

Matthew 1:18-25. "Prepare His Presence" (p.757)
Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday December 24th, 2023.

Matthew 1:18-25.[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." [22] All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:[23]"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (ESV)

One of the most famous Christmas stories is entitled: "THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS", **written** by either Clement Clarke Moore or Henry Livingston. **It begins:** 'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse; The stockings were hung by the chimney with care, In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there; The children were nestled all snug in their beds, While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads; And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap, Had just settled down for a long winter's nap", <http://www.christmas-tree.com/stories/nightbeforechristmas.html>

These **visions of sugar-plums** seem quite **strange** to the modern ear. **The concept of a virgin birth** is even more removed from our modern medical minds. **Joseph, Jesus' father, was told of such in a dream.** The virgin birth is voiced in **all ecumenical confessions** of the church, beginning with the Apostles' Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." (Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (38). Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House.)

Even had He wanted to do so, how could God have explained to us, in terms we could comprehend, how such a blending of the divine and human could have been accomplished? We could **no more** fathom such a thing **than we can fathom** God's creating the universe from nothing, His being one God in three Persons, or His giving an entirely new spiritual nature to those who trust in His Son. **Understanding of such things will have to await heaven, when we see our Lord "face to face".**

After establishing Jesus' human lineage from David, Matthew proceeds to show His divine "lineage." That is the purpose of **Matthew 1:18–25, which reveal five distinct truths about the virgin birth of Christ that "Prepare His Presence".** We see the **virgin birth** **1) Conceived** (Matthew 1:18), **2) Confronted** (Matthew 1:19–20), **3) Clarified,** (Matthew 1:21) **4) Connected** (Matthew 1:22-23), **and 5) Consummated** (Matthew 1:24-25).

In Preparing for the Presence of Christ we see how His virgin birth was:

- 1) **Conceived** (Matthew 1:18)

Matthew 1:18.^[18] Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

Birth is from the same Greek root as “genealogy” in **verse 1**, indicating that **Matthew is here giving a parallel account of Jesus’ ancestry—this time from His Father’s side. Verse 1 has promised to reveal the “origin” of the Messiah, and the repetition of that word here shows that that promise is still being fulfilled.** (France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (50). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.)

We have little information about **Mary**. It is likely that she was a native of Nazareth and that she came from a relatively poor family. From **Matthew 27:56**, **Mark 15:40**, and **John 19:25** we learn she had a sister named **Salome**, the mother of James and John (who therefore were **Jesus’ cousins**). If, as many believe, the **Eli** (or Heli) of **Luke 3:23** was **Joseph’s father-in-law** (**Matthew gives Joseph’s father as Jacob, 1:16**), then Eli was **Mary’s father**. We know that **Elizabeth**, the wife of Zacharias, was **Mary’s “relative” (Luke 1:36)**, probably her cousin. Those are **the only relatives**, besides her husband and children, of whom the New Testament speaks. **We know even less of Joseph** than of **Mary**. **His father’s name** was **Jacob (Matt. 1:16)** and he was a craftsman, a construction worker (*tektōn*), probably a carpenter (**Matt. 13:55**). Most importantly, he was **a “righteous man” (1:19)**, an Old Testament saint. From the gospel accounts we see that the Gospel of **Matthew** focuses largely on **Joseph**, **Luke** on **Mary**. (Carson, D. A. (1984). *Matthew*. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, p. 71). Zondervan Publishing House.)

It is possible that **both Joseph and Mary were quite young when they were betrothed. Girls were often betrothed** as young as twelve or thirteen, and **boys** when they were several years older than that. Although **Joseph and Mary** were only betrothed at this time (**v 18**), **he was considered her husband** and **she was considered his wife. The difference between our modern concept of “engagement”** and that of first-century Jews is indicated by the description of Joseph already in **v. 19** as **Mary’s husband** and by the use of the normal word for **divorce** to describe the ending of the engagement. Though the **couple** were **not yet living together, it was a binding contract** entered into before witnesses which could be **terminated** only by death (which would leave the woman a “widow”) or by divorce as if for a full marriage (*m. Ketub. 4:2*); **sexual infidelity** during the engagement would be a basis for such divorce. **About a year after the engagement** (*m. Ketub. 5:2; Ned. 10:5*) the woman (then aged normally about thirteen or fourteen) would leave her father’s home and go to live with the husband in a public ceremony (such as is described in 25:1–12), which is here mentioned by the phrase **“before they came together”** and will be recorded in **v. 24**. (France, R. T. (2007). *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament (50). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co.). **Some translators have taken (the phrase “before they came together”)** to mean specifically **“sexual intercourse,”** but **“married”** is more accurate here. **Matthew is obviously referring to marriage...** Although in many respects **engagement** was considered as binding as marriage, **the two words** are distinguished from one another. **Marriage actually took place only** as the bridegroom took his bride to his home and consummated the marriage with her (Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992). *A handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*. UBS helps for translators; UBS handbook series (21). New York: United Bible Societies.).

Please turn to Genesis 3 (p.3)

Mary’s virginity was an important evidence of her godliness. **Her reason for questioning Gabriel’s announcement of her conception** was the fact that she knew she was a virgin (**Luke 1:34**). **This testimony protects from accusation that Jesus was**

born of some other man. That Mary was “**found**” to be pregnant indicates that **she may not have** immediately told Joseph, but had **waited until her condition could be seen.** This **probably occurred** after her return from visiting her pregnant cousin Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist) with whom she had **stayed for three months** (see **Luke 1:39–56**) (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew*. Life application Bible commentary (14). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.).

Obviously, Jesus’ **conception by the Holy Spirit is a great mystery.** Yet, not only had **Isaiah indicated such a birth (Isaiah 7:14),** but even **in Genesis we get a glimpse of it. Genesis 3:14-16.** ¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, **cursed** are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; **on your belly** you shall go, and **dust you shall eat** all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put **enmity** between you and the woman, and between **your offspring** and **her offspring; he shall bruise your head,** and **you shall bruise his heel.”** ¹⁶To the woman he said, “I will surely **multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband,** but **he shall rule over you.”** (ESV)

- In a technical sense **the seed** belongs to the man, and Mary’s impregnation **by the Holy Spirit** is the only instance in human history that a woman had a seed within her that did **not come from a man.** **The “seed”** here is singular, in that it refers to one great, final, glorious product of a woman, who **will be the Lord Himself-born without male seed.** In that sense **the prediction** is messianic. **Because Jesus lived as a man,** we know that **he fully understands our experiences and struggles (Hebrews 4:15–16).** **Because he is God,** he has the power and authority to deliver us from sin (**Colossians 2:13–15**). **We can tell Jesus all our thoughts, feelings, and needs. He has been where we are now, and he has the ability to help** (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew*. Life application Bible commentary (15). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.).

Poem "Twas The Night Before Jesus Came"

Consider this significance through a remake of the poem, “Twas the Night Before Christmas”: **Twas the night before Jesus came** and **all through the house** Not a creature was **praying,** not one in the house. **Their Bibles** were lain on the shelf without care **In hopes that Jesus** would not come there. **The children** were dressing to crawl into bed, **Not once ever kneeling** or bowing a head. And **Mom** in her rocker with baby on her lap Was **watching** the Late Show while I took a nap. When out **of the East** there arose such a clatter, **I sprang to my feet** to see what was the matter. **Away to the window** I flew like a flash **Tore open the shutters** and threw up the sash! When what **to my wondering eyes should appear** **But angels proclaiming** that Jesus was here. With a **light like the sun** sending forth a bright ray **I knew in a moment** this must be THE DAY! **The light of His face** made me cover my head **It was Jesus returning** just like He said And though **I possessed worldly wisdom** and wealth, **I cried when I saw** Him in spite of myself. In the **Book of Life** which He held in his hand, Was written **the name** of every saved man. **He spoke not a word** as he searched for my name; When He said, “**It’s not here**” my head hung in shame. **The people whose names** had been written with love, **He gathered to take** to His Father above **With those who were ready** He rose without a sound While **all the rest of us** were left standing around. **I fell to my knees,** but it was too late; I had **waited too long** and thus sealed my fate. **I stood and I cried** as they rose out of sight; **Oh, if only I had been** ready tonight. **In the words of this poem** the meaning is clear; **The coming of Jesus** is drawing near. There’s **only one life** and when comes the last call, **We’ll find that the Bible** was true after all! (Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.)

In Preparing for the Presence of Christ we see how His virgin birth was:

2) Confronted (Matthew 1:19–20)

Matthew 1:19-20. [19] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. [20] But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (ESV)

Joseph, Mary's husband, is called **just/righteous**, marks Joseph as a truly religious Jew, puts him **in the same class** with **Zacharias and Elisabeth** who were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," makes him **like Simeon** who was "righteous and devout." The word refers to **the heart as well to the conduct**. As a truly religious Jew, Joseph could **not think of consummating his marriage with Mary under the present circumstances** (Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (42–43). Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House.).

Joseph, being **just/righteous**, saw that he was **unable to consummate the marriage**, but he **did not want to be harsh**. Perhaps we should say that for Joseph being **just/righteous** before God included an **element of mercy** (the "just man" is compassionate, **Ps. 37:21**). Probably also he preferred to act in a way that would **avoid an open scandal**. **He could have made a public display of his indignation** by taking Mary before the law court and making an example of her. But **his concern for the law did not** lead him to the conclusion that he must humiliate the young lady who, he thought, had offended. He preferred to *divorce her secretly*. **Divorce** was no great problem for an Israelite man: he simply had to give the lady "a bill of divorce" before two witnesses and send her away (the procedure is given in **Deut. 24:1**). (Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (27). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.)

Since Joseph was **a just/righteous man**, he had a **double problem**, at least in his own mind. **First, because of his righteous moral standards**, he knew that he should **not go through** with the marriage because of Mary's pregnancy. **He knew** that he was **not the father and assumed, quite naturally**, that Mary had had relations with another man. But **second, because of his righteous love and kindness**, he could **not bear** the thought of **shaming her publicly** (a common practice of his day in regard to such an offense), **much less of demanding her death**, as provided by the law (**Deut. 22:23–24**). There is **no evidence that Joseph felt** anger, resentment, or bitterness. **He had been shamed** (if what he assumed had been true), but **his concern was not for his own shame but for Mary's**. **Though Joseph was a godly, upright man; yet he suffered much trial** from this situation of Mary. **The godly are not exempt from puzzling and painful trials**, rather "*Many are the afflictions of the righteous*" (**Psalm 34:19**) (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew* (14). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.).

He was **unwilling/not wanting to put her to shame/disgrace her** by public exposure of her supposed sin. **Because he loved her so deeply he determined simply to divorce her quietly/put her away secretly**. **Joseph, in spite of his love for Mary, would deal faithfully and firmly with (what he thought) was sin**. **In spite of his love for Mary, his convictions made immoral conduct intolerable**. He would **not marry** a girl who had bad morals. So **he thought to end the espousal and not marry her**. He would **not sacrifice** purity and principle for pleasure but **would give up Mary** in favor of righteousness. Joseph had some **good moral convictions** and would **conduct himself**

accordingly **in spite of** his sorrow. **Joseph's plan was to divorce** (*Apoluō*) her **quietly/secretly**, though before long **everyone would have guessed it** when the marriage **never** materialized. But for a while, at least, **she would be protected**, and **she would live**. (Butler, J. G. (2008). *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew* (15). Clinton, IA: LBC Publications.).

In Matthew 1:20, the **aorist tense of the verb, considered**, indicates that he apparently came to a conclusion: he **had made up his mind**, **Joseph planned to divorce her quietly/put her away secretly (v.19)**. (Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (28). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.)

That Joseph **considered these things**, seems to indicate that **Mary had not explained her visit from the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:34) to Joseph at this time**. Joseph did **not act hastily**, but **carefully considered the relevant factors to ensure what he was doing right**. He did **not act** driven by emotion but **sought to act in a righteous manner** (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew. Life application Bible commentary* (15). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.). While he **considered these things**, **an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream**. The **angel of Joseph's dream was real**, ἐφάνη, "he **appeared**." ...The appearance in the **dream** is **actual** and **not like** the **mere images** that at other times come to our consciousness during sleep. **Joseph knew** that this **angel** had been at his bedside that night. **He regarded this dream** and the one in 2:13 exactly as did **Zacharias and Mary the angel vision they beheld with open eyes** (Lenski, R. C. H. (1961). *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (45). Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House.).

This Angel allayed his fears saying "**Joseph, son of David, do not fear/be afraid [stop being afraid] to take Mary as your wife; for that which is/has been conceived in her is from/of the Holy Spirit.**" This verse **emphasizes the supernatural character of the whole event**. **To reinforce the encouraging words**, as well as to verify Jesus' royal lineage, **the angel addressed Joseph as son of David**. Even though **Jesus was not** the biological son of Joseph, Jesus **was his legal son**. **His Father**, in actuality, was God, who conceived Him by the Holy Spirit. But **His royal right in the Davidic line came by Joseph**. In **the fulfilment of the Messianic promise** Joseph, viewed as legal heir of David and as **the one who transmits this honor to Jesus**, is **not bypassed**, **neither here nor in the preceding genealogy**, which in a sense was really **Joseph's family-tree** (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. New Testament Commentary (131). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.). **Joseph could not have had children by a previous marriage**, as some suppose, for then **Jesus would not have been heir to the Davidic throne as the oldest son of Joseph** (Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Mt 1:25). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.).

The phrase **that which is/has been conceived in her is from/of the Holy Spirit** is profound. In those words is **the ultimate testimony to the virgin birth**. It is **the testimony of the holy angel** from the Lord God Himself. The term **virgin birth** is a **misnomer**. **Neither Matthew nor Luke describes Jesus' birth at all but only his conception**. ... (It is an) **unscriptural** notion that **Mary's hymen** was **not broken at the time of delivery** (Blomberg, C. (2001). *Vol. 22: Matthew* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (57). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

- **God often shows us that we have more options than we think**. Although **Joseph seemed to be doing the right thing by breaking the engagement**, **God helped him make the best decision**. **We should always seek God's wisdom, especially when our decisions affect others** (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew. Life application Bible commentary* (15). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.).

Poem: "Mary Had The Little Lamb"

Consider this significance through a remake of the poem, “Mary had a little Lamb”: Mary had the little Lamb, who lived before His birth; Self-existent Son of God, from Heaven He came to Earth. (Micah 5:2) Mary had the little Lamb; see Him in yonder stall— Virgin-born Son of God, to save man from the Fall. (Isaiah 7:14) Mary had the little Lamb, obedient Son of God; Everywhere the Father led, His feet were sure to trod. (John 6:38) Mary had the little Lamb, crucified on the tree The rejected Son of God, He died to set men free. (1 Peter 1:18) Mary had the little Lamb—men placed Him in the grave, Thinking they were done with Him; to death He was no slave! (Matthew 28:6) Mary had the little Lamb, ascended now is He; All work on Earth is ended, our Advocate to be. (Hebrews 4:14–16) Mary had the little Lamb—mystery to behold! From the Lamb of Calvary, a Lion will unfold. (Revelation 5: 5, 6) When the Day Star comes again, of this be very sure: It won’t be Lamb-like silence, but with the Lion’s roar. (Psalm 2:12; Revelation 19:11–16) (Marv & Marbeth Rosenthal, as recorded in Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press)

In Preparing for the Presence of Christ we see how His virgin birth was:

3) Clarified (Matthew 1:21)

Matthew 1:21. [21] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (ESV)

As if to reinforce the truth of Jesus’ divine conception, the angel tells Joseph that she will bear a Son. Joseph would act as Jesus’ earthly father, but he would only be a foster father. Luke’s genealogy of Jesus through Mary’s line accurately says: Luke 3:23 [23] Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, (ESV) Joseph was told to name the Son ... Jesus. Naming the child will signify that Joseph accepts the child as his own, and this in turn will secure Jesus’ claim to Davidic ancestry (Gardner, R. B. (1991). *Matthew*. Believers church Bible commentary (39). Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press.)

Jewish boys for centuries had been given this name Jesus with the frequency of today’s John or Mike. This reflects, in part, the hope of Jewish parents for God’s salvation from centuries of oppression under a succession of world powers. God’s choice of such a common name, when he could have chosen something unique, also emphasized that Jesus came in a way that identified with “the average Joe.” He came in love to become one of us, that we might be drawn to him and become one of his. Jesus was approachable and touchable. He was one of us. “We do not have a high Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus did everything to build bridges to us (Weber, S. K. (2000). *Vol. 1: Matthew*. Holman New Testament Commentary; Holman Reference (18). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)

By His own work He would save His people from their sins. To be saved means a. to be emancipated from the greatest evil: the guilt, pollution, power, and punishment of sin; and b. to be placed in possession of the greatest good. Although in the present passage the negative alone is expressed, namely, to save—from sin, the positive is immediately implied. One cannot be saved from something without also being saved for something: true happiness, the peace of God that transcends all understanding, freedom, joy unspeakable and full of glory, answered prayers, effective witness bearing, assurance of salvation, etc (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. New Testament Commentary (133). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.)

Salvation ‘from their sins’ is initially surprising. The need for forgiveness was, of course, clearly recognized (e.g., Je. 31:34), but this was normally seen as in the hands

of God alone. When a mediating figure was involved at all, cleansing from sin was normally seen in terms of the destruction and removal of sinners and/or the moral renewal of the people ... John the Baptist's ministry provokes the confession of sins (3:6); Jesus himself forgives sins (9:2, 5, 6); his blood is finally 'poured out for the forgiveness of sins' (26:28; cf. 20:28). ... That it is 'his people' whom Jesus will save from their sins brings to the fore here the corporate dimension of forgiveness and its connection with the covenant (as in 26:28). (Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: A commentary on the Greek text* (99). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.)

- Even from this description, we see who Jesus intended to save. He came to earth not to redeem all of humanity, but his particular people. He has a mission from all eternity to die for His elect.

Illustration: "The Unspeakable Gift"

Long ago, there ruled in Persia a wise and good king. He loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived. He wanted to know about their hardships. Often he dressed in the clothes of a working man or a beggar, and went to the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited thought that he was their ruler. One time he visited a very poor man who lived in a cellar. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate. He spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left. Later he visited the poor man again and disclosed his identity by saying, "I am your king!" The king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he didn't. Instead he said, "You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the course food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!" The King of glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, gave himself to you and me. The Bible calls Him, "the unspeakable gift!" (Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.)

In Preparing for the Presence of Christ we see how His virgin birth was:

4) Connected (Matthew 1:22-23)

Matthew 1:22-23. [22]All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: [23]"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). (ESV)

Twelve times in his Gospel Matthew identifies O.T. prophecies as being fulfilled in the life of Jesus (cf. also 2:15, 23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9). This is a major theme in his Gospel, and one uniquely designed to speak to his Jewish audience (*Believer's Study Bible*. 1997 (electronic ed.) (Mt 1:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.).

At this point Matthew explains that Jesus' virgin birth was predicted by God in the Old Testament. The Lord clearly identifies the birth of Christ as a fulfillment of prophecy. All this refers to the facts about the divine birth of Jesus Christ. And the great miracle of His birth was the fulfillment of what the Lord had spoken by/through the prophet. That phrase gives a simple, straightforward definition of biblical inspiration as the Word of the Lord coming through human instruments. God had spoken; the human instrument is only a means to bring the divine Word to humanity. Based on these words of the Lord given through Matthew, the Old Testament text of Isaiah must be interpreted as predicting the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew repeatedly uses the phrase "to fulfill" (2:15, 17, 23; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54; etc.) to indicate ways in which Jesus, and events related to His earthly ministry, were fulfillments of Old Testament prophecy. The basic truths and

happenings of the New Testament were culminations, completions, or fulfillments of revelation God had already made—though often the revelation had been in veiled and partial form. Thus, for Matthew this verse is not merely an explanatory footnote to the genealogy; it also suggests new christological themes that will be developed in the Gospel. (Luz, U. (2007). *Matthew 1–7: a commentary on Matthew 1–7* (H. Koester, Ed.; Rev. ed., p. 96). Fortress Press.)

Please turn to Isaiah 7 (p.535)

The scene in Isaiah 7 is the reign of King Ahaz in Judah. Though son of the great Uzziah, he was a wicked king. He filled Jerusalem with idols, reinstated the worship of Molech, and burned his own son as a sacrifice to that god. Rezin, king of Syria (Aram), and Pekah, king of Israel (also called Samaria at that time), decided to remove Ahaz and replace him with a king who would do their bidding. In the face of such a threat to the people of Israel and to the royal line of David, Ahaz, instead of turning to God for help, sought the help of Tiglath-pileser, the evil king of the Assyrians. He even plundered and sent to Tiglath-pileser the gold and silver from the Temple.

Isaiah came to Ahaz and reported that God would deliver the people from the two enemy kings. When Ahaz refused to listen, Isaiah responded with the remarkable messianic prophecy of 7:14.

Isaiah 7:14-16. [14] Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. [15] He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. [16] For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. (ESV)

- How did a prediction of the virgin birth of Messiah fit that ancient scene? Isaiah was telling the wicked king that no one would destroy the people of God or the royal line of David. When the prophet said, “The Lord shall give you a sign,” he used a plural you, indicating that Isaiah was also speaking to the entire nation, telling them that God would not allow Rezin and Pekah, or anyone else, to destroy them and the line of David (cf Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:13). Even though the people came into the hands of Tiglath-pileser, who destroyed the northern kingdom and overran Judah on four occasions, God preserved them just as He promised.

Isaiah also refers to another child who would be born; and before that child (Mahershalal-hash-baz) would be old enough to “eat curds and honey” or “know enough to refuse evil and choose good,” the lands of Rezin and Pekah would be forsaken (Isaiah 7:15–16). Sure enough, before the child born to Isaiah’s wife was three years old those two kings were dead. Just as that ancient prophecy of a child came to pass, so did the prophecy of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both were signs that God would not ultimately forsake His people. The greatest sign was, as it reads in Matthew 1:23 that Immanuel, (which means, God with us), would come. In Isaiah 7:14, the verse here quoted by Matthew, the prophet used the Hebrew word .almâ. Old Testament usage of .almâ favors the translation “virgin.” It should be concluded that .almâ is never used to refer to a married woman. The word occurs five other times in Scripture (Ex. 2:8; Ps. 68:25; Prov. 30:19; Song of Sol. 1:3; 6:8), and in each case contains the idea of a virgin. Until recent times, it was always translated as such by both Jewish and Christian scholars. Notice, the text describes Marry as “the virgin” meaning that particular virgin destined to this unparalleled distinction (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* (Mt 1:23). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.).

Almâ can mean “**virgin**,” and that is how the Jewish translators of the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) translated the word in **Isaiah 7:14** (by the Greek *parthenos*, “virgin”)-several hundred years before the birth of Christ. **The “sign” of which Isaiah spoke** was given specifically to **King Ahaz**, who feared that the royal line of Judah might be destroyed by Syria and Israel. **The prophet assured the king** that God would protect that line. **The birth of a son** and **the death of the kings** would be the signs guaranteeing His protection and preservation. And **in the future** there would be a greater birth, the **virgin** birth of God incarnate, to assure the covenant with God’s people. **If Christ had been the son of Joseph and Mary by ordinary generation**, would he not have been a human *person* and as such a sharer in Adam’s guilt; hence, a sinner, **unable** to save himself, hence **also unable** to rescue others from sin? **In order to save us**, the Redeemer must in one person be **both God and man**, *sinless* man. **The doctrine of the virgin birth** satisfies both of these requirements. **It reveals to us Jesus Christ**, **one divine person** with **two natures: a. divine, b. sinless human** (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. New Testament Commentary (143–144). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.).

The name of the Son born to a **virgin** would be **Immanuel**, (which means, **God with us**),” **That name** was used more as a **title or description than as** a proper name. In His incarnation **Jesus** was, in the most literal sense, **God with us**. As far as our information goes, **nobody ever called Jesus “Emmanuel”**; it was **not** the child’s name **in the same sense** as “Jesus” was. **Matthew surely intends his readers to understand** that **“Emmanuel”** was **his name in the sense** that all that was involved in that name found its fulfillment in him. **The quotation and the translation of the Hebrew name** underline the fact that in Jesus **none less than God** came right where we are. And **at the end of this Gospel** there is the promise that Jesus will be with his people to the end of the age (**Matthew 28:20**)—God with us indeed. **The Old Testament repeatedly promises** that **God is present with His people**, to secure their future in His covenant. **The Tabernacle and Temple** were intended to be symbols of that divine presence. **The term for tabernacle** is *mishkân*, which comes from *shākan*, meaning to dwell rest, or abide. From that root the term *shekinah* has also come, referring to the presence of God’s glory. **The child born** was to be the Shekinah, the true Tabernacle of God (cf **John 1:14**). **Isaiah** was the instrument through which **the Word of the Lord** announced that God would dwell among His people in visible flesh and blood incarnation—**more intimate and personal** **than** the Tabernacle or Temple in which **Israel had worshipped**. (Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (31). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.).

Hymn: This is what captured the sanctified imagination of **Charles Wesley** when he composed the second stanza of his great Christmas **hymn “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.”** Wesley must have had this passage in mind when **he moved from** the thought of Jesus’ heavenly preexistence to his incarnation, ending with the powerful name **Immanuel**. “Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord! Late in time behold him come, Offspring of the virgin’s womb. Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate deity, Pleas’d as man with men to dwell. Jesus, our Emmanuel. Hark! The herald angels sing, “**Glory to the newborn King.**” (as recorded in Boice, J. M. (2001). *The Gospel of Matthew* (27). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.)

Finally, in Preparing for the Presence of Christ we see how His virgin birth was:

5) Consummated (Matthew 1:24–25)

Matthew 1:24-25. [24] When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, [25] but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. (ESV)

That **Joseph woke/arose from sleep** indicates that **the revelatory dream had come to him while he slept** (cf v 20). Such **unique, direct communication from God** was used on other occasions to reveal Scripture (see Gen. 20:3; 31:10–11; Num. 12:6; 1 Kings 3:5; Job 33:14–16). It should be noted that **all six New Testament occurrences of *onar*** (“to dream”) are in Matthew and concern the Lord Jesus Christ (see 1:20; 2:12–13, 19, 22; 27:19). **We know nothing of Joseph’s reaction**, except that **he immediately obeyed, doing as the angel of the Lord commanded him**. Joseph is **the first person in the Gospel called upon to commit himself to the significance of Jesus in the purposes of God** (Nolland, J. (2005). *The Gospel of Matthew: A commentary on the Greek text* (103). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.)

Although he knew that **taking Mary as his wife might be humiliating**, Joseph chose to obey the angel’s command to marry her. He did **not hesitate**. The decision was no longer difficult, for he simply did what he knew God wanted him to do. **His action revealed four admirable qualities:** (1) righteousness (1:19), (2) discretion and sensitivity (1:19), (3) responsiveness to God (1:24), and (4) self-discipline (1:25). **Apparently Joseph broke with tradition and took his wife**, even though **the customary one-year waiting period** had **not passed**. However, Joseph did as God commanded and “completed” their marriage by taking Mary to live with him. **No matter what the social stigma, no matter what the local gossips thought about this move, Joseph knew he was following God’s command in marrying and caring for Mary during her pregnancy** (Barton, B. B. (1996). *Matthew. Life application Bible commentary* (18–19). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.)

Finally, as **Matthew 1:25** notes, **he knew her not/kept her a virgin until she had given birth to a Son**. Matthew makes it clear that **Mary remained a virgin until she had given birth**, implying that **normal marital relations began after that time**. The **Hebrew verb “to know”** is frequently used in the Old Testament in the sense of “have sex with” (Gen 19:8; Num 31:17; 1 Sam 1:19). Thus the basis for “*he had no sexual relations with her*” (until she gave birth) (Newman, B. M., & Stine, P. C. (1992). *A handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*. UBS helps for translators; UBS handbook series (29). New York: United Bible Societies.)

The case against Mary’s perpetual virginity is strengthened by these considerations: *a.* According to both the Old and the New Testament **sexual intercourse for married couples is divinely approved** (Gen. 1:28; 9:1; 24:60; Prov. 5:18; Ps. 127:3; I Cor. 7:5, 9)...**Incontinence is definitely condemned** (I Cor. 7:5; Gal. 5:22, 23). But **no special sanctity** attaches to total abstention or celibacy. *b.* We are definitely told that **Jesus had brothers and sisters, evidently together with him members of one family** (Matt. 12:46, 47; Mark 3:31, 32; 6:3; Luke 8:19, 20; John 2:12; 7:3, 5, 10; Acts 1:14). **Mark 6:3a** [3]Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. (ESV) (Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953-2001). *Vol. 9: New Testament commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*. New Testament Commentary (144–145). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.)

As a final act of obedience to God’s instruction through the angel, Joseph called His name Jesus, indicating that **He was to be the Savior** (cf v 21). **His naming of the child** means that **he adopted him legally**. (Morris, L. (1992). *The Gospel according to Matthew* (32). Grand Rapids, Mich.; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.)

Matthew's opening chapter has provided (us) with **foundational insights** concerning **Jesus' origin and identity**. **The coming of Jesus the Christ** is the culmination of God's dealings with Israel (1:1–17). **As the long awaited Davidic Messiah** Jesus is commissioned with the task of "saving" his people (1:21). While **legally, Jesus qualifies** as an heir to the Abrahamic and Davidic promises, the **anomaly of his origin** ("from the Holy Spirit," 1:20), and the **spiritual dimensions of his work**, (i.e., to manifest God's saving presence), alert (us) to **the uniqueness of Jesus' status** (Chouinard, L. (1997). *Matthew*. The College Press NIV commentary (Mt 1:25). Joplin, Mo.: College Press.).

- **Much has been done to "Prepare His Presence"** and **with His arrival**, we indeed have **"Immanuel", God with us**.

(Format note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. (1989). *Matthew* (10–23). Chicago: Moody Press)

Closing Hymn.

Prayer Room Invitation

Benediction: Now **may the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ** **fill you with** wonder and Joy that **our God** has come unto us. **From the Love** of the **Father, through the Power** of the **Holy Spirit** **may we testify** to **this one born in Bethlehem, born** to die that **we** may live. **May the reality of this one born of humble estate** fill our hearts with wonder and awe that **we now have Immanuel; God with us. Amen.**