JESUS

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).
Matthew 1:22-23

Matthew continues his narrative, telling the story while disclosing its significance.

All this took place – this phrase includes everything that Matthew has thus far given an account of including the genealogical record of Joseph and Mary.

Matthew takes the story of Jesus' birth and is connecting it through all the centuries of kings and conquests, tragedies and triumphs, back to Abraham. The sovereign God is at work in history.

Matthew does this so that God fulfilling his promises remains central to the Gospel's theme.

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?" Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."
Isaiah 7:10-14

First things first. In order for this prophecy to even meet the criteria of prophecy means that it would have had to been fulfilled in Isaiah's and Ahaz's immediate future. Yes, there is a broader meaning to the passage, a grander and later one, which is why Matthew uses it.

The Hebrews word for *virgin* here is *almah.* The verbal root of the word means *'to become whole or ripe.'* In that sense, *almah* means pubescent girl, ripe for marriage, just as the masculine equivalent *elem,* means pubescent boy.

Historically speaking, God himself was going to give King Ahaz a sign concerning an *almah* who would conceive, and by this sign Ahaz would know that his enemies would fall.

Given Matthew's application of the prophecy, there is little problem in understanding that Mtthew meant a virgin conception, but the 8th Century BC prophecy simply meant a young girl who was of the age to marry but presently was not yet married.

Regardless of the argument, the core of the point Matthew is making is the connection between Jesus Messiah, the power and person of God, and the fulfillment of God's promises.

The words of God in Scripture are not left to fulfill themselves. God is at work.

Consider, as in this case of a prophecy given some 800 years before Matthew's Gospel is written, of an *almah* conceiving a child, is that the Old Testament gives us *types* more than *predictions.*

The classic apologetic argument from prophecy . . . is no longer primarily a question of the exact fulfillment of a divinely guided foreknowledge; it is much more a question of the culmination of a divine plan that could only be detected through hindsight.

Raymond E. Brown – The Virgin Conception And Bodily Resurrection of Jesus

When we think of fulfilled prophecy, we could approach it this way:

not how precisely the prophets predicted this,

rather we might think,

how perfectly Jesus fulfilled ancient revelations which honor both the Son's fulfillments and the Spirit's promptings.

Another thing to note about Matthew's revelation of Jesus is the connection found between vv.21 and 23.

She will bear a son, and <u>you shall call his name Jesus</u>, (Joshua) for he will save his people from their sins.

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and <u>you shall call his name Immanuel</u> (which means, God with us).

Matthew 1:21, 23

Matthew places before us a duality in the naming of this virgin-born child. He is both and fully the divine and the human Savior.

Jesus is a *Joshua – Yah saves* – the fully Divine Redeemer;

he is also *Immanuel – Yah with us* – the one who is fully human.

He is at once the *Divine God* and a human named Joshua.

so we see the duality of the divine-human Scripture in this verse, for the Word is spoken both "by the Lord: and "through the prophet." If we divinize Scripture we lose its humanity; if we humanize Scripture we lose its divinity. The same balance – of "both divine and human – must be kept in our treatment of Scripture as in our treatment of Jesus.

Bruner – Matthew, page 33

Philosopher Karl Barth would have us hold this balance:

The Word revealed (Jesus Christ), the Word written (the prophetic, apostolic, Scriptures), and the Word spoken (the indispensability of preaching).

Karl Barth – Church Dogmatics

Matthew loves the idea that Jesus is what the whole Old Testament is about. Discipleship under Jesus by walking in the Spirit is God's plan of salvation.

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us).
Matthew 1:23

To the people of King Ahaz and Isaiah, this prophecy would be simple: the prophet promises a sign to King Ahaz and the House of David: the birth of a royal son (some believe Hezekiah) during whose infancy the two kings of Syria and Israel would suffer ruin.

This prophecy, however, came to have a deeper understanding to Jews of later centuries, and it is here that the name *Immanuel* has greater significance.

and it (Assyria) will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel. Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered, give ear, all you far countries, strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing, speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.
Isaiah 8:8-10

Given Isaiah's surrounding passages, speaking as they do of the dawn of the promised golden age with the judgment of the wicked and the blessing of the righteous, the ultimate sense in this is God's presence being manifested in Israel.

The promised son of Isaiah 7:14 becomes identified as the son of David who would bring the expected kingdom consisting security, righteousness, and justice.

Accordingly, probably sometime in the third century BC, the Greek translators of Isaiah 7:14 apparently regarded the passage as having a deeper meaning, as yet unrealized. In agreement with this interpretation, they chose to translate the Hebrew work "almah" (which means young woman, who may or may not be a virgin), with the Greek word παρθένος (specifically "virgin") rather (than young woman, used by the later Jewish translations of Theodotion, Aquila, and Symmachus) in order to stress the supernatural association brought to mind by the identity and work of this son.
Hagner – Matthew, page 20

There should be no difficulty in reconciling the two names of *Jesus* and *Immanuel,* seeing that Immanuel is not a personal name bur rather a name that is descriptive of the task this person will perform. Immanuel brings the presence of God to humanity, bringing with it God's promised salvation. God's salvation is also the meaning of the name *Joshua – Jesus.*

Here at the beginning of his Gospel, Matthew likes to stress this idea of *"God with us"*, for he ends his Gospel with this same idea.

And behold, (Immanuel) I am with you always, even to the end of the age.
Matthew 28:20

Understand the importance of Matthew's narrative. The virgin birth does not seem necessary, either for God or for us. Yet it is an impressive doctrine which highlights the good news that in truth, God can and regularly does engage in human life *without* the initiation of human nature.

> *When Jospeh woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, and knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*
> *Matthew 1:24-25*

> *P. Bonnard shows that throughout Matthew's opening chapters, the divine initiative that finds human beings strictly inactive – here even asleep – is followed in every case by immediate, concrete, and humble action. Thus divine grace does not cancel human responsibility, it enables it: it does not render believers comatose, it makes them obedient.*
> *Bruner – Matthew, page 47*

Given his perception of Mary's condition and his prior plans to quietly divorce her, Joseph's actions upon waking are surprising. One should consider the rapid change of life expectations that have occurred in this short time in his life.

He took his wife – means he completed the second stage of the marriage process, most likely with a second or final formal ceremony and then took Mary to live with him.

In Joseph, Matthew clearly desires to show us a pre-Jesus model of a righteous man in his obedience.

In the New Testament, Joseph never speaks, but in Matthew's Gospel, where he appears more than in any other, he does some important things.

In chapter one he overcomes hesitation and obeys the divine summons to marry the questionable Mary.

In chapter two he obeys the command to flee to Egypt with child and mother. Later in chapter two, he heeds the command to return to Israel and settle north in Galilee.

In every scene, he says nothing but simply acts in obedience. It would seem Matthew is setting us up for the son of Joseph who though only born, will become the greatest example of one whose speech is to do the will of God.

> *and knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*
> *Matthew 1:25*

Here again Matthew reveals the obedience of Joseph: refraining from any relation with Mary until after the birth and calling her child Jesus.

The simple reason Matthew includes this aspect to their relationship is to ensure that the readers understand Jesus is virgin born per Isaiah's prophecy.

Understand that Mary's perpetual virginity is far from Matthew's mind. His desire is to glorify the Son of God.

> *Joseph's obedience in completing his marriage to Mary and in naming Jesus is also indicative of his formal adoption of Jesus and hence the establishment of his Davidic lineage. The repetition of the name Jesus serves to remind the readers both of the purpose for which he has come and of the consequent accomplishment of the sovereign plan of God.*
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> *Hagner – Matthew, page 21*

Matthew does a great service to his readers in mixing the miraculous and the ordinary, the divine and the human. The focus of attention is not on the birth itself, but on the significance of the child and on the role he will play in fulfilling God's will.

Jesus and Immanuel. This promised child now born embodies both God's presence and his saving ability.

> *If Joseph and Mary were indeed people of prominence due to their genealogy, now brought low by their obedience and sacrifice, then Matthew's Gospel elevates them, not by placing them at the top of any worldly standard, but by placing them in the history of people whose obedience to the will of God sets them in the timeline of the greatest story ever told.*