

Christmas, A line in Time  
Matthew 1:18-25

**Slide 1**

There has never been an event in the history of man that has so defined human history as the birth of Jesus and because of that event we're all sitting here today.

That solitary event shaped the world like no other. It shaped how the world is viewed and how people are viewed.

Even the most disinterested and antagonistic person will, in some way, acknowledge Christmas as something special, even if it's only as a paid day off.

Even when people replace Merry Christmas with Happy Holiday, they're acknowledging that it's something special. If it's a holiday, then what are we celebrating?

The world today is what it is because of the birth of a child 2000 years ago in a stable located in an obscure village country considered insignificant by most of the known world.

But Jesus didn't come to change the world, He came to change people, the line that was drawn on that first Christmas would radically change the lives of people.

**Slide 2**

Of course, the first people who were changed were those who were closest. Christmas changed Mary and Joseph's world. How could their lives not be changed?

The entire story is summed up in Matthew 1:18, *“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.”*

From the very foundation of time, men and women have been choosing to spend their lives together in a socially and legally recognized union that we call marriage, and Mary and Joseph were no different.

We don't know how they met, and we don't know how old they were. What we do know is that they were engaged to be married, but they weren't married yet and Mary was a virgin.

Everything was going well, just the way it was supposed to. They were probably planning for the big day and dreaming of their lives together.

Then an angel showed up with an announcement that changed everything.

Just imagine what that news meant to Mary and Joseph. People would never view them the same, to some, they would always be that couple who had to get married.

They would always feel the weight of the responsibility with which God had entrusted them.

*“This is My Son, He's going to save the world, and I want you to take care of Him, make sure that He stays safe and healthy and bring Him up knowing about Me.”*

For thirty-three years Mary marveled at the son she called Jesus and the responsibility that was hers.

To be truthful, she probably couldn't comprehend the plan when she held her son and laid Him in a borrowed manger.

She probably still couldn't comprehend the plan when she held her son before He was laid in a borrowed grave.

But her words were words of trust. Luke 1:38, *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."*

### **Slide 3**

Christmas changed Simon Peter's world. How could Peter know that a chance encounter would change his world and change the world?

Because of the first Christmas, the largest church in the world, a city in Russia, and many hospitals all share the name of a Jewish Fisherman.

It was very early in Christ's ministry that we discover Peter doing what he had probably done every day of his adult life, fishing.

When we think of fishing, we either think of sport fishing or large-scale commercial fishing.

This was not the kind of fishing Peter did. It would've been similar to the fishing still done in developing countries around the world today.

Two or three men, in an open boat throwing their net into the water and then pulling it back by hand. The hope was to catch enough to feed their family, and some left over to sell.

Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen. They probably weren't poor, but if they were like most fisherman, they probably said they were.

They probably weren't rich, just ordinary men working for a living to provide for their family.

We pick them up in Matthew 4:18-20, *“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him.”*

If you’ve read your Bibles, you know that over the next three years that Peter became one of Jesus’ closest friends. It was Peter who first clued into the fact that Jesus was more than just a teacher or prophet.

It was Peter who walked on the water with Jesus the night of the storm. It was Peter who said he would die for Jesus before he would ever deserted him.

It was Peter who denied Jesus the night Jesus needed him most. It was then he discovered the truth.

Jesus wasn’t looking for people who would die for Him, He was looking for people who would live for Him.

What did Jesus tell Peter? Matthew 16:18, *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

Because Jesus was born, Peter went from being a fisherman to the foundation of the Church universal. He wasn’t rich and he wasn’t perfect, but he was willing.

Because he was willing, the church that would change the world had its beginning.

From that unlikely beginning hospitals, orphanages, universities, and relief agencies have changed how the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged were viewed.

#### **Slide 4**

Christmas changed our world, too. Jesus didn't come just so we could have Christmas and He didn't come just so we could have a religion. The message the angel gave to Joseph explained why He came.

*Matthew 1:20-21, "But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

When Jesus defined His purpose and His mission, He stated in Luke 19:10, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* That's us, those who are lost.

Each of us is born with a longing for more. We know there's something out there, even if we can't name it or describe it.

Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:11, *"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*

Did you catch that? God has placed eternity in the human heart. A desire to connect with our Creator, to have a relationship with God.

That happens because He came as a child to bridge the chasm that exists between sinful man and a Holy God.

#### **Slide 5**

Now, let's look at the story of the woman caught in adultery. Maybe you know the story? She's brought to Jesus by the religious leaders for judgement.

We don't even know her name, but you can be sure that she would never forget the name of Jesus.

She had broken her marriage vows and got caught. The best she could hope for would be a public divorce and humiliation.

The worst-case scenario would be that her husband would insist on her death, which he was entitled to according to the laws of the day.

But most of you know the story. It's told in John's gospel and it's where we get the phrase: Cast the first stone.

There didn't seem to be any doubt concerning her guilt, the story says she was caught in the act of adultery.

You might remember the part where Jesus stooped down and began drawing in the dirt, perhaps chronicling the sins of her accusers and then he looks at them and says....,

*John 8:7, "When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."*

*If we pick up the story in John 8:10-11, "Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

Because there was a Christmas, there was a Jesus to save this woman from the consequences of her actions.

On that day when her guilt was beyond question Jesus also offered her two gifts.

The first gift Jesus offered the woman was forgiveness from her past; that's a gift we all long for, whatever our past holds.

But that wasn't the greatest gift that was offered that day, because Jesus didn't stop there, he continues to say "*Go now and leave your life of sin.*"

You see the greatest gift that Jesus offered the woman was the gift of a new future, and that's the gift that's still offered to us today.

Symbolically this woman represents all of us.

## **Slide 6**

### Conclusion

The biggest mistake we can make is to see Christmas as a celebration of an isolated incident that happened 2000 years ago.

You see the challenge isn't to keep Christ in Christmas, it's to get Christ out of Christmas and to allow Him to change our lives and to change the world.

When you realize that the Child, Who was born to an unknown couple in an obscure village two thousand years ago truly, is the Son of God.

When you embrace the message that He taught and recognize that He died for you and rose from the dead, then you're understanding the difference that Christmas made, not just then but also right now.

When you allow His grace to become a part of your life, it will be almost as if someone had dragged a stick through the sand drawing a line that said, "*That was then and this is now.*" because Christmas truly can be a line in time for you.