaning you put yourself in Mary's place.

I can't believe that you haven't done that for most of you who've read it. Can imagine you come home and tell your parents that you are pregnant, but you were not intimate with a man.

If you saw the movie, The Nativity, when Amy Grant does that great song, I love that. Mary tells her dad, I have broken no vow.

Remember what her dad said? You have broken every vow. Because he was right. In his view, it was a scandal.

[4 : 51] And those who do not believe in the historical record of the word of God have said Mary was either covering for Joseph, but if she was covering, couldn't they come up with a better story than that?

I mean, really? What woman would stay with such a coward who would let her take all the flack, you know? Some have said she was raped by a Roman soldier.

They even gave a name to the soldier, Panthera. So that's harder to believe that, actually. Or some have said it's a legend that developed later to explain Jesus.

But here's the thing about legends. They take many years to develop. Long after the people who were there have died. This way the legend cannot be corrected or contradicted.

But the virgin birth is part of the historical record of the life of Jesus from the very, very, very beginning. He was even accused, at one point we saw in John, of being illegitimately born.

[6 : 00] They knew the story. It was from the beginning. It wasn't a legend. It was part of the historical record from the very moment he breathed his first breath. And keep in mind, Mary was still alive doing this time.

And if it had been if it had been a legend, she could have corrected the story. So not a legend.

But Joseph, her betrothed, is also scandalized. In his mind, he's forced to divorce her.

In that culture, betrothal was binding. It was marriage, which is why Joseph is called her husband. The betrothal period lasted for one year.

And then a couple would officially, formally wed. And that's when the wife would move into her husband's home to consummate their marriage and fully begin their life together.

[7 : 06] The only way to break this betrothal agreement was through divorce. And Joseph would have felt he had no choice. Right? He had to divorce her.

But to divorce her or to have or not to divorce her would have had his reputation tainted by her sin. Because he thought he was getting a woman of godly virtue.

And evidently, she was not. She was not a woman of godly virtue, a woman of godly character. She would have been unfit to be his wife, therefore. He being a man of godly integrity and a member of good standing in his community could not be tainted by her sin.

And remember, if he did not divorce her, he would be admitting that he was the baby daddy. Because no respectable Jewish male would have a woman like that unless he himself was guilty.

But the text tells us, right, that Joseph was a righteous man, a just man. In other words, he lived to obey God's law. And notice, he and Mary accepted the stigma of this scandal.

[8 : 33] Why? Because they knew it was true. That God does the impossible. It's striking that at the beginning and end of our Lord's life, he was a scandal.

Remember what 1 Corinthians 1 says, Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews.

That's a scandal. And folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. The cross was a scandal too.

I mean, who, what self-respecting Jew would believe in a Messiah who was crucified? Remember, crucifixion was a sign that a person was accursed.

Cursed is the one who's hung on a tree. It was a sign that you had been rejected by God. You were hung between heaven and earth, as it were. Neither wanted you.

[9 : 43] A sign of curse. And for the Jews to accept that their Messiah would experience that was a scandal. That's what the word stumbling block means in the original language.

It's a scandal. The word is scandalon. It's a scandal. It's horrible. Who would believe such a thing? So the birth of Jesus and the cross of Jesus is hard to believe.

And foolishness then and today. But this gospel is a story of life and hope to those who believe it.

To those who believe in spite of the fallout. In spite of the scandal. It's life if you will believe, if you will trust. Believe it.

Remember, faith is not believing in something you can't prove. Faith is believing in what God has said. What about you?

[10 : 48] Are you willing to be scandalized for Jesus whose very existence is a scandal? Christmas is therefore your opportunity to identify with the God of the impossible.

The God of the impossible who is holy, holy, holy, who created the greatest moral scandal in history.

Do you understand that? God created the greatest moral scandal in history with the virgin birth. God and yet it's true because God can do what we cannot.

Secondly, the virgin birth was a work of the Spirit. That's how it happened. Verses 20 and 21. Joseph, first of all, our language is a bit misleading.

Mary experienced a virgin conception. the birth of Jesus was normal just like yours, just like any other baby.

[12 : 09] It's a virgin conception. Joseph, how did it begin? Joseph is visited by the angel in a dream. It could have been Gabriel since he was sent to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, to prophesy John's birth and he was also sent to Mary.

So likely this is Gabriel. We don't know and really it doesn't matter. Joseph is told not to fear. The same thing Mary was told by the way, fear not.

Joseph is told not to fear to take Mary as his wife. What would he be afraid of? Well, we mentioned one thing, don't fear the stigma.

Don't fear the ostracized, being ostracized. Don't fear the shame or whatever was coming your way. Don't fear that. But it was one other thing that Joseph would have been afraid of.

He would have been afraid of being unfaithful to God because the law is clear about this that a woman who is caught in adultery, there were things that had to be done.

[13 : 16] There was a process that could actually end and her and the guy being stoned to death. Don't fear, Joseph.

Don't fear that you're dishonoring me by doing this. Sometimes, haven't you noticed, to follow Jesus means you have to believe or act in a way that the world might find scandalous or backwards or even just plain oh, sad.

We met a girl, I won't tell you her name because I haven't asked permission, we met a girl in Jamaica in Black River and I want to get her words right because I wrote down it was so powerful what she said I actually wrote it down.

She was asked, I think Pastor Billy asked her or one of the guys asked her, were you afraid? She said, no. I asked God for a, here's her phrase, a hard heart to be here for the children and community.

I didn't want to be crying and worrying. I didn't ask God to make me tough but to be hard hearted.

[14 : 32] What she meant was strong hearted. People are looking to the church for help. I can't break down till this day I have not.

Her house was being destroyed and she ran to the church across the street for refuge. Sometimes following Jesus may look a little weird.

She wasn't afraid. She's trying to be strong for the community. Her house is destroyed. Why are you staying, child?

Because she knows God has answered her prayer and she's staying there in that community for the children, she said, to help them, to encourage them and to be with her church family.

sometimes when you follow the Lord it can look odd. People don't believe it. Why would you do that?

[15 : 41] Are you sincere? Are you serious? What's your angle? We're very distrustful people and for good reason sometimes. But if you listen to the spirit and not to the spirit of the world and follow his word, you will walk in glory even if you're misunderstood by others.

Sometimes you will pay a price. You will take a risk if you follow his word. Do it.

Do it. And trust the Lord. He'll be with you. Believe me, he'll be with you. So then how is she pregnant? The angel explains this. The spirit of God, the third person of the Holy Trinity is the cause of this conception.

Luke actually gives us clearer wording here. In Luke chapter 1 verse 35, the angel answered her, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, Mary he's talking to, and the power of the Most High will overshadow, look at that word, overshadow you.

Therefore, the child to be born will be called Holy, the Son of God. That idea of overshadow is like he would be like a cloud hovering over you.

[16 : 59] The language is familiar to Jewish people. That language would have been very familiar. It sounds like this. Genesis chapter 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was out form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep.

Watch this. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. just like the Spirit of God hovered over the earthly creation, so now he would hover over Mary to create life in her womb.

We're not saying the Spirit of God created Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, but he gives life to Mary's womb that was empty. The Spirit is the life giver.

Why are we surprised? Even in us, he is the life giver. He is the one that gives us new birth, spiritual life, so that we can believe in the King of kings and enter his glorious kingdom.

That's John chapter 3. We've studied that. He gives life. That's what the Spirit does. I wonder, I just wonder, get Kevin Smith imagination, you know.

[18 : 15] I wonder if Joseph thought, will it be a boy or a girl? Now, my Jewish man of that day, he was likely hoping for a firstborn son.

I tried four times for a son. I got four beautiful women who are better to me than 12 sons. Amen. Amen. The angel does a gender reveal and says, Mary is having a boy.

Joseph, you're going to have a son, son. Now, going against Jewish custom, the father of the baby is not allowed to name the child somewhat.

In other words, God tells Joseph what to name the child. He actually does name it, but he names the child because God told him what to name the child.

And the name is very important, Jesus. Very important, right? And you know this already, but Jesus is the Greek for Joshua. Joshua's Hebrew, Yeshua, right?

[19 : 23] And Jesus, Greek, speaking of Old and New Testament, it means the same thing, the Lord is salvation or the Lord saves. It means both, but that's the translation you could use.

The Lord is salvation, the Lord saves. I like the fact that Jesus is our salvation. By telling Joseph to name the boy, now listen, I told you he did do some naming, but it was based upon what God told him.

But the fact that Joseph actually names him tells us he was adopting him. God told him to adopt him.

God told him because that adoption legitimized Jesus. Otherwise, he would have been what was called Amazer, M-A-M-Z-E-R, Amazer.

Hebrew, it means an illegitimate child. Now listen, this won't be on the screen, so write this down. Deuteronomy 23, 2. No one born of a forbidden union, like this would have been called, may enter the assembly of the Lord.

[20 : 40] Even to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the Lord. If Joseph had not adopted Jesus, Jesus would have been a M-A-M-Z-E-R and therefore not able to even enter the assembly of the Lord, meaning he couldn't hold office of any kind, which would be horrible because Jesus is the prophet, the king, right?

The priest. He would be unable to bear any of those titles. He would have been a shame upon his community. But when Joseph named him, he adopted him as his son.

And he gave him full rights of being a citizen of Israel. But here's the funny thing about that. Jesus would grow up and legitimize Joseph.

He would legitimize Joseph before the Father because Joseph's faith in Jesus would make Joseph a son of God. God The Jews were looking for their Messiah remembered to come and deliver them from human oppression.

Jesus, God saves, right? They would have been looking for this. They sought this as their, as listen, as their greatest problem. Their greatest problem was they were, was the man.

[22 : 10] they were being oppressed by the man, Caesar. That was their greatest problem. If we could get rid of these cruddy Romans, we could live our life.

We could have prosperity. We could determine our own destiny and destination. We could, you know, we could be what we need to be. If we could just get rid of these cruddy Romans. Our Messiah is coming to deliver us from oppression, set us free.

That was their greatest problem to them. And the same is true today. We see our greatest problems as lack of money, lack of freedom, poverty, war.

What do you think of as your greatest problem? We all have a view of what, our greatest struggle. What is it? Your family.

Oh goodness, your spouse. Your children. Your parents. What do you see as your greatest struggle, your greatest problem?

[23 : 16] Now listen, these are tough issues. Okay? We're not denying that. And we as the Lord's disciples should do our part to alleviate them as much as possible, as much as God would use us to help.

But they're not going anywhere. those problems will continue. God is going to eradicate all of them, but not yet. He's going to do it.

All those problems I just mentioned will be done away with because God's going to cleanse this earth, cleanse this world. Yes, but not yet. First, he wants to deal with our true greatest need, our true greatest problem, that problem that is destroying each one of us from the inside out.

And then causing all of the problems that we see in the world socially, politically, economically. You see, it's the sin in us that causes the problems that we see and experience.

That's the problem. The stuff in us. And God tried to tell his people. He tried to tell Israel what their greatest problem was.

[24 : 34] In Psalm 130, 7 and 8, the psalmist sings, O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love.

That's covenant love. And with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

You see it? God was telling his people, listen, the redemption you're looking for, that which, that which will set, redemption, that which will set you free is that you will be delivered from your iniquities, from your sins.

That's what's tying you up. That's your greatest problem, is when you look in the mirror, you see you. that's who's looking back at you.

When you point the finger at people and point the finger at governments and point the finger at economics, listen, when you point your finger, there's a few of them looking back at you.

[25 : 35] And it's true. It really is true. You are the biggest sinner that you know. And that I know too, by the way.

No, just kidding. I'm a mess. I know that. I don't want to be. I really don't. I want to be perfect.

I want to be everything I do for you is right and for my family is right. I want to be that guy, but I'm not. I screw up. I have anger issues sometimes.

And I'm a selfish so-and-so sometimes. Stop looking at me. You know it's you too. You're looking at me for. Don't be agreeing either.

You know, Sandy, get the car. I'm getting out of here. Listen, when God tells you something about you, listen.

[26 : 39] He says you're created in the image of God. That means you are somebody. You are important. You are beautiful in many ways. He says you're created in my image. You have dignity and worth just by being you, just by existing.

Believe him. But he also says you're a sinner, that you rebelled against me, that you told me to hit the road and you're going to do life your way, that you got it covered.

Come when I call you, but right now I don't need you. You've told God that you're the center of the universe and we know that. Just ask your friends. And if you're married, ask your spouse.

They'll tell you how selfish you are, each one of us. We really believe the world exists for us and so do you. To make me happy, your job is to make me happy. And when my happiness is not met, believe me, I'm not happy.

I can be a shrewd, I can be evil when you mess up my happiness. God has spoken that you and I are sinners.

[27 : 46] For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All means all. That includes Mary, by the way. So you have the immaculate conception is not true.

Mary had a sin nature. Mary needed a savior. She gave birth to her own savior. Only one ever did that. Listen, listen, listen, listen.

If you don't understand this, that God has spoken to you what your greatest problem is, you will believe you are good enough. And so you don't need saving by anyone, including God.

You're your own personal savior. You got it all together. You always do, you always think, say, and do what is right. If you do, you really don't need a savior.

If you don't believe what God says, you either go that way or you do this. You will misconstrue what you need saving from. Like I said before, your other things like your poor self-esteem, poverty, a difficult marriage, irrational boss, whatever it is, you will think that's what you need saving from.

[28 : 59] Imagine if you went to a doctor, and some of you have had this experience, sad to say, but you went to a doctor and was misdiagnosed. The doctor misdiagnosed your illness.

You walked in with pains in your stomach, and your doctor said, okay, you just need some antacids or something, we'll take care of that, just take some medicine. But what you had was cancer of the pancreas, which is very deadly.

But you didn't know that. You were misdiagnosed, and what happens when you're misdiagnosed, if your illness is serious, you could die. If nothing else, you won't get treated, and you'll be sick far longer than you need to be, your suffering will continue.

You see, if you don't understand that you are a sinner in need of saving, that you are a screw-up in need of somebody to fix you, if you don't understand that, then you are misdiagnosing your own problem.

And you're not going to ask God for the help that you need. And by the way, if you are walking with Jesus, continue to diagnose your problem correctly.

[30 : 14] Because if you still, if you misdiagnose your problem, even as you're walking with Jesus, remember, he's died for your sins, that's taken care of, you can never be lost, but as you're walking with Jesus, you still sin, you still mess up, you've got to understand and take responsibility for what you've done.

If you keep blaming other people for what you've done, you're still misdiagnosing your problem and you won't come to God like you should for help. God wants to help us.

And if we rightly understand our weaknesses, we can find the help that we need at the cross. in the gospel and the word of God and the power of his spirit.

Jesus was born of the spirit by our virgin, not so he could save you from temporary problems primarily, but he was born this way to save you from the problem that would determine where you spend eternity.

That's your big problem. Where would you spend eternity? with God or without him? And Jesus has come to help us so that we could spend eternity with him.

[31 : 36] He took on our humanity so that we would hear and see what salvation really is.

look in the manger. A human being is born but more than that. God in human flesh. I remember I read a story recently.

A man is one winter night this dear man is hearing this irregular thumping against his kitchen storm door. You've had this happen before.

he went to the window and watched as tiny shivering sparrows who were being attracted to the warmth and the light in his home were beating their heads against the glass.

You ever seen a bird fly into the window? I watched it happen to me several times in our house. Got all these windows and birds will fly into the window. Well this night this man sees these sparrows there's cold outside they're trying to find some place warm and he's touched his farmer is touched and so he bumbles up and goes out into the fresh snow to open the barn.

[32 : 51] He had a barn opens the barn door for these struggling birds he turned on all the lights and he tossed some hay in a corner he sprinkled a trail of saltine crackers to direct them to the barn you know like follow me here come on birdies follow me but it didn't work it didn't work they didn't come he tried other tactics he tried to go behind them and shoo them and scare them you know shoo them into the barn he tossed cracker crumbs in the air towards them hoping they would then get the idea come on there's food over here there's warmth he would go he'd go to the house to see what would happen and it still didn't happen nothing worked because he was a large alien creature he had terrified them and they could not understand that he actually was trying to help them he withdrew in his house and watched the doomed sparrows because they were doomed as he watched them hit the window land on the ground and do it all over again then he had a thought like a lightning bolt hit him if I could only become a bird just for a moment become one of them then I wouldn't frighten them so much

I could show them the way to warmth and safety as one of them then at the same moment he was a Christian at the same moment he realized he had just grasped the whole principle of the incarnation of Christmas of what happened in the manger God becoming one of us he understood now that's what God was doing he who is immense he who holds the world in the palm of his hand he who is glorious and good became one of us so that he might point us to the warmth and to the safety he might give us more than bread crumbs he might set a table before us that we would come to him now and find all the help we need all the hope all the substance all the warmth because without the incarnation it was hard to understand God and he was downright many times sometimes frightening even though he revealed himself as a loving

God caring for his people in the Old Testament he's loving he's caring for his people yes he could be wrathful yes and he still is by the way but at Christmas time Emmanuel came God's salvation appeared that we might see what he's totally like he might come and speak baby talk to us by being one of us we might understand him and see him have you seen him do you see Jesus if you see him if you truly see him you'll come to him because there's no better friend and that he's the only savior meaning he's the only one that can truly truly help you and certainly the only one who can save you because he's God of the impossible father thank you thank you for sending

Jesus thank you for giving us life in him thank you for doing that which the world says is impossible what science says is impossible what biology says is impossible you did that which is impossible that we might not take any credit that we would see that only you only you are the savior help us to to know Jesus in his name we pray amen