

The Virgin Conception

📖 Matthew 1:18-25

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This is not a transcription of the lesson on Christmas day but the pastor's notes. The lesson delivered does not follow this text very closely at all. Pastor decided to deliver a different lesson that he had in mind.

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The incarnation is perhaps the greatest of miracles. It involves God taking to Himself human flesh. It is a miracle attributed to the Holy Spirit that is antedated by His work in the lives of Elizabeth, Zechariah and John the Baptist. And all this work of the Spirit was a sudden imposition in history in that the Books of Maccabees attest that the Spirit was not at work in any visible manner during the 400 years between the testaments. And this work is very significant because it relates to the establishment of God's purpose for man in history in the Messiah.

The Messiah was predicted to be a very particular person. He was to be the seed of David and the seed of Abraham and the seed of Adam and the seed of God so that we see very much that He was to be connected to God and to man and as man in particular this connection was made by the covenants God made with David and Abraham. This is why Matthew, in his genealogy of Jesus says, "Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" and Luke in his genealogy of Jesus says, "the son of Adam, the son of God." So he has a connection to God and man and this is why you err if you think of Mary as simply an incubator for Jesus. She was nothing of the sort. She had to make a contribution to his humanity and yet, of course, that comes with difficulties, as for, example, how if she makes a contribution is it that Jesus is said to be sinless? And what exactly was the role of the Holy Spirit? But we do know that she had to make a contribution because she is said to be "the mother of Jesus" and the covenants predicted that the Messiah would have a human lineage. Under the Davidic covenant there was to be an heir of promise. What were the Davidic promises? 2 Sam 7:16, "your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." A house or seed, a kingdom, a throne and rule from that throne forever. This is what He came for but He did not receive these things because His own received Him not. And therefore it remains for Him to do these things at a future time.

As for the nature of this kingdom the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 12:1-3 reveals to us that it involves a land and worldwide blessing. This too He came for but He did not receive them at that time and so it remains for the future. Together the two covenants define the nature of the kingdom as involving a land or sphere of rule and the offspring who is to rule that kingdom as a descendant of Abraham through David and even a connection back to Adam, for if he has no connection to Adam He cannot pay the redemption price for Adam.

And in the Davidic covenant that offspring is specified to be not only through David but also through Solomon. 2 Sam 7:12, "your descendant after you, who will come forth from you,...I will establish his kingdom...I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." So David had several sons but the Scripture is precise in demarcating Solomon as the son through whom the ultimate offspring would come who would rule the kingdom. Matt 1:6 is tracing this, "David was the father of Solomon." Everyone who follows Solomon in verse 7 down to Jeconiah in verse 11 was a Davidic king and all these men sat on the Davidic throne and ruled. But the men after Jeconiah did not sit and rule because God cursed Jeconiah. The curse is in Jer 22:30, "Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David Or ruling again in Judah." The curse is not that Coniah would be childless in the sense of having no children because verse 12 tells us "Jeconiah became the father of Shealtiel." But the curse is that none of his children would sit on the throne of David and rule over Judah. And therefore, every son who came from Jeconiah had throne rights as descendants of David but the curse is saying that none of them could actually sit and exercise the throne rights. As you go through this list you come all the way down to verse 16 where you find Joseph and we read, "Jacob was the father of Joseph" so that we know that Joseph was under the curse. He had throne rights but he could not exercise the throne rights. And if Joseph is the father of Jesus then we would have to conclude that Jesus was under the curse. But that is what is so significant about the grammatical shift in verse 16. We don't read as we have before that Joseph was the father of Jesus but we read that Joseph was the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. We are to know that Mary is the mother of Jesus but Joseph is not the father of Jesus, for if he was then Jesus is not the Messiah. But as it is verse 16 is a very important verse because it shows that Joseph as the husband of Mary adopted Jesus and under the inheritance laws of Leviticus He inherits the throne rights of Joseph but with one unique difference; He is not under the curse and He can sit and exercise those throne rights. Now this is the precision with which God, in His sovereignty, was controlling this family in history, even down to the meeting of Mary and Joseph and their proposed marriage and the role of the Holy Spirit in the conception of the Messiah.

And Matthew investigated this. Matthew knew his OT. He knew what credentials the Messiah had to have. He knew that the Messiah had to be in the line of David through Solomon so that he might have the Davidic throne rights. He investigated this down at the Temple where the records were kept. And isn't it interesting that in the Gospels and the Book of Acts not once does anybody ever challenge Jesus' claim to be the Son of David? The Pharisees never said, "You can't be the Messiah because you're not the Son of David." Yet that would have been a very easy way to discard the notion. But we don't find that charge in the Gospels or Acts because they did go

down to the Temple and they did check the records and they did see that He was the Son of David. But even with those credentials you still have the problem of the Jeconiah curse. How did Jesus get around the Jeconiah curse? And this leads to another investigation. And that is how this man was conceived. It is not about how he was born. How he was born was irrelevant. He had a natural birth in every sense of the term and that is not what the miracle is about. The miracle is about the conception. And a good student of the OT would immediately think of three or four passages that might have had a bearing on what kind of conception the Messiah would have. What are they? Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14, Isa 9:6 and Micah 5:2. Why Gen 3:15? Because Gen 3:15 predicted that a woman would have a male seed. Let me repeat that. A woman would have a male seed. That word seed is then referred to by a masculine pronoun, he. How can a woman have a male seed? Women don't have male seed. It's the first hint of a virgin birth. Why Isa 7:14? Because Isa 7:14 predicted a virgin birth. "Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." If we are connecting Scripture correctly then the virgin here is really a virgin and not just a young woman, the ancient rabbi's interpreted this as a true virgin and prediction of the Messiah's birth. A virgin would have a son. Sounds strikingly like Gen 3:15. Why? Because it is. And this son would be called what? Immanuel. What does that mean? God with us. The Messiah would be God with us. He's not just born of a woman. He's also God. Why Isa 9:6? Because Isa 9:6 it is putting all this together, weaving together His humanity and His deity in one beautiful picture. "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us." Note the difference between being born and being given. A child will be born, only humans are born. The Messiah would be born. He's a true human. And the other phrase, "a son will be given," - for one to be given they have to already be in existence. The Messiah would already be in existence. He's the true God. And lastly, why Micah 5:2? Because Micah 5:2 made it even clearer that the Messiah would have a human birth in Bethlehem but His goings forth were from all eternity. He is the one true God. "but as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity." There it is. What's happening in the incarnation is God becoming or taking to Himself true humanity. It's these OT passages that predicted it and its these passages that Matthew was investigating. He looked at the Temple records. He dug into the OT and he pulled up these passages. How do I know that? Because I read the Gospel of Matthew and He refers to all of them. The Jew has no excuse. He has all this data before him. He is responsible to investigate this. Here it all is. The Gospel of Matthew is the most Jewish of all the gospels. It's so Jewish it reeks! And because of it the Gospel of Matthew has been a very instrumental gospel in bringing Jews to believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Let's see Matthew's conclusion after investigating the genealogy down at the Temple and after investigating the OT Scriptures about the uniqueness of the Messiah's birth and the conclusion He came to about Jesus. Verse 18 begins with Matthew stating the subject matter. **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows.** See, he investigated the birth. Matthew refers to Him as **Jesus Christ** (Gk *Iesou Christou*) as he did in verse 1. What does **Christ** mean? It's the same word as the Hebrew Messiah. So Jesus Christ, Jesus Messiah, same thing, don't distinguish between Christ and Messiah, they're the same word, they both mean "the Anointed One." In verse 16

the translators translated it "Messiah," in verse 18 they translate it "Christ." It's the same word. It's His title. Jesus is the Messiah. What's his name? **Jesus. Verse 21**, "you shall call His name Jesus." What does it mean? It's the Greek name *Ἰησοῦς*. It's the equivalent of the Hebrew name Yehoshua or Yeshua, which is Joshua. Joshua is an OT Jesus in that He goes forth to conquer the land. He never completed that mission but the NT Jesus will. The name has two parts, Yah or Yeh or Ie which is God and shua or sous, which is saves. God saves. So who is Jesus? He is God. What does He do? He saves. So Matthew says this is his investigation of **the birth of** the God who saves who is Messiah. Think about what he just said? **The birth of** the God who saves who is Messiah. That ought to smack you upside the head. The **birth of** God. What doctrine? The incarnation. Incarnation means "in flesh" and the doctrine of the incarnation teaches how God came in the flesh. Matthew says through a birth and he says the birth occurred **as follows**, meaning, he investigated it. This Jewish man lived 2,000 years ago but he was not stupid. The Jewish people investigated things. They weren't mystical. They didn't believe in magic.

They believed that there were only three ways people had come into the world. Adam by direct creation of God out of the dust of the earth and God breathing into him the breath of life. Eve by direct creation of God out of the side of Adam. And everybody else by indirect creation of God through procreation between a man and a woman. But here is something to investigate, as verse 16 implied, a son who came into the world only by a woman. So here's what Matthew found out in verse 18. **When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.** Note the timing of everything. This is very important. It was after **Mary had been betrothed to Joseph** but **before they came together** in marriage that **she was found to be with child**. So she became pregnant during the betrothal period. What's the betrothal period. We don't have this in our culture. This was a part of Jewish culture. The betrothal was a legal contract made between the father of the groom and the father of the bride. Both fathers agreed to make sure their son or daughter remained pure for marriage (cf the wonderful analogy based on this custom in 2 Cor 11:2-3). During the betrothal period the man was legally the 'husband' and the woman was legally the 'wife' even though they could not legally engage in conjugal relations. So strong was the betrothal that to break it required seeking a formal divorce. The betrothal lasted about one year at the time of Christ in order to give ample time to discover any evidence of the girl committing fornication and if so the contract was broken, a divorce would be sought and the marriage proper would never take place. Joseph was therefore legally her husband prior during the betrothal as verse 19 explicitly states. And indeed he did discover that she was pregnant. Matthew is very careful in verse 18 to point out that the discovery occurred **before they came together**, that is, before they had married and had conjugal relations. What difference does it make? If the pregnancy had been discovered after they were married and had come together then it would have naturally been concluded that the child was Joseph's. But since they had not come together then this was highly unlikely (though there were questions, cf Lk 1:31, "supposedly the son of Joseph"). So it was during the betrothal period that Joseph discovered that she was with child. Luke 1:26-38 fills in the picture by explaining that the Holy Spirit conceived the child during the period of betrothal when Elizabeth was in her sixth month. It was at that time

that the angel announced to Mary that she was with child. At that time, she left Nazareth and travelled to Elizabeth's, staying with her for three months. Figuring in travel time, when she returned it became apparent to Joseph that she was pregnant. Joseph logically concluded that she had committed fornication while she was at Elizabeth's. However, verse 18 alerts us to something Joseph did not know at the time; namely, there was now a fourth way human flesh could come into the world; **by the Holy Spirit**. So right away we know this is unique. It had never occurred before and it has never happened since, it is a one of a kind conception. Therefore, Mary had not committed fornication but a unique conception.

Verse 19, **And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.** We're told a couple of things here about Joseph. And if you think about it we don't really know much about him. So these three things are important. First, he was already considered her **husband** even though this was during the betrothal prior to the marriage. Second, he was a **righteous man**. Now, of course he was a believer and thereby counted righteous, but what **righteous** means in this context is that as a believer he sought to uphold the Law of Moses. He lived according to the Law as well as he could. He was not trying to establish his own righteousness with God because he was already a believer. So he was righteous in the sense that he wanted to uphold the law. Third, he didn't want **to disgrace** Mary. He didn't want to do that because he loved her, even though he thought she had committed fornication. He did not want to get back at her and that tells us a lot about Joseph. Now two of these things caused tension for Joseph. On one hand he was a righteous, law abiding man, and on the other he did not want to disgrace her. Here were his options. Option one, he could marry her anyway. But that would put into question the fact he was righteous because it would imply that he was the father of the child and had sexual relations with Mary prior to the formal marriage. Option 1 was out. Option two, he could file legal proceedings that would demand she be stoned to death (Deut 22:23-24). But that would compromise his love for her and though it was rarely carried out in the first century the law did give him this option. But option two was out. Option three, he could disgrace her by publicly divorcing her. But again, this would compromise his love for her. He did not want to destroy her reputation in society. And in that society divorce was a social status.¹ She would be considered a prostitute. So option three was out. Option four, according to the Mishnah he could divorce her privately by handing her a bill of divorce in the presence of two or three witnesses. In this way he could maintain his righteousness according to law and his love for her. So this is what he decided to do. The text says he decided to **send her away secretly**, a very wise man.

Verse 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."** Note that the **angel of the Lord** was not sent to explain what had happened to Joseph until he had been given time to consider all the options and come to his decision. I think that God does this with us sometimes. He wants us to think about what we would do in a situation before He solves the problem. He does this to approve of us and He did this to approve of Joseph. Joseph had made a

good decision given the information he had. But now he is given better information. This information came **to him in a dream**. And the **angel of the Lord** said to him, **do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife**. Of course, Joseph had good reason to **be afraid to take Mary as his wife**. She was not a virgin. He would not be righteous. But now he is told that she still is a virgin because **the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit**. So we see the conception of the Messiah is in Mary and accomplished by **the Holy Spirit**. Luke says “the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.” As we mentioned before Mary made a contribution to keep the Messiah’s connection to humanity and the Spirit made a contribution to keep the Messiah’s connection to God and to assure that the offspring was holy and sinless. We don’t know exactly how it was accomplished but we do know some things. We know, for one, that the Spirit accomplished it. He is the one stated in all the relevant passages to have done this. For two we know that however He accomplished it He did not violate Mary in the sense that she was no longer a virgin. It was a secret work. An inner work. For three we know that however He accomplished it He is not the Father of the Child. The relationship of the Child to God was that His is the Son of the Father. So what the Spirit did was not something that put him in the position of being the Child’s Father. For four we know that the Child was without sin. It is at this point that we must admit some working of the Spirit upon the substance contributed by Mary because the Roman Catholic doctrine of immaculate conception only creates a larger problem. The immaculate conception was a doctrine created to explain how Mary did not contribute sin to the Child. And it said that Mary herself was conceived sinless. That has never solved the problem, it has only moved it back one generation. I don’t think we have to go too far in our minds to imagine that in the overshadowing work of the Spirit He saw fit to not enable the transmission of any sin to the Child. And the eyes of faith can accept the Scriptural testimony without all the details provided. The fifth thing we know is that it was the conception that was the miracle, not the birth, only the conception, for the birth was a natural birth. So we celebrate the birth today but the miracle was the conception and that happened some 40 weeks before the birth, whatever time of year He was born. The sixth thing we know is that at creation the Spirit of God is said to have hovered over the watery mass of the original watery state and brought order to it. And so we see him bringing order to this situation as well in the waters of Mary’s womb.

Now why would God go to such an extent as to send an angel to reveal this information? In order to ensure that Joseph adopt Jesus into his family. If Joseph didn’t take Mary as his wife then Jesus would not have been in the line of David, He wouldn’t have been a legitimate King. So the whole reason God sent the angel was to secure Joseph’s marriage to Mary. Now the explanation of the angel was that the **Holy Spirit** had chosen to conceive **the Child...in her**. Did Joseph accept this explanation? Yes, he did. He had faith that this was true. Why would he accept this as true? Because the Scriptures predict the virgin birth? Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; Isa 9:6; Micah 5:2? And so Joseph was to **take her as his wife** so that the Child would be the seed of the woman, the seed of David, born of a virgin, in Bethlehem whose goings forth are from all eternity in the line of David..

In verse 21 the child is revealed to be a Son. Some people say it's not just saying He'll be male but it's pointing to Dan 7, He'll be the Son of Man. That may be but it's not clear to me. So the verse says, **She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.** Now what's interesting is that over in Luke the angel Gabriel also told Mary you shall name Him Jesus. So both Joseph and Mary were told to name Him Jesus and they were told this independently. Why? For confirmation that this was the truth. You see in history that when someone really hears the voice of God there will be independent verification. In Genesis there were two dreams about famine, not one. In Daniel there were two dreams of Gentile kingdoms, not one. So there is always verification. And the fact that both Mary and Joseph had a revelation to name the son Jesus would verify for them that this was of God.

Now in Jewish culture who named the son? Surprisingly, it was often the mothers. Go look in Luke at who named John, it was Elizabeth, not Zachariah, he just agreed with the name. But in verse 25 who is to name this Son? Joseph. Why would Joseph be the one who named Him? To show that he is Jesus' legal father. And what is this all pointing to again? That Joseph was transferring his Davidic throne rights to Jesus. So at the birth you have a true heir of the Davidic throne on earth. This is the sovereignty of God over history. For almost 600 years there had been no legitimate heir to the Davidic throne but that line was kept intact and now here He is.

Now this name, **Jesus**, we commented on the meaning in verse 18, but it's worth a second look. This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Joshua. And in Messianic Jewish circles they refer to Jesus as Yeshua. But Joshua is also a Yeshua and this is by divine purpose to draw a parallel between these two men. What's the parallel? Joshua in the OT led the conquest and he was largely successful but he never did conquer all the land. That's why in Judges 2 the Lord pronounced doom at Bochim. But part of the pronouncement of doom is that a greater than Joshua would come and He would also lead a conquest and he would be successful and conquer all the land. So the parallel is that both these men with the same name led conquests. But the difference is that only Jesus will actually complete the conquest and bring in the kingdom. And so what is Joseph going to name the Son? Jesus, a last Joshua. Now He came and he offered Himself to the nation as the Davidic King but did the nation Israel receive Him? No. They rejected Him. And what did they do to Him? They crucified Him. And that comes to be the fulfillment of His name. As the text says, **For he will save His people from their sins.** That's what the name **Jesus** means. It means the Lord saves. Well, what do people need to be saved from? They need to be saved from their sins. Sin is what separates people from God because God is holy. He can't have anything to do with sin. And therefore there has to be a payment for sin, a blood sacrifice, which is the giving of a life, but we're all dead in sin and we have no life to give Him. And so Jesus came to save from sin. And that is what the cross work is all about. We're not there yet, this is just the birth but we might say He was born to save people from their sins. Or He was born to die. Not like you and I. We don't die to save others. But He does. And in this context you read that He would die to save His people. Who are **His people**? In the historical context His people are the covenant nation of Israel. This was His mission. It was embedded in His very name. And of course, the cross work would be available for more people than the nation Israel, but at this point the mission is to Israel. And how do we know

that? Because it's the theme of the four gospels. What does John say? "He came to His own and His own received Him not." So His mission was to save Israel but only a small remnant of Israel accepted, most received Him not. But through that rejection the gospel would go out to the whole world and that's the great commission. But at this point you see that He is named Jesus because His name identifies His mission as saving His people from their sins. And it did not happen at the first coming, but it will happen at the Second Coming. And in the meantime He is saving all who come to Him simply by faith. But He still has saving to do in the future. And the primary focus of that saving is the nation Israel.

Now we come to verse 22 and here Matthew tells us why **all this took place**. It was **to fulfill what was spoken**. In other words, it was to fulfill prophecy. And what prophecy was this to fulfill? Well, in verse 23 he quotes Isa 7:14. **"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."** Let's turn to this passage. Matthew insists that this is a prophecy of the virgin conception and that it was fulfilled in Mary and Jesus by the Holy Spirit. This is a difficult passage, not so much as to whether Isaiah prophesied the virgin conception but as to what immediate relevance the prophecy would have to the people in Isaiah's day. The historical situation is that the northern kingdom of Israel has made an alliance with Syria and together they want to conquer Judah. Ahaz was the Davidic king in Judah. And in verse 2 what's his response when these two nations move against him? Well, he's afraid, "his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind." So he is expecting defeat. It's two kings against one. So God in verse 3 sent Isaiah and his son out to meet Ahaz. In verse 4 he says, "Take care and be calm, have no fear..." Why? Verse 5, they have "planned evil against you..." Verse 6 is the plan. They want to topple Ahaz and put the son of Tabeel in his place. The son of Tabeel would apparently go along with their programs. But verse 7, the Lord says, "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass." In other words, the plan will be spoiled so Ahaz has no reason to fear. But Ahaz was still shaking in his boots. He couldn't trust the Lord. All he could see was the human situation, two kings against one. So in verse 10 the Lord sends another message to Ahaz and in verse 11 we see the message, alright, says the Lord, "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." All this is to precipitate trust. Get Ahaz to trust the Lord. But in verse 12? "Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" In other words Ahaz did not want to trust the Lord. This man was a rebel. He didn't want God interfering in human affairs. He just wanted Him to buzz off. And verse 13 the Lord was not happy about this, "Then he [Isaiah] said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?" The Lord had had it with Ahaz. This guy had the God of the universe say, ask for a sign, anything you want, anything that would precipitate trust, but the guy didn't want to trust the Lord. He'd rather just shake in his boots. So in verse 14 the Lord is going to give him a sign whether he wants one or not. And here's the sign: "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." ¹⁵"He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. ¹⁶"For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken." Now Matthew only picks up verse 14. He insists that verse

14 was fulfilled in Mary and Jesus. However, it looks strange that he would peel verse 14 off from verses 15-16 and insist that only verse 14 was fulfilled in Jesus and Mary when verse 16 seems to require that it be fulfilled in Ahaz's day. So it goes without saying that commentators have had a difficult time sorting this one out. The bottom line is that we have two prophecies: one near and one far. The near prophecy would be a young woman of marriageable age who would get married and have a child and before the child knew right from wrong the alliance between the two kings Ahaz dreaded would be broken. This near prophecy would be a sign relevant to Ahaz. In all truth we don't know who this young woman was but we do know that the alliance was broken within a few years. The far prophecy would be to the whole house of David, a virgin would have a child. According to Matthew the virgin was Mary. She conceived a son by the Holy Spirit. That's the only way that could happen. The conception was a miracle. Somehow the Spirit of God did an inner working utilizing the substance of Mary because she is said to be His mother. So she was not just an incubator for Jesus. She had to make some contribution, but the Holy Spirit insured that her contribution was without sin so that the Son was sinless so that He could be our substitute. We don't know all the details of how He brought about the conception but there is no question that He had to use the substance of Mary so that Jesus remains in connection with the human race because He had to be the seed of David, the seed of Abraham and the seed of Adam. He had to have that lineage with the human race, and yet at the same time He had to be without sin. What the Holy Spirit was able to do was maintain the connection with the historical race of men and at the same time make a disconnect from Jesus acquiring a sin nature. If He could not do that then we might as well all go home because there can't be any salvation from sin. So the incarnation is absolutely fundamental to Christianity. Without the incarnation there can be no salvation for humans. And yet at the same time if the incarnate one is only human then the salvation could extend only to one other human being. And so it is obvious that He would also have to be God and that as God the value of the salvation would be infinite and could extend to every human in the world, provisionally. This is where the debate between limited and unlimited atonement is and the limited folks have to wordsmith here because clearly the value of Jesus' death is infinite and yet they want to limit it to the Father's purpose to save only the elect and thereby disconnect it from the non-elect, even in a provisional sense. But that is really just talk. Obviously, the atonement is unlimited in the way God designed it so that it is provisional for all and only applicational to those who believe. And so through this union of God and man, which we refer to as the hypostasis, all these things were provided for by the Holy Spirit so that ultimately there could be a salvation from sin which extends to every man, woman and child. And that the Son would also be God is manifest in the context as the Isaiah prophecy says, "and she will call His name Immanuel," which Matthew says means what? **"God with us."** So the woman would call His name Immanuel. Joseph would name Him Jesus. And if you put both together you get what? God with us, the Lord saves. The incarnation is a critical doctrine, it is at the very heart of salvation.

Back in Matt 1:24 **And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, the man obeyed, but kept her virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His**

name Jesus. If you think about this in real life, Mary would be showing and so the families would have to be told. The fathers who arranged the marriage according to their desire would have to be convinced. And they would have to be behind the whole thing. And apparently they were because it says that Joseph took her as **his wife.** But very carefully we are also told in verse 25 that he **kept her virgin until she gave birth to a Son.** Now why did he do that? Usually the marriage was consummated on the night of the marriage. Well, what would you do if the Son of Man was developing in the womb? Not interfere. This man did not want to interfere with the work of God. So he **kept her a virgin until she gave birth.** And what that little word **until** implies is that after **she gave birth** he then consummated the marriage. She did not remain **a virgin.** And, of course, the Bible does not sustain the teaching of the perpetual virginity of Mary. That is a Roman Catholic doctrine. Instead the Bible mentions other brothers and sisters in the Gospels and these are to be rightly understood as not spiritual brothers and sisters as they argue, but physical, including His mother. They all had Mary as their mother and Joseph as their father. And when **she gave birth** Joseph **called His name Jesus** because of the nature of His mission as revealed by the angel. And so we have a lot to celebrate. We have the greatest gift given; the Son of Man, conceived in a virgin by the Spirit of God to maintain His connection to the human race and yet truly God so that His salvation could have the value to extend to every man, woman and child and that is a salvation that is extended to you freely by God in Christ. You must receive it. He will not force it on you but He says to you that you are dead in transgressions and sins and that Christ paid the penalty on the cross for your sins and that on the third day He was raised again because the Father was pleased with the payment and so all that is left is for you to believe in Him, to trust that He has paid the price in full and at that moment you are set free from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, enabled to live a new life by the Spirit of God who comes to indwell you. That is the gift of God! If you receive it, you will have that gift.

¹ Cited by Ed Glasscock, *Matthew: Moody Gospel Commentary*, p 43.