



Matthew 1:24-25

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

A bit of Bible trivia to begin. The Bible contains 929 chapters, and more than 31,000 verses, and yet I think today's passage must contain one of the biggest understatements

in all of Scripture. Did you see it there in verse 25, where it says 'she gave birth to a son'?

Don't miss what's happening here. 'She gave birth to a son.' Just six words to record what must be the most amazing miracle in the entire Bible – if you think about it, this is far more amazing than the resurrection, far more amazing even than the creation of the universe. Here, God becomes a man. The God of the universe appears on earth as a helpless human baby, utterly dependant, just lying there, wriggling, making noises, needing to be fed and changed and taught like any other child. The infinite, all powerful, eternal son of God has become a human baby – this has to be the most amazing miracle of all time.

In verse 25, God becomes a man. The author of life, is born. It's so unthinkable it almost sounds

ludicrous. God who dwells in unapproachable light, in heaven, holy, righteous, utterly other – comes to earth and is born as a human baby? Ludicrous. And if it sounds ludicrous to us, well that's nothing compared to how it would have come across to its original hearers. Firstly the Jews. The Jews' picture of God came from the Old Testament – that's all the bible they had to refer to. They only had the first half of the story. Drilled into them from childhood was the fact that there is only one God and that no human is divine. And in the Old Testament it says things about God like that he can hold all the oceans of the world in the palm of his hand, and that he can't be bound by time or space.

So for Jews, the thought a God becoming a man would have been utterly ludicrous. And yet eight of the nine authors of the New Testament were devout Jews – and a huge per-

centage of the early church became Christians out of Judaism – because despite their Jewish background, despite how impossible it may have seemed to them, they recognised that in Jesus Christ, God had taken on the form of a man. And this is a huge testament to the truth of what happened.

The other author of the New Testament was Greek named Luke, and for the Greeks, and for the wider Roman culture that was very much influenced by the Greek way of thinking, God becoming a man was perhaps even more ludicrous. You see, Greeks looked down on the physical and raised up the spiritual. Religion for them was about escaping the confines of the body and rising to a higher, spiritual plane - a lot like many Eastern religions today. Why would God who is perfect and transcendent and timeless and free bind himself in a prison

of flesh? Utterly ludicrous. Utter foolishness.

And yet despite both Jewish and Greek expectations, despite their way of thinking, despite their expectations, and despite many of our expectations – God entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ and became a man. God became a man.

But not just any man we – might have expected him be born a King, in a palace – but he was born in manger, in an animal's feeding trough in a stable. Now it's easy at Christmas to make this sound all pretty, and Matthew just glides right over it, but the Son of God, was born in the equivalent of a car park outside a motel, because the motel was full – they let a pregnant foreign women give birth in the carpark because no one was prepared to give up their bed. That is how the God of

this universe stepped down into our world. He left thousands and thousands of angels in joyful assembly, tore apart a perfect loving relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in heaven, and stepped down out of heaven to be born in a stable so that thirty years later he might hang on a cross.

Jesus didn't step down to be the greatest amongst us, he stepped down and became the lowest amongst us – to show us what it is to be truly great. You see when God himself steps down and becomes one of us, we're given the ultimate example of what it is to be human. How we were intended to be. Jesus, in becoming a man, became the model man. He stepped down to show us how to live and then he died so that we might truly live.

2 Corinthians 8:9 captures this perfectly,

‘For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.’

Jesus became poor so that we might become rich. God stepped down ... that we might live. And he calls us to follow him. How can you step down today, that others might live? If you're rich, how might you become poor so that others might become rich? If you're comfortable, how might you become uncomfortable so that others might find the comfort of God? Jesus left the company of the Father and the Spirit, to mix with us – who is it that you don't usually mix with that needs to hear about the love of Jesus? Jesus left the comfort of his home and became a missionary to our world. Have you considered leaving the comfort of your home to go on mission to

our world? Or perhaps you were born on the wrong side of the tracks? So was Lord Jesus. Have you considered staying there? Jesus did, until the day he died, because they needed him. Its questions like these that this passage raises. Think about them now, and pray about them, and then praise the one who for the joy set before him endured the cross, so that through his poverty we might become rich.

Thanks for reading. I hope these words of Scripture are as much a blessing to you today as they have been for me.