**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**December 12, 2022 – Matthew 1:18-25**

**Immediate Context**

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| Matthew 1:1-17 The Genealogy of Jesus | Matthew 3:1-12 The Proclamation of John the Baptist |
| **Matthew 1:18-25 The Birth of Jesus the Messiah** | Matthew 3:13-17 The Baptism of Jesus |
| Matthew 2:1-12 The Visit of the Wise Men | Matthew 4:1-11 The Temptation of Jesus |
| Matthew 2:13-15 The Escape to Egypt | Matthew 4:12-17 Jesus Begins His Ministry in Galilee |
| Matthew 2:16-18 The Massacre of the Infants | Matthew 4:18-22 Jesus Calls the First Disciples |
| Matthew 2:19-23 The Return from Egypt to Nazareth | Matthew 4:23-25 Jesus Ministers to Crowds of People  |
|  | Matthew 5:1-7:29 The Sermon on the Mount |

**Helpful Scriptures**

**Genesis 16:1–16 (NRSV)**

1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, 2 and Sarai said to Abram, “You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave-girl, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife. 4 He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. 5 Then Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!” 6 But Abram said to Sarai, “Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.” Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she ran away from her. 7 The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. 8 And he said, “Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?” She said, “I am running away from my mistress Sarai.” 9 The angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her.” 10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude.” 11 And the angel of the Lord said to her, “Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.” 13 So she named the Lord who spoke to her, “You are El-roi”; for she said, “Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?” 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. 15 Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

**Genesis 20:1–18 (NRSV)**

1 From there Abraham journeyed toward the region of the Negeb, and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While residing in Gerar as an alien, 2 Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” And King Abimelech of Gerar sent and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, “You are about to die because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a married woman.” 4 Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent people? 5 Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ I did this in the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands.” 6 Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; furthermore it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her. 7 Now then, return the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all that are yours.” 8 So Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants and told them all these things; and the men were very much afraid. 9 Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said to him, “What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you, that you have brought such great guilt on me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that ought not to be done.” 10 And Abimelech said to Abraham, “What were you thinking of, that you did this thing?” 11 Abraham said, “I did it because I thought, There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. 13 And when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, I said to her, ‘This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.’ ” 14 Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male and female slaves, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. 15 Abimelech said, “My land is before you; settle where it pleases you.” 16 To Sarah he said, “Look, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; it is your exoneration before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.” 17 Then Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. 18 For the Lord had closed fast all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

**Genesis 31:10–13 (NRSV)**

10 During the mating of the flock I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats that leaped upon the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’ 12 And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the goats that leap on the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.’”

**Genesis 35:5–15 (NRSV)**

5 As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them. 6 Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, 7 and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. 8 And Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So it was called Allon-bacuth. 9 God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he was called Israel. 11 God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. 12 The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.” 13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. 14 Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. 15 So Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

**Genesis 46:1–7 (NRSV)**

1 When Israel set out on his journey with all that he had and came to Beer-sheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. 2 God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.” 3 Then he said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. 4 I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again; and Joseph’s own hand shall close your eyes.” 5 Then Jacob set out from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 They also took their livestock and the goods that they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and they came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, 7 his sons, and his sons’ sons with him, his daughters, and his sons’ daughters; all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 22:22–29 (NRSV)**

22 If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. 23 If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, 24 you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor’s wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. 25 But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. 26 You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. 27 Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her. 28 If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, 29 the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman’s father, and she shall become his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

**Deuteronomy 24:1–4 (NRSV)**

1 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house 2 and goes off to become another man’s wife. 3 Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); 4 her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession.

**Numbers 5:11–31 (NRSV)**

11 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 12 Speak to the Israelites and say to them: If any man’s wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him, 13 if a man has had intercourse with her but it is hidden from her husband, so that she is undetected though she has defiled herself, and there is no witness against her since she was not caught in the act; 14 if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if a spirit of jealousy comes on him, and he is jealous of his wife, though she has not defiled herself; 15 then the man shall bring his wife to the priest. And he shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley flour. He shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, for it is a grain offering of jealousy, a grain offering of remembrance, bringing iniquity to remembrance. 16 Then the priest shall bring her near, and set her before the Lord; 17 the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water. 18 The priest shall set the woman before the Lord, dishevel the woman’s hair, and place in her hands the grain offering of remembrance, which is the grain offering of jealousy. In his own hand the priest shall have the water of bitterness that brings the curse. 19 Then the priest shall make her take an oath, saying, “If no man has lain with you, if you have not turned aside to uncleanness while under your husband’s authority, be immune to this water of bitterness that brings the curse. 20 But if you have gone astray while under your husband’s authority, if you have defiled yourself and some man other than your husband has had intercourse with you,” 21 —let the priest make the woman take the oath of the curse and say to the woman—“the Lord make you an execration and an oath among your people, when the Lord makes your uterus drop, your womb discharge; 22 now may this water that brings the curse enter your bowels and make your womb discharge, your uterus drop!” And the woman shall say, “Amen. Amen.” 23 Then the priest shall put these curses in writing, and wash them off into the water of bitterness. 24 He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings the curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her and cause bitter pain. 25 The priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy out of the woman’s hand, and shall elevate the grain offering before the Lord and bring it to the altar; 26 and the priest shall take a handful of the grain offering, as its memorial portion, and turn it into smoke on the altar, and afterward shall make the woman drink the water. 27 When he has made her drink the water, then, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, the water that brings the curse shall enter into her and cause bitter pain, and her womb shall discharge, her uterus drop, and the woman shall become an execration among her people. 28 But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be immune and be able to conceive children. 29 This is the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, while under her husband’s authority, goes astray and defiles herself, 30 or when a spirit of jealousy comes on a man and he is jealous of his wife; then he shall set the woman before the Lord, and the priest shall apply this entire law to her. 31 The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity.

**Numbers 23:4–6 (NRSV)**

4 Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, “I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar.” 5 The Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, “Return to Balak, and this is what you must say.” 6 So he returned to Balak, who was standing beside his burnt offerings with all the officials of Moab.

**Isaiah 7:10–25 (NRSV)**

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. 13 Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. 15 He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. 17 The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.” 18 On that day the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures. 20 On that day the Lord will shave with a razor hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well. 21 On that day one will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, 22 and will eat curds because of the abundance of milk that they give; for everyone that is left in the land shall eat curds and honey. 23 On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. 24 With bow and arrows one will go there, for all the land will be briers and thorns; 25 and as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

**Isaiah 52:13–53:12 (NRSV)**

13 See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. 14 Just as there were many who were astonished at him —so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals— 15 so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate. 1 Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. 4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. 9 They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the Lord shall prosper. 11 Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

**Judges 13:1–25 (NRSV)**

1 The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. 2 There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren, having borne no children. 3 And the angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, “Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. 4 Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, 5 for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth. It is he who shall begin to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines.” 6 Then the woman came and told her husband, “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like that of an angel of God, most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name; 7 but he said to me, ‘You shall conceive and bear a son. So then drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for the boy shall be a nazirite to God from birth to the day of his death.’ ” 8 Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, “O Lord, I pray, let the man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we are to do concerning the boy who will be born.” 9 God listened to Manoah, and the angel of God came again to the woman as she sat in the field; but her husband Manoah was not with her. 10 So the woman ran quickly and told her husband, “The man who came to me the other day has appeared to me.” 11 Manoah got up and followed his wife, and came to the man and said to him, “Are you the man who spoke to this woman?” And he said, “I am.” 12 Then Manoah said, “Now when your words come true, what is to be the boy’s rule of life; what is he to do?” 13 The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “Let the woman give heed to all that I said to her. 14 She may not eat of anything that comes from the vine. She is not to drink wine or strong drink, or eat any unclean thing. She is to observe everything that I commanded her.” 15 Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “Allow us to detain you, and prepare a kid for you.” 16 The angel of the Lord said to Manoah, “If you detain me, I will not eat your food; but if you want to prepare a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord.” (For Manoah did not know that he was the angel of the Lord.) 17 Then Manoah said to the angel of the Lord, “What is your name, so that we may honor you when your words come true?” 18 But the angel of the Lord said to him, “Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful.” 19 So Manoah took the kid with the grain offering, and offered it on the rock to the Lord, to him who works wonders. 20 When the flame went up toward heaven from the altar, the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar while Manoah and his wife looked on; and they fell on their faces to the ground. 21 The angel of the Lord did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah realized that it was the angel of the Lord. 22 And Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die, for we have seen God.” 23 But his wife said to him, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these.” 24 The woman bore a son, and named him Samson. The boy grew, and the Lord blessed him. 25 The spirit of the Lord began to stir him in Mahaneh-dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

**Exodus 3 (NRSV)**

1 Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. 3 Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.” 4 When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” 5 Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” 6 He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. 10 So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” 12 He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” 13 But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I Am Who I Am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I Am has sent me to you.’ ” 15 God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations. 16 Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ 18 They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’ 19 I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. 20 So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. 21 I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; 22 each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor’s house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians.”

**Judges 6:1–27 (NRSV)**

1 The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them into the hand of Midian seven years. 2 The hand of Midian prevailed over Israel; and because of Midian the Israelites provided for themselves hiding places in the mountains, caves and strongholds. 3 For whenever the Israelites put in seed, the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the east would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and destroy the produce of the land, as far as the neighborhood of Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel, and no sheep or ox or donkey. 5 For they and their livestock would come up, and they would even bring their tents, as thick as locusts; neither they nor their camels could be counted; so they wasted the land as they came in. 6 Thus Israel was greatly impoverished because of Midian; and the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help. 7 When the Israelites cried to the Lord on account of the Midianites, 8 the Lord sent a prophet to the Israelites; and he said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I led you up from Egypt, and brought you out of the house of slavery; 9 and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians, and from the hand of all who oppressed you, and drove them out before you, and gave you their land; 10 and I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God; you shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you live.’ But you have not given heed to my voice.” 11 Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.” 13 Gideon answered him, “But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.” 14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.” 15 He responded, “But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” 16 The Lord said to him, “But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.” 17 Then he said to him, “If now I have found favor with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. 18 Do not depart from here until I come to you, and bring out my present, and set it before you.” And he said, “I will stay until you return.” 19 So Gideon went into his house and prepared a kid, and unleavened cakes from an ephah of flour; the meat he put in a basket, and the broth he put in a pot, and brought them to him under the oak and presented them. 20 The angel of God said to him, “Take the meat and the unleavened cakes, and put them on this rock, and pour out the broth.” And he did so. 21 Then the angel of the Lord reached out the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened cakes; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened cakes; and the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight. 22 Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the Lord; and Gideon said, “Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.” 23 But the Lord said to him, “Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die.” 24 Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. 25 That night the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s bull, the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of Baal that belongs to your father, and cut down the sacred pole that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on the top of the stronghold here, in proper order; then take the second bull, and offer it as a burnt offering with the wood of the sacred pole that you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten of his servants, and did as the Lord had told him; but because he was too afraid of his family and the townspeople to do it by day, he did it by night.

**Jeremiah 1:4–19 (NRSV)**

4 Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” 6 Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” 7 But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.” 9 Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, “Now I have put my words in your mouth. 10 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.” 11 The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Jeremiah, what do you see?” And I said, “I see a branch of an almond tree.” 12 Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it.” 13 The word of the Lord came to me a second time, saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north.” 14 Then the Lord said to me: Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land. 15 For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the Lord; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah. 16 And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me; they have made offerings to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. 17 But you, gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them, or I will break you before them. 18 And I for my part have made you today a fortified city, an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. 19 They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you.

**Jeremiah 31:27–37 (NRSV)**

27 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. 28 And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord. 29 In those days they shall no longer say: “The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.” 30 But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge. 31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. 35 Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name: 36 If this fixed order were ever to cease from my presence, says the Lord, then also the offspring of Israel would cease to be a nation before me forever. 37 Thus says the Lord: If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will reject all the offspring of Israel because of all they have done, says the Lord.

**Psalm 130 (NRSV)**

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. 2 Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! 3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. 5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; 6 my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. 7 O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. 8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

**Matthew 1:18–25 (NRSV)**

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

**Key Words/Phrases**

**The Birth** – ἡ γένεσις – “the Genesis”

**Jesus –** Ἰησοῦς is the Greek form for the Hebrew name Joshua יְהֹושֻׁעַ (Yahoshu’a or Yeshua; Moses’ successor) and means ‘YHWH saves’ or ‘YHWH is salvation’.” Think about what this does for the expectations of the people. The first Joshua saved God’s people from their enemies, from foreigners. Matthew says Jesus will save people from their sins. But the people wanted Jesus to save them from their foreign oppressors and restore the kingdom of Israel/Judah. The same word in Greek is used in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 but gets translated as Joshua, the successor of Moses. Another Jesus is mentioned in Colossians 4:11, a fellow-laborer with Paul (also called Justus).

**Messiah** – “Messiah” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word for “anointed” מָשִׁיחַ. Anointing is the practice of pouring oil on the head of one who is being given a position of authority. It is used in the Old Testament to describe Prophets, Priests, and Kings (all people of authority). See Leviticus 4:3 (Priest); 1 Samuel 24:6 (King); 1 Chronicles 16:22 (Prophet). Isaiah 45:1 used the word to describe the King of Persia as YHWH’s anointed.

**Christ** – “Christ” is a transliteration of the Greek word for “anointed” Χριστός.

**Having been engaged** – μνηστευθείσης from the word μνηστεύω – comes from a root word meaning “to remember”(from where we get the word ‘amnesia’ when the prefix – a is added). The Old Testament law treated betrothal as creating a legal state of marriage, with attendant possibilities of adultery, divorce, and widowhood. Despite this, during the betrothal the wife continued to be the responsibility of her father for a maximum of twelve months (provided she had reached puberty) prior to the marriage ceremony. In this interim period sexual relations were not considered proper, though no doubt they did at times occur. Betrothal is binding, and can be terminated only by death or divorce. A person whose betrothed dies is considered a widow or widower.

**Lived together** –συνέρχομαι (literally, “come together”).

**She was found to be with child** –εὑρέθη ἐν γαστρὶἔχουσα (literally, “she was found in stomach having”); anticipates the language of Isaiah 7:24 in verse 23.

**From the Holy Spirit** – ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, (literally “out of a Holy Spirit”).

**Mary** –Μαρίας (Maria), which in the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) is related to the name for Miriam, sister of Moses.

**Joseph** – Ἰωσήφ – in the Old Testament, this was the eleventh son of Jocob’s twelve sons and the firstborn son of Rachel (see Genesis 30:22-24; Genesis 37-50).

**The Virgin** – “The virgin” is the correct translation of *he parthenos* rather than “a virgin”––the original has the definite article––suggesting that God has a particular virgin in mind. Isaiah referred to a young woman הָעַלְמָה (*almah*)––although the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, uses *parthenos*, which means virgin, in Isaiah 7:14. `Almah doesn’t mean “virgin” but a young woman who may or may not be married. It could include virginity, but it doesn’t have to. In fact, it would be unusual, since Hebrew has a perfectly good, and common, word for virgin, betulah. But still, from a linguistic point of view, `almah in Isaiah 7:14 could mean “virgin.” But contextually it doesn’t. It most definitely doesn’t.

The context of this prophecy in Isaiah (and it is a prophecy—but hold that thought) is the impending invasion of the Assyrian war machine led by King Tiglath-pileser III in the mid 730s BCE. In a desperate effort to not be annihilated, the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, Pekah, and his northern neighbor Aram (Syria), ruled by King Rezin, decided to form a coalition against the Assyrians—often referred to as the Syro-Ephraimite Coalition. Pekah and Rezin really wanted the southern kingdom of Judah, ruled by King Ahaz, to join them but he was reluctant. So they thought they’d attack the southern capital of Jerusalem first to force him to comply.

Anyway, Ahaz is freaking out at the thought of this attack, and, to make a long story short, Isaiah gives Ahaz a sign, which has to do with the birth of a son to an `almah, which most English translations render (correctly) as “young woman.” Some refuse to budge and say “virgin” (so as not to upset Bible readers who might be cross-referencing Matthew 1:23) but then bury in a footnote “or ‘young woman.’” The point here is that “young woman” is correct.

And this is why we need to keep reading past verse 14. Verses 15-16 tells us that the child . . . shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose good. For before the child knows how to refuse evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

So what does that mean? Curds (something dairy) and honey (something nectar) are peacetime foods, not the kind of things you’d eat during a siege. And how old would a child have to be to have the capacity to choose good over evil? Good question. If it’s my kids I’d say 30, but normally let’s say a few years.

The point is that before the child is old enough to make moral choices, the Syro-Ephraimite siege will have come to an end. There will be peace. That is the miracle of the story, not the nature of the birth. If it helps, Begin reading at Isaiah 7:1 and when you get to verse 14 say “young woman” and then keep reading. It makes perfect sense.

**Emmanuel** – Ἐμμανουήλ in Hebrew is עִמָּנוּ אֵל Immanuel, meaning “God with us” or “with us is God.” (See Isaiah 7:14; 8:8, 10). What about the child’s name? Doesn’t that speak to the miraculous nature of this birth? No. The Hebrew is Im-manu-el—literally with-us-God. But think of how many people in the Old Testament have “sentence names” ending with “El” (God).

Daniel means, “God is my judge,” but that doesn’t mean that the man bearing that name is God. There are dozens and dozens of sentence names in the Bible that contain “El” but they don’t identify the bearer of the name as God. Rather, those names say something about God.

So, naming the child Immanuel (Emmanuel is reflecting later Latin spelling) is saying something about God, that God is with Ahaz and has nothing to fear. The child’s birth to a young woman and his early life is the sign of what God will do. The child isn’t the miracle in the story. The deliverance of outnumbered Judah from the coalition is.

So is Matthew stupid? Can’t he read the context as well as we can? Sure he could. But Matthew is engaging here (as he normally does—just track his use of the Old Testament in chapters 1-2 alone) in the creative interpretation of his Bible (the Greek Septuagint) and tying that story in Isaiah to the birth of Jesus by means of a “hook word.” Such creative handling of texts (often called “midrash”) was a common Jewish method of interpretation at the time, and we need to keep in mind that Matthew’s Gospel is likely aimed at a Jewish readership.

We might think—and I hear this objection often—that such creative interpretation would never have convinced anyone. But that is thinking like a modern westerner, and not like an ancient Jew. They wouldn’t have batted an eyelash. But more likely, Matthew wasn’t trying to convince anyone that Isaiah 7 “proves” Jesus. He is writing to those who already believed, which included Jews, and such creative connections to Israel’s story would have been seen as captivatingly ingenious.

Neither Mark nor John addresses the issue of the virgin birth, nor do the epistles. However, both Matthew and Luke makes it clear that the child is from the Holy Spirit and that Joseph is not the father (Matthew 1:18, 21; Luke 1:35)––and that Mary is a virgin (Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:34).

**“But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream”**

This is the first of three occasions in which an angel appears to Joseph in a dream. In each instance, the angel calls Joseph to action and Joseph obeys. He has no speaking part––Matthew does not record one word that Joseph says. In this first appearance, the angel commands Joseph to take Mary as his wife. In 2:13, the angel will tell Joseph to take the mother and child to Egypt to escape Herod’s wrath. In 2:19, the angel will, at the death of Herod, tell Joseph to return to Israel. In a fourth obedience, after being warned in a dream (no angel this time), Joseph will go to Galilee (2:22).

The angel begins by saying, “Joseph, son of David” (v. 20), alerting us to Joseph’s lineage. It is through Joseph that Jesus will be of the house and lineage of David.

The fulfillment of prophecy is important to Matthew. He mentions it eleven times (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9).