

Immanuel is Born

God's Word:

Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verse:

*"She will bear a son; and you shall call His name Jesus,
for He will save His people from their sins."*

- Matthew 1:21



Breaking It Down:



The birth of Jesus is recorded in two of the Gospels, Matthew and Luke. Luke tells the story primarily from the perspective of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Matthew's account focuses primarily on Joseph.

There is little information about Joseph in the Gospels. He was a descendant of David, the husband of Mary, and the legal guardian of Jesus. By trade, he was a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). It can be deduced from Scripture that Joseph possessed great integrity and firm moral conviction (Matthew 1:19). Regardless of what God desired of him, he was willing to obey. Because he was a devout Jew, Joseph no doubt made sure Jesus received good spiritual training as He grew up. Joseph is last mentioned when Jesus was 12 years old (Luke 2:42-48). Many believe Joseph died by the time Jesus entered His public ministry.

In Joseph's time, being engaged was a legally binding pledge between a man and a woman. This "contract" required that each partner remain faithful to the other. Unlike many couples today, they did not live together or engage in sexual relations until they were married. Only a "bill of divorce" could dissolve the marriage contract. A divorce was easier to obtain during the engagement period than it was after the marriage had been consummated. Once the marriage vows were completed, a divorce was allowed only in the case of adultery.

It is during the engagement period that Joseph learns that Mary is pregnant and thus presumes she committed adultery. At first, Joseph decides that rather than publicly disgrace Mary, he would “divorce” her quietly. Even though the pregnancy would eventually be known, Joseph would not be the one making it public. God intervenes before Joseph can carry out his plan for divorce. In a dream, an angel assures Joseph that he is to be part of a mighty act of God. Joseph is not only told to take Mary home as his wife, but he is also given the name to be given to this Child. God knew that Jesus would need a good earthly father and mother to prepare Him for the work that lay ahead. The choosing of Mary and Joseph for those roles speaks of God’s view of their characters.

One of the primary purposes behind Matthew’s writing of his Gospel was to show that Jesus is the one who fulfills the many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. He was born physically, as we were, including labor pains. But His birth fulfills prophecy and occurred in a way that only God could have arranged. It was miraculous, one of a kind, and never to be repeated. Matthew’s explanation of the purpose of the virgin birth is very simple: it fulfills prophecy. It is the sign Isaiah anticipated. It is a confirmation of God’s hand in the creation of this Child.



Living It:

Wesley Autrey, a construction worker, was waiting for the subway with his two daughters in Manhattan on Jan. 2, 2007. Nearby, Cameron Hollopeter had a seizure and fell onto the tracks just as a train was coming. With the train bearing down, Autrey jumped onto the tracks and pulled the thrashing Hollopeter into a 21 inch-deep trough between the rails. The train brushed his cap as it rolled over them. A U.S. Senate resolution praised Autrey for acting responsibly and, as all would agree, heroically, with courage.



Joseph is another example of courage. Awakening from his dream, he did as the angel instructed him. He took Mary under his protection by marrying her. He named “their” son Jesus, the name that had come by divine instruction. He showed great trust in the Lord. His reputation was still at stake, yet he submitted that to the Lord. Joseph knew that he and Mary were not guilty of immorality. Though others might have presumed otherwise, he did not allow that to deter his obedience.





Questions:

1. Why did Joseph initially decide to “divorce” Mary?
2. What does Joseph’s obedience to the angel’s command suggest about Joseph’s character?
3. What can we learn from Joseph’s obedience to God?
4. Who did it? Matthew 1:24 says Joseph “did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.” The Bible offers many examples of individuals who did exactly as the Lord commanded. Look up each passage of Scripture and indentify “Who Did It.”

Genesis 7:5 _____

Genesis 12:4 _____

Exodus 19:7 _____

Judges 6:27 _____

Jonah 3:3 _____

Matthew 3:13-15 _____

Luke 5:27-28 _____

Acts 1:4 _____

Acts 9:10-17 _____

Acts 18:9-11 _____



Do It!

Most of us don't like changes in direction in life when we have other plans. Joseph had such an interruption. He reacted nobly and rightly, as he understood God's will. This week, think about the following commitment and sign it. The next time God changes your plans, remember the courage Joseph displayed by submitting to God's plans.

O Lord, the One who knows the future, I will submit to the changes You bring to my comfortable, well-thought-out plans. Give me the faith and courage of Joseph.

Signed _____