

**Two Purposes of the Birth of the Savior**  
**Matt. 1:18-25**  
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Introduction

Recently, Lifeway and Ligonier Ministry in America conducted a survey called the State of Theology.

The survey is designed to see what evangelicals believe on various critical doctrines of Christianity.

The survey was conducted by making statements and then ask participants to agree or disagree with those statements.

One statement said, Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.

Shockingly, 43% of evangelicals in America agreed with this statement. Two years ago, only 30% of the evangelicals agree with this statement.

So Christians in America are increasingly denying the deity of Jesus.

I don't know how Indonesian Christians would answer this statement, but I know what happens in America usually gets exported to the rest of the world, including Indonesia.

There are also a lot of KTP Christians.

So I won't be surprised if a lot of Indonesian Christians deny the deity of Jesus.

This is very shocking. To deny the deity of Jesus is to deny the heart of Christianity as revealed in the Bible.

If Jesus is just a human, not God, then there is no salvation for us.

No human being can die for the sin of another human being.

Only the death of Jesus, who is 100% God and 100% human, can pay for the sins of other human beings.

In light of the shocking denial of the deity of Jesus, it is fitting for us during this Christmas season to be reminded of the importance of Jesus' deity in connection with our salvation.

Before we read this passage, let's remind ourselves of the context of this passage.

The main theme of the gospel of Matthew is about Jesus being the divine, son of David, who will establish God's kingdom on earth.

Everything in the gospel of Matthew is trying to support this main theme.

The passage before Matthew 1:18-25, gives the genealogy of Jesus.

This genealogy shows that Jesus fulfilled God's prophecy that the messiah would be from the line of Abraham and David.

Ever since the colossal collapse of humanity in Genesis 3, the Jewish people, since the time of Abraham, have waited for almost 2,000 years to get their gift of Jesus.

Can you imagine waiting for 2,000 years to get your Christmas gift?

My kids cannot even wait for 2 days for their Christmas gift.

And when they get their gifts during Christmas Day, they are extremely happy.

Can you imagine how happy the Jewish people would be to receive their gift of the messiah after 2,000 years?

The genealogy is supposed to remind the Jewish people how long they have waited for the messiah.

They are supposed to read the birth narrative of the messiah with excitement and great joy.

So let's read this narrative in Matthew 1:18-25 with excitement and great joy.

Now the main point of this narrative is to show us that there are two purposes for Jesus' birth.

The first purpose is to fulfill God's promise of salvation. This is in v. 21.

And the second purpose is to fulfill God's promise of closeness with us. This is in vv. 22-23.

### The Incarnation of Jesus (18-20)

Before we look at these two purposes in detail, let's examine the birth narrative and the incarnation of Jesus in vv. 18-20.

Mary, Jesus' mother, was from the bloodline of David.

This is revealed in the genealogy in Luke 3.

When Mary was old enough to be married, she was betrothed to Joseph, meaning she was engaged to be married to Joseph.

Typically, girls at that time married when they were about 14-20 years old. So Mary was about 14-20 years.

Men typically were about 18-20 years old. So Joseph was about 18-20 years old.

It is difficult for us to imagine that young adults like Mary and Joseph can get married. Children at that time, mature a lot faster than children now. They had more responsibilities in life.

Back then, being betrothed meant that they were legally married, but they did not live together yet or have sexual relationship or a wedding ceremony.

Typically, they would have the wedding ceremony after one year of betrothal.

But Before Joseph and Mary came together, meaning before they had sexual relationship, Mary was found to have a child through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1 gives us more details about how this occurred, but Matthew doesn't give us any details.

He just mentions that Mary, a virgin, conceives the child Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

This shows us God the Son took on a human body through God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus had no earthly father because Jesus is God. In v. 23, Jesus is called Immanuel, which means God with us.

After a while, Mary's pregnancy was obvious to everyone because her stomach was big.

Joseph eventually found out about it and wanted to divorce her because he was a righteous man.

Back then, a righteous man would never marry a woman who is considered to be adulterous.

It would ruin his reputation and the reputation of his family.

The culture at the time would also demanded him to not marry her.

And Joseph was a compassionate person who did not want to make Mary's life even

harder.

She would have been considered to be a ungodly, promiscuous woman.

Probably, no one would ever marry her again. It was horrible fate for her.

So Joseph did not want to bring more suffering on Mary by going to court and make the divorce public.

So he wanted to divorce her quietly, meaning he did it in front of two or three witnesses.

As he was considering this, God intervened in a miraculous way by sending an angel to speak to him in a dream and told him to marry Mary because she was not unfaithful. The child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, not the angel Gabriel.

God the Son took on a human body through the Holy Spirit. This is what we called the incarnation.

It is clear that Jesus is divine, God himself.

Jesus is 100% God and 100% human. He is not 50% human or 50% God. He is not 100% human and 0% God.

Now, a lot of people have asked how can Jesus be 100% God and 100% human. How can this be possible?

This is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. We can only understand it partially, but not completely.

I think the best way to understand this better is by an illustration.

Have you ever watched a human being entering a giant robot and controlling the robot from within the robot?

If you have not seen that, you can watch it on Youtube later. Actually there are competitions of these giant robots fighting with each other.

When a human being enters a giant robot, the person is taking on a robot nature.

The person starts to express his personhood through a robotic nature.

He moves like a robot and talks like a robot through its speakers.

He has taken on a robot nature so to speak.

But the person does not become 50% human and 50% robot. He is 100% human and 100% robot.

And when the robot gets hit and falls down, the person also feels the hit and the fall.

The incarnation of Jesus is kind of like that. When Jesus entered a human body, he is 100% God and 100% human. He doesn't become 50% God and 50% human.

When his human body gets hit and falls down, the person of Jesus also feels the hit and the fall.

Now If humans can create a robot and enter it, is it impossible for God to enter a human body that he has created?

Of course it is possible, even though we do not fully understand it.

I hope that analogy has helped you to understand the incarnation better. I hope it will strengthen your faith.

The Bible is clear. Jesus is God. This is a critical doctrine in the Bible.

It is connected to many other critical doctrines.

It is connected to our salvation and to our closeness to God.

We see these in the following verses.

But before we look the two purposes of Jesus' incarnation, I want to look at the role of dreams.

God had to miraculously intervene in the life of Joseph through a dream, in order to prevent Joseph from divorcing Mary.

Can God still intervene in miraculous ways in dreams today?

Yes, I think so. I have heard of many testimonies of faithful Christians in the Middle East from Muslim background who saw Jesus in their dreams.

But I want to caution us about interpreting dreams that is not from God, but we think they are from God.

There are a lot of misinterpretation and misapplication of dream narratives in the Bible so I want to clarify this.

Many people have told me that they think God have revealed himself to them through dreams because they saw bunch of images in their dreams so they interpret these images as signs from God.

But the problem is God never spoke in their dreams. There were only images.

But God did not reveal the meaning of these images in their dreams.

The interpretations of these images are always from the dreamers, not from God.

I believe if there is no interpretation from God, then the dream is not from God.

When God communicates to someone in dreams, it is never through just images, it is always through spoken words.

Just like in Joseph's dream, God spoke to Joseph through the angel.

Joseph did not see bunch of images and then interpreted the images to mean the child was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

God does not play the game of charades with us to communicate his special revelation to us.

I know one pastor who quitted ministry because he had a bad dream one time.

Now, I really sympathized with him because he was having a tough time in ministry. I pray for God's blessing on him.

But when we are very stressed, it is common for us to have strange images in our dreams.

It has happened to me before.

But if God does not speak to us in an audible way, then these dreams are not from God.

### Fulfillment of God's Promise of Salvation (21)

As God spoke to Joseph through the angel, God revealed to Joseph two purposes of the incarnation of Jesus.

The first purpose is to fulfill God's promise of salvation. This is in v. 21.

God commanded Joseph to name the child, Jesus.

The name Jesus, is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua. It means God is salvation.

Jesus is salvation because he will save his people from their sins.

Jesus will save us from our sins by dying on the cross as a substitute to pay for the penalty of sin that we deserve and so that we can be united with God and his people in God's eternal kingdom on earth.

Brothers and sisters, that is the gospel.

If you have never communicated this message, then you have never communicated the gospel.

Now we can use many methods as a bridge or introduction to the gospel.

But at some point, we must communicate that Jesus came to die for our sins so that we can be forgiven by God and enter his eternal kingdom.

This is the heart of the gospel message.

The necessity of Jesus dying for our sins is communicated clearly in the Old Testament.

God instituted a system of sacrifices to teach the Jews that God is a holy, righteous judge who must judge sin or else he is not a righteous judge.

After the colossal collapse of mankind in Genesis 3, every human person is born with a sinful nature and this sinful nature causes humans to rebel against God constantly.

The just penalty of our sin is death and separation from God. Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death.

Sadly, most Christians in US do not even believe that people are born sinful.

According to the same survey done by Lifeway and Ligonier, 65% of evangelicals believe that everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God. That's 65%. This is very shocking.

Now can a person who is born with a sinful nature be a decent human being by human standards, which is very low, if given the right environment and right teaching?

Yes, that is possible. Many people do not murder or do drugs. And they love those who love them.

But can a person born with a sinful nature fulfill the first and greatest commandment in the Bible, to love God with all our heart, soul and strength, meaning to love God above all?

No, absolutely not.

No human being born with a sinful nature can fulfill the first and greatest commandment in the Bible.

To break the first and greatest commandment of God is the essence of sin.

It is the heart of sin.

It is also the gateway to all other sins.

Because a person does not love God above all, the person will love other things more than God and is willing to break his laws to obtain what he or she wants.

Because of this sinful nature, every person will inevitably decay morally and become worse and worse.

The trajectory of a person's life without God is a life filled with all kinds of evil.

If God removes all restraints from a person, that person can become the devil.

A person without God most likely will follow whatever is popular in society.

Every single person born on this earth has a sinful nature, is decaying morally, and has the potential to commit all kinds of evil.

Every single person is under God's righteous judgment. God cannot be bribed.

Ex. 34:6 says God, as a righteous judgment, will by no means clear the guilty.

God must judge sinners, or else he is not a righteous judge.

The sacrificial system in the Old Testament taught the Jews that God is a righteous judge who must judge sinners.

There can only be forgiveness of sin when there is the death of an animal which was a substitute for the sinner.

Hebrews 9:22, "Indeed, under the law (the Mosaic Law) almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

These animals were pointing to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus, who is the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.

This is the reason why Jesus was born.

He came to be our substitute to pay for the penalty of our sins. This is the gospel.



To deny that Jesus is God, is to deny God's salvation for us.

In order to receive this gift of forgiveness, a sinner must believe Jesus is his or her savior and lord and submit to Jesus.

You cannot only accept Jesus as a great teacher, you must also accept Jesus as your king and God.

Jesus is the king of the universe.

He expects us to repent from our sins and to submit to him.

If you don't submit to him, you are not a Christian.

You have no salvation. Our repentance is not perfect and does not save us.

But it shows our faith in Jesus as our savior and lord is real.

I'm pretty sure there are a lot of Christians in Indonesia who also believe everyone is born innocent.

This is why a lot of churches in Indonesia do not even preach the gospel.

They do not even teach about sin and the need to repent and submit to God.

Many Christians believe people are born basically good, or a little broken, and all they need is just some good coaching so that they can become better people.

To become better people just means people need to be nicer to other people and don't offend others, but they don't even mention anything about loving God and submitting to him.

They don't even mention the first and greatest commandment in the Bible: to love God above all.

Of course it is important to be nice to other people, but if we don't mention the need to love God, our definition of love is be nice to others and never tell people that God is offended by their sins, even when they are committing great sins against God.

And then there are many Christians who think people are born basically good but kind of lost in life, they just need purpose and direction in life.

To these people, Jesus is just a great teacher of "fill in the blank." He is a great teacher of psychology, who help us to have better relationships with each other.

Or he is a great teacher of life, a great life coach who can help us to be better leaders.

Or he is a great teacher of motivation, who can motivate me to fulfill our dreams.

These messages are the gospel. There is no salvation in these messages.

They are just human effort at moralism.

They cannot save us.

We are sinful people who constantly disobey God's first and greatest commandment.

We deserve God's righteous judgment on our sins. That's the bad news.

Everyone understands that the first step to solve a problem is to recognize you have a problem.

If you deny you have a problem then you cannot solve the problem.

You have to understand you have a problem with God, before your problem with God can be solved.

Romans 3:23-26 say, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

This passage is saying God did not judge the sins of his people in the OT, and it looked like God was unjust.

But he is not unjust, he has punished Jesus for the sins of his people in the OT.

And if you and I believe in Jesus, Jesus will also take the punishment of our sins so that we can also be forgiven by God.

This is the gospel. This is why God the Son took on a human body. He came to fulfill God's promise of forgiveness and salvation for sinners.

For those of you who have not received Jesus as your savior and lord, I urge you to receive Jesus as your savior and Lord and submit to him as your king.

He is the greatest gift from God to you. To live in his perfect kingdom is much better than living in a broken world without God.

Fulfillment of God's Promise of Closeness (22-23)

Now, according to our passage, the first purpose of Jesus' incarnation is to fulfill God's promise of salvation.

The second purpose of Jesus' incarnation is to fulfill God's promise of closeness to us. This is in vv. 22-23.

These two verses say the incarnation of Jesus took place in order to fulfill God's prophecy about God living closely with us, face to face.

It is the fulfillment of God's prophecy in Isaiah 7:14.

In the very beginning, mankind was meant to live face to face with God in paradise on earth.

Adam and Eve had unhindered access to God's physical presence in the garden of Eden.

After Adam and Eve sinned against God, they were banished from Eden and from God's presence.

Even since then, God has been on a mission to restore his full physical presence with mankind.

When God called the nation of Israel to worship him, God commanded Israel to build a temple that resembled the garden of Eden and the temple represented God's physical presence.

But a temple was still not enough. It is just a representation of God's physical presence, not the very physical presence of God.

This is why God prophesied in Isaiah 7:14 that a divine child would be born through a virgin and his name will be called Immanuel, which means God with us.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to be close to us.

The prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 took place in the context of Israel's rebellion against God.

God gave this sign of the virgin birth to the evil king Ahaz because of his unbelief and rebellion against God.

The fulfillment of this prophecy birth actually came about 700 years after Ahaz dies. Ahaz never saw the fulfillment of this prophecy.

You may think, what kind of sign is that if Ahaz never saw its fulfillment? How does that encourage him to believe?

It was very common for prophets in the OT to use current events in their time to prophesy about God's future, eternal kingdom through the Messiah.

This is because God wants the Jews to live in light of eternity, even though they could not see the God's kingdom yet.

This is also a common way for God to encourage Christians in the NT.

Christians are exhorted to live our lives today in light of God's eternal kingdom on earth, even though we cannot see it now.

But God was gracious to king Ahaz by giving him another prophecy about the future of Israel, which he could see its fulfillment.

This was the prophecy about Isaiah's child in Isaiah 8:3. Before Isaiah's child could talk, the northern kingdom of Israel would be defeated.

This is actually what happened.

then later on in Isaiah 9:6, God again prophesied about the birth of Jesus and made it clear that the child would be God.

Isaiah 9:6 says, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

You see, the incarnation of Jesus is necessary for God to complete his love for us.

Our salvation is not just about getting out of hell, it is about being fully restored to God's physical presence.

This is what believers in the OT have long for since mankind was kicked out of the garden of Eden.

We long to be in God's physical presence forever, where we can experience the full love of God in his kingdom, where there will be no more sadness, sin, death, diseases, and poverty.

In the new heaven and new earth there is no need for a temple because the very physical presence of Jesus will be with us.

And you know the amazing thing is that Jesus' physical presence will be with us forever because Jesus' incarnation is forever.

It is not temporary.

Jesus does not put on a human body and then takes off that human body. No, he has put on a human body forever.

Hebrews 7:17 says Jesus is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

A priest by definition must be a human being.

So the Bible says Jesus' incarnation is forever.

Brothers and sisters, this is the purpose of Christmas. God the Son came to be with us forever. This is the amazing love of God.

When I first discovered that Jesus' incarnation is forever, I was blown away by it.

I realized that God's love for us is much greater than I had imagined.

We are lowly human beings. It is incredible to think that the creator of the universe would give up the glory of his throne in heaven to come down to this broken world to be like us forever and to dwell with us forever.

It would be like the king of England, giving up the glory of his throne, to go live in a slum in Jakarta and be with the lowly people of a slum.

The king of England would not do that, but that is what Christ did for us.

He showed us his eternal, incomparable love.

Brothers and sisters, I pray that you understand God's love for you even more through the incarnation of Jesus.

Believing Jesus is God is also important for us to obey the first and greatest commandment.

We cannot fulfill this commandment if we don't have any hope of fellowship with him face to face.

I remember when I was a young Christian and I kept hearing sermons about we need to love God above all.

And it bothered me because I was thinking how can I love God in such way when I cannot even see him.

Can you imagine you tell everyone that you have a best friend and this best friend is the most amazing person in the world, but then when others ask you where is your best friend and you say I don't know, I have never met my best friend.

By the way, Jesus does not look like a white European man with long blonde hair. It bothers me when I see that. He was a dark Middle Eastern looking person.

Isaiah 53:2 says he was not a good looking man. He was just an ordinary looking man.

I'm not sure what he will look like when he returns.

It is very strange to say that you have a best friend but you have never met the person face to face.

We humans cannot operate like that. We cannot love someone without seeing the person, especially when we are called to love God with all our heart.

For us to love someone, we must be able to see the person or have the hope of seeing the person.

When I realized that I would see God face to face one day, that gave me the spiritual power to fulfill the first and greatest commandment, even though I could not see him now.

I live by faith now, but one day my faith will turn into sight. I will see God in human flesh forever.

This is why 1 John 3:2-3 say, "We shall see him as he is, and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure."

To deny that Jesus is God is to destroy our ability to live by faith and to fulfill the first and greatest commandment.

It also denies God's love for us and dishonors his love.

Also, if we deny Jesus is God, then we are actually worshipping of an idol.

We pray to Jesus.

To pray to someone is to consider that person to be divine.

Only God can hear our prayers from far away and only God can have the power to answer our prayers.

We cannot pray to any human being, no matter how godly the human being was and no matter how powerful that human being was.

The Roman Empire used to deify emperors after they are dead.

And Ancestor worship in the form of praying to dead relatives was common in ancient times, especially in ancient China.

Jesus is not a deified human. He is not a man who became a god. He is eternally God who became a man.

It is very strange to pray and worship dead human beings.

I think most of us have been around a relative or close friend on his or her death bed as the person was about to pass away.

At a person's death bed, the person is at his or her weakest moment in life.

I was at the death bed of my grandparent before he passed away.

He could not even talk and I was not sure if he was able to understand what I was saying to him.

I cannot imagine treating him like a god and praying to him after he died, as if death has enabled him to become a god and gave him the ability to hear my prayers and the power to fulfill my prayers.

How can death make a human being a god? It is so strange.

Some Roman Emperors knew the irony of deifying dead emperors and some of them talked sarcastically about their deification because they knew it was non-sense.

If Jesus is only a great teacher and not God, then we are worshipping an idol.

If someone can consider a dead human being to be god, then that person has a very low view of God.

The person is comparing the almighty God to a weak human being.

This is offensive to God.

Imagine if the world champion in weightlifting is in front of you. He is the strongest man in the world.

Now imagine you go up to him and compliment him by saying, "Wow, you are so strong like a little baby."

Do you think he would be offended if you compare his strength to a baby? Yes, he

would be offended.

Now can you imagine saying to God, "God you are so strong like a human being."

Do you think God would be offended if you compare him to a created, weak human being? Yes, he would.

God is almighty. Even the strongest human being is nothing compared to him.

Do not have a low view of God.

### Birth of Jesus (24-25)

Now, after God revealed his will to Joseph in a dream, Joseph immediately obeyed God and took Mary as his wife. This is in v. 24-25

Not only that, but he did not have sexual relationship with her before Jesus was born.

Mary needed to be a virgin not just before the conception of Jesus, but also before the birth of Jesus.

God prophesied that the virgin would bear a son, so she must remain a virgin before she gave birth.

This shows us a lot about Joseph's character.

He had great self-control.

It takes a lot of self-control for a sexually active 20 year old not to sleep with his wife, even if it is just for a few months.

God knew the heart of Joseph and trusted him to fulfill his prophecy.

God is in complete control of history and the future.

God will fulfill every prophecy in the Bible. We can trust him with all our heart.

### Conclusion and applications

1. Friends, it is clear that Jesus is God and he is offering salvation to you. Have you receive Jesus' salvation?

Have you receive Jesus as your Lord and savior?

If you have not, I urge you to save yourself from God's wrath and experience God's love for you.



Jesus is offering you a much better world than this broken world. Receive Jesus as your Lord and savior.

Experience his great love for you and have your guilty conscience be cleansed.

2. For those of you who have received Jesus' salvation, how is your joy in God?

Have you become dull in your thanksgiving to God? If you have, I urge you to offer a prayer of praise to God every morning when you wake up.

The proper response for you to God's great love is to praise him and celebrate Jesus with all our heart.

Be committed to praise God every day, especially during this season of Christmas.

3. For those who are living with a thankful heart to God, how are you living out this thankfulness?

Are you imitating Jesus' love in your life?

Jesus could have stayed in heaven and enjoyed his glory in heaven.

But he came down to live sacrificially as a poor man and share the love of God with you.

You can also stay in our home and enjoy ourselves in leisure, entertainment, watching TV all day or play video games all day. But you would not be following Jesus.

I urge you to imitate the love of Jesus, go out of your comfort zone and serve God by loving those in your church and those who do not know the gospel and share the gospel with them.

If your life is too comfortable, then it is time for you to step up and serve God.

God's purpose was not his own comfort. Our purpose in life should not be our own comfort.