

Connection to Matthew 1:18-25; Numbers 21:6-9

In Numbers 21, the people of Israel complained against God, and He sent poisonous snakes to judge them. The people admitted their sin and asked Moses to intercede for them. God told Moses to make a serpent and put it on a pole. Those who were bitten would look to it and live. In John 3, Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Matthew 1 tells the story of Jesus' birth—the one who was born so that He might be lifted up to bring life to all those who trust in Him.

Introduction/Opening

Christmas season is a dangerous time. Christmas is dangerous not because of the holiday shopping rush but because of its familiarity. Christmas is dangerous because of how familiar the events surrounding Jesus' birth can become. The events can become so familiar that we lose the wonder of Immanuel—"God is with us."

Outline

1. The Decision (Matt. 1:18-19)
 - a. Before Joseph and Mary were married "she was pregnant" (v. 18). Although she was pregnant "from the Holy Spirit" no one would believe her.
 - i. The virgin birth of Jesus is one of the great and mysterious truths of Scripture. How can Jesus be born of a virgin? We cannot fully fathom how, but this is a miracle.
 - ii. Biblical miracles are meant to point us to the greatness of God.
 - iii. The virgin birth was meant to show the utter uniqueness of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Joseph had two options: divorce her secretly or publicly disgrace her. He decided to divorce her secretly because he was a righteous man (v. 19).
2. The Appearance (Matt. 1:20-21)
 - a. As Joseph was deciding what to do, an angel appeared to him. The angel called him "Joseph, Son of David" (v. 20), linking Joseph back to King David in the genealogy right before this text.
 - b. The angel explained that he need not break off his engagement to Mary because "what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (v. 20).
 - c. They shall name the child "Jesus" (v. 21).
 - d. This child will "save his people from their sins" (v. 21).
 - i. This is why Jesus came to this earth—to save his people from their sins. There is salvation in no one else (Acts 4:12).

- ii. As the people of Israel were to look to the serpent in the wilderness and be saved from their afflictions, those who look to Jesus will be saved from their sins.
3. The Promise (Matt. 1:22-23)
 - a. Jesus would be called Immanuel which means “God is with us” (v. 23). Jesus came to make God known.
 - i. God’s presence was never only confined to the tabernacle. Here in Jesus, God revealed Himself personally to His people.
 4. The Obedience (Matt. 1:24-25)
 - a. Joseph faithfully obeyed the Lord’s command. He certainly would have been ridiculed, and Mary would have been called horrible names, but Joseph obediently did what God told him.
 - b. Joseph named the baby “Jesus” showing that he took Jesus as his own son.

Conclusion

Do not let the events surrounding Jesus’ birth become so familiar that you lose the wonder of “God is with us.” Jesus was born to be lifted up. In a greater way than the Israelites were saved from their afflictions by looking to the serpent Moses lifted up, Christians are saved by looking to Jesus Christ who was lifted up on the cross for our salvation. Jesus was born to die. See the love of God on display in that He sent His one and only Son to come and “save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

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