



November 30, 2025

The Promise: Foretold & Fulfilled

Savior

Matthew 1:18-21



1. Opening Discussion Questions:

- a. What is your favorite Christmas song (not a traditional Christmas carol)? Why?
- b. What is the most surprising news you have ever received? How did you respond to the news?

2. Prayer:

- a. Consider this prayer by Henry Alford (1810-1871) as a model for opening this advent devotional study:
We ask you, O Lord, pour your grace into our hearts, that, as we have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel, so by His cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of His resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.
- b. Pray for this Least Reached People Group: *Modaks* of India (from the IMB “Loving the Lost Through Prayer” guide.):
“This Hindu group of 158,000 people in the eastern states of West Bengal and Jharkhand make sweets for a living. God’s Word invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Psalm 34:8) and tells us of the sweetness of His teachings. The Bible is in their language, but they have not tasted of the Lord’s goodness or been nourished by the living Word of God. There are no known believers among them. Pray that God will send Christians to proclaim the gospel among Modaks so that they might believe in His words that are “sweeter than honey” and have new life”.

3. Sermon Key Points:

- a. Before Jesus Was Born, Joseph Faced A Dilemma
 - i. Joseph’s fiancée was pregnant and he wasn’t the father
 - ii. As Joseph was deciding what to do, God sent him a message
 - iii. The baby’s name emphasized His role as Savior
- b. Jesus Came to Save Us from Our Sins
 - i. God had long promised forgiveness of sins
 - ii. The birth of Jesus took place to fulfill those promises
 - iii. Jesus is the ONLY fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation

4. Bible Study: This week’s study is on Matthew 1:18-21. Read the short passage each day before continuing with the discussion question.

- a. *Sunday Afternoon* – As soon as possible after the sermon, make time to consider:
 - i. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?

- ii. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
- iii. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
- iv. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- v. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

b. Monday:

- i. Without considering what your Bible may have, what topical heading would you give for the four verses being studied this week?
- ii. What name does your translation give for the individual whose birth is being described? If you have access to other translations, what name do they give for the child? What is the common feature of the names?
- iii. What was Mary's status at this point in the birth account? What does it mean to say she was "betrothed"? (If you are unfamiliar with the term, consider the explanation provided by Bible Hub at biblehub.com/topical/b/betrothed.htm)
- iv. What do you think Joseph thought about Mary when he learned she was pregnant? Before his dream, is there any other explanation for her condition that he would have accepted?
- v. Why are the words "before they came together" in verse 18 so essential?
- vi. Read Gabriel's announcement to Mary in Luke 1:26-37. How does he explain to Mary what is about to happen? What fact does he use to conclude his announcement that seems to have been sufficient for Mary to believe? How should this same fact influence us as Christians in today's world?

c. Tuesday:

- i. What title is Joseph given, and why is it appropriate even though he hasn't actually married Mary yet?
- ii. What conflicting concerns are attributed to Joseph in verse 19?
 1. As a just/righteous/law-abiding Israelite, why could Joseph not go through with the marriage (see Deuteronomy 22:23-24)? What should then have happened to Mary (note: historical texts from the period suggest that this rarely, if ever, was actually done, but a life of shame would have followed in any case)
 2. Since betrothal had the same binding legal status as marriage, how did Deuteronomy 24:1 provide a way for Joseph to spare Mary at least some shame? But if he divorced Mary, what would it seem to his friends and family that he was admitting?
 3. Taken in totality, what does verse 19 tell us about Joseph's character? About his love for Mary?
- iii. What does verse 20a suggest about Joseph's decision-making process? Does it seem that he rushed into a snap decision, or more likely to have considered his

options carefully? What lesson can we learn from Joseph’s example about our decision-making, even when “the facts” seem absolutely certain?

d. Wednesday:

- i. According to verse 20, how did God communicate His intentions to Joseph? How did this differ from the announcement that was made to Mary in Luke 1:26-30?
- ii. In the New Testament, angels appear “in a dream” only in Matthew’s Gospel. Read Matthew 1:20, 2:12, 13,19, & 22. What is the common denominator for all of these dreams?
- iii. What title does the angel associate with Joseph? Where is this title normally used in the Gospels (see Matthew 1:1, 20:30, 21:15, etc.)? What significance, if any, do you see in the use of this title?
- iv. Often when humans have an encounter with an angel, the first words are something like “Fear not” (see Luke 1:13 & 2:10) because of the supernatural nature of the appearance, but how are they used differently in Joseph’s dream? How does the angel’s command relate to what Joseph has been considering? Why would it have been important in the face of the gossip and innuendos he was sure to face?
- v. Assuming that Mary and Joseph have likely had some frank discussions about her condition, how might what the angel tells Joseph be viewed more as confirmation than a revelation?

e. Thursday:

- i. Why would the first clause of verse 21 be a reassurance to Joseph?
- ii. What is significant about the name that the angel commanded be given to Mary’s son?
 1. How would the angel’s announcement of the name again have been a confirmation of what Joseph had probably heard from Mary? How would it have helped remove any lingering questions about her faithfulness?
 2. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “the Lord saves”, “Jehovah is salvation”, or simply “Savior”. If you substitute those meanings, how would verse 21 read?
 3. One of the main issues Jesus faced during his ministry was that the Jews were looking for a political figure to rescue them from the Romans. How does the angel clarify the mission of God’s Son right from the start?
- iii. Joseph is told that Jesus will save “His people” from their sins, but who are “His people” (See Matthew 1:1, Genesis 22:18, Acts 3:25)?

f. Friday:

- i. God’s plan to “save His people from their sins” is prominent throughout the Bible, so it would be impossible to consider all the important references in a devotional such as this, but read and discuss (or meditate) on what is taught by these few from the Old Testament:
 1. Genesis 3:15 (the first promise of a Savior, called the *protoevangelium*)

2. Job 19:25-26
 3. 2 Samuel 22:47 and Psalms 18:46 and 89:26
 4. Psalm 24:5, 25:5, & 85:4
 5. Isaiah 49:6
 6. Ezekiel 37:23
 7. Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16
- ii. Read and discuss (or meditate) on how these New Testament verses describe the Savior and His mission:
1. John 3:16-18, 4:42
 2. Acts 5:31-32 and 13:22-23, 32, & 38-39
 3. 2 Timothy 1:9-10
 4. Titus 2:4-7
 5. Revelation 22:3-4
- g. **Saturday:**
- i. Reread Matthew 1:21 and then Acts 4:10-12.
 - ii. In your view, how important is it that Mary's child be given the name the angel told Joseph?
 - iii. In our pluralistic society, why is it important that we Christians accurately communicate the exclusivity of that name when sharing the Gospel?

5. **Application:**

- a. **Salvation.** Jesus came to save his people from their sins. Only He, God Incarnate, the second person of the Trinity, could satisfy God's holy justice and pay the penalty we deserve. But after His death and resurrection, He ascended to the Father and left us the mission of telling people that Good News. Paul makes it crystal clear in Romans 10:14-15 that we must tell others about Jesus if they are to experience the salvation He provides. This Advent is an ideal time to commit (or recommit) to sharing the Gospel message with the lost.
- b. **Marriage.** Although it is almost lost in the bigger picture of the Incarnation and birth of our Savior, God demonstrates how important and sacred He views marriage and family in this passage by encouraging Joseph to continue with the marriage, even when divorce would have been easier and probably more acceptable to his family and friends. Likewise, Joseph demonstrates in a most difficult situation what Paul teaches husbands in Ephesians 5:28-33 and Colossians 3:19.