

The JESUS we never knew x52. Sunday 24 December_2017.

(PP1). (Read: MATTHEW1: 18 - 25.) GOD Speaks.

Many of the Carols that we sing and dance to describe a **snowy stillness** – the world stopped in awe at the birth of the special, unique and “universal” child – Jesus. So, the classic “**Silent** the night – holy the night” is also sung in translation as “**Still** the Night”.

I’m very sure that Bethlehem on the night of JESUS birth (whatever day that was) was neither “Silent” or “Still”. Joseph with his heavily pregnant wife Mary came to this town because of the Roman Census and because Joseph was a descendent of David. Mary was betrothed to him (as good as married) and so they turned up with many others from different parts of Palestine. Joseph may well have had relatives in Bethlehem, but they had no “place” in any “guest room” (*katalumati Luke 2:7*) – the city was packed but space was made where the animals overwintered and the new born was placed in a manger. The 65 miles was a gruelling 4/5-day journey for a heavily pregnant woman and she certainly wouldn’t have delivered her first born in silence.

Our theme - **GOD speaks – because God wants to be known.**

- 1) Through history i.e. the genealogy in Matthew’s Gospel ...
- 2) Through dreams. 5 dreams are mentioned in the first 2 chapters of Matthew’s Gospel...
- 3) Through Angels – spiritual messengers – sometimes encountered when awake and sometimes in dreams/ visions (1:20; 2:13,19)
- 4) Through Scriptures see v 22 “*all this took place to fulfil what the LORD had said through the prophet.* Matthew uses this formula 12 times to make the point.
- 5) Through Immanuel (Jesus described as God with us) –



1. God speaks through history: Matthew writes to his Jewish audience and with his genealogy seeks to show verse 1 a list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ, who is a descendent of David, who was a descendent of Abraham. Lots of Jews challenged Jesus' legitimacy but Matthew counters this by telling his human pedigree. Mind you within this amazing genealogy are unusually women, as well as men cited to show that it's through all of our muddled human relationships that God works. So, Bathsheba who had been Uriah's wife and also Ruth a foreigner both get a mention. If we look at history many have argued that there is, not just in the Bible narrative but many other places evidence for the existence and working of God through human history. (Those like John Adams, the second President of US, and Mark Twain author, and even Benjamin Disraeli twice PM of the UK have argued that the continued existence of the Jews is one proof of the existence of God). I don't know about that, but I think the birth and life of Jesus and the ongoing story of the People of God despite opposition prove it.

2 & 3. God speaks through dreams and also angel messengers. The Bible is full of stories involving people encountering God and hearing messages from God in dreams and waking visions which also include visits from angels (often appearing in human form). We had a fascinating short discussion some weeks ago with contributions from people who had encountered angels and those who hadn't but still believed in them. In this very materialistic and often cynical world it is amazing that book shelves in all the major chains and on line are packed with books on not just zombies and vampires but

also angels. In the birth accounts of Jesus dreams and angels certainly feature. Indeed, reading the Gospel accounts opens us to the possibility of a world that is not just material and that science doesn't fully explain for many of us. Human beings have not just physical but also and spiritual needs and these feature in the pages of Scripture. Joseph was betrothed to Mary (year before and binding to death). So, at the Angel of the LORD's direction in a dream Joseph takes Mary as his wife by taking her to his family house (Bethlehem of David's town) and also, he names the child "Jesus" as instructed and therefore owns the child as his "adopted" son. He will "adopt" him if you like and he will be a descendent of David.

4 & 5. God speaks through Scriptures and the person of JESUS known as Immanuel.

The genesis of Jesus (v18). Matthew in these verses tells us about Jesus' BEGINNINGS not so much his birth – but his ORIGINS – the beginnings is actually the word "genesis".

Matthew also tells about his NAME – how Jesus is to be spoken about, Matthew refers to 2 Old Testament prophecies given about the Messiah.

The child will be spoken of as "Immanuel" – Isaiah 7:4 – the birth will be to a young woman (LXX Parthenos or virgin which Matthew picks up on) and will be called – *"God is with us" – Immanuel.*

It is the clear understanding of Christians that we encounter God **in the person of Jesus Christ.** (As revealed in Scripture and in person). GOD has come in person. God has not sent a representation. Jesus is the Logos or Word of God to us.

The focus here is on Joseph rather than Mary – how will the conception affect Joseph. Even though vv22 and 23 it is a virgin conception and the agent of the conception is the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew nation were quite used to the idea that the Spirit of God was active in creation and giving life (e.g. Genesis 1:2 and Ezekiel 37: 1 – 14). Luke (1:35) also tells us conception was of the Spirit of God not a human father. The Spirit is bringing in the Messianic age and not a human being alone.

V25 **Joseph names him "JESUS"** as he was instructed (v21) – *You will name him Jesus because ... (PP3) he will save his people from their sins.*

This NAME is a fulfilment of Psalm 130: 8 *He will save his people Israel from all their sins.*

Jesus is a very common or ordinary name: in time of his birth because the people were looking for the Messiah and Salvation. It has its roots in the name of Joshua or Jeshua – Yahweh is Salvation OR O save, Yahweh. But it is a declaration rather than a prayer here! This is the OT HOPE spoken of by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

His Name is JESUS and he will be spoken of as Immanuel – God is with us.

GOD is with us – present with us in JESUS to save us. To save us from what? All the things that would destroy us – to rescue us from pride and selfishness and greed and their consequences – to rescue us from death itself.

We do not live in a Silent Universe – in fact it is very noisy and there are MANY VOICES trying to get out intention. This Christmas we will need to work very hard at stopping to listen if we want to hear -

What is GOD saying?

Who is listening?

Perhaps a quiet walk in the park to think – so can listen to our inner self & God.

Perhaps sitting in a room and switching the TV or the PC/ tablet off and just stopping to think or pray.

Perhaps reading the Gospel stories again and pausing to think and seeking to hear what God is saying to us.

Perhaps some of may have a dream or even be visited by an angel without knowing it.

WE DO NOT LIVE IN A SILENT UNIVERSE – GOD HAS SPOKEN AND SPEAKS STILL.

GOD speaks – wants to be known.

- 1) Through history
- 2) Through dreams.
- 3) Through Angels – spiritual messengers – sometimes encountered when awake and sometimes in dreams/ visions (1:20; 2:13,19)
- 4) Scriptures

5) Through Immanuel (Jesus described as God with us) –

