

Jesus Our Immanuel

Matthew 1:18-25

1. The crisis which revealed Joseph's character. (Vv. 18-19; 24-25)

- Vs. 18 – Matthew is not simply giving an account of Christ's birth – he really says nothing about his birth – but to demonstrate his divine origin and that his coming was prophesied in the Old Testament.
- Vs. 19 – Matthew tells the story of the Lord's birth from Joseph's perspective as Luke tells it from Mary's. In Matthew's account it is Joseph, in every case, who does what needs to be done. Mary is scarcely mentioned. He was the faithful father of the Messiah. This is probably due to Matthew's concentration on the royal ancestry credited to Jesus through Joseph his father, not Mary his mother.
- The term “divorce” reminds that betrothal had a greater legal significance than does engagement in our day. If the male fiancé died during the betrothal the woman was called a widow. To end a betrothal a writ of divorce had to be obtained. Joseph was both a righteous and compassionate man. He could have exposed her (supposed) sin publicly but he did not want to do that to her.
- Vs. 25 – The natural sense of “until” is that Joseph and Mary had a normal married life after Jesus was born, contrary to the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary's perpetual virginity. The natural sense of Jesus being called her “firstborn” in Luke is that Mary had other children and that the “brothers” of Jesus mentioned in Matt. 12:46 were also her children by Joseph, also contrary to the notion that she remained a virgin the rest of her life.



2. The miracle which revealed God's purpose.

(Vv. 20-23)

- Vs. 20 – Notice that Joseph is addressed as “son of David.” Matthew is reminding us that Jesus hails from the royal line.
- Vs. 21 – Joseph is instructed to “call his name Jesus.” By giving him this name Joseph was formally and officially accepting the child as his own and Jesus thus became himself a “son of David.”
- Vs. 22 – The events of Christ's life were the fulfillment of the prophecies of the ancient Scriptures. The virgin conception of Jesus is the fulfillment of Isa. 7:14. Matthew will use this form of words, this fulfillment terminology, to prove that Jesus is the Christ for whom Israel has longed (2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:25; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9).
- Vs. 23 - So far as we know, no one called Jesus “Immanuel.” It was not his name in the sense that Jesus was. It is more the description of his life than his given name. It is a reflection of the fact that God has now come near his people. He has “tabernacle” among them (John 1:14). In the older administration of the covenant the worship practices of God's people reminded them

of the distance between them and God. But in Jesus God has now come near to his people. He is, quite literally, *with* them.

Why we believe in the virgin conception of Jesus:

a) The Bible teaches it.

- Christians are people who believe that the Bible is God's Word.
- The Old Testament prophesies the virgin birth and the New Testament records it.

b) The Nature of Jesus requires it.

- Jesus is both God and man. He is God incarnate.
- Philippians 2:5-11 / Colossians 1:15-20
- The virgin birth ensured the union of the human and divine that is the root of Christ's dual nature. He must be truly human if He is to be one with us and atone for our sin. He must be truly divine if He is to be without the guilt and corruption of sin and able to endure the infinite wrath of God against sin. The virgin birth is the necessary foundation upon which this doctrine is built.

c) Our salvation depends upon it.

- We needed a Savior who was both perfect and human. He had to possess all of the holiness and perfection of God and, at the same time, to stand in our place fully identifying with our humanity and representing us before the Father.

3. The name which revealed God's grace. (Vs. 21)

- "Jesus" as a name, both by its sound (it sounds like "he will save") and its etymology (which was "Yahweh is salvation") means "savior." [France, 78]

Jesus name tells us at least two things:

a) We are sinners.

- Romans 3:23 – "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
- Romans 6:23 – "The wages of sin is death..."
- Ephesians 2:1 – "And you were dead in trespasses and sins..."

b) God saves sinners.

- Thus the angel defines for Joseph the heart of the mission of the Child now in the womb of Mary. He is a special child. He is "of the Holy Spirit." He is "God with us." And what does He come to do? He comes to save. He does not come primarily to teach, though He does teach, and we need his teaching. He does not come primarily to heal, though He does heal and we need healing. He does not come primarily to comfort, though He does comfort and we need comforting. He comes to save us.