

Matthew 1:18-25 Luke 1:18-38 2:15-20

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 December 2022

[0 : 00] opportunity, go ahead and mark Matthew 1, Matthew chapter 1, and then you can turn to Luke chapter 1. If you remember last week, we began, we kind of stepped away from our series through the Gospel of Matthew, and we are looking at a four-part Christmas series of When God Interrupts History.

So we began looking at When God Interrupts History, and last week we looked at these same set of verses, but we kind of left them halfway read. We didn't finish the rest of the account of each one of these, because our introduction to this message is the announcement of heaven. When God makes an announcement, and if you remember the wonder and the glory of it, after 400 plus years of silence, God had something to say, and God said something in very distinct locations, and He said not something new, but something He had already said before. As a matter of fact, when we close in our English Bibles, the Old Testament, and we transition, sometimes there's a little historical background, sometimes there's just one little page that says the New Testament, and sometimes, depending on which, you know, type of Bible you have, it's nothing. You just go from Malachi to Matthew. Well, when we close Malachi, God makes this pronouncement through the prophet Malachi that there would be a forerunner coming before the Spirit of the Lord, coming in the Spirit of the Lord, in the Spirit of Elijah, and who would turn the hearts of the children back to the fathers, and the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and He's coming to prepare a way. And then we open up our Bibles, and we go immediately into the New Testament, and we read of these events. What we need to know is historically, over 400 years has transpired, and a lot of things have taken place in that geographical region, and then God picks up the story as if nothing had changed. He continues to say the same thing, because the very first thing God says, after so many years of silence, He says to Zechariah in the temple, and He says, a son's going to be born to you, and it is He who is going to go in the Spirit of the Lord and prepare the way, and that is John the Baptist. So we've seen those announcements, how Zechariah or Zechariah, I know many of the translations have an S on there because of the Greek versus the Hebrew, but the Zechariah is in the temple to Mary, and then we have to

Joseph, and then we have to the angels that appear to the shepherds, I'm sorry, and to the shepherds. So you have Zechariah in the temple, Mary at Bethlehem, or at Nazareth, Joseph at Nazareth, and then you have the shepherds around the vicinity of Bethlehem, and if you remember, we kind of did a little quick math, it's in the span of about 15 months. In a span of about 15 months, God had a lot to say, and He said it to these individuals. There was this great announcement, but it is just part of one grand story. He's not starting something new, He's not changing the script, so to say, He is just saying what He's been saying from Genesis 1. He has a plan, a purpose, and these events are coming about.

So we've seen the announcement of heaven. We're going to pick up that story or that account, continue that as we continue reading in the Gospel of Luke chapter 1. We left off last week in verse 18, or actually in verse 17, where it says, It is He who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and the power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Okay, this is the angel Gabriel speaking to Zechariah. We're going to pick up in verse 18. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you stand with me as we read together the Word of God? I will try to read it a little slower this morning because I know at times when I have a number of texts, I tend to read them too fast.

So we're going to begin in Luke 1, starting in verse 18. And the angel Gabriel has just spoken. Zechariah is in the temple. He's burning incense. Remember, put yourself in the setting.

[3 : 49] The incense on the altar of incense, which was before the Holy of Holies when you walked into the temple, was to be a representation of the prayers of God's people ascending into the presence of God.

It was a visible representation of the fact that God hears the prayers of His people. That's what it was. When the angel Gabriel came, the very first thing he said is, your prayers have been answered. Okay? We don't know how many years have transpired since Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth have prayed for a child, but we know evidently from this response, it had been a number of years. So we pick up verse 18.

Zechariah said to the angel, How will I know this for certain? For I'm an old man, and my wife is advanced in years. And the angel answered and said to him, I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time. The people were waiting for Zechariah and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he kept making signs to them and remained mute. When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

[5 : 11] After these days, Elizabeth, his wife, became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when he looked with favor upon me to take away my disgrace among men.

Now let's just continue reading this, even though I know we read this last week. Now in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the city in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming in, he said to her, Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you. But she was very perplexed at this statement and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was.

And the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. And he will be great, and we will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.

And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end. And Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

[6 : 20] And for that reason, the Holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.

For nothing will be impossible with God. Look at verse 38. And Mary said, Behold, the bond slave of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. Hold your place here, but go with me over to Matthew. Matthew chapter 1. Matthew chapter 1. We'll go ahead and read again, starting in verse 18, so that we can get it in context.

Now, the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, the son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

[7 : 27] And she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. Now, all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which translated means God with us.

Here's what I want you to pick up this week. And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus.

Go with me back to Luke chapter 2. We'll pick it up now with the shepherds in the field, but we're going to pick up in verse 15.

The angels had appeared to the shepherds in the field and made this announcement in verses 8 through 14, verse 15 through 20. When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, Let us go straight to Bethlehem then and see this thing

that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph and the baby as he lay in the manger. And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this child.

[8 : 43] And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to read your word. We thank you, Lord, for the opportunity we've had to praise you in song and to encourage one another in fellowship.

Lord, we pray now that the reading of your word and the hearing of it would penetrate our distractions. Lord, that it would captivate our hearts and minds and turn us to you. Lord, may the truths which we have heard become realities in our life for your glory.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Last week when we began to look at the facts of when God interrupts history, the ways and the manners in which he does it, we saw the truth that in a span of about 15 months, heaven could not be silent.

That God had something to say. And when God had something to say, he said it through his angels, which should not surprise us because the word angels means messenger. It's literally the word messenger.

[10 : 01] God had something to say to man and to the world. Now, he did not make this announcement in such a way that all of the world would hear it, but he made this announcement in such a way that all of the world would know it.

Right? It transitioned and transformed all of history. The timetable of history turns on the hinge of what happened in these days. God had something to say and he sent his message to proclaim only that which he wanted to say.

An angel did not have freedom. It did not have liberty. There was no freedom of speech among angels. They could not say whatever they want to and they still today cannot say whatever they want to. They had to be faithful messengers who could only fully and honestly proclaim that which God alone had told them to say.

So we can see that when they say something, this is what God wants them to say. And the reason we know that is because when an angel chooses to go his own way, he is no longer an angel, but he is a fallen angel and we refer to them as demons.

An angel does not have the right to ad lib or add to or to adjust. He only has the right to repeat. So when God sent his messengers, Gabriel and then the angels and the heavenly host, what they said is what God was proclaiming.

[11 : 14] And he wanted to break the silence and he had this announcement. And this announcement to this select group of individuals is that which interrupts history to the fullest measure.

And that interruption was so much more than the declaration of the word. Because just because God said something doesn't necessarily change everything.

Now it should. Okay, stay with me. But only when he says something, when God has an announcement, and then here's the second part, man has an adjustment.

We see the adjustment of men. The only time that when what God says changes history is when man responds to what God has said.

Because when man responds to what God has said, then all of a sudden what God has proclaimed becomes a living reality. Now we know that God can make his word live because in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and the word became flesh.

[12 : 17] So God can make the word live, and we refer to him as Emmanuel, John chapter 1.

Some of you started reading that this morning in your daily reading, or you'll read it later on.

Probably one of my favorite chapters in all of scripture, one of them.

There's so many of them, it's hard to put them in any kind of order, so it's just one of them. So he can make his word live, but most of the time, the way God makes his word live is how he lives it out through his people.

And it is when man adjusts to what God has said, history is changed. You can read church history, you can read world history, you can read men's history.

I love reading biographies and autobiographies. And the reason I love reading them is not because I necessarily love reading. I just love seeing how God interacts with man and how man adjusts to what God is doing.

Because we need to know that, we need to understand that. That when God says it, they believed it, and they did something because of it. Because just because he said it, and we believe it, until we do something about what we believe, it doesn't do anything.

[13:26] James wrote a whole book about that. Right? Putting faith into practice. It's near the end of your New Testaments. We understand here that God had an announcement, but man had an adjustment.

That is to say, that those whom God spoke to had to change something in their life. And if you remember, we closed last week's sermon with the reality that while a lot of people want to hear from God, they don't necessarily know what it is they want to hear from God.

That God is still speaking according to the same purposes which he's already proclaimed. He is still speaking according to the same plans which he has already determined.

So until we are on board with the plans and purposes of God, we cannot fully hear the word of God, because the word of God will always coincide with the purpose of God, and God does not deviate from his purposes and plans.

Which is just a simple way of saying is God's not just going to bless whatever we want, whatever mess we want to get into. Right? He's going to speak to us according to his purposes and according to his plans.

[14:35] And when we begin to align ourselves with what he's doing, listen, Zachariah was in the temple. Right? Mary was at Nazareth.

You say, well, what does that matter? Because out of Nazareth shall sign a great light. It says it in the Old Testament. Right? She was of the right family too. She was aligned. Joseph was of the descendants of David.

He was in the right. He said, well, he didn't have any control over his family. Right? But he was still aligned with his purposes. The shepherds were in the field outside of Bethlehem. There were other shepherds in other fields, but these were in the field outside of Bethlehem, which is where God was at.

So we understand they aligned themselves with what God was doing, and then they were able to hear what God was saying. So many times people today don't hear what God is saying because we're not aligning with where God is at.

We want to bring him wherever we want him to be, where the whole time he's trying to lead us to where he is. But hearing him is not the end.

[15:41] That's the beginning. When God made an announcement that started the Christmas season, that didn't end it. Okay? When God speaks to you and to me, he speaks to our heart and our mind, and you say, well, pastor, how does he speak to us?

Well, we said it again, but it bears repeating. Sometimes he speaks to us through his word. That is, we're reading his word. This is why it's so important to get in the word of God. You don't have to follow the same reading plan I follow. You don't have to follow the same reading plan anybody follows.

But I would encourage you to follow a plan because if you do not follow some plan, you're going to just be reading kind of haphazardly, and you're not going to be intentionally studying and reading the word, and you're going to choose which passages you want to read.

And that's okay every now and then for devotional purposes. But God has said some of the greatest things through some of the most difficult passages to me. I mean, never in my wildest dreams, in my own inclinations, would I ever pick up the Old Testament and read the books of the prophets and find all these dark seasons of the prophets and then find this great gem in the midst of it that while striking yet healing, God has a purpose for his people.

That sometimes God strikes us so that he may heal us. And I was like, oh, wow. The only reason I was there is because my plan wanted me there, right? So sometimes he speaks to us through his word, oftentimes, the Bible.

[17:03] Sometimes he speaks to us through other people. Do you know why? The book of Proverbs in the 18th chapter in the first verse says, it is a fool who isolates himself. Do you know why?

You know, the Bible calls people fools, and that's too many times I found myself on the other side of that. It is a fool who isolates himself. You know why? Because left to ourselves, we'll only tell ourselves what we want to hear.

But when we surround ourselves with others, sometimes what God has to say to us, it will step on our toes, it will kick us in the shin, he'll strike us so that he may heal us.

And that we, as iron sharpens iron, so does one brother sharpen another brother. Sometimes he speaks to us through other people. Sometimes he speaks to us through our circumstances.

You ever walk through life and say, well, that's a coincidence. I was just reading about that, and now all of a sudden, these things are happening, and all these things keep popping up in front of me. And everywhere I look, I keep seeing these things. And everywhere I look, I keep seeing these things.

[18:04] I don't believe in coincidences. I believe in divine appointments. I believe that God controls every circumstance and every happening in my life. And I believe he controls it of yours as well.

Quit writing it off as coincidence and start opening your spiritual eyes as appointments and saying what God was saying to me through his word, what God said to me through some individual. Now, all of a sudden, I keep seeing the opportunity before me, and these things keep popping up before me.

God is saying something. Sometimes he speaks to us through songs. You ever heard a song you've heard so many times, and all of a sudden, that thing says something totally different to you? See, God has a way of speaking. But the announcement is not the end of the story. It's the beginning. Because when God speaks to us, then it is becoming upon us to adjust to what he has said.

My personal experience, and I know I'm going a little slow this morning. It's because I don't want you to miss this. And I'll go through it really quick here in just a minute. My personal experience is very seldom does God say something just to leave me alone.

[19:15] Because words matter. You ever met those people that are very quiet? They don't say a whole lot, but there seems to always be this phrase, but when they speak, you better listen, because they have something to say.

You better stop what you're doing and pay attention, because they have something to say. We go through enough seasons of our life where it seems as if God is silent, but when he speaks, we better listen.

Because he has something to say, which means there's an adjustment to make. Now, he'll come along beside me and say, persevere, push on. That's one thing.

But that still requires me making an adjustment. Sometimes that requirement is, I need to get over my little pity party and keep pushing on. Sometimes he speaks to me, wanting me to do something totally different than what was on my radar.

That's another thing. But it always, when the word speaks, it is becoming upon me and you to adjust. We see here in our four announcements, Zechariah in the temple, Mary and Joseph in Nazareth, and the shepherds in the field.

[20:28] There are adjustments of men. The man has to do something. Not all of them are good. Not all of them are pleasant. But every one of them made an adjustment.

I won't take you back through the text, but you can read it and you can see it. The first adjustment we see is surprise. Zechariah is surprised.

He is at the temple. He is inside the temple. He's not just worshiping at the temple. He's worshiping in the temple, which means he's one of the select few whoever gets an opportunity to go there.

And he's not just in the temple. He is in the temple at the altar of incense, burning incense. And the very first thing the angel tells him is, your prayers have been answered. And do you see this?

Zechariah says, how can I know? How do you ask, how can I know when the very thing he is doing is being done so that God's people may know? He is literally putting the incense on the altar and watching the smoke and the soothing aroma go up into the ceiling because God had declared that that would be a soothing aroma to his nose as a reminder that God heard the prayers of his people.

[21:44] And it is at that location when the angel Gabriel says, your prayers have been answered. And he says, I don't think so. How can I know? How can I believe?

It reminds me of the story in the book of Acts when Peter is in prison. You remember that? It's such a good story. Peter is in prison here. And it's not a good time to be a believer and to be in prison because they've already started killing people there.

People have already been beheaded. So the church has a prayer meeting regarding the fact that Peter is in prison. And the church is gathered at a home because there were no church buildings. And the church was gathered at a home praying because Peter was in prison. And they were praying that God would intervene the circumstances that put Peter in prison. They were saying, God, get him out of prison. And Peter is asleep in prison while the church is praying.

And that's okay. And the angel wakes Peter up and leads him through the gates. Remember that? The gates open by themselves and he walks through the gates. And then Peter realizes, I'm no longer in prison. So Peter goes to where God's people are at, at the house that they were praying regarding the fact that Peter was in prison and knocks on the door.

[22 : 51] And when he knocks on the door, the servant girl comes to the door and she's so surprised because Peter's supposed to be in prison, but Peter's on the other side of the door, that she runs back and tells the church, Peter's at the door and the church doesn't believe it.

The church says, that ain't true. Peter's in prison. But you were just praying, asking God to get Peter out of prison and now you don't believe that Peter's not in prison because they're surprised. Zacharias, who was a Levitical priest who should have understood the reality that God hears the prayers of his people. It was Zacharias' job at this particular moment to demonstrate for the people that God heard their prayers.

And the people were outside praying based upon the actions of Zacharias, but yet Zacharias surprised that God heard his prayers. See, sometimes the adjustment man makes is we're surprised by what God says.

Has God ever surprised you how much he knows you? And how intimately he can speak to you in your circumstances. And Zacharias stands back.

[23 : 57] Now I know, and I don't want to rush through this, so you'll have to stay with me just a little bit. I know some of you say, well, how can Zacharias say, how can this happen? And how can Mary say, how can this happen?

And how does Zacharias get rebuked and Mary gets comforted? Well, to whom much is given, much is expected. Mary was probably a young teenage girl living in a poor town of Nazareth. Zacharias was a priest standing in the temple. What is surprising is not when the world is surprised when God speaks. What's surprising is when God's people are surprised when he speaks. That's what's surprising.

Because Zacharias can't believe it. And the reason Zacharias can't believe it is because his personal circumstances do not match what God is promising. I am old and my wife is advanced. The angel calls her old. Zacharias never does. Listen to that, man. Never does. She's advancing. She ain't old. Okay. The angel says she's old. Zacharias never does.

[25 : 02] And what he sees before him does not match what the word is telling him. And since his circumstances can't match the promise, he is surprised.

And here's where it becomes sinful. That surprise leads to doubt. And when surprise leads to doubt, now all of a sudden, we're treading on dangerous ground.

Rather than being surprised and excited, he is surprised and doubtful. And he doubted the reality of what God was telling him because what he saw before him did not seem to align with what was being promised to him.

Friend, most of the times when God speaks to us, what he tells us, most of the time, what he tells us, most of the time, will never align with what we see before us.

Because if you can explain to me how it will happen, then more than likely, God didn't do it.

Sometimes he takes the ordinary and does things in an extraordinary way.

[26 : 11] But most of the time, when I read the scripture, what God calls his people to do are things that are unexplainable according to the circumstances before them.

It just doesn't make sense. And we should not be surprised when God asks us or proclaims something to us that doesn't seem to align. Because rather than trying to fit God to our circumstances, maybe we need to forget about our circumstances and lean on what God has said. And we need to see this because the first adjustment that is made here is surprise. And when surprise led to doubt, then listen to me, Zachariah suffered because the angel says to him, since

you did not believe me, you shall be silent until these things come about.

These things will come about. This is where you need to understand this biblical truth. God is not dependent upon man's faithfulness to bring about his purposes.

Zachariah's doubted, but God still brought it about. Man suffered because of his lack of faithfulness. You say, how did he suffer?

[27 : 28] Zachariah was the first person to hear God speak in over 400 years and he can't tell anybody about it. He can't say a word. All of Israel has been waiting for this day.

The hope and the expectation of the Messiah was hinging on the coming of the forerunner and Zachariah knew who it was. He couldn't tell anybody.

He couldn't even tell his wife Elizabeth. He had to be silent. And he couldn't say anything until it came about.

See, friends, when surprise leads to doubt, we suffer. We suffer. The second adjustment we see is surrender.

Now we go to the account of Mary. Mary is a young teenage girl, probably very young, much younger than most of us would expect. She's in this very poor town of Nazareth.

[28 : 29] We know just how surprised Nazareth is when you read that first chapter of John in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and the word became flesh and dwelt among us and his name is Emmanuel.

Right? Read the rest of that when you get to the end of it and he is that first chapter. He's getting his disciples together because we also find in that first chapter that John the Baptist points him out and says, there he is.

There's the one that you want to follow so people began following Peter and Peter goes and finds his brother and then you have all these other ones and then someone goes and finds Nathaniel and says, we found him who is the Messiah and he says, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

That's what people thought about Nazareth. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? See, it was looked down upon and yet here's a teenage girl in Nazareth who's engaged to a carpenter and God has an announcement to her since the angel Gabriel that she asks how.

She doesn't say, she wants, it's an inquisitive how, not a doubtful how. Right? How's it going to happen? Which implies it's going to happen but how's it going to happen is in the word and not how, I don't think it can happen.

[29 : 43] There's a difference in how you ask how. And the angel tells her and then we see her adjustment in her response and it surprises us. Mary said, behold the bond slave of the Lord.

That word's *doulos* in the Greek. It's the same word that Paul uses to refer to all believers. Paul refers to himself as the *doulos* of Christ, the slave of Christ.

She surrenders her life to be the servant of the Lord. And then she makes this declaration, may it be done to me according to your word.

See, surrender is the giving up of the right to make any decisions moving forward. Surrender is the giving up of the ownership of the rest of your life.

We see, what happens to Mary changes the world but sometimes we forget what happens to Mary changes Mary. I mean, it changed her life dramatically. Who's going to believe her?

[30 : 48] Who's going to ever understand this other than Joseph? Remember when Simeon comes into the temple, if we read on in Luke chapter 2, he is led in the spirit of the Lord and he goes there and he makes this declaration of who Jesus is and then he looks at Mary and says, and a sword will pierce your hearts.

So the reality, by the time we get to the cross, Joseph's not there. We don't know why. He was probably much older. I mean, just historically, he was probably already dead. We don't know. But the prophecy is, your life is different now too because surrender says, I no longer have a right to dictate what my life looks like.

And surrender says, may what it is, whatever God says to me, be the very thing that happens to me. And she surrenders. Surrender is a very beautiful place to be as a follower of Christ, by the way, because there's no true obedience without biblical surrender.

There's no true obedience without biblical surrender. And true surrender always, always, radically changes our life.

Changes everything moving forward. And it would change the lives of the people around us. Third, there's surprise, there's surrender. And now we get to Joseph.

[32 : 11] The third adjustment we see is submission. Submission. Submission. See, Mary surrenders. Joseph submits. Those words, while they sound the same, are not.

Stay with me. Mary surrenders. She gives up all rights. Joseph submits. That is, he allows God to overrule. Joseph has a course of action in his mind.

There's something he believes he should do. See, the wages of the sin of adultery was stoning. If a woman was betrothed to a man, which was in those days more binding than the marriage itself.

So the engagement which could last one to three years was even more binding than the marriage ceremony itself. So if she was betrothed to a man and she was found to be pregnant or with child, then the natural inclination is that she had committed adultery.

It's not that she had been unfaithful, she had committed adultery. And the punishment for adultery was stoning. She was to be publicly stoned. But the reality is that no one could stone her until the broad groom, that is, the husband-to-be, cast the first stone.

[33 : 19] So it was his responsibility to bring the charge. And in bringing the charge, he had to cast the first stone. And in casting the first stone, he set in course the rest of judgment.

Remember what I said earlier, even when we were singing, God placed responsibility and leadership upon men. Okay, I know that's not necessarily culturally always accepted, but it's biblically true and I'm unapologetic in it.

I'm sorry, well I'm not, I'm not even gonna say I'm sorry, I'm just, that's just what it is. Okay? And so Joseph has this responsibility. Joseph's responsibility is, is now I got to decide what I'm doing with Mary.

Not only for his own self, but for all of society. Because what was about to happen in Nazareth was completely dependent upon what Joseph decided. And Joseph, being a righteous man, had considered sending her away secretly.

Because now Joseph says, I don't want her to die for this and his righteousness and holiness. Because they did not have to do that. They did not have to stone them. That was what the law determined.

[34 : 15] But mercy could overrule the law at any moment. And the mercy of Joseph was gonna overrule the law of the lamb because Joseph was righteous. So he wanted to send her away secretly and just kind of let this thing die out a little bit.

And while he was considering this, this was his decision, this was his course of action, God had something to say to him and God spoke to him in a dream. And then look what it says, so Joseph got up and took Mary to be his wife.

See, Joseph submitted to a higher authority than himself. Joseph did not have to surrender, Joseph had to submit because Joseph was still gonna be leading his family.

We find him later on, he leads them to Egypt, right? He's still in charge of leading his family. But his leadership, stay with me men, I'm gonna get a drink so we get this clear.

The quality of his leadership was completely dependent upon his submission to the word. He had to submit to the word of God as a greater authority for his decision making than his own desires.

[35 : 28] He had to submit to God's counsel to being wiser than the opinion of man. He had to submit to God's word as being more directive than the customs or tradition.

See, he submitted. Notice what it says. He took Mary. He kept her a virgin. And he named that child Jesus. Three things.

Three things. He took her, which was contrary to society. He kept her, which was contrary to nature. The natural desires that God had given a man.

He kept her, which was contrary to nature. And he named him Jesus, which really was submission because every dad wanted to name that firstborn son after himself.

I've got three sons. All three of our sons bear one of my names. You say, none of your sons are named Billy Joe when neither am I. That's just what you call me. My name's William Joseph Corlett Calvert.

[36 : 36] I have a William and a Corlett and a Joseph. I pass those on. I pass those along because that's just part of it. Joseph's family tree doesn't contain any Jesuses but that one.

He submitted. He submitted. Submission to the word is telling God that even though I think I should do this when you tell me something different than what I think, you're the greater authority.

Surrender says, I give up all rights. Submission says, I'll let you decide how I do it. He submitted. Fourth and finally and I'll be done.

There's surprise, there's surrender, there's submission and there's searching. The shepherds are in the field. They hear the greatest news of all time. By the way, table talk questions are on the front. These are good table talk questions. I'm not saying they're good because I came up with them. I'm just good because there's a lot of questions we can answer as they pertain to these verses, right? So here we see that the angels come and they appear.

[37 : 44] The only public appearance we have is a bunch of shepherds. You can answer that question in the table talks, by the way. So they're to these shepherds and it says, and the angels departed and look at what it says. So they look at one another and said, let us go.

That's pretty easy, right? When God says something, that's something we got to do. They didn't just stand there and go to each other. Can you believe that? Ain't nobody going to believe this. And the reason they can say this is because nobody believed shepherds at that time.

Shepherds weren't even considered a liable witness in the court of law. They couldn't even testify in court because shepherds were known for all their lying. I mean, they had stories that they could tell and they had all these things. I mean, when you sit alone with a bunch of sheep, you can come up with some stories, all right?

I got kids on my bus that got more stories than Dr. Seuss and it makes me scratch my head. I don't know how they come up with these stories. Only thing I can figure is they must spend a lot of time alone. They kind of like shepherds, right? So you have these shepherds who are out here all night long, all day long talking to sheep and they got all this thing and they did not look at each one of us and ain't nobody going to believe us.

They said, we got to go find this out because friend, listen to me. When God says something, man is supposed to move according to it. And when the angel spoke, the shepherds went and they went to go see if what God has said was actually true.

[39 : 00] And when they searched and found out, when their actions and adjustments testified to the reality of what had been said, they found a baby laying in a manger, but they knew also that with the baby laying in a manger, he was also to be the deliverer and the redeemer of mankind, right?

They knew that since one part of it was true, all of it was true. And did you notice what happened? And they would not be quiet, but they went back glorifying and praising God and telling everybody all that the angels had said to them because here, and I'm closing with this, here is my final testimony to you.

When God says something to you and you search and find out that he's true, and when you search and find out the reality of what God has declared to you and you see that it is actually real, then you will not be able to be quiet and tell everybody you find out about what God has said.

You will begin to praise him and declare his worthiness and you will be able to declare to everybody that listens, even people that won't listen, you'll say, you won't believe what God has said to me.

And you say, and I know it's true because I've seen it with my own eyes.

I've seen the baby laying in the manger. I've seen these people in places they shouldn't be. I've seen things that God has told me and I've searched and found out that that actually is true. I've seen how he says that he will not forsake the righteous, so I tried him on it and guess what?

[40 : 18] He does not forsake the righteous or let them go hungry. I have seen how he said he can provide even when I'm asleep and I've went to sleep and seen God providing. And I've seen that when God says these things to me and I adjust my life to what he has said and I search and try him and test him.

Did he not also say that in the book of Malachi? Test me and try me and see if I will not open up the heavens and rain down my blessings upon you. Did I not see? I have seen that when the bank account did not look good, but the Bible says I should give it instead.

And the Bible says to test me and try me in this, so I gave it instead. As a matter of fact, I let my wife write the check and give it instead. And I have seen how God says if you search me, I will provide. I have seen how the world can scratch their head and say I don't see how they have it all together. And it gives me an opportunity to say I don't, but he does. And it gives me an opportunity to tell everybody that'll listen. Listen, friends, all I have found is that what God says is true.

And when I adjust my life to what he has said, I'm okay. But man has to adjust because when God interrupts your history and he tells you something, it's time for you to adjust to what he has said and move on from there.

[41 : 32] Because until you adjust, as Henry Blackaby said in his study experiencing God, you cannot be still and go with God. You gotta move.

You can be still and know he's God, but after he's told you that he's God, then you need to move. You need to make an adjustment. Let's pray.

Lord, thank you for this day. Thank you for your word. Lord, we pray it would be the leading and guiding force of our lives. That it would dictate our steps and our decisions.

And that it would bring you glory as we allow it to. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.

[43 : 22] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 52] Thank you.

Thank you.