

Theme: The story of the first Christmas, recorded in Matthew 1 and 2, is full of surprises, each of which reveals an aspect of the Gospel that still has the power to amaze us today.

I. Recap - Christmas Surprises in Matthew

- A. We have spent 4 weeks looking at Matthew 1 and 2
- B. There are a lot of surprises in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth!
 - 1. Beginning with a genealogy that is full of surprising women who show us Jesus' surprising family roots and the ravaging effects of sin
 - 2. The surprise reactions to Jesus' arrival, including indifference or hostility from those who should have welcomed Him, and joyful worship from the least likely people!
- C. Tonight - a few minutes to focus on the biggest surprise

II. Jesus Came To Save Us From Our Sins

- A. His name reveals His mission

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. Matthew 1:21

 - 1. Name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins!
 - 2. Many were looking for a great military figure or politician who would deliver people from Rome and oppressive social problems.
 - 3. So it is today - many want to turn Christmas into a political or nationalistic focus or a culture war.
 - 4. But God gave a surprising diagnosis - our real disease is sin!

- 5. This was also in the genealogy which hinted at sinful events that brought pain to those involved.
- 6. The first big surprise of the Christmas story is that it is God's way of dealing with our terminal disease of sin.

B. Or problematic responses to this news

- 1. When we mention sin, it often causes bad reactions
- 2. For some, we think of such talk as a power play by "holier than thou" people - and sometimes it is that!
- 3. For some, it produces deep feelings of guilt and shame, which can leave us in a stupor or lead to harmful behaviors to deaden the shame.
- 4. But the reality is that we really do have a sin problem!
- 5. We all behave in ways that we know are wrong and hurt us and others around us - not to mention things we think of doing but can't accomplish yet!
- 6. But rather than having a knee-jerk reaction, listen to the even bigger surprise to come!

III. Jesus Saves Us By Being God With Us

- A. Jesus is no ordinary Child - He is God Himself

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, **she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit...** ²³ **"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son..."** Matthew 1:18, 23

 - 1. Talk about a surprising conception and birth - a Virgin!

2. This is no superstitious belief or cover for some sin Mary had committed - the Virgin birth is necessary because Jesus is God coming to us in human form!
3. This is why Mary was with Child through the Holy Spirit - God comes to us supernaturally!
4. It is also why He is named Jesus - the LORD saves!
5. Our sin problem is so deep, and we are so enmeshed with it, that the only One Who can save us is God!
6. The solution to our sin is not moralistic lectures, nor is it self-improvement programs - it is God Himself coming to save us!

B. Jesus is Immanuel - God With Us!

“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and **they will call him Immanuel**” — which means, “**God with us.**” Matthew 1:23

1. Matthew quotes the prophecy about the Virgin conceiving and points out that the Child will be referred to as Immanuel - a Hebrew word that means “God with us!”
2. This is the great surprise - Jesus is the Holy God coming, not to be against us, but to be with us!
3. In Jesus, God comes, not to judge our sin, but to forgive our sin.
4. In Jesus, God comes, not to reject us, but to be with us!
5. What a surprise - the Holy God, Who has every right to judge and punish us as traitors, instead comes to save us and to be with us and bless us!

C. Behold the surprising love of God revealed in the Christmas event!

1. Behold the surprising love of God the Father!

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

- a. The Father Who knows our sin and rebellion, Who knows our excuses and all the ways we hide, sends His Son to save us!
- b. The Holy Father does not demand we save ourselves, or clean ourselves up - He says, “Simply believe and receive!”

2. Behold the surprising love of God the Son!

- a. The Son Who knows our sin and rebellion does not push us away or reject us - He takes our humanity to Himself!
- b. Jesus is the Eternal Glorious Son of God, Who willingly lays aside His Divine prerogatives and humbles Himself to become human - not to destroy us but to save us!
- c. Jesus does not come to shame us or to teach us how to save ourselves, but rather in love, He comes to live and die for us so that we might be saved from sin, Satan, and death!

3. Behold the surprising love of God the Spirit

- a. The Spirit Who knows our sin and rebellion, comes to a young Virgin, enables her to miraculously conceive and bear the Eternal Son - all so that we might be saved.
- b. The Holy Spirit, Who knows and sees all of our unholiness, gently woos and draws us so that we might see Jesus and look to Him for salvation!

- c. The Spirit Who knows all of our weakness and sin chooses to dwell in us, stay with us, and bit by bit transform us, all so that we might become all that God has made us to be!
- 4. This is the ultimate Christmas Surprise - you and I do not need to hide or make excuses for our sin, for God is with us!
- 5. This is the Ultimate Christmas Surprise - we can let God deal with our sin, for He loves us, knows and wants what is best for us, and will give it to us if we will turn to Him!

IV. Applying the Word

A. Believe that Jesus is Immanuel - God with us!

- 1. You may be here with many wounds from the past - even from Christians or the Church!
- 2. Do not let that stand in the way of hearing Jesus calling to you - salvation comes from Him, not the church or other people!
- 3. He loves you more than you can know, and offers to you more than you can even imagine!
- 4. Respond to Him tonight and receive His love, joy, peace, and hope!

B. Receiving and passing on the light for a new year!

- 1. Christians - do not let sin and the struggles of this life turn you from this truth: God is with you!
- 2. Let this truth resonate deeply within you, meditate on it, believe it, live in it!
- 3. In a world of people trying to justify themselves, casting blame, and living in despair - be people of true hope, for God is with you!

- 4. We just passed the winter solstice - the light is slowly growing!
- 5. Let us receive the surprising Christmas light of Immanuel, and let us pass it on to others so that it will spread and grow through the coming year!

C. Silent Night/ Candle lighting/O Come Let Us Adore Him

Christmas Surprises

Matthew 1-2

December 24, 2025

Silent Night/Candle Lighting/O Come Let Us Adore Him

Romans 15:13

Teaching keywords: Advent and Christmas; biblical characters; salvation and deliverance

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, and may the surprising love of God fill your lives this week. Romans 15:13

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But after 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. 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." ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" — which means, "God with us." Matthew 1:18-23