

The Divine, Disclosing and Delivering King

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[0 : 00] Well, let's turn to our Bibles now. We're going to read this morning once again at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel. Last Sunday, you remember, Phil Copeland was helping us through that long list of names at the beginning where Matthew begins his Gospel, linking it right back to, well, right back to the book of Genesis with Abraham and all the way through the story of Israel and the kings and David and the exile and right down to the birth of Jesus Christ.

And so at verse 18, we pick up the story in its extraordinary fulfillment. 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.

[1 : 42] 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. Amen. May God bless to us these wonderful words of the fulfillment of promise.

Well, please do have your Bibles open to Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1, which is really all about the divine disclosing and delivering King.

The divine disclosing and delivering King. Well, I recently came across a news report. It was quite a harrowing read. It was from New York some decades ago.

[2 : 54] A woman was returning home to the apartment blocks, the high-rise flats that she lived in. And as she was coming to the entrance of the apartment blocks, she was getting her keys out of her handbag.

And she was approached by a mugger. And the mugger tried to grab her handbag, but the woman refused to give up the bag. And when she did so, the mugger turned on her and started to beat her brutally.

And there were many bystanders on the pavement looking on, but not one of them came to her aid. And as her cries for help floated up and came to the ears of her neighbors in the flats above, they all came out onto their balconies and they looked down at the woman and her terrible plight.

But again, not one of them came to her aid. And eventually she died. And after the incident, the police interviewed all of these bystanders and said the question, why didn't you help?

Why didn't you intervene? To which every bystander replied with the same answer. I just didn't want to get involved. I didn't want to get involved.

[4 : 06] When we read Matthew chapter 1, we see just how wonderfully different God is. God is not a bystander. As Christians, we celebrate this truth every day of our lives, but especially at Christmas.

For in the birth of Jesus Christ, we see that God isn't a God who idly looks at this world of evil and peers down and goes, oh, I don't want to get involved in that.

Far from it. God loves the world so much that he himself comes down and plunges himself into our mess in order to save us from our biggest problem.

It's almost like the living God plunges his pure hands into the muck and filth that we've got ourselves stuck into in order to save us, to cleanse us, and so that we can know him. And as we saw last week, Jesus coming into this world, it was not an isolated event that happened in a sort of time vacuum. No. From the opening genealogy that Matthew lays down there in verse 1 to 17, he declares to us that the birth of Jesus is an actual fact, the continuation of, and the climax of, the Old Testament.

[5 : 20] The whole Bible is one big, long gospel account. And this Jesus is the promised King, the one in whom all of God's covenant promises of salvation and blessing find their great fulfillment.

The promises that were made to men such as Abraham and David find their yes and their amen in Christ. And we heard that last week. Here at last is the King who will destroy Satan and all of his works.

Here at last is the King who will deal with the problem of the human heart that's evil. And here at last is the King who will renew our broken world and fill it with the glory of God and his visible, unopposed rule, making this world a paradise for all those who put their trust in him as their Lord and Savior.

And as Willie helpfully highlighted by giving you that exercise, Matthew continues pressing home this point of Old Testament continuation by linking the historical events that surround Jesus' conception, birth and childhood with promises and Old Testament patterns.

Five times in chapters 1 and 2, Matthew tells us, he follows this structure of telling us about the historical event and then he repeats this little phrase. There's an example of it in our passage in verse 22 where he says, all this, and in this case it's the conception of Jesus, all this took place to fulfill what the Lord has spoken in the Old Testament.

[6 : 54] So Matthew not only gives us the events themselves and how they actually happen, but he also gives us the interpretation of what the events mean so that we can understand their significance and so that we can see how beautiful God's Christ is.

Remember, that's why Matthew has written this book. He wants to convince you that Jesus is Lord and that you should surrender your life to him and build your life upon his teaching. Well, this morning, let's look at this historical event and the interpretation.

I'd like us to look at it under three points. Firstly, we see Jesus is the divine king. He is the divine king. Matthew is teaching us that Jesus is none other than the son of God incarnate.

Jesus is unlike any other person in history for when he was born, he is both fully God and fully man. Back in verse 16 in chapter 1, when we come to the end of Jesus' genealogy, we're really left asking the question, who is Jesus' biological father?

Just look at how carefully Matthew words verse 16. It says, Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[8 : 11] Notice, he doesn't say Joseph, the father of Jesus. He says, Joseph was the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying that Jesus is Joseph's legal son by adoption.

And Jesus is Mary's physical son by birth. But we're told nothing about Jesus' physical father. And you're left thinking, well, who is the father? And that was certainly the painful question that would have pulsed through Joseph's mind, wouldn't it?

Imagine the pain he was going through, hearing that the one he loved, the woman he was betrothed to for marriage, the one he was saving himself for, she's with a child.

She's pregnant. What heartache that must have been for him. Who is the father? You remember that in those days, when a man and woman were engaged to be married, it's a little bit different from how we do things today.

The couple would go through this period of betrothal, lasted for usually about a year. And during this time, the couple were deemed to be legally bound together. But they would not live together and they would not enjoy the full pleasures and privileges of the conjugal rights of marriage.

[9 : 26] Only after this period was over and after they had a public ceremony would they move in together and then sexual union could begin. But during this period of betrothal, if either of the couple had sex with somebody else, it was legally classed as adultery and thus the grounds for divorce.

And being a decent man, we're told that Joseph, when he discovers Mary's pregnant and all of his heartache, he resolves to divorce her quietly, not put her to public disgrace.

That's a very gracious thing to do, isn't it? Most men, I'm sure, would have not reacted with such kindness. But as he considered all these things, the Lord sends to him a messenger, an angel in a dream so that Joseph would see the true significance of what had taken place in Mary's womb. Let me just say, that's always the case throughout salvation history. In order for human beings to see and believe the mighty works of God, they also need to be accompanied with a clear interpretive word of God.

Words from God that teach us the true significance about what he has done. Left on our own without those words, we'd be spiritually blind to these realities. And so the angel comes and reassures Joseph that he should still take Mary to be his wife because she's not committed adultery.

[10:46] No, no, no. She's still very much a virgin. Very much a virgin. But the child in her womb has not come about in the normal way. Not by the will of man, but by the will of God.

Please look at verse 20 and listen to the words that the angel says. 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. In other words, the child that she will give birth to is none other than the Son of God. Now please, please don't make the same mistake that many have made throughout history and assume that this is crassly teaching that God had some kind of a sexual intercourse with Mary. What utter blasphemy that is. We do not believe that. No. The son that is in Mary's womb has come through a powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

And Matthew repeats this fact twice to emphasize his point. Just look at verse 18. The child has come from the Holy Spirit. And then again in verse 20. And also, I think Matthew seems to be subtly alluding to the beginning of the Bible here.

[11:59] Verse 18. Have a look at that. It literally translates as this. Now, the Genesis of Jesus Christ took place in this way. And as you'll know, Genesis is the title of the first book of the Bible.

And in those very early verses of that book, we're told that the Spirit of the Lord, the same Spirit that's mentioned here, is the Lord's great agent of creation through whom he brought everything into existence.

What Matthew wants us to see is that here is God at it again through the same Holy Spirit. He's bringing about the start of a new creation where the pre-existing eternal Son of God humbled himself and took the form of an embryo in the womb of a virgin.

Let me just say that Matthew doesn't explain the incarnation. He just proclaims it. He says, look, how can I even begin to explain this? But this is how it happened.

This is fact. God the Son, the one through whom all things were made, the one through whom all life is sustained, left the glory of heaven and came down to such a humble and weak state.

[13:11] He was born fully God and fully man in his one person. And if that doesn't blow your mind, then it's probably because you don't really know who God is in and of himself.

I think it's fair to say that most people today, when they think about God, what they think about is just a really big man. So what they do is they picture in the mind a man and they make him bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and so they go, a really enormous man, huge.

And they go, aha, that's what God is like. He's just like us but just enormous. Well, if you believe in that type of a God, then the incarnation is really just a matter of God becoming smaller.

It's not a big deal. But that is so wrong. God is not a big man. God is not a bigger version of us. Let me just fire off some ways in which God is totally different to us.

God is not even a creature. God is the creator. He has had no beginning and he has no end. He's not bound by time and space because he made time and space. He doesn't have a body.

[14:14] John 4 tells us that in and of himself God is spirit. He is present everywhere. He knows everything. He has unlimited power. And of course, God is triune.

He is one God who dwells in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of them are fully God and distinct from one another and yet at the same time, they're all one. And unlike us, we rely on so many things to keep us alive externally from us.

It's not the case with God. God doesn't need anything or anyone from outside himself for his existence. Within his own life, God is complete and perfect.

God is not a big man. The church I was at down in England, I used to take the youth group and I used to make all the little kids chant this, God is not a big man. God is not a big man. So please, don't think of God as though he's a big man.

And yet what Matthew declares to us here is this immeasurable mystery that this indescribable God, all-powerful and all-knowing, has humbled himself beyond all measure.

[15 : 24] The eternal Son, who is of one substance and equal to God the Father, has taken upon himself our human nature with all of its weakness and infirmities, born into the same world that we live in.

This world of pain, heartache, sorrow, suffering, evil, disappointment, disease, and death. He was born to face all of these same struggles that you and I face.

I wonder if you can remember a few years ago on the news reports images of Prince William who left the glory of his royal home and humbled himself, not choosing to draw upon his royal status and privileges.

He took the form of a homeless man and spent the night sleeping rough. and I think it was a really grotty refuge area and refuge area, a bin area in London.

And he did that for charity and it was a great act of humility but it was nothing compared to the depths that the Son of God went to. Jesus is the divine king who left the gaze of angels and came into this world.

[16 : 36] Let me just pause there and ask you this question. Who do you believe Jesus to be? There's lots of opinions about Jesus in the world today, all sorts of nonsense online.

Why don't we listen to one of the eyewitnesses? Why don't we listen to Matthew and to the word of God? Because Matthew wants us to know the truth. Jesus is not just a good teacher.

He's not just a human prophet and he's not just a great historical figure to be admired and respected. He is far more than this. Jesus is God. He's not to be admired and respected.

He's to be adored and revered and worshipped and praised and honored and obeyed and loved as God. Jesus is the divine king.

But it throws up another question and it's this. Why? Why would the son of God choose to become so weak and come to us as man? Well our next two points tell us why.

[17 : 37] Jesus is the divine king and therefore he came to be the disclosing king. The disclosing king. Matthew tells us that Jesus has come to make known and disclose to us the truth about God the Father.

Just listen to the writer to the Hebrews later on in the Bible. He says this. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

Or listen to the apostle Paul. He says that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. So the Bible couldn't be clearer that the baby born to Mary is none other than the definitive and exclusive revelation of God to this world.

I have a friend and he's an atheist. And recently I really annoyed him because he asked me yeah have you ever actually seen God? And I replied no because I wasn't born early enough.

For there was a time when the Son of God walked this earth. He revealed himself. He made known to men like Matthew the truth of God. Men who would go on to write down the eyewitness accounts such as the one we're looking at this morning so that we could read and encounter Jesus today through his words.

[18 : 53] Friends, God really hasn't left us to play desperate guessing games about who he is and what he is like. He is not a shy God. He's made himself known exclusively in this Jesus.

He is the only place where we can meet God because he is God. There is no other way to know God but through this Jesus. And can I just say some people they don't think that's a positive thing that God has been so exclusive in how he's revealed himself.

They say that well that must be a negative thing. Well let me assure you that the opposite is the case. The fact that God has given us a precise and exclusive meeting place I think is deeply assuring because it assures us that we can really meet God in Jesus and it also assures us that God really wants to meet us in Jesus.

Let me just illustrate what I mean. Imagine if I was arranging to meet up with you and I said to you well let's meet up in Glasgow sometime in the next month and then I stopped there and left it and didn't give you any more details.

giving you such a vague and non-precise meeting place that would not be very assuring. It would not assure you that you would actually meet me and it would also give off the impression that I don't want to meet you.

[20 : 11] But on the other hand imagine if I gave you an exclusive and precise place to meet me if I said let's meet on Thursday the 14th of December 2017 at 3pm outside the front door of 25 Bath Street the Tron Church that's a different matter isn't it?

It fills you with the hope that actually I'm going to meet Phil and Phil wants to meet me. And the same principle applies to the way that God has exclusively said come and meet me come and know me I want you to meet me and my son.

God has made it possible for us to fulfil the purpose that we were created for. Isn't that wonderful news? Just as a whale was made for water man and mankind was made for God knowing him glorifying him and enjoying him.

We touched on this last Sunday how at the very beginning God created mankind and gave them alone the great privilege above all the other creatures on earth to have a relationship with him. And so let me just say a humbling truth if you don't know God then you're not properly functioning as a human.

you're failing to be what you ought to be if you are a stranger to God. And as a consequence anyone who doesn't know God who's a stranger and alien to God their lives will always be marked by a continuous pursuit of meaning and purpose.

[21 : 37] A never ceasing hunt for satisfaction and contentment. They will go on and on looking and never finding. For only in God do we find true satisfaction contentment and meaning for humanity.

This morning God is inviting every single one of us to come to him through faith in his son. He's gone to extraordinary lengths for us to meet him and know him. Will you heed his invitation? Will you trust him to teach you the truth about God the Father? I just say perhaps you've been brought to church this morning and you're not a Christian. Perhaps you've been brought by a Christian friend. Why don't you ask them about how they came to meet Jesus?

Ask them after the service. I'm sure they'd love to tell you more. Matthew declares to us Jesus is the divine king and therefore he is the disclosing king.

But lastly Matthew also tells us that Jesus came to be the delivering king. The delivering king. Jesus was born to save his people from their biggest problem.

[22 : 43] Please look at the words of the angel again in verse 20. 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. What's your biggest problem in life?

I'm sure if you're like me you'll have lots of problems in life. But what's your biggest problem? Well the words of the angel tell us that our biggest problem is sin. My wife and I used to live down in England and we got quite friendly with a neighbour of ours who lived along our street.

She would come round quite frequently for afternoon tea. She knew that we were Christians. She herself wasn't a Christian and she would always bring up Christianity in the conversation.

And as the conversation went on she would always come to the point where she'd say something along the lines of I just wish I had your faith but really I don't see why I need Jesus because in reality I'm not a bad person really.

[23 : 52] It was interesting what she deemed to be a bad person. What she did was she always compared herself to some of the monsters that you see on TV some of the criminals and some of the ghastly things human beings have done throughout history.

And of course if any average person does that if you compare yourself to a terrorist on the news well of course you're going to come up smelling of roses. Of course you're going to look good in comparison. But what about if you compare yourself to God and all of his purity and holiness?

That's a different matter. And as well I think another mistake my neighbour made was she only thought of sin as in terms of this way. Really sin it's all about not being a sinner it's all about not being harmful to other human beings.

And as long as you don't harm human beings too much and try and do good to other human beings then on the whole you'll be accepted by God. But that is fundamentally to ignore what the Bible teaches about the true nature of sin.

All sin is really about relationships this way between us and God. Even when we sin against human beings it is at the end of the day a sin against God because when you sin against one made in the image of God that is an act of rebellion against the Lord.

[25 : 11] And so what is sin? Well let me put it bluntly sin is to not treat God the way he deserves to be treated. Not treat God the way he deserves to be treated and if that's the criteria then there's no hope for any of us because not one person in this world has treated God the way he deserves to be treated.

And of course when I told my neighbour this she didn't come round for tea anymore but what about you? Are you honest with yourself? As a friend of mine likes to say if you are an honest person who's honest with yourself then you'll know you're not what you should be.

I look at my own life and I see that I fail to meet my own standards how much more must I fail to meet the standards of God who is entirely holy righteous and good. The Bible's clear we've all failed and because God is holy and because he's a God of love God cannot let sin go unpunished.

God takes our sin seriously and the punishment for sin is death judgment and the wrath of God and that's right that's fair it's what we deserve and it's what we will all face.

But this is why the words of the angel to Mary fill us with such hope and joy. God is declaring to us that here at last in the person of his son is the salvation that we all need and it's all there really in the name Jesus.

[26 : 38] I wonder if you know what your name means. I recently discovered that my name is taken from the Greek which means lover of horses which doesn't really reveal that much about me because I've never been on a horse and I have no desire to go anywhere near a horse.

I once had a burger from Tesco which I'm sure had horse meat in it and I love that as you can probably tell. But lover of horses my name doesn't reveal anything really about the reality of my character but it's not so in Bible times.

In Bible times names given to people were so important because they were loaded with significance they would reveal something about the purpose of the person. And so the angel from God commands Joseph to give the baby the name Jesus.

Well why? Well Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua and Joshua means the Lord's salvation the Lord saves.

So the name Jesus was given to reveal the purpose for which this son was born and in case it wasn't clear enough the angel explicitly says he will save he will save his people from their sins.

[27 : 46] That was promised long ago in the Old Testament prophets the Old Testament messengers from God just like Isaiah the prophet that's quoted here in verse 23 and you remember Isaiah speaking hundreds of years before the events of Matthew chapter 1 his book really has two halves in the first half of his book Isaiah promises that a Davidic king a son of David will come to rule his people and rescue them but the second half of the book of Isaiah speaks about another figure that was coming a suffering servant one who through his own death would save his people from sin and as history goes on and you come to Matthew you find that in Jesus both of them meet together in the same person here in Jesus we have the Davidic king and the suffering servant he's come to be pierced for our transgressions he's come to be slaughtered in our place so that we might be forgiven and made right with God read on in Matthew's gospel especially when you come to the end and you see Jesus doing exactly that listen to John's thought he says this despite having lived the perfect life of love and obedience to God the Father

Jesus went voluntarily and deliberately to the cross without any sin or sins of his own he bore our sins in his own body on the tree that is he endured in his own innocent person the consequences that we deserved the death he died was the just penalty for sin not his sins for he had none but ours with which he identified himself by becoming our substitute taking our place dying our death he perfectly satisfied both the justice and the love of God not that he did something God the Father was unwilling to do on the contrary God was in Christ doing it in his justice demanding and in his love providing a perfect sacrifice for sins well friends we've heard the wonderful truth this morning that Jesus is the divine king the disclosing king and the delivering king but it's news that always demands a response and every one of us has a choice this morning we can refuse to believe what Matthew has written here you can do that you can dismiss Jesus and build your life on something else but Matthew said don't do that what a fool you are if you do that because it means walking away from the living God walking away from forgiveness walking away from the life eternal and from true satisfaction and contentment rejecting Jesus means carrying on waging war against the God who made you and sustained you and by the way it's a war that you will not win you will face him as the almighty judge and on that day if you've rejected him now he will reject you then and you will face the horror of your sin for all eternity your sin is either paid for on the cross or in hell but of

course the opposite is true isn't it those who heed the call of Christ those who come to him and believe that eyewitness testimony who stake their lives upon him trusting that he is the only way to be forgiven and the only way to know the true God those who do that who come to him on their hands and knees they will be forgiven they will know the joy of having their sins dealt with and they will know the everyday presence of the Lord with them or how will you respond to this divine disclosing and delivering king let's be quiet for a moment to respond to the word of God by ourselves and then I'll pray for us heavenly father we marvel at the incomprehensible mystery of the way in which your eternal son came into this world at the incarnation we praise you that this declares to us that you are no bystander you are not the God who sits idly looking on whilst your people helplessly struggle in sin but rather you are the gracious God of love who willingly plunged himself into this world to save us save us from the punishment that we deserve and to give us the great purpose of knowing you glorifying you and enjoying you forever we praise you for king Jesus and we pray that this Christmas our hearts will be full of the joy of knowing him our Emmanuel God with us we pray all these things in Jesus' precious name Amen