Immanuel, God With Us

**Matt. 1:17-25**

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**Introduction:** Bible students have a saying, “Context is King.” By which they mean that that every verse or account in the Word of God has a particular historical or circumstantial setting in which it was spoken or written. Context is like radiating circles. There are the verses on either side of the one being studied. Then there is the chapter and the book that it contains along with the historical circumstances that book was written in. In the largest sense, the entire Bible is the context because God the Holy Spirit wrote the entire Bible.

**2 Tim. 3:16-17** All Scripture is inspired (breathed out) by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

In human terms God used 40 very different human authors over a period of 1,500 years to write the Scripture we presently have. Some were prophets. Others were priests. Matthew was a loathsome tax collector. Luke was a doctor; Timothy was a young apprentice. Peter and many others were common fishermen. Because of the time span involved, most never met one another so they collaborate on their accounts and yet they all proclaim the Yahweh to be the one true God and Jesus to be the Christ, the one true Savior of men. The human authors were spiritually assisted behind the scenes by God the Holy Spirit. God used their human personalities, nationalities and circumstances seamlessly to produce The Perfect Inerrant Book we call The Bible.

**2 Pet. 1:20-21** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved (carried along) by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

One of these Bible writers was Matthew. The Holy Spirit leads him to write an account of the life of Jesus that begins with by tracing Christ’s human ancestry back to Abraham. The Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham. God had promised and God is a promise keeping God.

**Gen. 22:17-18** indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Matthew summarizes Christ’s genealogy by dividing it into three equal parts. All three demonstrate God’s grace to Israel in different ways:

**Matt. 1:17** So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations

The fourteen generations from Abraham to David was a period of wandering without a land and even enslavement in Israel. During that time God raised up Moses and Joshua, gave them the law and overthrew those living in the land He gave to Israel

The fourteen generations from David to the exile showcased Israel’s failed monarchy. The monarchy they insisted on rather than having God as their King.

**1 Sam. 8:7-8** The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 8 "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also.

Israel’s kings had the Word of God\, The sacrifices, and The prophets. And yet this period is a testimony to the abject inability and failure of human government to bring about goodness and prosperity.

The fourteen generations from the deportation to the time of Christ was one of continued judgment and subjugation to the Gentile nations of the world. As the closing chapters of Daniel show, this was a time of spiritual darkness, war, and hardened hearts. Israel was in a state of spiritual collapse when Jesus arrived on the scene. So this is exactly where Matthew begins to tell the story of Christ’s life. The closing verses of chapter one reveal 5 important truths we will need to understand the life of Jesus.

* The virgin conception is an Absolute Necessity for God the Son [18]
* Marriage is a covenant that God uses to illustrate Christ’s love for us [19]
* The entire Trinity collaborated to make God’s Son a fully human man [20]
* Christ’s people are more than just Israel [21] (cf. Isaiah 49:5-7)
* Everything Matthew reveals proves The Bible to be The Word of God [22-24]

**The virgin conception is an Absolute Necessity for God the Son [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 [18]:** In the beginning of the 20th century a great wave of unbelief swept over the Christian church. It infected all the great historic seminaries of our land. Yale, Harvard, Princeton and thousands more all fell in love with what came to be called modernism. We were too 20th century and intelligent to believe that a woman could conceive a baby without any human father. Preposterous! Jesus was not divine, but a man like any other. He certainly was not God the Eternal Son. His miracles were embellishments and exaggerations of His followers and His resurrection was a hoax carried out by his disciples. He did not return to heaven and He is certainly not coming again to right all wrongs and restore His creation. The church in America descended into the hopelessness of a world without The living Word.

All this started with the repudiation of the virgin conception and birth. Jesus absolutely was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit. This is not an optional doctrine for believers. If it did not happen exactly this way then Jesus was a mere man, a sinner, who died for His own sins. He could not die for yours because He had to die for His own.

**Rom. 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

**Rom. 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul, under inspiration explains this in Romans Chapter Five.

Adam sinned and became, by nature, spiritually dead and alienated from God. His nature was therefore passed on to all humanity. Death and separation from God are indelibly embedded in the DNA of all humans. The human condition is set at the cellular and spiritual level. That is why nothing has ever been able to fix it. Religion, philosophy, education, politics all have a 10,000 year record of total failure. Civilizations rise only to fail, crash, disintegrate and be replaced by the next generation of men convinced that they will be able to succeed where all others have failed.

**Rom. 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

But wait, Didn’t you just say that Christ was without sin. Yes, I did.

**2 Cor. 5:21** He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God made Christ a fully human yet sinless man by stepping around Adam’s dead, fallen nature. God conceived Christ in Mary with no human father. Sin entered the world through Adam and it passed to all other humans through the fathers. All men have human fathers and are therefore sinners. Jesus did not and was therefore sinless.

Not only was this a notable miracle but it was an absolute necessity for Salvation. Adam was in the same state when he was created but then chose to sin. Jesus never sinned. Perhaps you have heard it said or even said yourself, “It doesn’t seem fair that Adam’s sin caused all men to become sinners.” Here is God’s response to that observation.

**Rom. 5:16** The gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment *arose* from one *transgression* resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift *arose* from many transgressions resulting in justification.

Jesus reversed what Adam did. God would become one of His own creatures. He would be a man without sin and because He was also God the Eternal Son He would not sin. He will never sin!

**Marriage is a covenant that God uses to illustrate Christ’s love for us [19]**

**And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. [19]:** Marriage in God’s view is a sacred contract. In Bible the contract was often made years before the actual marriage took place. The groom would make a solemn commitment to the bride and then return to his father’s home where he would prepare a place (a living place) for himself and his new bride. When it was complete the groom with mount an elaborate parade after dark to the home of his bride where he would gather her up to take her home as his bride. As Jesus prepared to return to The Father’s house He used this exact illustration for His disciples and for us as well. His disciples knew

**John 14:1-3**  "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, *there* you may be also.

Joseph had made a sincere promise to Mary. She seemed to have broken faith with that covenant. Following the prescribed procedure Joseph was going to end the covenant but God intervened. God intervened to conceive Jesus in Mary’s womb and then again to vindicate Mary’s honor and to reveal to Joseph what had happened.

**The entire Trinity collaborated to make God’s Son a fully human man [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. [20]:** Any child knows that you need a mommy and a daddy to have a baby. This is just the way things are. Matthew is no exception. He concludes that Mary has not been faithful. So God sends an angel to bring Joseph into the loop. Until now only Mary knew what was going on. She had already received direct explanation from God via the angel Gabriel ….

* **Luke 1:28-30**  28 ….. coming in, …. *Gabriel* said to her, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord *is* with you." 29 But she was very perplexed at *this* statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.

Mary begins to talk to herself and try to figure out why this strange man is suddenly in my chamber and why is he greeting me and how does he know that the Lord is with me? Very troubling! Very disturbing. Mary’s young life is about to intersect with the purposes of the Living God. Gabriel has to comfort her and he does this simply. Mary saying….You have found grace with God.”

What follows had been waiting in the mind of God since eternity past. It will be the greatest demonstration of this condescending mercy and love. This is how the human history of Jesus the Savior / King begins….

**Luke 1:31-34**  31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Mary questions the angel. There is a vast difference between questioning the Lord and questioning His goodness and motives. Mary does not say, “How could you do this to me? People will all think I am unfaithful to my betrothed.” She simply asks the question that is begging to be asked. You can ask God questions. Just be careful not to question His love for you or His wisdom toward you and your life.

**Luke 1:35** The angel answered and said to her, "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.

When people come to your door to say that the Trinity is not in the Bible you need to remember this verse. All three persons of the Godhead converge on Mary. The messenger and the message may be disturbing, but the answer to her question is spectacular.

* **The Holy Spirit** will come upon you

“Come upon you:” describes way more than a mere arrival. It means coming to her to accomplish something. It sometime speaks of someone overtaking you as you run. The Holy Spirit will not be operating from a distance. He will come to you Mary. He will take hold of you. He will touch you. It is a powerful and energetic word.

* **The power of the Most High (**God the Father) will overshadow you

**Acts 7:48** "However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands.

God’s power is absolute. Nothing can thwart it or successfully resist it. God has Sovereign ability to do whatever He pleases.

“Mary….The Father’s glorious power and presence will cover, hide and protect you.”

**Christ’s people are more than just Israel [21] (cf. Isaiah 49:5-7)**

**"She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." [21]:** Joseph now knows more of what Mary knows. She alone will conceive! She and he are to name the child Jesus because that name means “Yahweh Saves.” Mary is the human factor and God The Holy Spirit is the life giver. Most people think of Israel when they read the phrase “His People,” but it is way more than that.

Isaiah records a conversation between God the Father and God the Son somewhere in eternity past.

**Isa. 49:5-6** And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of the LORD, And My God is My strength), 6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the reserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Saving the Gentiles or “Nations” as they are called in the OT was always on God’s mind. The Messiah, Jesus would be a Jew. He would be the King of the Jews, but that is too small a thing in The Father’s mind. Notice that The Father Yahweh is the one who “formed Jesus in the womb” just like Gabriel announced to Mary. He is the one speaking to His Son and saying, “I will make you a light to the nations!”

**Isa. 49:7** 7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel *and* its Holy One, To the despised One, To the One abhorred by the nation, To the Servant of rulers, "Kings will see and arise, Princes will also bow down, Because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who has chosen You."

The Father goes on to describe exactly what will happen. Jesus the Eternal Son will be despised and abhorred by the nations of the world. He still is to this day. But that is not how the story ends. It ends with Christ Jesus…for now a little baby in a manger…ruling His creation with power and majesty.

**Psalm 2:1-12**  Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." 7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the *very* ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 'You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall hatter them like earthenware.'" 10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the LORD with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

So who are “His People?” They are all the chosen ones that God has known since before the creation of the world and that He has gifted to His Son. You beloved are a gift from God the Father to Christ the Son.

**Eph. 1:4-6** … He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

**Jn. 6:37-40** "**All that the Father gives Me** will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that **of all that He has given Me I lose nothing**, but raise it up on the last day. 40 "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

**Everything Matthew reveals proves The Bible to be The Word of God [22-23]**

**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." [22-23]:** We should not be surprised that the coming of God the Son into humanity would have been extraordinary. When He left it was equally miraculous, but that is for Easter in a few months.

God took great pains to be specific about the coming of His Son because it was all planned in eternity past. There was nothing random. Everything that was revealed came to pass with perfection. The greatest evidence of who Jesus was is to be found in the way God announced His coming in precise detail for centuries and centuries.

**CONCLUSION:** Mary and Joseph are a study in faith. People often say to me something like, “I wish I had more faith or I wish my faith was stronger.” Well that is much easier than you think it is. Faith is believing God. It is believing what God says about Himself, His creation and about what He does or intends to do in His world.

**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. [24-25]:** Both Mary and Joseph were told something (by God) that does not mesh with the way humans think. Humans believe that a child has to have an ovum and a sperm. In the amazing entrance of God the Son into humanity God miraculously conceived Jesus Himself. He told Mary and Joseph and they both believed Him.

The more you know about God from His Word and what God has planned for you, the more you can believe and obey it. Faith is trusting God so much that you can do what He says without fear. May we make this coming year the year we know more about God so that we can trust Him more.

**Hebrews 11:1-3**  Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 For by it the men of old gained approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

God loves it when we trust Him. It is impossible actually to please God without trusting Him. Will you commit to doing that more. The world says everything came by random chance through evolution and gas explosions. God says He made everything by speaking it into existence out of nothing. The Babe in the manger made the heavens and the earth. He created your life and then redeemed it at the cross when you became hopelessly lost. So let us increase our faith at Christmas. Let us say with conviction:

**Psalm 121:2-8**  … My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 5 The LORD is your keeper; The LORD is your shade on your right hand. 6 The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. 7 The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. 8 The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.