

Immanuel, God with Us

Summary and Goal

Across the centuries of the Old Testament, God made promises to restore humanity through the Messiah from Israel. But the Old Testament ends with lots of God's promises unfulfilled. In Matthew 1:18-25, we see Jesus as the continuation and fulfillment of God's rescue mission to the world. Conceived through the Holy Spirit and born to a virgin, Jesus is unlike any other human being. He is fully God and fully man, and He came to save people from their sin. The events surrounding His birth fulfill Old Testament prophecy and show us that Jesus is, in fact, the promised Christ, Immanuel, God with us. And just as He used Joseph, God desires to use our faith-driven obedience to fulfill His promises of salvation and restoration.

Session Outline

1. Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21).
2. Jesus was born to be Immanuel (Matt. 1:22-23).
3. Jesus was born as Joseph obeyed (Matt. 1:24-25).

Background Passage: Matthew 1

Session in a Sentence

Jesus was born to fulfill Old Testament prophecy that God would provide a way to dwell with His people.

Christ Connection

Jesus was born to the virgin Mary to fulfill Old Testament prophecy and to affirm that He is the sinless Savior—God in the flesh who came to dwell with people and save us from our sin.

Missional Application

Because we have been forgiven of our sin through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we present Christ in His fullness to others—as fully God and fully man, the One who provides forgiveness of sin.

Group Time

GROUP MEMBER CONTENT

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in this shaded area throughout the session.

Introduction

EXPLAIN: Use the paragraph on page 38 in the Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG) to comment on a couple of perspectives regarding the Christmas season.

The Christmas season fills many people with incredible delight in the experience of family, food, and fun. But for others, the Christmas season means anything but glee. Family strife, broken marriages, and illnesses protrude in this season like a mountain of pain standing in the way of joy.

INSTRUCT: Ask group members to use the table in their DDG (p. 38) to reflect briefly on their own joys and hurts associated with the Christmas season. Allow a moment for anyone to share who wants to, but don't force any responses.

What are some joys you're looking forward to this Christmas season?	What are some of the hurts you're feeling this Christmas season?

SAY: A mountain of pain with winding roads may lay before us, yet the Book of Matthew stands tall as a billboard in front of this mountain, and it says, "The promised Messiah has come, and He is far greater than we ever could have imagined."

SUMMARIZE: Matthew's Christmas account serves as a guiding light on the winding roads of all our painful mountains, reminding us that God Himself has come to be with us. As we peer into the miraculous, prophecy-fulfilling birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-25, let us look ahead with eyes of faith that we may glimpse His glory lighting our path, granting us joy now as we look forward to the joy that awaits us on the other side of our pains.

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Point 1: Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21).

SAY: The apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily for a Jewish audience in the first century, challenging them, and us, with this question: What will you do with Jesus of Nazareth? From the outset, Matthew was proving his point—Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham, the promised King of Israel to bless all the peoples of the earth (Matt. 1:1-17; see Gen. 12:3; 2 Sam. 7:11-16).

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 1:18-21 (DDG p. 39).

¹⁸ The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 39) to highlight Jesus’ **miraculous conception** through the work of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary’s womb and why it is important.


The Messiah’s birth story began with a scandal, or so it appeared. Mary was engaged to Joseph but was found to be pregnant before they ever had sexual relations at the conclusion of their betrothal period. So Joseph naturally assumed that Mary had been unfaithful and adulterous. Joseph did not yet understand that Mary’s pregnancy was the work of the Holy Spirit in her virgin womb. Our sinless Savior was not born through a natural conception but through a **miraculous conception** as utterly unique as He is.

While the details of Jesus’ **miraculous conception** are vague, its reality cannot be denied without a host of important beliefs tumbling down around it, like removing the bottom piece of a balanced block tower.

- If Jesus were conceived by normal means with a human mother and father—not through the Holy Spirit—then He would have been only human and not the God-man we need.
- If He were only a human born in sin and not also God, then He couldn’t have lived a sinless life (Ps. 14:2-3).
- If He couldn’t live a sinless life, then He couldn’t die on the cross as our righteous substitute (Ps. 65:3).
- If He couldn’t pay the penalty for our sins as a sinless Savior, then we are lost with no hope of a righteous standing before God (Isa. 53:4-12).

SAY: Thanks be to God! The Messiah came as the God-man—fully God and fully man—through the miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit. The promised woman’s seed who would defeat Satan was finally here (Gen. 3:15), and He is much more than anyone anticipated.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.


 What are some ways the Old Testament foreshadows the miraculous birth of the Christ? (the Lord promised a descendant through the woman to crush the serpent's head; God sovereignly worked in the lives of Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah that they would conceive children, though all through normal human means; the prophets foretold the coming Messiah in both human and divine terms)

EXPLAIN: Reference the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 39) as you comment on the angel's message to Joseph, noting especially how **Jesus' name** communicated His mission to save sinners.

God intervened through an angel to clarify for Joseph the uniqueness and glory of Jesus' conception, because while God had foreshadowed it in the Scriptures, nothing in human experience could prepare him for this miracle and its purpose. Mary's son would be named "**Jesus**" not simply as an acknowledgment that Yahweh is the Savior of His people but because Jesus Himself would save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Jesus is Yahweh, the sinless Savior of sinful people.

- God, who knows the depths of our hearts, spoke directly to Joseph's fear. The angel addressed Joseph as a "son of David," a nod to Joseph's royal lineage, through which the promised Christ would come. The angel told him to marry Mary because her baby was not conceived out of sin but through the Holy Spirit. Through this marriage, Joseph would assume legal fatherhood for the child and bear responsibility for naming Him. Therefore, the baby to be born of the virgin would indeed be the promised "Son of David."
- The name "**Jesus**" is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name "Joshua," which means "Yahweh is salvation." Yahweh is the personal, covenant name of God that He revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14). Jesus' very name communicated His mission: to save people from their sins. This primary purpose of Jesus' coming was not what many Jews expected of the Messiah. Many were anticipating the Messiah to free Israel from their Roman oppressors and establish the military and political dominance they had enjoyed in the time of King David and King Solomon. Jesus' revolution, however, would be focused on the greatest need of all humans at all times—freedom from the sin that separates us from God.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

 How do people today focus solely on earthly concerns and not their need for salvation from sin? (their goal is a good reputation before people without concern for their relationship with God; financial concerns of making ends meet and "doing well" in society can keep one from eternal concerns; political concerns can dominate a person's focus; parents may focus on education from an earthly perspective to the detriment of their child's need to know the Scriptures and to hear the gospel)

Point 2: Jesus was born to be Immanuel (Matt. 1:22-23).

SAY: Matthew often paused his story to comment on how Jesus' experience fulfilled some pattern, prophecy, or principle from the Old Testament. Here he paused to reveal how the conception, birth, and naming of Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 7:14.

READ Matthew 1:22-23 (DDG p. 40).

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

²³ See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son,
and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 40) to explain the context of Matthew's quote of Isaiah's prophecy. Emphasize the encouragement we should receive that God's Word and promises are true and sure.

Matthew unveiled a divinely orchestrated parallel between the immediate fulfillment of Isaiah's Old Testament prophecy of a boy named Immanuel born to a young woman (Isa. 7:14) and the future fulfillment of Jesus' birth to the virgin Mary. The immediate fulfillment entailed a young woman conceiving a son through natural means, but the complete fulfillment entailed an actual virgin conceiving a son through supernatural means. Matthew highlighted this prophecy to drive home his point: Jesus is the promised Messiah, the fulfillment of Israel's expectation.

- The immediate fulfillment of the prophecy assured Judah of salvation from a military threat (Isa. 7; note vv. 1,16), but the complete fulfillment ensured the spiritual salvation of God's people (Matt. 1:21).
- The details surrounding Jesus' birth not only prove His identity, they also remind us of the faithfulness and trustworthiness of God and His Word. Jesus was born to fulfill Old Testament prophecy that God would provide a way to dwell with His people. If God has kept His numerous promises to Israel by sending the Messiah, won't He also keep His numerous promises to us now?

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 40).

Virgin Birth: The Bible affirms that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). The virgin birth affirms both the **deity** and **humanity** of Christ.

Essential Doctrine "Virgin Birth": The Bible affirms that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38). The virgin birth affirms the historicity of the incarnation, where the eternal Son of God took on human flesh. The virgin birth is significant in that it serves as a reminder of Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 7) while also affirming both the **deity** and **humanity** of Christ.

EXPLAIN: Reference the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 40) as you explain the **meaning** and **significance** of Jesus' being Immanuel, "God with us."

The events surrounding Jesus' birth lined up with Isaiah's prophecy. The purpose of Jesus' name—that He would save His people from their sins—implied that He, indeed, is Yahweh. Understanding this divine implication, Matthew applied the name "Immanuel" to Jesus not just as a symbol but as reality. *Jesus is God with us in every sorrow. Jesus is God with us to save us from every moral failure. Jesus is God with us on mission. Jesus is God with us forever and ever.*



Voices from Church History

"He dy'd for all who ever saw
No help in them, nor by the
law: I this have seen; and
gladly own 'Salvation is by
Christ alone!'"¹

—Olaudah Equiano
(1745-1797)

Meaning of Jesus' being Immanuel, "God with us":

- Like the triune nature of God, the miraculous incarnation of Christ—God the Son took on a human nature through the work of the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary's womb—is a reality we can't grasp completely. Jesus is one-hundred percent God and one-hundred percent man. He is the only Man worthy our worship.

Significance of Jesus' being Immanuel, "God with us":

- Jesus felt hunger, fatigue, and great grief. He felt the sting of being misunderstood, hated, abandoned, betrayed, and left to hang on a cross. God the Son in the flesh completely immersed Himself in our physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. *Jesus is God with us in every sorrow.*
- Jesus did all of this to become the perfect sacrifice to pay for our sins. On the cross, Jesus, who never sinned, became sin and endured the full wrath of God for our sins (2 Cor. 5:21). The death of a perfectly righteous human could atone for the sins of another human. But only God Himself could endure the fullness of God's wrath to atone for the sins of all sinners and rise from the dead three days later. Only Immanuel, God with us, could accomplish such a great salvation. *Jesus is God with us to save us from every moral failure.*
- After Jesus rose from the grave, He gave His followers an incredible commission: Go and make more followers of Jesus from every nation (Matt. 28:18-20). Attached to this command was the incredible promise of His eternal presence (Matt. 28:20). *Jesus is God with us on mission.*
- One day, God will again dwell in fullness on the earth. In the New Jerusalem, God the Almighty and the Lamb of God will be enthroned forever (Rev. 21). *Jesus is God with us forever and ever.*

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



Why is Jesus' presence with His people such an encouragement?
(we know we are never alone, never forsaken, never abandoned; our obedience to God's commands and Jesus' mission is possible because we are strengthened by Jesus' presence; Jesus' presence with us confirms God's love for us and guarantees our eternal salvation from sin)

Point 3: Jesus was born as Joseph obeyed (Matt. 1:24-25).

READ Matthew 1:24-25 (DDG p. 41).

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her ²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

EXPLAIN: Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 41) as you highlight the *two ways* God's words to Joseph empowered his faith and subsequent obedience. Emphasize that **obedience to God is an act of faith** as you connect this pattern to how we grow in our belief that God is trustworthy.

Don't miss the incredible leap of faith Joseph took when he obeyed God's command to marry Mary and assume legal fatherhood of Jesus. Joseph would be subject to the town's confusion, distrust, and disdain. Who would believe Mary's baby wasn't the result of his lack of sexual restraint during their betrothal? Can you imagine the whispers and scoffs dripping from people's lips at the mention of Joseph's name? Joseph's obedience wouldn't be applauded by most people, but he sought the applause of the only One who matters. Empowered by God's words through the angel, Joseph believed and obeyed.

God's words, spoken through the angel, empowered Joseph's faith and subsequent obedience.

- *First*, God reminded Joseph who he was—a "son of David" through whom the promised Messiah would come (Matt. 1:20). By addressing Joseph in this way, God reminded Joseph that He never forgot His promise to David. God was now calling Joseph to take his place in the lineage that led to the Savior.
- *Second*, God spoke to the fear that threatened Joseph's faith (Matt. 1:20). Joseph's fear certainly wasn't unfounded. God knows that we face circumstances that are legitimately frightful, but He also knows how to speak to our fears through His Word so that our fear doesn't keep us from obedience. God's words told Joseph that God was up to something greater than Joseph's fear: the salvation of His people from their sins. Empowered by God's words, Joseph believed and obeyed.
- **Obedience to God is an act of faith.** When we distrust God's goodness, wisdom, power, and authority, we aren't inclined to do what He says. But when we are convinced that God is good enough, gracious enough, and powerful enough both to command what He wants and to empower us to do what He wants, we're compelled to obey. Our obedience or disobedience to God communicates whether or not we believe He is trustworthy. We become convinced of God's trustworthiness as we immerse ourselves in God's Word (Rom. 10:17), which declares over and over again God's holiness, love, power, and faithfulness. And as our faith grows, sweet fruits of obedience come forth.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 41) to reinforce the proper motivation and strength for our obedience.

Obedience to God is an act of **faith**.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 41) to highlight Joseph as a model of faith for us, and then show how our simple acts of faith-driven obedience are also used by God in eternally significant ways.

Joseph is a model of faith for us. But could he ever have imagined the significance of his faith-driven obedience? He was a man from a small town who simply sought to pattern his life after God's word. Yet this is the very kind of person God delights to use in great ways for His glory (Isa. 66:2). This was the kind of person God used in the birth of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. So too, the acts of our obedience, even the smallest ones, are used by God in eternally significant ways.

- Following Christ often feels confounding and painful, thankless and marginalizing. We seek to live for God but then we lose our job, our reputation, our marriage, our child, our health. We may know of Jesus' promise that we will experience trouble in this life (John 16:33), yet the pain of a new or lingering trial always feels like a shock. Grief has a way of making us feel abandoned and condemned. Yet at the crossroads of our brokenness and faith, God is at work to sanctify us and to use us for His glory in ways we could never imagine. We see this truth in Joseph's life, but do we believe it for our own?
 - Can you imagine the generational and eternal significance of your day-to-day simple acts of faith-driven obedience, such as choosing love over retaliation, gentleness over wrath, and faithfulness over dominance? If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then you can trust that every single step of obedience you take is well worth it. The God who used Joseph in the coming of Immanuel is the same God who is eager to use you for His eternal purposes as you daily yield to His Word in faith and obedience.
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INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.



What are some ways faith-driven obedience can have eternal significance? (models faith-driven obedience for the next generation of believers in our families, our communities, and our churches; faith-driven obedience extends to sharing the gospel, which can impact others for their eternal joy in Christ; faith-driven obedience reinforces our own sanctification and desire for eternity as we live now in God's presence)

INSTRUCT: Ask group members to spend a few moments filling in the table in their DDG (p. 41). Depending on the characteristics of your group and the time you have left, this could be a small group activity, or you might need to encourage group members to work on it during the following week. Offer to help people with pointing to or finding appropriate Scriptures that address their struggles with obedience.

Ways I'm Struggling to Obey God	Scriptures That Can Empower My Faith to Obey God in This

My Mission

EXPLAIN: From the beginning, God chose to use humanity to spread His glory throughout the earth. He made humans in His image to fill and cultivate the earth as His very own representatives (Gen. 1–2). Adam failed, but God did not. God later chose the nation of Israel to model His character and justice to the rest of the nations (Deut. 4:5–6). Time and time again, Israel failed, but God did not. Through Israel, God sent His Son to become a human and perfectly live as the radiant and complete image of God (Heb. 1:1–3). He is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus, fully God and fully man, did not fail. He succeeded in obedience on our behalf and for our instruction. When we place our trust in Christ, we receive His forgiveness, righteousness, and friendship. We also receive His mission (Matt. 28:18–20). God is still working through human beings—His church—to spread His glory throughout the earth by presenting Christ in His fullness to others.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 42), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have been forgiven of our sin through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we present Christ in His fullness to others—as fully God and fully man, the One who provides forgiveness of sin.

- **How does the promise of Jesus as Immanuel, God with us, encourage you to obey in faith?**
- **What are some ways your group can show those suffering in your community that Jesus came to be “God with us” this holiday season?**
- **Who will you introduce to Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of the world?**

Voices from the Church

“God’s will and the obedience of his people have great power in changing the course of individual lives and indeed the history of the world.”²

—Joe Kapolyo

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, we praise You for Your love and grace shown in sending Your Son, Jesus, to be Immanuel, God with us. You have provided for our salvation by faith in His name, and You have given us Your Spirit to empower our faith-driven obedience. Help us to obey You with gratitude in our hearts, and help us to proclaim the name of Your Son with boldness and joy so that others can believe in His coming. Amen.

PACK ITEM 6: SIMPLICITY OF FAITH: Cut out these bookmarks and pass them out to group members to remind them that faith is simply taking God’s Word for it.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the **Daily Study** devotions in their DDG (pp. 43–45), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use **Encourage One Another** (p. 46) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.

Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The **Daily Study** devotions in the DDG (pp. 43-45) will help group members get into God's Word and study it for themselves. **Encourage One Another** (p. 46) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 43-45) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for **Day 3** as a part of point 1 in the session: **God knows that our greatest problem is our sin, and nothing can solve that problem except God Himself. Jesus saves us from the penalty, the power, and (one day) the presence of our sin.**



Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God's Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 4:** "As Immanuel, 'God with us,' the Christ's coming would mean salvation for those who believe and judgment for those who will not."
- **Day 5:** "There's simply no way for us to grasp fully the historical, theological, and eternal implications of our day-by-day obedience to God's Word."



Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God's Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member's DDG (p. 46) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using *The Gospel Project* in their groups.

- **Encourage group members to stay in touch with one another during the Christmas season, a time of constant distraction and, for some, loneliness.**
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.

Additional Commentary

Point 1: Jesus was conceived through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-21).

“The fifth woman whose name appears in the genealogy is Mary. Matthew does not give us the extended details about the annunciation, the pregnancy and birth, so beautifully recorded for us by Luke. But Matthew tells us considerably more about Joseph and God’s dealings with this godly man who became Jesus’ earthly father. Four times (Matt. 1:20; 2:13,19,22), we are told, the Lord or his angel appears to Joseph in a dream, and on each occasion Joseph does exactly what he is told. In each case, he is to act to protect Mary and the child she bears, the child of whom Joseph is not the father.”³

“The words **of Jesus Christ** are in an emphatic position in the Greek text, implying that the circumstances of Jesus’s birth differed from those of everyone else in the genealogy. Although several of those people were conceived by miracles, they all had a human father. Only Jesus was born of a virgin. **Mary had been engaged to Joseph.** However, ancient Jewish engagement was as legally binding as marriage. The couple did not live together or engage in sexual intercourse. But the engagement could only be ended by divorce (thus, Joseph’s decision in 1:19). **Before they came together** means that Joseph and Mary had not yet had intercourse. Joseph thus assumed that Mary had been unfaithful. **Pregnant from the Holy Spirit** means that Mary’s pregnancy was a miracle performed by the Spirit, not that God assumed material form and physically impregnated her. This makes Jesus’s conception dramatically different from Greek myths that speak of children born to gods who lay with women.”⁴

Point 2: Jesus was born to be Immanuel (Matt. 1:22-23).

“**the virgin.** The Greek word *parthenos* (‘virgin’) corresponds to the Hebrew term ‘*almah*, which is used in the prophecy of Isa. 7:14 regarding the virgin birth of the coming Savior ... The Hebrew word ‘*almah* (‘virgin’ or ‘maiden’) generally denotes an unmarried woman who is a virgin (e.g., Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Ps. 68:25). The prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 (occasioned by threat of attack on Judah in the time of Isaiah) points to God’s enduring promise for the line of David. Matthew thus presents the virgin birth of Jesus as God’s miraculous fulfillment of this promise in the person of Jesus the Messiah. This brings further affirmation of the promise that **God (Immanuel)** will be **with** his disciples in every age, to empower them in their commission to ‘make disciples of all nations’—as Jesus reaffirms in the closing words of Matthew’s Gospel: ‘behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’ (cf. Matt. 28:20).”⁵

“Matthew now introduces his first Old Testament fulfillment quotation ... Isaiah’s prophecy is viewed as God’s word. ‘Immanuel’ is translated for the benefit of those in Matthew’s audience who could not understand the Hebrew ... An understanding of prophetic foreshortening of time (the Old Testament prophets often predicted in one and the same context various events that would take place in entirely different future eras), multiple fulfillment of prophecy (partial fulfillments often preceded and foreshadowed later complete fulfillments), and Matthew’s use of typology, along with a careful reading of the larger context of the Isaiah quote (7:1–9:7) ... [means it] is best to see a partial, proleptic fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy in his time, with the complete and more glorious fulfillment in Jesus’ own birth.”⁶

Point 3: Jesus was born as Joseph obeyed (Matt. 1:24-25).

“Jesus has the right lineage, Scripturally speaking. He is the son of Abraham and the son of David. But how does he get to be the son of David? Is it through Mary? Maybe. Maybe not. Nowhere is that the point, either in Luke or Matthew. Rather, and more certainly, it is through Joseph, his surrogate father! Why is this narrative before us so important? It is important because it shows us how Joseph made Mary’s son his own son. That is, he made Jesus his legally. How? Two ways. First, ‘he took [Mary as] his wife’ (v. 24). Second, ‘And he [Joseph] called his name Jesus’ (v. 25). By accepting Mary as his wife and by naming her child, he officially bestowed upon Jesus ‘the status of a descendant of David.’”⁷

“The fact that Matthew never explicitly refers to Joseph as Jesus’ father reminds us that Jesus was born **to an adoptive father**. After being named and taken into the family by Joseph, **legally, Jesus is Joseph’s son**. And being Joseph’s son means that this adoption ties Jesus to the line of David as a royal son. Finally, in terms of how Jesus came, Matthew tells us that all of these things happened **amidst a fallen world**. Jesus came to a world of sin in need of salvation, which is why it is crucial to see that **ultimately, Jesus is God’s Son**. The problem of sin needed a divine solution. Part of the purpose of the virgin birth of Jesus is to show us that salvation does not come from man, but from God. Salvation is wholly the work of a supernatural God, not the work of natural man. There is nothing we can do to save ourselves from our sins, which is evident even in the way in which Jesus entered the world. This baby born in Bethlehem was and is the center of all history.”⁸

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The Gospel Project®
Adult Leader Guide CSB
Volume 8, Number 2 Winter 2019-20

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Printed in the United States of America

The Gospel Project®: Adult Leader Guide CSB
(ISSN 2163-0917; Item 005438061) is published
quarterly by LifeWay Christian Resources,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234.
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Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth

Think about the encouragement people often share to help others through times of adversity. We might hear someone speak of how pressure is required to transform coal into a diamond; thus, pressure can be good for us, transforming us into someone better. Or we might be told of the hatchling that has to work to break through its eggshell, and that struggle is good for this creature—even necessary—so that it grows strong. Likewise, adversity strengthens us and positions us to be who we were meant to be.

While these illustrations might provide encouragement, they reveal something quite important about the world's view of adversity. The world sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to dig deep, gaze within their soul, and discover who he or she truly is. But the gospel tells a different story—a better story. The gospel sees adversity as an opportunity for a person to look high above, gaze upon Christ, and see who He truly is. For it is Christ, not ourselves, who carries us through all trials and suffering. Adversity positions us to rely on Christ's power, not an inner human strength that has been lying dormant.

In this volume we pick up the story of Scripture with the Jews living in bondage in a foreign land, the result of their rebellion against God. But even in the midst of judgment, God's faithful love still shines forth brightly. We will witness God continuing to guide, strengthen, and protect His people in their time of great adversity, not to help them discover who they were but rather to understand who He is. At the same time, we will see God continue to drive the events of history toward the fulfillment of His ancient promise to provide the Rescuer, the One who would free people from an even greater bondage, that of sin and death.

EDITOR