

THE KING'S ARRIVAL
MATTHEW 1:18-25

My parents and I were born in Canada (I got to Texas as quickly as I could, though); and I suppose it was the influence of being part of a British Colony that led my mom to always be more than a little intrigued by the British monarchy and Queen Elizabeth and her family. Mom wasn't a TV watcher; but the day that Diana married Charles, when I got up mom had already been up for hours watching the news coverage.

So I guess I shouldn't have been surprised that when Diana's oldest son, William, married Kate that my daughters had a "Princess Party" with multiple friends — complete with tiaras, poufy skirts, and tea — and stayed up all night to watch *that* wedding. [I had a good and full night of sleep on both occasions.]

More than one person has been excited about the arrival of royalty. But Jesus arrived very differently than other kings. In fact, when we think about the arrival of King Jesus, the word "unique" is appropriate. The [primary meaning](#) for "unique" is "existing as the only one or as the sole example; single; solitary in type or characteristics." That is exactly what we mean when we say that Jesus' arrival as King was "unique" — it was singular, unrepeated, and the only one of its kind.

Matthew tells of the unique arrival of Jesus in quite unremarkable language, though with highly remarkable truth and realities. As we look this morning at Matthew 1:18-25 we will find —

THE ARRIVAL OF KING JESUS WAS THE UNIQUE ARRIVAL OF A KING.

In this section, let's delight in **five revelations** about the arrival of King Jesus:

1. **The King's Arrival: A Unique **HOME** (v. 18a)** — it was humble
2. **The King's Arrival: A Unique **CONCEPTION** (v. 18b)** — it was miraculous
3. **The King's Arrival: A Unique **ROLE** (vv. 20-21)** — He was a Savior
4. **The King's Arrival: A Unique **PROMISE** (vv. 22-23)** — it fulfilled the OT
5. **The King's Arrival: A Unique **"FATHER"** (v. 19, 24-25)** — he was righteous

1. The King's Arrival: A Unique HOME (v. 18a) — it was humble

- Raye Jeanne got an email this week from Queen Elizabeth — along with a few hundred thousand or a couple of million others, I'm guessing. It had all kinds of information about the Queen's family — a nice story about King George VI (Elizabeth's father) and an accompanying family picture, along with a painting of King George VI's father's childhood family, and more. Elizabeth's childhood family might have been taken for just another family, but not her dad's family.
- The family into which Jesus was born was just a little more humble — and unique for the King. Matthew gives no details, though he mentions both Mary and Joseph by name:
 - ✓ **Mary** was from Nazareth, from a poor family, though [perhaps] of the Davidic line (the Eli in Lk. 3:23 may have been Joseph's father-in-law, her father). We know she had a sister (Jn. 19:25) and her cousin was Elizabeth, who was married to the priest Zecharias (Lk. 1). That's about all we know about her life and family — it's largely unremarkable. We know something more of her spiritual life:
 - She was well-trained in the Scriptures: her song in Luke 1 quoted from Ps. 103 (Lk. 1:50) and Ps. 107 (Lk. 1:53) with other multiple other allusions to OT passages.
 - We also know that she had a solid understanding of theology. Her first desire was the exultation of God (Lk. 1:46-47); she clearly understood grace (vv. 48-49), the retribution of God (v. 51-52), and His eternal covenantal relationship with Israel (v. 54-55).
 - Perhaps most importantly, Mary acted on what she knew — she was submissive to the will of the Lord ("Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38; 2:22ff). She was humble and grateful and loved the Lord (Lk. 1:46ff). She marveled at and delighted in (*treasured*) what was being revealed about Christ (Lk. 2:51).
 - ✓ We know even less about **Joseph**. He worked with wood as a carpenter (Mt. 13:55), and while he and Mary had at least four other sons and two daughters (13:55-56), he apparently died young as he is not mentioned in Jesus' teaching ministry. Like Mary, though young, his character was righteous (Mt. 1:19) — likely meaning that he was an OT believer, or possibly that his general conduct was in keeping with one who maintained the Law as well as a man was able.
 - ✓ It was quite possible that they were betrothed to each other very early — Mary might have been as young as 12-13, Joseph a few years older than that (those ages were not uncommon).
- This is all points to the humility of Christ's background (also seen in His genealogy).
 - ✓ Here is a King who is eternal and infinite (Jn. 1:1ff) but set aside the glories of Heaven (Phil. 2:6-7).
 - ✓ Never has anyone so great stooped so long to become a ruler. Jesus' home makes Him unique King.



2. The King's Arrival: A Unique CONCEPTION (v. 18b) — it was miraculous

- Mary and Joseph were **betroted** to each other.
 - ✓ A marriage would be arranged by the parents of the bride and groom and a contract was negotiated, with the groom's family paying a dowry to the bride's family. This helped the bride's father with the cost of the wedding and provided security for her should her groom divorce her prior to the wedding.
 - ✓ The contract was signed in a ceremony with the two families and they took a sip of wine together as a sign of the agreement. At this point, the betrothed couple is considered husband and wife (though the marriage was not yet physically consummated). And it would take a divorce to end the agreement (as we see in v. 19).
 - ✓ The couple would not live with each other for at least a year. And the primary reason for that waiting period was to determine faithfulness and purity of both the bride and the groom. And it was during that year that Mary was **found to be with child**. It's the worst kind of news for Joseph.
 - ✓ One commentator said the news "stuck [Joseph] like a calamity." While the marriage had been arranged, he obviously was anticipating it because he was conflicted about what to do.
- But Matthew clearly says that this was no ordinary pregnancy — it was **by the Holy Spirit**. The Messiah was born *in* the flesh, but was not *of* the flesh.
 - ✓ While the mechanics of how that took place are unexplained, we do know that it was the working of the Holy Spirit — probably like the original act of creation (not "divine intercourse" with Mary).
 - ✓ It was a work of agreement in the Triune God —
 - It was the Father's plan (Gal. 4:4).
 - It was the Son's submission and humility (Phil. 2:5-8).
 - It was the Spirit's work (Mt. 1:19).
 - ✓ Why is this so important? The virginity of Mary certainly protected her reputation and the earthly reputation of Christ. But it also did far more.
 - ✓ It protected the divine nature of Christ. Jesus is never called the son of Joseph and Joseph is never called His father. If Jesus had been conceived naturally, He could not have been divine and He would not have had an infinite nature to endure an infinite wrath and could not have been our Savior. He could not have been resurrected, and our faith would be hopeless (1 Cor. 15:15-19).
 - ✓ There is simplicity to this statement: Matthew took 17 vv. to explain the human lineage of Christ, and the divine lineage is given in one verse. And the simplicity of the statement attests to the truthfulness of it. When we attempt to convince someone of something that might not be true, we embellish and expand our story. Not so here. Matthew isn't attempting to convince the readers of something untrue; he lets the truthfulness of the story stand on its own. Mary was pregnant by means of a supernatural miracle done by the Holy Spirit.

- ✓ Jesus' conception (and thus, His arrival also) is unique. It has never been repeated. He stands alone among kings by the means through which He arrived on earth and (ultimately) at His throne.

"The virgin birth is an underlying assumption in everything the Bible says about Jesus. To throw out the virgin birth is to reject Christ's deity, the accuracy and authority of Scripture, and a host of other related doctrines that are the heart of the Christian faith. No issue is more important than the virgin birth to our understanding of who Jesus is." [MacArthur, *God With Us*, 46.]

3. The King's Arrival: A Unique **ROLE** (vv. 20-21) — He was a Savior

- Matthew tells us that Joseph took some time to **consider** the circumstance; remember that an angel had appeared to Mary to explain what happened and then she went to see Elizabeth (Lk. 1:26, 39). There is no indication that she told Joseph, and his response confirms he knew nothing about her pregnancy. (God seemed to allow him to struggle as a means of revealing his character, which we will see shortly.)
- An **angel of the Lord** appeared to Joseph — perhaps Gabriel (Lk. 1:11, 19, 26). What is important to understand is that the angel is a messenger who comes *from the Lord* with the *message of the Lord*. God is sovereignly orchestrating all these events.
- The angel makes two pronouncements about the pregnancy (v. 20, to comfort Joseph's contemplation):
 - ✓ **Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.** There were fears associated with this marriage, but Joseph is commanded not to begin to be afraid. He has not been fearful and he should not be.
 - ✓ The reason that Joseph wasn't to be fearful is because the baby is **of the Holy Spirit**. Again, there is no indication of how Jesus was conceived in Mary, only that it is a fact that God has divinely superintended the pregnancy. This is God's commentary on the pregnancy. It is final and unequivocal. God has acted. As A. T. Robertson said, "The virgin birth is the only intelligible explanation of the incarnation ever offered."
- The angel then gives one statement about the uniqueness of the Child and His role (v. 21):
 - ✓ He will be **a Son**. It will be a male heir to the Davidic throne (vv. 1-17).
 - ✓ He will have the name **Jesus**. He had a different name from Joseph not because Joseph wasn't the father, but to denote the purpose and mission of Christ — **He will save His people from their sins**.
 - **Jesus**, as you likely know, comes from the Hebrew name, **Joshua** (Y'Shua), which means, "God saves." So Jesus' name indicated His purpose. This is the role of the Messiah (King).
 - It has been made clear by Matthew that Jesus was the Messiah (vv. 1, 17, 18). But the Jews looked for a Messiah that would deliver them from political oppression; Jesus' deliverance was different (cf. 9:2ff, 6, 13; 26:28; Mk. 2:17; 10:45; Lk. 5:30-32; 15:7ff; Jn. 3:14-15; 8:21ff, 34ff).
 - That He was on a Messianic mission is also clear when Matthew says, **His people**. The Messiah (anointed One, King) came to redeem the Israelites (and others also — us! — would be adopted into that family; cf. Lk. 2:32; Jn. 10:16; Rom. 11:17ff).

- That salvation is from every aspect of sin — the punishment deserved because of our sin and sin nature and the power to be liberated from the ongoing activity of sin. God won't punish the sin of the believer in Christ, and that one no longer has to sin!
- ✓ This is a unique role for a King. Other kings have certainly died in their role as kings. But this is the only King who has died to obliterate sin in the lives of His subjects. That is the reason He came.
- If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, this truth is the heart of the Christmas story — Jesus Christ (the King) came as One who was fully God and fully man.
 - ✓ He lived a perfect life, fully obeying and doing everything God's righteous Law demanded.
 - ✓ Then He died — not because the Romans and Jews were able to overcome Him, but because He put Himself in the place of sinners and willingly absorbed the wrath of God against the sin of sinners.
 - ✓ And He rose from the dead, demonstrating that God was satisfied with His payment for sin. And He makes the life that He owns available to those who believe in Him.
 - ✓ And to believe in Him is simply to say, "I believe I cannot save myself, and I believe you are able to free me from the debt of my sin and from the power of sin over my life. And I believe that freeing me from sin that you are also a Savior worth living for and following." Would you believe?

4. The King's Arrival: A Unique PROMISE (vv. 22-23) — it fulfilled the OT

- This unique King didn't just show up in history randomly. He had been promised in in **Isaiah 7:14**. It helps to understand the historical context before looking at the quotation (v. 23).
 - ✓ The nation of Israel was divided into two nations — ten northern tribes called Israel (also called *Ephraim* in the OT, and often by Isaiah) and the two southern tribes called Judah ("Jerusalem" v. 1).
 - ✓ In Isaiah 7, Israel and the pagan nation Aram formed an alliance against Judah. When the people of Judah heard of the coming attack from Aram (and Israel), they were terrified (v. 2). So the Lord sent Isaiah to speak to Ahaz, the king of Judah and reassure him (v. 3).
 - This reassurance is also an act of grace from God because of the wickedness of Ahaz.
 - Ahaz was "spiritually disastrous" for Judah. [*ZPEB*] — he followed Aram's religious practices, of worshipping stars and planets, consulting with mediums (Is. 8:19) and sacrificing children, and "provoking the Lord" (2 Chron. 28:2-4, 22-25).
 - ✓ Isaiah came with the message that the plans of Aram and Israel will not succeed (vv. 4-7) and a warning against Ahaz if he does not believe (v. 9).
 - ✓ To convince Ahaz of the certainty of this prophecy, God invites Ahaz to ask for a sign (vv. 10-11). Signs are generally a sign of lack of faith, but since God invites Ahaz to ask, it's appropriate.
 - ✓ Ahaz foolishly and self-righteously refuses (v. 12) and he is reproved by Isaiah (v. 13), who gives a sign of the destruction of Aram and Israel anyway (v. 14).

- The sign offered to Ahaz concerns the birth of a child (vv. 14-16).
 - ✓ The word **virgin** speaks of an unmarried woman who has not had relations with a man. And that woman will have a son (named **Immanuel**) and before he is two years old, the two kings of Israel and Aram (Rezin and Pekah, v. 1) will be rejected/ruined (v. 16).
 - ✓ Now that prophecy had a meaning to Isaiah and Ahaz as well as to Joseph and Mary. The way that the word **virgin** is used here, it means, “a woman who is right now a virgin will get married and have a child.” In other words, Isaiah is putting a time frame on the destruction of Aram and Israel’s leaders of 3-4 years. This virgin would get married (to Isaiah, 8:1-3) and they would quickly have a child and when that child was weaned, but still not accountable (v. 16) the kings would be gone.
 - ✓ Isaiah says that his name is **Immanuel** — “God with us” — a rebuke to Ahaz, who is afraid of his enemies (7:2). If God is for Ahaz, why is he afraid?
 - ✓ Now in Isaiah’s mind, when the baby was born, that was the end of the prophecy. But sometimes OT prophecies have NT implications that are not evident to the OT participants (1 Pt. 1:10-12). And that’s what the angel is revealing here to Joseph — the prophecy of the birth of Isaiah’s son had an even more significant manifestation — the birth of the Messiah to a (real) virgin!
 - ✓ And just as (except infinitely more) Isaiah’s son was a sign of God’s presence, Christ came as the fulfillment of God’s presence with His people.
 - ✓ The uniqueness of Jesus’ kingship is that it was promised in the OT (how He came to be King), *and* He came as a uniquely acting King — He came to be *with* His people. Kings typically rule *over* people but none comes to live *among* and *with* the people. But King Jesus did. He came as King who was with His people and called them “friend,” “brother,” and (ultimately) “bride.”
 - ✓ “No greater blessing can be conceived than for God to dwell with his people.” [Carson]
- The prophet has spoken. Christ is coming by means of a virgin birth. Now the only remaining question is, “what will Joseph do with all this information?”

5. The King’s Arrival: A Unique “FATHER” (v. 19, 24-25) — he was righteous

- Joseph was *not* Jesus’ father. But he was “step-father.” How would he respond to the announcement?
- When Matthew says Joseph was **righteous** (v. 19), he uses the same word the described Zecharias and Elizabeth (Lk. 1:6) and Simeon (Lk. 2:25). It does not mean that he is a perfect man; it is a word that indicates he was an OT believer — trusting God for salvation (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17). He is saved by faith and he actively lives by faith, doing the right thing — which has now become a dilemma.
- “What does a righteous man do when his betrothed wife is found to be pregnant, and not by him?”
He had options —

- ✓ He could have gone through with the marriage, but his own morality precluded that — to marry her would have suggested that he'd been immoral as well and that he was “doing the right thing.” To marry her would have damaged his reputation as a righteous man.
 - ✓ He could have exposed her and she could have been stoned to death (Dt. 22:23-24).
 - ✓ He could divorce her (**send her away**). Cf. Dt. 24:1-5.
 - ✓ What we should notice with all these options is that “an informal canceling of the betrothal was impossible” (McNeile). They are married and the appearance of sin by Mary has severely complicated the situation. There was no easy way out.
- So Joseph made his decision. He is going to **put her away** (v. 19)
 - ✓ In this situation (because of the betrothal arrangement), Joseph could divorce Mary and still maintain his righteousness before the Lord.
 - ✓ Joseph could have said, “It’s my right, and I’m getting a divorce!” He could have been righteously angry. But there is no hint of anger, bitterness, or resentment.
 - ✓ Instead, we see compassion and grace in what Joseph doesn’t want and in what he wants —
 - Joseph **doesn’t want to disgrace her**. He doesn’t want his pound of flesh. He is not indignant and self-righteous, demanding his rights. It appears to him that she has sinned, but he not only doesn’t want to put her to death, he doesn’t even want her to experience shame or humiliation. Though their marriage was not consummated, here is a grand demonstration of love!
 - Joseph does want to divorce her **secretly**. He wants this to be done quietly. At some point it would be evident in the community that they didn’t get married — “Weren’t we supposed to go to Mary and Joseph’s wedding last weekend? What happened?...” But Joseph’s intent was to do it as quietly as possible. According to the *Mishnah*, he could appear with Mary in front of two witnesses and with just cause (her pregnancy) end the betrothal. There was no need for formal charges in a court; it would be done privately and simply.
 - Joseph is resolute. He’s decisive. And he is righteous in what he has decided. Yet he is also gracious. There is compassion in his righteousness (just as God is compassionate and gracious).
- After the angel appears to him, his gracious plan changes to an even more gracious plan (vv. 24-25):
 - ✓ Joseph obeyed. He wasn’t afraid and **he did just as the angel...commanded him**.
 - ✓ Because he was righteous (v. 19) **he took Mary as his lawful wife**. He kept his vows to her and was not fearful of what others might think of him (or her) and the Child.
 - ✓ Because he was righteous, he **kept her a virgin** until after the birth of Jesus. (Mary was not a “perpetual virgin” as taught by Roman Catholicism, but only was a virgin until Jesus’ birth; all her/their other children were conceived naturally.)
 - ✓ Because he was obedient, when the baby was born, Joseph called Him **Jesus**. Jesus would not carry his name (the norm for that culture), but would be given the name given to Him by the Father.

- So, the account of Mary and Joseph’s marriage and all of the unusual events surrounding it were not ultimately about them but about the unique God-Man, the unique King — Jesus Christ.
 - ✓ It’s tempting to read these accounts of Mary in Luke and Joseph in Matthew and ask questions like, “If I was Mary (or Joseph), what would I do?” “What are the lessons we might learn from the actions of Mary and Joseph?” And certainly we can observe their humble faith and obedience and imitate those attributes.
 - ✓ But that is not why these stories were given. The birth of Jesus was revealed to us to elicit our worship of the only One God who is worthy of worship — *the unique King* of Israel and all men.

BENEDICTION: Luke 2:29-32 (Simeon’s prayer)