

1:18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ¹ was on this wise, here's how it happened, **When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.** Now, in the Jewish culture, there is this thing known as betrothal. It could be as long as a year. It could be as short as several months, rarely was it shorter than that. It was an engagement but much more important than an engagement. It was so important as an engagement that if the engagement was broken off, it was actually called a divorce. Obviously the marriage wasn't complete until there was a consummation of the union, until there was intercourse.² When a father of the groom, the father of the bride, would come together and make an arrangement for their children, often the children did not know each other very well and at any given time during the next year when the father of the groom deemed it appropriate because provisions had been made for him to care for his new wife, he would then go with a great entourage and gather his bride to himself. There would then be a great ceremony with lots of fanfare.³

With this explanation, you and I are amazed that we have a virgin who is pregnant when in today's world we should be amazed that we have an unmarried person who is a virgin! I'll just go ahead and say it: "This doesn't happen on accident."

CULTURE: Perhaps you're saying, "well, that was the culture then, and we have so much more to deal with."

Really? You think what we deal with is harder than an occupation force that takes whatever women they want, does unspeakable things to them, and then returns them—maybe—to their families? **Do you really think we have pressure with which to deal each day?**

GOD's EXPECTATIONS: Perhaps you think God has changed His mind on marital chastity? Perhaps you think God was against fornication then, but now...he's progressive and expressive?

Wives, allow me to help your husbands for just a minute: Dad, nobody is going to understand what a man looks at better than you. Furthermore, nobody is going to remember being a young man better than you—maybe your young men will understand it as well as you, but not better than you. Furthermore, nobody is supposed to be as protective/jealous (2 Corinthians 11:2) as you. So, you have—not the right (that's American); you have the responsibility to make sure your daughters are remaining pure. Your sons? Of course. But your son won't be left alone with a baby after he gives birth. Your son won't be known as "loose" or a "skank" if he sleeps around. While mom is thinking "sure, baby. Wear that. It looks cute on you", you, dad, need to tenderly remind all the ladies in your household how men think. Why? Why are we talking about how a lady dresses in relation to her chastity. For those of you still listening...here's why. Because along with the extra temptation of men to think lustily after young ladies, the more dangerous dynamic will be young ladies thinking they have to look "hot" for every pair of eligible, masculine eyes out there. ...>Could I just remind you, that it's not just the men you would like to marry or the men you hope are eligible that will notice you...it's everybody else too...SO, it's not just a man being drawn unnecessarily through immodest dress; it's a young lady who thinks she owes "cuteness and hotness" to the world when she owes it only to the husband God has for her.

We are forced with wondering, "Joseph, what did you think when that young lady was **found with child?**"

Mary says, "Oh Joseph, it's from God."

When a young lady⁴ today is pregnant and it's understood that she and her husband are expecting, she says "it's from the Lord" and we all understand what that means: it's a gift from God. But when Mary said, "The Father is God"...well, that was different.

1:19-20

¹Jesus must have been born before 4 B.C. since it is "almost certain" that Herod Great died in the spring of that year. If the edict of Herod in Matthew's second chapter called for the death of all those two years old and under, it seems reasonable that Christ was born no less than 2 years before this time and was therefore born in 6 B.C.

²Jim Bishop *The Day Christ Was Born* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 21.

³Matthew 25:1-13 gives a sort of peek into this.

⁴Bishop, 3; most young ladies were betrothed between 13 and 14.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example. There were two ways to handle this: you could either stone the violator or you could privately send her away in shame. Joseph makes a decision to not punish his dear espoused wife. Like I said, it's a cultural uniqueness. He did not want her stoned because he loved her.⁵ He was **a just man**. There are but two people mentioned as being **just** in the entire Old Testament and one of them is Noah.⁶ Now think that through. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, Eli, Solomon, Hezekiah, Manassah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. None of them are called **just**. What kind of man was a man who the only other person described up to that point as **just** is a man who was one of eight to survive a flood.

He was **just** enough to not act on his suspicion.⁷ Furthermore, we have no dogmatism that Mary told him the reason of her pregnancy, but this Scripture gives the additional light that Joseph probably needed a **dream** for him to believe the story even if Mary did tell him what had happened. One wonders how much a man loved a woman to keep her suspected infidelity at a distance through divorce while being unsure enough to allow his own name to be tarnished as the 1. Suspected participant in fornication resulting in pregnancy; 2. Assumed "dead-beat dad" who left a woman after getting her pregnant.⁸

Jesus never got away from this. As you read through John, do you know what you're going to find Jesus called? A child of fornication (John 8). In other words, Jesus went through his entire adult life with everyone supposing that his mother was cheap and that she had probably been messing around with Joseph before they were married.⁹

*Matthew 13:53 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, "From where did this man's wisdom come, and these mighty works? Isn't this **the carpenter's son**? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?"*

By the way, does anybody else think it's strange that the character of Mary is not explained here? As a matter of fact, Matthew makes very little of Mary in comparison.¹⁰ More than that, where are the shepherds? The angels? The manger? We're all the way up to His birth and there is no talk of a taxing or anything that is famed in many Christmas stories. Why? Matthew wants you to notice other things...like the quality of this man Joseph.¹¹

⁵Deuteronomy 22:23-24 not only identifies a betrothed as a spouse but also assigns stoning as the penalty for fornication during this betrothal period.

⁶The only other one I can find is David (in the words of Saul; 1 Samuel 24:17)

⁷John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 52.

⁸One wonders how he might have avoided stoning for her in the case of public divorce or stoning for the both of them in the case of private divorce. I don't know at this point.

⁹or was messing around within a local garrison of Roman soldiers and Christ was begotten

¹⁰She is later known as Jesus' mother in Matthew 12 and Matthew 13:55 where it is also evident where she had other children—to include two guys known as "James and Joses." They were probably "born" to her and Joseph after the birth of Jesus. [So much for the perpetual virginity of Mary.](#)

Now, I want you to notice the next time we see Mary is in Matthew 27:54 where she is known as "the mother of James and Joses." This shows us that she needed a Savior. At the cross, she is not known by Matthew as "the mother of God" or "the Queen of Heaven" or even... "the mother of Jesus." Furthermore, Matthew 12 describes her as Jesus' mother, yes. However, Jesus describes anybody as "his mother, brothers and sisters" if "they do the will of my Father." [So much for an exalted position in Heaven](#) for one who wasn't even exalted on earth.

¹¹Matthew's genealogy traces Christ through Joseph, the son of Solomon (Mat 1:6) the Son of David whereas Luke's genealogy traces Christ through Mary (through the assumption that Joseph is counted as a son—being a son-in-law to Heli; Luke 3:23) the son of Nathan (Luke 3:31) the Son of David.

Mary and Joseph were engaged for marriage (Mat 1:18) and she was found with child of the Holy Ghost (Mat 1:18). This pregnancy was announced by the angel Gabriel in the 6th month of Mary's cousin, Elizabeth's pregnancy (Luke 1:26). She received the vision with great faith (Luke 1:38). Around this time, Mary journeyed away from her espoused husband to see her cousin Elizabeth in a different part of Palestine (Luke 1:39). She lived there for a short time with her and her husband Zecharias (Luke 1:40) whereupon entering, Elizabeth's baby leaped within her (Luke 1:41) and Elizabeth announced Mary pregnant (Luke 1:45). At this time, Mary sang a song of praise to the Lord much like that of Hannah's (1 Samuel 2; Luke 2:46-55).

But it gets even more phenomenal than that. Matthew doesn't use that term **just** again. After looking at Matthew 27:19, The only other person in the entire book of Matthew is the one that Joseph raised. Has it ever dawned on you that Jesus was greatly influenced by Joseph? Do you have nephews or nieces that need influence? Jesus was greatly influenced by the adults in his life.¹²

Matthew, Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19) and Pilate (Matthew 27:24) all use a term and they're the only ones that use the term and they only used it about two different people in the book of Matthew: Joseph and

After about three months, Mary returned to Nazareth (Luke 1:56). Joseph was willing to divorce her privately instead of having her stoned (Mat 1:19) but the angel of the Lord came to him in a dream (Mat 1:20) and named the son in Mary "Jesus" telling of His mission that "Jehovah saves" (Mat 1:21). One must assume that Mary knew before Joseph since the aforementioned vision of Gabriel which informed Mary of the same name intended for Jesus (Luke 1:31) occurred before her pregnancy (Luke 1:35). Joseph arose and formally married his wife thereafter (although he did not lay with her until Jesus was born; Mat 1:25). At some point there was a decree from the emperor of Rome that each citizen in the government should be counted in his home town (Luke 2:3). Since Mary and Joseph were both "sons of David" (Mat 1; Luke 3), they simply returned to Bethlehem (Luke 2:4).

Upon arrival in Bethlehem, Mary began going into labor (Luke 2:6) and they had difficult times finding a room because of the influx of travelers returning there so they stayed in a stable of sorts, and it was there where Jesus was born (Luke 2:7). Just outside of town shepherds were watching sheep when the angel of the Lord appeared to them (Luke 2:9) and announced the birth of their Messiah in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11)—giving them guidance for what to seek (Luke 2:12). At this time a multitude of angels chanted praise to God (Luke 2:14) and left—leaving the shepherds to seek this Messiah (Luke 2:15-16). There were apparently many townspeople present to whom the shepherds relayed the angels' news (Luke 2:18). Mary took all of this and pondered it (Luke 2:19).

When Jesus was eight days old, he was circumcised (presumably in town). When he was just over forty days old, He was taken to the temple in Jerusalem where his parents offered a sacrifice as commanded by the Law of Moses (Luke 2:22). It was at this time that the Holy Spirit led Simeon into the temple and He held Jesus (Luke 2:27-28), pronounced a blessing upon his own life (Luke 2:29), a blessing upon the baby (Luke 2:30-33) and a prophecy concerning Mary (Luke 2:34-35). At this time also, a widow of about 100 years old named Anna prophesied of the blessed Messiah (Luke 2:36-38).

Following the birth of Christ, there is a sound of immediacy in Matthew's account where it records the arrival of the wise men (2:1) who first inquire in Jerusalem with King Herod as they search for the "King of the Jews" (2:2). The Jewish leaders narrowed down the birthplace of the Messiah to Bethlehem of Judaea (2:5) and Herod sent the wise men after the child to supposedly locate him for Herod's worship as well (2:8). The wise men then followed a star to the house where Jesus was located (2:11) where they presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh (2:11). Then God warned them in a dream to return some other way (2:12) as His angel appeared to Joseph and warned him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus (2:13) to avoid Herod's angry holocaust of boys two years of age and younger (2:16).

After Herod's death, a fourth dream (the 3rd from the angel of the Lord—all three of which were to Joseph) occurred where Joseph was informed of Herod's death (2:20) and at this time he passed through Israel (2:21) and landed in Nazareth (2:23).

The dilemma:

1. *Matthew 2:1 places the arrival of the wisemen in close proximity to the birth of Christ. This would still allow for the 45 or so days for Luke 2's temple episode with Simeon and Anna.*
2. *We are told in Matthew 2 that Joseph and Mary and Jesus fled to Egypt after the wise men's visit (which was in close proximity to the birth of Christ; Mat 2:1).*
3. *We are told that they went to Nazareth following their return from Egypt (Mat 2:23).*
4. *We are told Joseph and Mary and Jesus returned to Nazareth after the temple episode (Luke 2:39) and where Jesus continued to develop as a young boy (Luke 2:40).*
5. *Therefore, one must account for a return to Nazareth following the trip to Egypt and a trip to Nazareth following the temple episode when Jesus was less than two months old.*

Possible Solution:

1. Luke 2:40 says that Jesus and Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem (or greater Jerusalem area, perhaps) each year. It could be, then, that a full year had elapsed before their next trip to Jerusalem (to include Bethlehem to stay with family during their trips to the temple each year).
2. While Matthew 2:1 indicates the wise men arrived in Jerusalem around the birth of Christ, it does not give a definite interval to the time the wise men stayed in Jerusalem, awaiting the star to reappear (Matt 2:9). It was furthermore required of Joseph to be in town for all three major festivals (Deuteronomy 16:16).
3. It is possible that the "young child" Jesus was in the "house" (Mat 2:11) upon their following trip to Jerusalem. In other words, the Egypt episode could have taken place while Jesus was around one year old after a return from Nazareth for sacrifice (Luke 2:39-40).

¹²This is doubtless hard to swallow until we consider passages like Isaiah 53:2 where Christ grows as a "tender plant" or Luke 2 where we're told twice that he "grew in favor and grace." These seem proof positive that Jesus learned under Joseph. Please don't think for a moment that because Jesus was God in the flesh that meant he didn't fall and scrape his knee. How can you be a partaker of Adamic flesh and not trip and skin your knee? Not hit your thumb with a hammer in the carpenter's shop? Do you know that Jesus had to be shown how to put a table together by Joseph?

Jesus. I say to you that I don't believe God is doing anything but showing us that Joseph had an amazing impact on Jesus.

Was mindful to put her away privately But here's a man that was so in love with his bride-to-be that although he was suspicious of her conduct and fervent about justice...he couldn't just watch her die.¹³ Banishment is harsh, but it is better than death and, who knows, maybe it's better than her damnation. "She's pregnant and she's blaming it on God. She's obviously not repentant so he doesn't even know if she's one of Jehovah's kids anymore. If she's dead, what happens to her?" With a love and concern for a woman that he wasn't sure he could even trust anymore, Joseph shows himself a **just** man.

Clearly the **angel of the Lord** is not a Christophany as is usually supposed in O.T. contexts since Jesus is already in the belly of his mother. The "man, Christ Jesus" never expressed omnipresence and could therefore not be in two places at the same time. What a mystery that for this time...I hesitate to write this...Jesus knew nothing in the womb of His mother.¹⁴

1:21
And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet Isaiah saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not. That's an old euphemism for he "did not have sex with her." There was no consummation of the union **until she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called him Jesus.** Now before we go to some cerebral material about the virgin birth, I feel like a quote from Pastor Baxter is in order:

Many ministers study only to compose their sermons, and very little more, when there are so many books to be read, and so many matters that we should not be unacquainted with. Nay, in the study of our sermons we are too negligent, gathering only a few naked heads, and not considering of the most forcible expressions by which we should set them home to men's hearts.¹⁵

This is not to say that the "virgin birth" is not a something with which we should be "acquainted," but rather that I wish to make an impression more upon your heart. Yet, we cannot adequately love our God without first knowing Him and knowing of Him.

We can also love God more when we love His Word more. Of course, we must embrace Scripture's veracity in order to love our God through His Word.

A God who called the entirety of the universe into existence can handle a virgin birth, a virgin conception. Do you see how that works? Look at six statements that tells us that Jesus was born of a virgin and maybe there are more but here's where I see it.

1:16 Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

¹³Joseph in this episode—in this way—appears to take on Adam's perspective. Adam couldn't watch Eve die alone; so he ate.

¹⁴ For more on this, listen to <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=1212121937452> [accessed December 8, 2016].

¹⁵ Richard Baxter and William Orme, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*, vol. 14 (London: James Duncan, 1830), 182.

*1:20 While he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for **that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.***

1:23, to look at this baby and say God is now with us, that must mean that he's the offspring of God then. Divinity can beget only divinity.

Also in this verse, we find a quotation from Isaiah 7 where Matthew clearly believed that Isaiah's prophecy required a virgin to conceive.

*1:25 and **knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus.***

So they had not even come together for another nine months after he found out she was pregnant. I'm assuming nine months.

Why do we need a virgin birth anyway? Well, I can think of four reasons and there are probably more.

1. You have to get around the curse of Jechonias. He couldn't have a natural born descendant sit on the throne so he needed a virgin birth. We need Jesus to become the legal child of someone in that line because he's the son of David that is also the king of Israel (Jeremiah 22).
2. To fulfill prophecy. Matthew 1:22-23 plainly cite a prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 and this commentator does a good job of giving an explanation of "virgin" in the original context of Isaiah 7:14...

In the passage before us the reference is probably to a typical prophecy. The virgin (עַלְמָה) presented to Ahaz as a sign, was a type of the holy Virgin for the following reasons: 1) her future pregnancy and her giving birth to a son were announced even before her marriage had actually taken place;¹⁶

The neat thing is that while it was prophecy for the prophecy of Isaiah, destined for two fulfillments, it was historical when it was cited by Matthew as a fulfillment. Or, maybe a little easier, Mary was still a virgin when she gave birth whereas she was a virgin, as was the one in the near-term fulfillment, when the prophecy was spoken.

3. For God to be a man. You read all through the Old Testament and you're going to find out that God took on the form of a man but did not actually become a man.¹⁷ Clearly God took on forms of men, but did not actually become man. Temporary versus permanent. And in order for us to have someone die for the sins of the whole world, we need someone who's able to do that which is infinite. If he's going to shed blood for all the sins that have ever been committed which, by the way, brings with it an infinite or endless or boundless or incomprehensible penalty of an eternal damnation from the presence of God—to satisfy an infinite God with an infinite payment for an infinite obstruction, an infinite transgression—takes infinitely righteous blood produced only by an infinite God.¹⁸ So if Jesus were a perfect man (and there hasn't been once since the pre-fall Adam), then he could die for one other man but not every man. But because he's God and he's infinite, he can pay for the sins of the whole world: men, women, everybody. He tasted death for every man (Hebrews 9), and he cannot do that if he's not infinite and he cannot be infinite without being God.
4. To avoid the sin nature of Adam. Surely we understand that the responsibility of sin and the sin nature itself is passed down through the father. Exodus 34:7, it says that, "I will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children and the children's children unto the third and fourth generation." And since

¹⁶ John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Matthew* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 53.

¹⁷If you would like a couple of examples, you have the story of Abraham in Genesis 18 where three men come to his tent door. One of them is clearly the LORD and two are his angels.

¹⁸Acts 20:28 gives the idea of "God's blood."

every father in my upline has been a sinner, that “third and fourth generation” carries well on to me and even beyond me. A Christ who was born of a man and a woman is just as sinful as you are and as sinful as I am and he can't even die for his own sins, let alone mine, because he has Adam's sin nature in him.¹⁹

Some takeaways for this wonderful season:

1. God still reveals Himself to His people.
 - a. As He did to Joseph in a dream.
 - b. Just this week
 - i. \$17
 - ii. James 5
 - iii. Janice Caulder
 - iv. Request for Ray Hedrick
2. God still visits His people.
 - a. Just as He did through Jesus

¹⁹Romans 5:12 seems to bear this out as sin passing as almost a biological component through the father. We'll wait for science to catch up to theology as it normally does.