Immanuel

Matthew 1:18—25

(As Joseph)

Introduction

It was proving to be a restless and sleepless night. I had just found out that day that Mary, my betrothed, my beloved, was with child … and it wasn't mine. I knew the baby wasn't mine because we were betrothed, as good as married, except we hadn't "come together" yet to consummate our union. I am a good man, law abiding, just, and honest. And I had given my love to Mary. We would wait until we were fully, legally married.

Not a Marriage of Custom

It's true that I was quite a few years older than Mary. That was the custom of the day. Men waited until they were established in their carriers and community before getting married and, because of how hard on a woman having children is and wanting to have as many children as possible, women got married in their teens. Truth be told, Mary's mother was closer to my age. The carpenter shop was doing okay, and I was looking forward to starting a family with Mary, who had been promised to me. Just because it was arranged, didn't mean there wasn't love.

True Love?

The more we got to know each other, the more we grew to love each other. At least, I had grown to love Mary. And I thought she loved me. That's what she said. Then I found out she was expecting another man's baby. Mary had been unfaithful to me. How could she? I was shocked at the news, furious that Mary had been untrue, and confused about what to do. I knew that the "proper" thing to do was publicly accuse her of adultery and divorce her. I could save face and wash my hands of the whole mess. But … I still loved her. I didn't want to hurt her or bring shame on her.

A Loving Answer to the Problem

Finally, I hit on a solution. I will divorce her quietly. I won't charge her with adultery. I'll just call off the betrothal. Mary could go away and have the baby someplace else, and we could minimize the shame somewhat. Now, maybe I can get to sleep.

The Angels' Visit

I had just faded off into sleep when I had the craziest dream. An angel came and said, *"Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"* (**Matthew 1:20—21**). That was a lot to digest. First, and most important to me at the time, Mary hadn't been unfaithful. Second, God told me that He wanted me to go ahead and marry her and raise His Son. Finally, God told me what to name Him … Jesus.

"Jesus"

In Hebrew, the name is *Yeshua* and means "Yahweh is salvation" or "Yahweh has saved." This Boy was going to save His people from their sins. He is going to save us from our sins. How was this all going to happen? There goes life like I had planned it. How was I going to be able to do this. No one could give me any tips on raising God's Son. I'm thinking, "Oh no! I can't do this."

"Immanuel"

But then I thought of a verse in Scripture that this whole thing reminded me of: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel* (**Isaiah 7:14**). *Immanuel*, God with us. This Boy will be the Son of God. He will be, He *is* God. And God will be with us, He will be with me. That's the most comforting thought at this time of year. The One who saves us is always with us, because He has come as a Baby, born of my Mary.

And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.