

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

## Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

### 3- Immanuel Has Come!

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Church November 28, 2021

#### **Matthew 1:18-25**

**18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.**

**19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.**

**20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.**

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

**22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:**

**23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."**

**24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,**

**25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.**

To the Glory of God

Now the primary Focus of the Apostle Matthew in this Passage is centered around verses 22&23 that says:

**22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:**

**23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."**

And that tells us that the Virgin Birth of Jesus is a “*Primary Truth*” of Christianity. So, belief in the Virgin Birth is part of “*Christian Orthodoxy*”; it is an “*Essential Truth*” of the Christian Faith. And that means that we are to believe; and proclaim; and defend the Fact that Jesus was born of a virgin- if we hope to be saved.

So, the Apostle Matthew teaches here- clearly and unapologetically- that Jesus was born of a virgin in a miraculous Act of God. So, the main Point that Matthew is making in this Passage is that the Birth of Jesus IS the *fulfillment* of **Isaiah 7:14** that says:

**Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.**

... and then at the end of verse 23, the Apostle Matthew himself adds infallible Commentary to this Prophecy from **Isaiah** and tells us that the Hebrew word, “*Immanuel*” means: “*God with us*”.

So, what Matthew is boldly saying to his Jewish readers by linking Jesus to the Prophecy of **Isaiah 7:14** is that Jesus is “*God with us*”- which is to say that Jesus is the Messiah. But instead of Jesus being a warrior or a military leader- Jesus is God Almighty in human Flesh.

And this would have been a staggering thing for Matthew to say. In fact, most Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century would consider a Statement like that to be blasphemous.

We need to remember that before Jesus was born- God had never been a part of His Creation. You see, part of what it means when we say that God is “*Holy*” is that God is separate from what He made. So, God is unlike; He is set apart; and unique from all that exists. And that doesn’t merely mean that God is different from what He made- but also that He is BETTER than what has been made. So, in **Psalm 19:1**- David was “*moved*” by God the Holy Spirit to say,

**The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.**

... which means that the “*Glory*” that the Heavens are “*telling*” of- is NOT its *own* Glory- but the Heavens are attempting to reflect God’s Glory.

Now why is that? Why don’t the Heavens tell of their *own* glory? They DO have a glory themselves- but instead of displaying their own glory- the Heavens testify about God’s. So, why do they do this? Because the Heavens understand that the Glory of God is infinitely BETTER and MORE IMPORTANT

than any kind of “glory” that a created object might have. Oh, that Man would come to that understanding!

And so, God’s primary Goal is that fallen, wicked rebels “see” or “behold” what the Heavens tell of: God in His Glory. Because when our eyes are miraculously unveiled; and we are given the Gift of being able to see God in His pristine Beauty and Worth and Value and Magnificence- two things ALWAYS happen:

1. We will love what we see
2. We will be changed into what we see

... but Sin stops that from happening.

And that means that satan’s primary Goal is to keep us blinded- so that we CANNOT see the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus, the Christ. Satan will open our eyes to anything EXCEPT the Glory of God. So, he goes to great lengths to keep us blinded. And that is what the Apostle Paul was talking about in **2Corinthians 4:3, 4&6:**

**3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

**6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

So, there is the created Universe. And then OUTSIDE of that Creation- there is God. So, even though God is completely INVOLVED in the moment- by-moment Actions of the entire Universe- He is totally *SEPARATE* from them. So, ever since Adam fell- there is a space; a distance; a barrier; a separation that divides between God and His Creation. And that is what the Prophet meant when he said this in **Isaiah 59:2b:**

**... your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.**

... which is what makes the “*Incarnation*” so breathtaking.

Now the word, “*Incarnation*” itself had to literally be *invented* by the early Church because there wasn’t a word in any language to describe the moment when

God became Man. From “Eternity Past” until the moment described here by the Apostle Matthew- God had never become Man. So, the early Church took the Latin word, “*Carne*” which means: “*Flesh*” or “*Meat*” and they put the modifier, “*In*” before it; and they got “*Incarne*” which is the “*in-Fleshing*” or the “*Fleshing*” of God.

So, God Almighty with human Flesh- is Jesus. You see, God the Father has NO literal, physical Body. The Bible teaches that God the Father is pure “Spirit”. So, He is NOT able to be measured or limited or defined by either Time or Space. God simply “IS”. And God “IS” from all Eternity.<sup>1</sup>

And from all Eternity- the one, single God has existed in three separate and distinct “Persons” of God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. So, God the Son- Jesus, the Christ- is every bit as much “God” as God the Father. Jesus is fully Deity. And as fully Deity- Jesus *can* and *should* be worshipped and glorified. But in what way is Jesus fully Deity? Jesus is God- in His “*Essence*” or His “*Substance*”.

Yet Jesus is also fully Man. So, IN ADDITION to being fully God- Jesus is also fully Man. But how should we understand this? Jesus is NOT 50% God and 50% Man. He is also NOT God in the Mornings and then Man in the Evenings. And He isn’t God on Mondays; Wednesdays; and Fridays; while being Man on Tuesdays; Thursdays and Saturdays. No, Jesus is FULLY God and FULLY Man- all the time. The 4<sup>th</sup> Century Preacher, John Chrysostom said that Jesus was,

“... fully God and fully Man in the same body at the same time without conflict or contradiction...”

So, the word, “*Incarnation*” describes *the* single most amazing and magnificent Miracle that the world has ever or will ever see- the moment when God Almighty *inserted* Himself into His Own Creation and became a *part* of what He alone had made. God has become Man!

Now as you study the many false religions and human Philosophies that have existed throughout History- you find that they all seek to answer the same Question:

### **How can Man become god?**

How can humans reach to the Heavens and become part of the Divine? But Christianity alone teaches that God took on flesh and came down from Heaven to dwell on earth as a Man!

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:14

And that is why Matthew not only tells us that Jesus is God- but also that Jesus is God- WITH US! So, God is now here! After over 400 years of Silence- God is no longer distant. So, God Almighty has come near to us and now dwells among us!

But “God dwelling with us” did NOT happen the way that everybody thought it might. Because God did NOT wait for us to “clean ourselves up” or “become worthy” BEFORE He came to be with us. No, God has come to dwell with us FIRST- and then He will save us; and clean us; and MAKE us worthy. And this is what the Prophet meant when he said this in **Ezekiel 36:23-28**:

**23 “I will vindicate the holiness of My great name which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord,” declares the Lord God, “when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight.**

**24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land.**

**25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.**

**26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

**27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**

**28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.**

Notice here that the only one who does anything here is God. Man doesn't *initiate* any of this. We don't even *cooperate* with God in any of this. In fact, we don't even *ask* God for any of this. All of what the Prophet saw here is a sovereign Act of God alone. And it can be summarized by what the angel told Joseph in **Matthew 1:21b**- that Jesus will...

**... save His people from their sins.**

Now this is the BEST News in all the world! In fact, this is the GREATEST News that anybody could ever receive! Immanuel has come! And Jesus will go out to seek and save His people from their Sins! And fallen, wicked rebels will be given the Gift of being able to behold the Glory of God in the Face of Jesu Christ. And they will love what they see; and they will be changed into what they see. So,

after 400 years of Silence- God is no longer distant from us! What could be greater than this?

And yet there is one person, who is not happy. At all. In fact, the way that God chose to take on Flesh and become Man has put Joseph into a terrible tailspin. And in verses 18-25- Matthew was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to give us the Account of the titanic Struggle that Joseph was going through because of all of this.

Now Matthew begins this Section of his Gospel Record by saying,

### **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows:**

Yet Matthew does not give us any of the details of the angel meeting with Mary like Dr. Luke did. In fact, Matthew doesn’t hardly address Mary at all. Instead, the main Issue that the Apostle deals with in this section- is Joseph’s *response* to all of this. So, why did Matthew write like this?

Some would say, “*Well, Brother Blair, it was because Luke had already given such great detail that Matthew had no need to simply repeat what Luke wrote.*” But Luke’s Gospel Account was written AFTER **Matthew** had already been published and distributed. According to what I can find- the **Gospel of Matthew** could have been written as early as 50AD- which would have been just 21 years after the Resurrection. Dr. Luke wrote both his Gospel Record and the Book of the Acts around 60-61AD. The Church Historian, Eusebius (265-339AD) wrote “*Ecclesiastical History*”. And in Book 6 page 25- he quotes one of the early Fathers of the Church, Origen, who said,

“Among the four Gospel, which are the only indisputable ones in the Church of God under heaven, I have learned by tradition that the first was written by Matthew, who was once a publican, but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, and it was prepared for the converts from Judaism.”

Now The Bible doesn’t give us a lot of information about Joseph- but what it *does* give us tells us a lot. For example, right out of the gate we need to remember what Matthew says about Joseph. He said Joseph was a “**righteous man**”. So, Joseph was saved. He believed. He had experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and Joseph had been brought into “right standing” with God by Grace alone through Faith alone.

And we are given several examples of just what a godly man Joseph really was. For example, over in Luke’s Account (**Luke 2**)- Joseph named the baby, “*Jesus*”<sup>2</sup>- in humble Obedience to what Mary told him the angel told her (**Luke**

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<sup>2</sup> Jesus’ actual Hebrew name was “*Yeshua*” or “*Joshua*”- which means: *The Lord is Salvation*. The Greek rendition of that name is “*Iesous*” which corresponds to the Latin, “*Iesus*”, from which we get, “*Jesus*” in English.

**1:31**); AND in humble Obedience to what the angel told him in a dream (**Matthew 1:21**). Now he *could* have named him anything he wanted to- but he didn't. He obeyed the angel of the Lord and named the baby, "Jesus". And this tells us that Joseph loved the Lord and sought to be obedient.

Again, Dr. Luke also tells us that Joseph took Mary and the eight- day old baby Jesus into the Temple to have him circumcised. Why? Because the Old Testament told him to. So, once again, we see that Joseph sought to be obedient- even when it wasn't convenient.

But it is the Account here in **Matthew 1:18-25** that tells us volumes about this man. And verse 19 gives us great insight into the Struggle that Joseph had when Mary announced to him that she was pregnant- supposedly by a miraculous Act of God.

**And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.**

Now the phrase, "**send her away**" comes from a Greek word (*aphiethsomai*; Strong's # 863) that has to do with "*letting go*" of someone important to you. It has to do with "*freeing yourself*" from another; or being able "*to have no obligation*" toward another. So, what Joseph was considering was a 1<sup>st</sup> Century equivalent of a modern "*Divorce*".

So, Joseph was contemplating divorcing Mary. But why would he do that? Matthew tells us. He said that Joseph was a

**... righteous man ...**

So, it was precisely *because* he was a "**righteous man**" that motivated Joseph to think about divorcing Mary. But what happened that righteous Joseph would contemplate divorcing Mary? Matthew tells us:

**... she was found to be with child...**

So, the news; or the understanding that Mary was "with child" caused such a Disturbance inside of Joseph- that he considered divorcing her. Why? Because it was obvious to Joseph that Mary had sinned; and that she had been intimate with another man- probably a pagan Roman soldier; and was now pregnant.

So, the sweet, wonderful, and glorious News about the Birth of Jesus that we all sing about; and that seems so serene and precious around this time of the year-

was such a “gut punch” to Joseph- that he was going to divorce the women he loved. Because in Joseph’s mind- Mary had betrayed him so horribly that there was just no way he could stay with her.

Now before we think badly about Joseph’s response here- we need to remember what Moses taught in the Torah<sup>3</sup> about what was *supposed* to be done with someone, who had been unfaithful. In **Exodus 20:14**, God had originally told Moses:

**You shall not commit adultery.**

And then in **Leviticus 18**- God gave Moses what is called, the “*Holiness Code*” of the Old Testament. And this Section delineates *very specifically* what types of sexual Expressions are strictly *forbidden* by God. So, when you put all of the verses and Passages that teach about “*Human Sexuality*” together- you come up with a “*Summary Statement*” that says that ALL Expressions of Human Sexuality are expressly forbidden by God- except one:

**Intimacy between one naturally born Man and one naturally born Woman within the Covenant of Marriage**

All other sexual Expressions carried out by *anyone* for *any* reason- are *sinful* Expressions. They *dishonor* God; they violate His Will and Word; and they *do not* bring Him any Glory. And that would be bad enough- but the Bible goes on to teach that ALL sexual Expressions except that one- also are *destructive* to us as well. God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle Paul to say this in **1Corinthians 6:15-20**:

**15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!**

**16 Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."**

**17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.**

**18 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.**

**19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?**

**20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**

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<sup>3</sup> The “*Torah*” was the 1<sup>st</sup> five Books of the Old Testament- which taught how saved people were supposed to live their lives under the Old Covenant.



Now when Paul wrote, “**Flee immorality**” in verse 18- the original Greek reveals to us that he was discussing “*sexual Immorality*”. So, we are told here to “run away” from sexual Sins. Now the normal way that Scripture tells us to battle against Sin is to resist it; or fight against it. But here- we are told to “flee” from sexual Sins and NOT to stand and fight against them.

And this tells us that sexual Sins are *different* and *unique* among all other Sins. And then Paul tells us *why* God wants us to “flee” or run away from ALL Expressions of Human Sexuality except that one:

**... Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the [sexually] immoral man sins against his own body.**

Now why does a sexually immoral man sin against his own body? Paul said,

**... your bodies are members of Christ... your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?**

... and then Paul gives his reasoning as to WHY sexual Sins are so horrific:

**... the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her...**

So, the Act of Intimacy creates a “Union”; or a “Oneness” between the two people. Now why is that?

**... For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."**

God has created Mankind- in such a way- that sexual Intimacy *seals* the Covenant of Marriage. And the Reality is that throughout all of human History it has been said that sexual Union “*consummates*” the Marriage. So, if for some reason, there has been no sexual Intimacy- the Marriage has NOT been “consummated” and there really isn’t a Marriage.

So, sexual Intimacy *creates* the Union. But when there is sexual Intimacy between two people who are NOT married to each other- the “Union” that is created is an *unholy* Union; and *ungodly* Union- and a monstrosity. And this Union *dishonors* God and is *guaranteed* to hurt the people involved.

The point is that Human Sexuality is a huge Issue to God. But as we say that- we also need to remember that it was God, Who created Human Sexuality.

Sexual Intimacy was God's Idea. And that means that it isn't dirty or sinful or wrong- UNLESS it is engaged OUTSIDE of the one, single Expression that God honors and blesses. So, rather than look at God as being a "Kill-Joy", Who exists for no other reason than to stop people from "having fun"- we need to see God correctly- as an infinitely Good and Glorious Being- Who exists to magnify the Worth and Value of Himself; and Someone, Who seeks to kill EVERYTHING that dishonors Himself; and that will destroy us from ever having the FULLNESS of everlasting Joy.

But because Human Sexuality was God's Idea- it can ONLY honor God- when it is very *narrowly* engaged. In other words, by purposefully *restricting* Sexuality to only one single Expression- God shows us the Beauty; Glory; and Benefit of Human Sexuality when it is in alignment with God's Word and Will.

For example, when you build a Fire in a fireplace- it warms the whole room and brings Comfort and Joy to the family. But take that very SAME Fire and put it in the middle of the living room floor- and it will do nothing but burn the house down. Why? It is the SAME Fire!

The only difference is the *location* of the Fire. The wood, flame, and heat are the same. And so, the Fire that COULD bring Comfort and Joy- brings ONLY Destruction and Misery.

And in His Wisdom- God has created one, single location for ALL sexual Expression:

### **Very narrowly within the Marriage Covenant.**

... and ALL sexual Expression *within* the Marriage Covenant is blessed by God and brings Joy and Comfort to the Family. But *outside* the Marriage Covenant- the very SAME Fire of sexual Intimacy is *guaranteed* to destroy.

Recently, our Nation has been shaken to its Core- by wicked people, who seek to *expand* Human Sexuality- to include unspeakable Acts that God has *specifically* condemned. And so, in the "Name" of "Freedom" this Generation is inviting the Damnation of Almighty God.

Now I have taught for years that the Issue of "Biblical Manhood and Womanhood" is the seminal Issue of our day. And I am sorely afraid to tell you that the many sexual Perversions that we have seen become "normalized" almost overnight- is merely the tip of the iceberg.

So, because sexual Intimacy has the Power to either honor God or dishonor Him; and because it has the Ability to either bless people or hurt them- God placed very severe Punishment on those who engaged in sexual Expression- sinfully: Death. And the *particular* Death was especially horrible: Death by Stoning.

So, in addition to *divorcing* Mary- Joseph *could* have had her stoned to death.

But Joseph loved Mary. And Joseph had chosen Mary to be his Wife because he KNEW that she was a godly and righteous Woman. And that is what was bothering him more than anything else. Joseph knew that Mary deeply loved God. And yet, she was telling him the most fantastic Tale he had ever heard about why she was pregnant. And Matthew gives us tremendous insight in these eight verses about how much Joseph was struggling with all this.

I mean, what is Joseph supposed to do with all that talk about an angel coming to Mary? What would you do? And now she is “with child” of the Holy Spirit? Really? Did Mary really think that Joseph was going to buy that ridiculous Story? No, it was obvious. Mary had broken Joseph’s heart and now he was going to end this.

But wait! Joseph knew Mary. And he knew she was NOT a liar. And she was *constantly* repeating the same Story- pleading with him to believe her- that after over 400 years of heavenly Silence- Gabriel had appeared to her and a Miracle had occurred. Joseph knew that Mary was every bit as devout as he was- but he just can’t buy into this. It’s just too far out; too unbelievable.

Now Matthew tells us that Joseph did not want to disgrace Mary. And that gives us insight into just how much Joseph genuinely loved her. Now normally, the ONLY Issue would be where and when the Man would either divorce her; or stone her- or both. Remember- he was the one who had been sinned against- yet Joseph was thinking of how, what he was going to do- would affect Mary. And this gives us insight into just how much Joseph really did love Mary. So, Matthew tells us that Joseph was planning to divorce her- “**secretly**”.

But wait a minute! How do you divorce somebody “secretly”? I mean wouldn’t everybody eventually know anyway? So, how was Joseph going to divorce Mary without everybody knowing about it?

Now this is very interesting. And it shows us how we insert our own logic and our own ideas into the Bible very easily- all the time. There are so many things in this Section of God’s Word that people either just assume or pass right by. But we must not do that. Because Matthew is very careful to tell us that, at the time he was thinking about divorcing her:

**... Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.**

So, at the time all this was going on- Joseph and Mary were NOT Married! Matthew says here that Mary had been “**betrothed**” to Joseph. And then he says, “**before they came together**” Mary was found to be “**with child by the Holy Spirit.**”

So, in “Alabama English” Joseph and Mary were “engaged” and had not yet been married. But then Matthew also says two other things that should puzzle us:

1. Matthew calls Joseph, Mary’s “**husband**”
2. Joseph contemplated “divorcing” Mary

So, *why* does Matthew call Joseph, Mary’s “**husband**”? And *why* does someone who is NOT married and is only engaged- seek a “Divorce”? and to understand that- we have to get into the Culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jew.

Now as a rule, back then- Marriages were arranged. But they weren’t as draconian as you might think. Remember, most woman in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century were uneducated. And so, the main objective of the Father was to protect his daughter from wicked men. And we also need to remember that back then- a Marriage was NOT merely a Covenant between two *people*- but two Families.

Now the girl was consulted about her wedding, yes. But the “*calling of the damsel and inquiring at her mouth*” after the Conclusion of all negotiations between the two Fathers- was usually just a formality.

A father was *infinitely* more concerned about the Marriage of his sons than about the marriage of his daughters. Because no expense was involved in marrying off a daughter. The father *received* what we would call, a “dowry” for his daughter whereas he had to *give* a dowry to the prospective father-in-law of his son when marrying him off.

Now the Price paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride was called a “*mohar*” in Hebrew. For example, in **Genesis 34:11b&12**- Shechem [Dinah’s fiancé] said to Dinah’s father and her brothers:

**11 ...“If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me.  
12 “Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage.”**

Now the original Hebrew here would have been “*mohar*” for the “**bridal payment**” and “*mattan*” for the “wedding **gift**”. So, a “*mattan*” was the gifts given by the groom to the bride in addition to the dowry (*mohar*).

Now according to Jewish History- the “*mohar*” was not always paid in cash. Sometimes it was paid “in kind”, or “in service”. **Genesis 24:53b** relates the story of the servant of Abraham, who, after his request for Rebekah [to marry Isaac] was granted,

**... brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her**

**mother.**

... so, here, the servant gave “*mattan*” (gift) to Rebekah, and “*mohar*” (dowery/bridal payment) to her brother and mother.

Now the newly married man usually did not create a new home for himself and his bride- but occupied a nook in his father’s house. So, the family of the groom gained- while the family of the bride lost, a valuable member who helped with all household tasks. So, it was reasonable, therefore, that the father of the groom should pay the father of the bride the equivalent of her value as a useful member of the family.

Now a Marriage consisted of two different Ceremonies that were marked by loud and joyous Celebrations at two separate times, with a quiet interval in-between.

The first Ceremony was the “betrothal” [Hebrew: *erusin*]; and later, the actual Wedding [Hebrew: *nissuin*]. At the formal Ceremony for the betrothal- the woman was considered to be “legally married”, although she still remained in her father’s house. She could not belong to another man unless she actually went through a formal “Divorce” from her betrothed.

This is what was going on with Joseph and Mary. Joseph was *initially* seeking to formally divorce his betrothed and stop the Process that would eventually lead to his formal Marriage- because he thought Mary had been unfaithful.

So, back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- the Wedding itself meant only that the betrothed woman, accompanied by a colorful Procession, was brought from her father’s house to the house of her groom, and the legal tie with him (and the family of the groom) was “consummated”.

This Division of Marriage into two separate events originated in very ancient times when Marriage was considered to be a Purchase, both in its outward form and in its inner meaning. A Woman was not recognized as a whole person but was bought in Marriage- like chattel.

And so, Marriage, as with any type of Purchase back then, consisted of two different Acts. First, the Price (dowery) was paid and an Agreement (Covenant) reached on the conditions of sale. Then at some point later- the purchaser took physical possession of the purchased Object. In Marriage, the “*mohar*” was paid first and then a detailed Agreement reached between the families of both the bride and groom. This Betrothal was followed by the official Wedding, when the bride was brought into the home of the groom, who took actual possession of her.

In those days the Betrothal was the more important of these two Events. And it maintained its importance as long as Marriage was actually based upon a Purchase. But with the reception of the radically superior Revelation of the New

Covenant- Women assumed more importance as individuals, and Marriage ceased to be looked at as merely a Purchase. It was then that the actual Wedding became more important than the Betrothal. Under the auspices of the New Covenant (through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus)- Marriage took on a moral and spiritual significance. So, much so- that the Apostle Paul said this in **Ephesians 5:22-33**:

**22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

**23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.**

**24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.**

**25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,**

**26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**

**27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.**

**28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;**

**29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,**

**30 because we are members of His body.**

**31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.**

**32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.**

**33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.**

So, now Marriage is a tangible, physical, earthly, and temporary *representation* of the Covenant between Jesus and His Church. And that is where all Discussions about Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage **MUST** begin. With the Covenant between Jesus and His Church- since that is the **PRIMARY** reason Marriages exist. And now Husbands are *commanded* to love their Wives- to the same extent; and with the same urgency; and under the same Finality as Jesus loves His Church. While Wives are to respect and honor their Husbands and to support his Leadership- to the same extent; and with the same urgency; and under the same Finality as the Church does with Jesus.

We need to remember that it was the *partial* Revelation of God and His Word given to Moses that began to bring Dignity to Women and sanctity to Marriage. Before Moses- Women were considered to be less than or, in some rare cases, equal to animals. But what God gave to Moses allowed for women to be regarded as “*endowed by God with “Personalities”*” just as were men.

And it was the final, full, and completed Revelation that God gave to the Apostles in the New Covenant that finally brought the *fullness* of Dignity and Respect to Women and the Glory of Marriage that we see today in biblical Christianity. And so, it is very puzzling as to why some political groups and feminist ideology attacks Christianity rather than the other religions of the world- which still to this day consider Women to be of a lesser value than men.

Now I know that this has been a little tedious- but the reason I have gone into this kind of detail here- is because all of this will matter greatly when we go over the “*Sermon on the Mount*” that Matthew wrote in Chapters 5-7- *especially* as it pertains to Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in what is so-called, the “*Exception Clause*” in **Matthew 5:32**. And when we get into that- it will be quite a shock to many of you.

So, that is why Joseph sought to divorce Mary- even though they had not yet been officially married. Okay, but why didn’t Joseph follow through on his plan? Matthew tells us:

**20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."**

Now remember that the primary Goal of Matthew in writing this Gospel Record was to convince the Jews of three Truths- so they would believe and be saved:

1. Jesus was the Messiah
2. Jesus was *Immanuel* (God with us)
3. Jesus was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Moses

Now the Jewish leaders believed that the promised Messiah would absolutely be the “son of David”. They believed that, from a human viewpoint, he would be a direct descendant of the royal lineage of King David. And both Joseph and Mary qualified. But the Jews really weren’t too adamant about much more than that. But there was one thing they almost all agreed on: the Messiah would NOT

be God in human flesh- even though there was some indication that a few of them may have believed that.

And this was illustrated when Jesus claimed to be both the “son of David” AND the “Son of God”- because the Jews accused Him of blasphemy. So, while they may have tolerated Jesus as being of the royal line of David- they categorically rejected Him as being Deity in human flesh.

And I think most people today are still denying that. Most people will easily accept Jesus as being a great Humanitarian; or as a Teacher; or as an Example; or as a political Anarchist; or as a Prophet; or even as a Messiah. So, they are very willing to accept Jesus was being the “son of David”. And they consider themselves to be very wonderful people for doing so. But most will still categorically *refuse* to accept the fact that Jesus was God Almighty in human Flesh. But until they do that- until they acknowledge that Jesus was and is- GOD- they are yet in their Sins. Salvation is ONLY for those who are gifted with the Desire and Ability to believe and confess that Jesus is “LORD”!

So, the Genealogy that we studied last time from verses 1-17 tells us that Jesus is the “son of David”. But the account of His Birth- here in verses 18-25 tell us that Jesus is also “Son of God”.

And so, Matthew was writing this Section to counter the Slander and the Scandal that Mary and Joseph had to endure because of the miraculous way in which Jesus was born. Because of the hardness of the heart of fallen Man- most people then as well as today simply cannot bring themselves to believe what Dr. Luke wrote in **Luke 1:35**:

**... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.**

... and this tells us that the Virgin Birth of Jesus is NOT some side Issue. It is crucial to our Salvation. The Bible teaches, unapologetically- that a grand and glorious Miracle occurred; and Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit while Mary was still unmarried and a virgin. And Matthew teaches the same thing:

**24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,  
25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.**

... and we should never get casual or common about this.



The Virgin Birth or the Incarnation of Jesus is THE single greatest Miracle that the world has ever seen. God Almighty took on human flesh; became Man; and inserted Himself into His Own Creation through a Virgin!

And this man, known to us only by his first name- “Joseph”- was such a godly and righteous man- that, against all odds- he submitted himself to the Will of God- through the angel in a dream- and he obeyed God! And Matthew says that Joseph, **... kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.**

Joseph so loved God that he voluntarily refrained from Intimacy with his own Wife- until she gave birth to the son of David and the Son of God. And then Joseph called His Name- Jesus!

So, we should marvel at this man named, Joseph. We should admire his righteous Stand and his godly ways. And we should emulate his humble Submission to the Will and Word of God and the way in which Joseph obeyed God- even under very difficult Circumstances. And we should join with Joseph- as we worship the God/Man- Jesus, Who is called, “Christ”- because Immanuel has now come!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

