



Matthew 1:18-25

*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. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.*

*<sup>20</sup> 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*

**Now the birth of Jesus Christ:** Matthew, who seems to be writing with a Jewish audience in mind, tells the story of the birth of Jesus from the standpoint of Joseph rather than that of Mary, as Luke does. Luke accordingly has such stories as the appearance of the angel to Mary, but Matthew simply says that Mary became pregnant due to an activity of the Holy Spirit and then tells his readers what Joseph did.

**Joseph, son of David:** Joseph, being just, (meaning, he wanted to follow the Law) 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 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.

**an angel... Joseph, son of David:** Matthew emphasizes the heritage of Jesus; he is born into the line of David. The angel tells Joseph that Mary's pregnancy is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, a prophecy that Joseph would have known. Joseph no longer has any wish to end the betrothal he is called to, to be the husband of Mary and to name Mary's baby.

*your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.* <sup>21</sup> *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* <sup>22</sup> *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

<sup>23</sup> *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"* (which means, God with us).

<sup>24</sup> *When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*

**you shall call his name Jesus:** By giving the name Joseph officially accepted the child (cf. "I have called you by name, you are mine," Isa. 43:1); this gave the child the status of a descendant of David. On this occasion the name is not to be left to the discretion of the parent, for this child is special and has a destiny that is to be expressed in the meaning of the name. So the angel goes on to say, he (the word is emphatic: "He and no other") will save his people from their sins (cf. Ps. 130:8). The word save may mean deliver from troubles and afflictions of various kinds, but the addition here shows that what is in mind is the salvation that reckons with the plight in which people involve themselves by their evil deeds.

**to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:** Matthew repeatedly tells his readers that things happened in Jesus' birth and life and death to fulfill the ancient (400 to 800 years prior) prophecies given by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah, Moses and Malachi. This formula, when appealing to the fulfillment of prophecy, is found (sometimes with small variations) in 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9. Matthew is very interested in the way the ancient prophecies found their fulfillment in Jesus.

**Immanuel (which means, God with us):** 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 (28:20)—God with us indeed.

**he called his name Jesus:** The story is told from Joseph's point of view; thus it is natural that it concludes with him naming the child Jesus. His naming of the child means that he adopted him legally. "Jesus" is the Greek form of Joshua (Heb. 4:8). He is another Joshua to lead the true people of God into the Promised Land. The name Jesus or Joshua was a common name of the time meaning "Jehovah is Salvation".

*The three "Immanuel prophecies" are unique to the prophet Isaiah and are found in his Messianic Oracle, chapters 6 to 12. These cherished texts anticipate the coming of Immanuel, God with us, and the arrival of the ideal king, the one who would decisively change the course of history, rule with justice and bring peace.*

**The first prophecy describes the birth of Immanuel: Isaiah 7:14**

*"The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" [God with us].*

**The second prophecy describes his dominion: Isaiah 9:5-7**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*  
<sup>7</sup> *Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*

**The third prophecy describes the justice of his rule: Isaiah 11:1-5**

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*  
<sup>2</sup> *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*  
<sup>3</sup> *And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,*  
<sup>4</sup> *but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips she shall kill the wicked.*  
<sup>5</sup> *Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*