

December 22, 2019

GOD SAVES

MATTHEW 1:18-25; NUMBERS 21:6-9

INTRODUCTION

In Numbers, we have been considering the grumbling and the rebellion of God's people as well as the Lord's new morning mercies towards them for His own sake. In this season of Christmas, we must give pause to remind ourselves and others that into the rebellion of humanity God sent Christ who, alone, is the hope of the world that still maligns Him. Yet, the One they bruised and reject is the only One to whom they can look for spiritual peace, freedom and joy. May we never give away this truth or allow others to contaminate it. Let our continual refrain be simply this: Look to Christ and be saved.

THE SAVIOR (Matthew 1:18-23)

One of the most striking realities within this passage is the meaning of the name Immanuel (Matthew 1:23). Its meaning gives illuminating significance not only to the context of the passage but also to the redemptive purpose of the Savior. Much of what surrounds Christmas is not joy, at least within the text. What is highlighted is a perceived darkness into which the Savior shines as light. Baby boys are being slaughtered because of the birth of Jesus which means families are experiencing pain – not joy – because of Christ's birth. Mary, a young girl, is not only pregnant – a stain on her family – but her pregnancy, she claims is from God Himself (Matthew 1:18)! Consider how insane this made her look to family and others. No joy here, only isolation. Yet, into this piercing darkness and pain Immanuel is the center of it all: *God with us* (Matthew 1:23). The phrase, *God with us* is translated in many places as "*God will fight for us*" since this is what God being among His people meant – spiritually speaking. Into darkness and pain the One who caused it is also the One who counters both and would, in His resurrection, abolish them. This is what it means for Christ to be born: *God has, does and will* fight for us. In contemplating the birth of Christ during this Christmas season, let us be filled with the wonder and glory that conquered the pain and darkness of sin (Matthew 1:23).

THE ARRIVAL (Matthew 1:24-25)

We have considered Mary's reputation above and now we must give thought to the reputation of Joseph. Mary tells her soon to be husband that she is pregnant by God. Far from what others must have thought we can only imagine what Joseph also felt! We get a glimpse into his emotions being told that he decided to divorce Mary secretly instead of enduring the shame and ridicule (Matthew 1:19). However, he is told in a dream, being addressed by an angel as son of David, not to do so but to stay (Matthew 1:19). That which has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20). Joseph is reminded by this designation – son of David - of the long waited and expected king that would come through the Davidic line. Now he, in amazing fashion, is being selected to participate in God's purposes of redemption. What is more, Joseph, after marrying Mary, remained celibate for the duration of her pregnancy so as to not disrupt the processes of the Lord (Matthew 1:25). In other words, Joseph got out of the way so that Christ could be, without dispute, the Son of God and the Way to the Father. This Christmas let the remembrance of His arrival move you to get out of the way that He might shine without doubt through you loyalty and obedience

THE REQUIREMENT (Number 21:6-9)

The glory of the Lord demands that any act or thought that opposes Him be punished. The people had sinned but this time they blamed, not Moses, but God Himself! The Edomites had refused them passage

through Edom and, as a result, their journey was much longer than anticipated. When things we do for the Lord don't go well men tend to blame God for their frustrations and this is exactly what the Israelites did (Numbers 21:4-5). In times past the Lord would give warning of His potential judgment but this time His exaction is swift. He sent poisonous snakes that *"bit them so that many Israelites died"* (Numbers 21:6). As a result the people are suffering and the wonder of it all is that it is coming from the hand of the Lord Himself. Therefore, they are without recourse and, certainly without anyone to blame but themselves. The Lord does this not only to avenge His glory but to open the hearts of the people to cry out in repentance and mercy and this they did with fervor and expectancy (Numbers 21:7). They demonstrated not only their repentance but His Lordship. Moses, then, interceded and the Lord commanded him to *"Make a snake image and mount it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, and he looked at the bronze snake he recovered"* (Numbers 21:9). God, who bruised them, provided a means of healing for them. John takes up this story in John 3:14-16 to highlight the redemptive truth that Christ, born of the virgin Mary, when looked to by faith, will heal the disease from the bite of sin.