Bible Study for December 23, 2020
[Adapted from the Serendipity Study Bible]

By Major Brian Coles

Read Matthew 1.18-25

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together,[l] she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. **19** Because Joseph, her husband to be,[m] was a righteous man, and because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her[n] privately. **20** When he had contemplated this, an[o] angel of the Lord[p] appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will give birth to a son and you will name him[q] Jesus,[r] because he will save his people from their sins." **22** This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: **23** "***Look! The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and*** they ***will name him***[s] ***Emmanuel***,"[t] which means[u] "***God with us***."[v] **24** When Joseph awoke from sleep he did what the angel of the Lord[w] told him. He took his wife, **25** but did not have marital relations[x] with her until she gave birth to a son, whom he named[y] Jesus.

a.
    Matthew 1:18 **tn** The connotation of the Greek is "before they came together in marital and domestic union" (so BDAG 970 s.v. συνέρχομαι 3).
b. Matthew 1:19 **tn** *Grk* "husband." See following note for discussion.
c. Matthew 1:19 **tn** Or "send her away."**sn** In the Jewish context, "full betrothal was so binding that its breaking required a certificate of divorce, and the death of one party made the other a widow or widower (*m. Ketub*. 1:2; *m. Sota* 1:5; *m. Git*. passim…)" (R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art*, 21).
d. Matthew 1:20 **tn** *Grk* "behold, an angel." The Greek word ἰδού (*idou*) has not been translated because it has no exact English equivalent here, but adds interest and emphasis (BDAG 468 s.v. 1).

e. Matthew 1:20 **tn** Or "the angel of the Lord." Linguistically, "angel of the Lord" is the same in both testaments (and thus, he is either "an angel of the Lord" or "the angel of the Lord" in both testaments). For arguments and implications, see *ExSyn* 252; M. J. Davidson, "Angels," *DJG*, 9; W. G. MacDonald argues for "an angel" in both testaments: "Christology and 'The Angel of the Lord'," *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation*, 324-35.

f. Matthew 1:21 **tn** *Grk* "you will call his name."

g. Matthew 1:21 **sn** The Greek form of the name *Iēsous*, which was translated into Latin as *Jesus*, is the same as the Hebrew *Yeshua* (Joshua), which means "Yahweh saves" ("Yahweh" is typically rendered as "Lord" in the OT). It was a fairly common name among Jews in 1st century Judea and Galilee, as references to a number of people by this name in the LXX and Josephus indicate.

h. Matthew 1:23 **tn** *Grk* "they will call his name."

i. Matthew 1:23 **sn** A quotation from Isa 7:14. It is unclear whether the author is citing the MT or the LXX. The use of the word παρθένος (*parthenos*, "virgin") may be due to its occurrence in the LXX, but it is also possible that it is the author's translation of the Hebrew term עַלְמָה (*'almah*, "young woman"). The second phrase of the quotation is modified slightly from its original context; both the MT and LXX have a second person singular verb, but here the quotation has a third person plural verb form. The spelling of the name here (*Emmanuel*) differs from the spelling of the name in the OT (*Immanuel*) because of a different leading vowel in the respective Greek and Hebrew words. In the original context, this passage pointed to a child who would be born during the time of Ahaz as proof that the military alliance of Syria and Israel against Judah would fail. Within Isaiah's subsequent prophecies this promise was ultimately applied to the future Davidic king who would one day rule over the nation.

j. Matthew 1:23 **tn** *Grk* "is translated."

k. Matthew 1:23 **sn** A quotation from Isa 7:14; 8:8, 10. The Hebrew name *Emmanuel* literally means "God (is) with us." This phrase occurs three times in the OT in close proximity, and subsequent uses are likely related to preceding ones. Thus it is very likely the present author had each in mind when he defined the name in v. 23.

l. Matthew 1:24 **tn** See the note on the word "Lord" in 1:20. Here the translation "the angel of the Lord" is used because the Greek article (ὁ, *ho*) which precedes ἄγγελος (*angelos*) is taken as an anaphoric article (*ExSyn* 217-19) referring back to the angel mentioned in v. 20.

m. Matthew 1:25 **tn** Or "did not have sexual relations"; *Grk* "was not knowing her." The verb "know" (in both Hebrew and Greek) is a frequent biblical euphemism for sexual relations. However, a translation like "did not have sexual relations with her" was considered too graphic in light of the popularity and wide use of Matthew's infancy narrative. Thus the somewhat less direct but still clear "did not have marital relations" was preferred.

n. Matthew 1:25 **tn** *Grk* "and he called his name Jesus." The coordinate clause has been translated as a relative clause in English for stylistic reasons.

Questions to Consider

1. How would you feel if you were in Joseph's place in v.19? Then how would you feel if you were in Joseph's place in vs. 20-21? What would you say to family and friends? To God?
2. What reason does Matthew give as to why Jesus was born [v.21]?
3. Apart from fulfilling prophecy, why was Jesus virgin birth necessary?

Point to Ponder

1. How have you experienced Jesus as your Immanuel in your life lately?
2. What do you learn about faith from Joseph?