



The Incarnation

**Matthew 1:18-25**

**Messiah On A Mission - Part 2**

## **(1:18) - The Birth of Jesus the Messiah**

The word rendered “birth” in 1:18 is the same term used already in 1:1, genesis (there translated as “genealogy”). While both translations are quite in line with the different senses of this Greek word, the connection between the two sections (1:1–17, 18–25) is strengthened in that they both explicate Jesus’ “origins.” The first half of the chapter gives the genealogical and kingly origins of Jesus, specifically the genealogical line from Abraham through David. The latter half gives the more immediate familial origins, providing the connection between Joseph’s genealogy and his adoption of Jesus into his family line.



# Pledged

## Pledged to be Married

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Jewish engagements were initiated by a contract of marriage, and a legal action was required to break the engagement. This is what is meant by Joseph's intention to "divorce her" (apolyō [1:19]). According to (later) rabbinic traditions, engagements, which usually were arranged when a young woman was about twelve years old, lasted about a year, after which the couple was married, and the wife lived with the husband's family. (See Footnotes "The Jewish Wedding")

## Joseph a Righteous Man

Matthew identifies Joseph as “a righteous man” (dikaios) and connects this character trait to Joseph’s intention to divorce Mary quietly. Matthew might intend to connect Joseph’s righteous character to his intention to be merciful to Mary (he meant to divorce her quietly, without public disgrace).

## **(1:20) - An Angel of the Lord**

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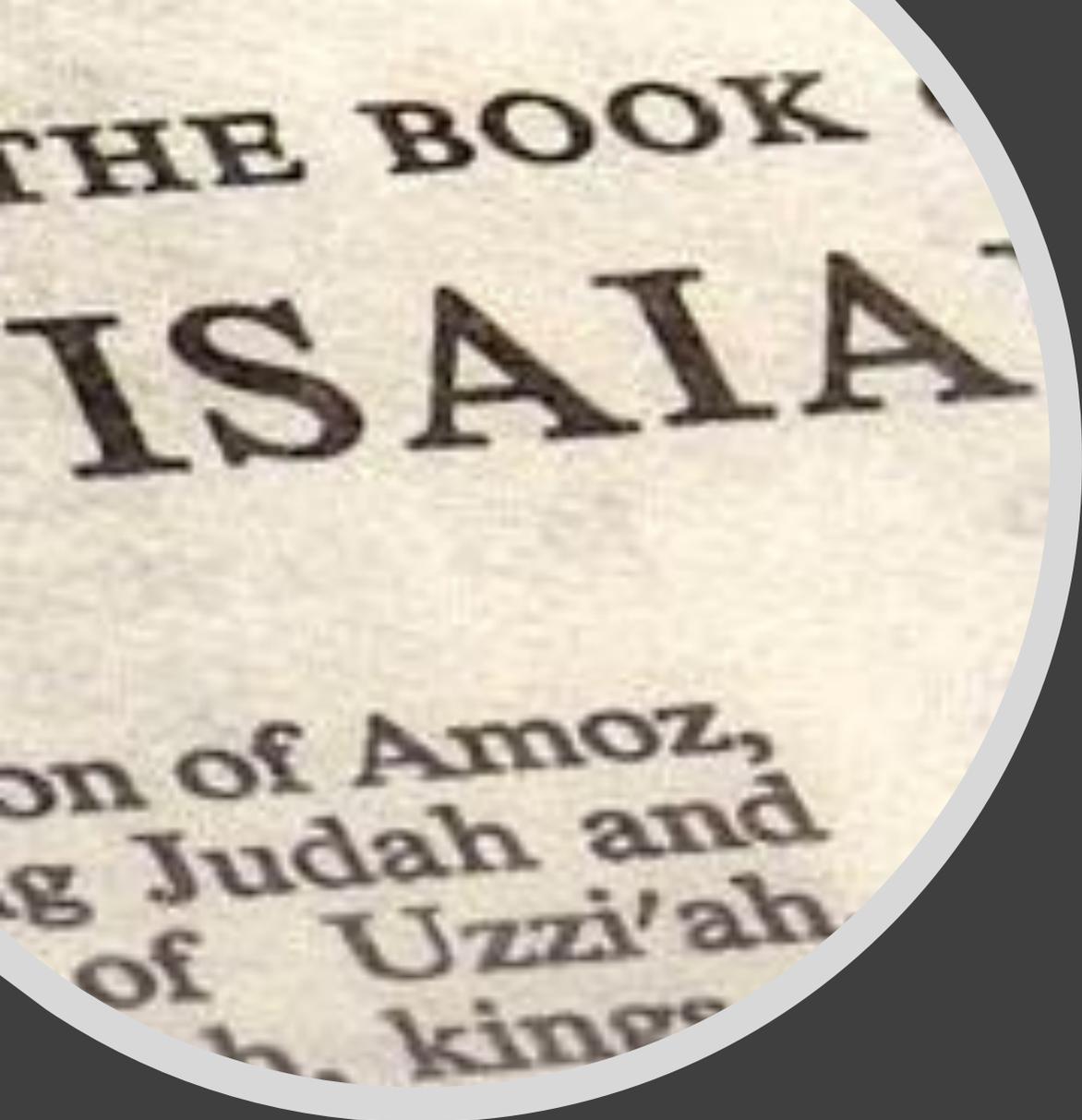
Matthew includes angels and/or divine messages, often given in dreams, quite frequently in his early chapters. Joseph is led by angelic instructions and dreams, as are the magi (1:20-21; 2:12, 13, 19-20, 22; 4:11; see also 27:19). Joseph “did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife” (1:24).



## From the Holy Spirit

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This is the first mention of the Holy Spirit in Matthew's Gospel. Although Matthew tends to tell of Jesus' presence with them (1:23; 18:20; 28:20), references to the Spirit occur often enough (e.g., 3:11, 16; 4:1; 10:20; 12:18, 28, 32; 22:43; 28:19).



## (1:22–23)- through the prophet

Matthew draws on Isaiah 7:14 for his first of ten such fulfillment quotations. Each begins with a similar formula (e.g., “so was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet” [see 2:15, 17–18, 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10]).

Matthew’s use of this formula, along with his many citations and allusions to the Old Testament, demonstrates his interest in Jesus as the one who fulfills the “Law and the Prophets” (5:17–20; 7:12). Isaiah 7:14 in its context refers to an immediate fulfillment, and specifically the devastation of Judah’s enemies Israel and Aram by Assyria before the child soon to be born grows up (Isa. 7:1–17). Matthew seems to draw on a typological reading that sees God’s work in Jesus’ birth as analogous to (and greater than) God’s saving work through the child spoken of by Isaiah (see Isa. 8:1–4; 9:6–7). Matthew uses the Isaiah link to emphasize the importance of the naming of Jesus as well as the conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (1:20). Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7:14 to show how Jesus fulfills Old Testament hopes.

(Keener, Craig, p389)



## Matthew's Use of the Old Testament Kinds of Usage

- Citations: Often one or more verses of Old Testament text are quoted.
- Allusions: Verbal links (e.g., two to four words) are made between an Old Testament text and Matthew, along with thematic ties.
- Echoes: Some verbal and/or conceptual connections are evident, usually in more than one Matthean passage. (Brown, Raymond, *Birth of the Messiah*, Bat. 8:6.)

## Kinds of Connections between Matthew and the Old Testament Text

- The Old Testament text fits a traditional understanding of prophecy-fulfillment. The Old Testament author envisions an event that is fulfilled in the New Testament context (e.g., Matt. 3:3 // Isa. 40:3: the time of restoration has come).
- The Old Testament text is used by way of analogy to explain an event portrayed by Matthew—that is, “as then . . . so now . . .”—a typological usage (e.g., Matt. 2:15 // Hosea 11:1; and Matt. 15:7–9 // Isa. 29:13: Isaiah’s generation compared to Jesus’ generation).
- The Old Testament text is used illustratively and/or expressively, often in the form of allusion (e.g., Matt. 10:35–36 // Mic. 7:6). Often in these cases the language and ideas of the Old Testament pervade the imagination of the New Testament writer, who draws from this language for expression.
- The Old Testament text is used to evoke a significant Old Testament salvation-history theme (e.g., Matt. 2:17–18 // Jer. 31:15 with its context). This use may fit another category simultaneously.
- The Old Testament is used to paint the broad strokes of Israel’s history (e.g., Matthew’s genealogy; and 23:35). (Brown, Raymond, *Birth of the Messiah*, Bat. 8:6.)

# The Incarnation

Matthew introduces Jesus as “God with us” (1:22–23), providing the church from its earliest days with a starting point for its doctrine of the incarnation. Various New Testament passages expand on this theological message and enhance Matthew’s brief reference. John 1 identifies Jesus with the Word (logos), which was with God in the very beginning and was “made flesh” in Jesus (John 1:1, 14, 18), and Colossians 1 joins John 1 in affirming Jesus as the means of creation at the beginning (Col. 1:15–16). Paul in Philippians 2:5–11 shows Jesus’ incarnation as an emptying (kenoō [v. 7], hence the theological term kenōsis) of divine prerogative and status.

# **1. Jesus is the Fulfillment of the Scriptures and Israel's Story**

Matthew has already indicated through the genealogy in 1:2–17 that Jesus completes Israel's story. With the use of his first fulfillment quotation (1:22–23), he introduces the theme that Jesus is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures. As we connect the story of Jesus with the story of Israel, we would do well to follow Matthew's lead and see the messianic importance of various Old Testament roles and figures. King, prophet, and priest are developed in the Old Testament and other Jewish writings as potential messianic categories, and Matthew draws especially on the first two for his Christology.

## **2. Jesus is Savior and Immanuel—God with us**

Two key Christological affirmations of this passage are that Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (1:21) and that Jesus is “God with us” (1:23). Jesus’ saving work is both assumed in his kingdom pronouncement and enactment (e.g., healings) and affirmed at key points in the story.

**3. Jesus is “God with us” (1:23), and Jesus makes an amazing promise in the final verse of the Gospel: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (28:20).**

## FOOTNOTES:

### Jewish Denial of a Divine Messiah

Today, in seeking to refute Matthew 1:23, Jewish theologians have sought to discredit the concept of a divine Messiah. However, evidence exists that this was not an uncommon messianic expectation. This is affirmed by modern scholarship, such as **Richard Bauckman's Jesus and the God of Isra'el (this is a very good book)** and among ancient Jewish sources such as Midrashei Geula (Midrashim of Redemption), which states, "In the future, the Holy One, blessed be he, will seat Messiah in the supernal Yeshiva [House of Study], and they will call him 'Lord,' just as they call the Creator." These books above mentioned prove that the Jewish belief in the Messiah did assume a divine realization.



## **FOOTNOTES:**

**Biblical Relevance and Practicality Demonstrated by the Incarnation**  
“More than anything, Matthew’s narrative of the virgin birth, like every other event in Matthew, explains and exalts the character of his Lord. Many Bible readers today want to hear the Bible made “relevant” and “practical” to issues like those Matthew teaches through the example of Joseph, but nothing Matthew tells us is more practical than the way he reveals the heart and character of our Lord. As we get to know Jesus better through the Scriptures, we get to know Scripture’s author and our character becomes more like his (see 2 Cor 3:14-18).

In view of Matthew 18:20 and Matthew 28:20, Matthew clearly understands God with us in Isaiah 7:14 to mean that Jesus is truly God (Mt 1:23). But as God “with us,” Jesus is also the fully human one who save[s] his people by the cross. Matthew thus invites us to consider and worship the God who accepted the ultimate vulnerability, born as an infant to poor and humiliated parents into a world hostile to his presence.” (Keener, Craig, *Matthew*, 91)

## FOOTNOTES:

### THE JEWISH WEDDING:

Matthew 1:18 When his mother Miryam was engaged to Yosef. The Hebrew/Aramaic word for “betrothal” is kiddushin, signifying “sanctification, separation” (i.e., the setting aside and separating of a particular woman for a particular man). According to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 7:4), adultery during the betrothal period is a more serious sin than adultery after marriage. Revelation 20:4 The Jewish wedding is a unique illustration of the Messiah’s relationship with his followers. It is no wonder, then, that there are numerous references to it in the New Testament. In biblical times, the process of getting married was comprised of three phases that took more than a year to complete. The actual ceremony was the culmination of these three stages. Shiddukhin, the first phase of the process, means “match” and starts with the selection of the bride. This is called a shidduk (making a match) and is performed by a shad khan (matchmaker). This is seen in Genesis 24 where Avraham (Abraham) sends his servant to make a “match” for his son, Yitz’chak (Isaac), trusting that God would guide the search. Women often became matchmakers. Sometimes, the father of the groom would make the match. In either case, this is no longer practiced. Yet, this is still a picture of believers in Yeshua having been chosen as Messiah’s bride (see Eph. 1:4).

## FOOTNOTES:

The second phase, *eyrusin*, means “betrothal.” It is the formal, one-year period when the two parties receive the betrothal blessings and become officially engaged. They are not to live together, but the commitment is so secure that it would take a religious divorce to nullify the agreement. The divorce is an option available only to the husband. Thus the lesson is clear from the Jewish wedding: believers are eternally secure in Messiah’s covenant, because it cannot be broken unless he breaks it, which he says he never will. As Yeshua said, “I give them eternal life. They will absolutely never be destroyed, and no one will snatch them from my hands” (John 10:28). During *eyrusin*, the groom has responsibilities—the most pressing being preparing the couple’s future home. Yeshua said, “In my Father’s house are many places to live. If there weren’t, I would have told you; because I am going there to prepare a place for you. Since I am going and preparing a place for you, I will return to take you with me; so that where I am, you may be also” (John 14:1–3).

The *nissuin* completes the process and the spiritual picture of Yeshua, the bridegroom, and his bride. According to ancient tradition, the groom comes for his bride at the end of the one-year *eyrusin*. Everything is made ready, and the bride eagerly awaits his arrival. The groom could come for his bride only after the father had given the command. He did not know the hour or day when this would take place. With the groom leading a procession through the streets of the village, the shofar would be sounded to the shouts of “The bridegroom comes!” At the close of *nissuin*, there is a jubilant celebration, as is the modern Jewish wedding. Revelation 19:7–8 describes a time when Yeshua “marries” his bride, the body of believers:

“Let us rejoice and be glad! Let us give him the glory! For the time has come for the wedding of the Lamb, and his Bride has prepared herself— fine linen, bright and clean has been given her to wear .”

“The wedding feast of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9) will be a great blessing to those who are invited. ‘

(The Complete Jewish Study Bible, 2016 by Hendrickson Publishers Marketing)

## FOOTNOTES:

### Legal Paternity

**Joseph gave him the name Jesus.** By obeying the angel's directive to name Mary's child (1:20), Joseph becomes Jesus' father via adoption (cf. Isa. 43:1; Luke 1:60–63).<sup>4</sup> The importance of the act of naming for the legal status of a child explains why Matthew accentuates the naming of Jesus, especially since he has raised the problem of Jesus being born from Mary but not from Joseph (1:16, 20). (Brown, Raymond, *Birth of the Messiah*, 138–39).