



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N49 December 5, 2021

WONDER

“The Wonder of Faith”

Matthew 1:18-25

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

Psalm 121:1-2



What does the incarnation teach us about God?

The fact that our God is a personal God is hardly more evident than it is in the incarnation. The doctrine of the incarnation is presented in John 1. In the opening verse John tells his readers, “In the beginning was the Word [Gk. *logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Then in verse 14 he says, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” If the Word is God, and the Word became flesh, then God became flesh. God made his dwelling among us in the person of Jesus Christ. “We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Incarnation may be defined this way: The “Logos” took to himself a human nature, thereby permanently uniting the eternal second person of the Trinity to the human being, Jesus Christ.

The incarnation was anticipated in the Old Testament. One author writes, “In this prophecy concerning Messiah in Isaiah 9:6, Isaiah foretold the union of Deity and humanity in Him. He said that a child would be born (a reference to humanity) and that His character would be such that He may be designated as the Mighty God (*el gibbor*, reference to Deity). Isaiah uses *el* only in reference to God (see 31:3); *gibbor* means hero. Thus the phrase means a hero whose chief characteristic is that He is God. Thus in this single verse both the humanity and deity of our Lord are predicted. The name Immanuel reveals the same truth about the Lord (Isa. 7:14). This means more than God’s presence with His people in His providential dealings. It means in this text that the very presence of the virgin-born Child brings God to His people” (Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 277).

About God becoming a human being, Philip Yancey writes, “I learned about incarnation when I kept a salt-water aquarium. Management of a marine aquarium, I discov-

ered, is no easy task. I had to run a portable chemical laboratory to monitor the nitrate levels and the ammonia content. I pumped in vitamins and antibiotics and sulfa drugs and enough enzymes to make a rock grow. I filtered the water through glass fibers and charcoal, and exposed it to ultraviolet light. You would think, in view of all the energy expended on their behalf, that my fish would at least be grateful. Not so. Every time my shadow loomed above the tank they dove for cover into the nearest shell. They showed me one ‘emotion’ only: fear. Although I opened the lid and dropped in food on a regular schedule, three times a day, they responded to each visit as a sure sign of my designs to torture them. I could not convince them of my true concern.

“To my fish I was deity. I was too large for them, my actions too incomprehensible. My acts of mercy they saw as cruelty; my attempts at healing they viewed as destruction. To change their perceptions, I began to see, would require a form of incarnation. I would have to become a fish and ‘speak’ to them in a language they could understand.

“A human being becoming a fish is nothing compared to God becoming a baby. And yet according to the Gospels that is what happened at Bethlehem. The God who created matter took shape within it, as an artist might become a spot on a painting or a playwright a character within his own play. God wrote a story, only using real characters, on the pages of real history. The Word became flesh” (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, 38, 39).

Through the incarnation, God is involved in and cares about everyone’s daily life. About the coming of God’s Son, Paul writes: “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Gal 4:4-5).

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EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Matthew 1:18-25

18 *This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.* 19 *Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

20 *But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.* 21 *She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

22 *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

24 *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Jesus the Messiah" in v. 18 and in the margin write, "Cf. vv. 1, 16."
- Circle "pledged" and "came together" in v. 18; "husband" and "divorce" in v. 19; "Immanuel" in v. 23; and "consummate" in v. 25.
- Bracket "was found" and "through the Holy Spirit" in v. 18; and "is conceived in her" and "from the Holy Spirit" in v. 20.
- Circle "this" in v. 20.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 18, 20, 25.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in vv. 19, 20.
- Circle "save" in v. 21.
- Highlight "Immanuel, which means God with us" in v. 23.
- Double underline "give him the name Jesus" in v. 21 and "gave him the name Jesus" in v. 25. Highlight v. 22.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Explain the *chronological* relationship between events recorded in Luke 1:26-56 and in Matthew 1:18-25.
 2. Paraphrase verse 18 to clarify its meaning; use “engaged,” “married,” and “baby” in your paraphrase.
 3. *How* do you think Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant?
 4. Describe Joseph’s dilemma (v. 19), *what* he decided to do to resolve it, and *why*.
 5. *What* did the angel *command* Joseph to do instead?
 6. *Why* was he to do such a thing?
 7. Put *what* Matthew had to say about the birth of Jesus in a nutshell.
 8. *What* do you believe about *Joseph* from what Matthew wrote?
 9. *What* do you believe about *Jesus* from what Matthew wrote?
 10. **Discussion:** What do you find most amazing about this narrative?
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Commentary On The Text

In the opening section of his Gospel (1:1-17), Matthew shows us Jesus' family tree, which lists David, Israel's great king, and the patriarch, Abraham, among his renowned ancestors. He did this to persuade us that as the son of David and the son of Abraham, Jesus had a legal claim to the throne of David, thereby justifying his opening reference to him as "Jesus the Messiah." Then when alluding to Jesus' parents at the end of his genealogy, Matthew refers in a roundabout way to Joseph not as Jesus' father but the "husband of Mary" and to Mary not as Jesus' mother but the one "of whom Jesus was born" (ESV). He does this in anticipation of something remarkable about Jesus—something he is about to reveal.

In the following section (1:18-21), the Apostle continues this roundabout talk as he goes on to explain "how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about" (v. 18). "His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph," he says, "but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit." Concerning their *relationship*, one author writes, "If typical Jewish custom were followed, she may well have been still a young teenager. Joseph may have been considerably older. Engagement in ancient Judaism was legally binding and required divorce if it were to be broken, but sexual relations and living together under one roof were not permitted until after the marriage ceremony. Joseph could therefore be spoken of already as Mary's husband, but Matthew emphasizes this was 'before they came together'" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 57).

The reason behind Matthew's way of speaking becomes increasingly clear as the passage unfolds. Jesus was begotten by the Holy Spirit, not by Joseph. Concerning his *miraculous conception*, the same author writes, "The virginal conception has regularly been understood as a way by which Jesus could be both fully human and fully divine. His father, in essence, was God, through the work of the Holy Spirit; his mother was the fully human woman, Mary. As fully God, Jesus was able to pay the eternal penalty for our sins (v. 21) for which finite humanity could not atone. As fully human he could be our adequate representative and substitutionary sacrifice" (Blomberg, 58). Once Gabriel pointed this out to Joseph in a dream, he changed his mind about divorcing Mary. Instead he decided to do as the angel commanded. He decided to take Mary to be his wife and to name the son she was going to bear, Jesus, because as the angel

had said, "he will save his people from their sins."

But that was just the beginning, as Philip Yancey recognizes. "Today as I read the accounts of Jesus' birth, I tremble to think of the fate of the world resting on the responses of two rural teenagers. How many times did Mary review the angel's words as she felt the Son of God kicking against the walls of her uterus? How many times did Joseph second-guess his own encounter with an angel—*just a dream?*—as he endured the hot shame of living among villagers who could plainly see the changing shape of his fiancée?" (*The Jesus I Never Knew*, 31, 32).

Why did such a remarkable thing happen? According to Matthew (1:22-24), "To fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet." Isaiah, an eighth-century prophet sent to King Ahaz of Judah gave the house of David a sign, the sign of the virgin birth, which served to confirm God's faithfulness to his promise to David. The house of David outlasted the threat of Israel and Syria allied against it in Isaiah's day, and the child of the house of David soon to be born would be Immanuel, "God with us" in the fullest sense. Jesus was the one of whom Isaiah spoke.

Names are important in this passage. Names are important in our day, but they were far more important in that culture, "being thought of as linked with or pointing to the actual character and destiny of the individual" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 19). With regard to Mary's son, "Both his common name and his titular name indicate profound truths: Jesus specifies what he does ('God saves'), and Immanuel specifies who he is ('God with us'). These are highly charged names that speak of a profound Christological orientation by Matthew. Note how he concludes his Gospel with the same theme, where Jesus promises his disciples, 'I will be with you always' (28:20). In Jesus Messiah, God is with us indeed" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 81).

The piety of Mary and Joseph is obvious from the birth narratives. After Gabriel revealed to Mary that she would conceive and give birth to a son, even though she was a virgin, she believed the angel and submitted to God's will, saying, "'I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled'" (Lk 1:38). And when the same angel told Joseph that Mary's child was conceived by the Holy Spirit and that he was to take her home as his wife, "he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him" (Mt 1:24) without further question.

Word Studies/Notes

v. 18 *Jesus the Messiah* “On the one hand, this paragraph shows how Jesus came to have the legal status of a son of David even though Joseph did not father him: ‘Joseph son of David’ (v. 20) made Jesus his son by taking Mary to wife prior to Jesus’ birth and by naming the infant on his birth (cf. *m. B. Bat.* 8:6). Without this explanation the preceding genealogy of Joseph is pointless” (Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew*, 20).

v. 18 *pledged* Cf. “Engaged” (TEV, NET, NRSV), “betrothed” (NKJV, NASB). “On the other hand, this paragraph highlights Jesus’ deity by noting that Mary became pregnant after her betrothal to Joseph but before her marriage to and cohabitation with him” (Gundry, 20). Engagement “was a binding arrangement; the betrothed could be called ‘the wife’ of her fiancé as is the case with Mary here (v. 20); the young man could similarly be called the girl’s ‘husband’ as is Joseph here (v. 19)”. To break a betrothal, divorce proceedings were necessary” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 27), and “the death of one party made the other a widow or widower” (Gundry, 21; For more detailed descriptions of the betrothal and wedding see Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 73, 74).

v. 18 *came together* “Were married” (TEV). The Greek word can refer to “coming together in a sexual sense” (see BAGD); here it refers to “coming together in marriage,” which would naturally entail the sexual sense. The word “before” precludes the possibility that Joseph was Jesus’ biological father.

v. 18 *was found* Another example of the *divine passive* (see “of whom Jesus was born” in v. 16, ESV) that here underscores the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of Jesus. Evidently, sometime after Gabriel visited her (Lk 1:26-38), Mary told Joseph that she was pregnant along with what the angel had said. “By the time of the narrative in Matthew, Mary is approximately four months pregnant. She has spent three months with Elizabeth, her ‘relative’ (Lk 1:36, 56), but now returns to Nazareth, where she ‘was found’ to be pregnant. This does not imply that Mary has attempted to conceal the pregnancy (i.e., she is ‘found out’), but rather that it becomes known to others including Joseph. This is not yet public knowledge, because Joseph can still divorce her privately (1:19)” (Wilkins, 74).

v. 19 *and yet* “Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break the engagement privately” (TEV).

v. 19 *divorce* Although Joseph had not taken Mary home as his wife, he had to “divorce” her to

terminate their engagement. “On the one hand, he could seek a public divorce, where her condition will become known overtly. But then she will be subject to community disgrace as an adulteress, and it could make her liable to be stoned according to the law. On the other hand, he could divorce her privately. The law did not require the deed to be made public, making allowance for a relatively private divorce (two or three witnesses). The latter was the only option that would allow Joseph to maintain his personal righteousness according to the law and yet save Mary from public disgrace and from possible death” (Wilkins, 75).

v. 20 *considered* Joseph had apparently made up his mind to quietly divorce Mary either because 1) he *did not believe* that what was conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit (i.e., she had been unfaithful, which is the common view), or 2) because he *did believe* that what was conceived in her was from the Holy Spirit but in deference to God’s plan for Mary decided to divorce her (see Gundry 21-22, italics added). Either is possible.

v. 20 *take Mary home* That is, as his wife (see v. 24). Joseph had decided not to take Mary home to live with him – not to marry her – but the angel persuaded him to reverse his decision.

v. 20 *angel of the Lord* I.e., Gabriel (see Lk 1:19, 26)

v. 21 *Jesus* “Jesus” is Greek for Joshua, which means “the LORD saves.”

v. 21 *he* The Greek word is emphatic, “He and no other will save his people from their sins.”

v. 21 *save* The Greek word can mean, “to deliver” or “to rescue” from various kinds of troubles and afflictions, but here the salvation in question pertains to sin with its dire consequences.

v. 22 *Immanuel* The child’s name was “Jesus.” He was called “Immanuel,” i.e., “God with us,” in the sense that “all that was involved in that name found its fulfillment in him” (Morris, 31).

v. 23 *fulfill* A good, yet brief, discussion of Matthew’s use of Isaiah 7:14 can be found in Wilkins, 78-81 and also in Blomberg, 59-61.

v. 25 *did not consummate* Lit., “was not knowing her.” In both Hebrew and Greek “to know” is frequently used as a euphemism for sexual relations (cf., “did not know her” NKJV). Other translations include “did not have marital relations with her” (NET), “had no sexual relations with her” (TEV), “kept her a virgin” (NASB).

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APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Mary's son, begotten by the Holy Spirit, was named Jesus by Joseph, because the child came to save us from our sins, and was called Immanuel, because God is with us through him.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

It's not often we go over the same passage more than once a year. In fact, as we close 2 Timothy, it's likely we won't study that book again for years. Thankfully, we get to dive deep into the Christmas story every year, and it never gets old. There are many facets of the Christmas story that we could spend time at length unpacking, and discovering, leading us to a better understanding of Jesus' character and God's true love for His people. This year we begin our Christmas series exploring the wonder of faith through Joseph. Humble, honorable Joseph who took the supporting role behind Mary's lead and crushed it. In a patriarchal culture where women were considered property, Joseph demonstrated true obedience to the Lord's calling no matter the cost. Despite what his family, neighbors or community would say about his decision to trust God over his personal rights, Joseph chose to live in faith over fear, obeying the angel of the Lord, continuing in his marriage to Mary and agreeing to be the earthly father to a son not his own. We may not know much about Joseph, but we can trust that he was kind, self-sacrificing, and hard working. His words were few, but his faith is written and recorded for all to see. Dads, you have a God-given job not too far removed from the one assigned to Joseph. Live as a true example of faith and godliness to the gifts the Lord has entrusted to you—your spouse and your kids. Lead and model faith in obedience; those gifts will follow. We're praying for you!


What Does The Bible Say?	What Do You Think?	What Do You Do?
<p>Read Matthew 1:18-25.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What problem did Joseph face? 2. Who appeared to Joseph? What did they tell Joseph to do? 3. How did Joseph obey? 	<p>Was it hard for Joseph to make this decision? Why or why not?</p>	<p>What does <i>Immanuel</i> mean? What are some other names of Jesus?</p>

CORE COMPETENCY: Faithfulness

I am loyal to God and others, so they know they can count on me.

MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders."

<h2>KidPIX COUPON</h2> <p>Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week. Questions: kids@wearecentral.org</p>	<p>_____ I completed my Bible Study _____ I memorized this week's verse _____ I brought my Bible to church _____ I brought a friend</p> <p>_____ CHILD'S NAME</p> <p>_____ GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE</p>	
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OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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