

## ***Matthew 1:18-24***

**“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. [*Ghost*: Middle English word for “*Spirit*”] Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily [secretly]. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. [cf. Isaiah 7:14] Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord has bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS [*Yeshua*].**

***These verses tell us two great truths:***

- 1. Jesus took our nature upon himself and became man***
- 2. His birth was miraculous---his mother was a virgin***

Picking up where we left off last time, **Matthew chapter 1, verses 18-25**, “Now the birth of Jesus was as follows. After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, not wanting to make a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she’ll bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS,

**for he will save his people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying, ‘Behold a virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel,’ which is translated ‘God with us.’ Then Joseph being aroused from his sleep did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took to him his wife, and did not know her until she had brought forth her firstborn son and called his name JESUS.” (Matthew 1:18-25, another translation, not sure which.)** In actuality, Jesus was born in the fall of the year, somewhere between the fall festivals, between the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, not anywhere near December 25<sup>th</sup>. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/festivalsloflights2.htm>. [It was after Constantine, who in the early 300s AD forcibly made the holidays of Christmas and Easter, to replace the Biblical Holy Days of the Bible, when previously the Judeo-Christian churches of Asia Minor from the apostle John onward through Policrates had nothing to do with them. What was the motive? See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch3.htm>.

] Adam Clarke, he says this, “The time in which Christ was born has been considered a subject of great importance among Christians [Gentile Christians that is]. However the matter is considered of no moment by Him who inspired the evangelist, as not one hint is dropped on the subject at which it might be possible even to discuss or guess nearly to the time.” It’s the Latin, or Roman church that places it on December 25<sup>th</sup>, the day on which the ancient Romans celebrated the feast of the goddess Bruma (also the feast of the Saturnalia). It was actually pope Julius 1<sup>st</sup> who made it officially December 25<sup>th</sup>, the day that we should recognize as the birth of Christ, and he concluded “that is the time right after the shortest day of the year, and so you have the dark longest night, and now there’s the sense of new light in the sense of the days getting longer [and that’s exactly what the pagan Romans were celebrating during their feast of Saturnalia, was the days getting longer again]. So, anyway, we’re looking here again at the birth of Christ. Not critical to know the time, but it is critical to know certain things and understand certain things. So the writer here, Matthew, now he’s going to focus on the birth of Christ, specific things about it that are very unusual. So now Matthew writes to show indeed, all of this fulfills the prophecies that this indeed is the Christ, the Messiah. He also demonstrates to his audience that Jesus was indeed a man. Later in the early Church there’s different heresies that it has to deal with as

different groups say 'He wasn't really a man, he was a phantom,' and all these different things [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/misc/whyorthodoxy.html>]. But very clearly, as Matthew has demonstrated, he was a man. Look at his ancestry. There's nothing super-human about his ancestry, there are people that struggle with all sorts of sins and made all sorts of mistakes, that's the stock he comes from. So, the New Testament teaches he's a high priest that can relate to me, as we noted in Hebrews chapter 4, verses 15 and 16, that he can relate, he was tempted in all points as we are. As the writer of Hebrews says, **'As we come to him, we can find understanding, he sympathizes with us, and gives us help and strength and grace and mercy that we need in our time of need.'** So Matthew lays it out, fully man of fully man, but also fully God of fully God, he's the Son of God. God, the second person of the God-head, Yahweh became incarnate, he became a man, amazingly, just incredible (cf. Exodus 3:13-15; John 8:58). As we read in the text here, he's "God with us," Emmanuel.

### *Awkward moments, time for Mary*

Now as he lays it out, about the pregnancy of his mother Mary [Hebrew: *Miriam*], she was pregnant as a virgin. She was betrothed, she was engaged, she was in this espousal period, but she became pregnant, and she was a virgin. So that certainly is something that needs to be considered. Now in her culture, gals were married at a very young age, 15, 16 years of age. It is possible in that culture to be engaged from a very young age. Marriages were pre-arranged. It was possible to be a Jewish gal, and to know, 'Well, that little guy on the playground, that's gonna be my husband, man, this is it, we're gonna be married,' it was possible to know that in that culture. But there was this year before you got married that was called the espousal period. In fact, it started out with a ceremony, and there was this year that followed, and you would court, and you would wait for that day, and it was a time of purity, there was no intimacy, but it was a big deal. In fact, that year before you were officially married, that espousal period, to get out of that, break the relationship at that particular time, required a divorce. In a sense that you were bound, and it required a divorce to get out of that situation. So it's during this time, Mary is with child. Now that certainly creates an awkward situation for her. Not only awkward though, but also potentially very serious, because in her culture, in the society of

the day to get pregnant, you know in our society gals get pregnant all the time that aren't married, and we just kind of roll with it, but in that culture the Law stated explicitly this is a big deal. To be pregnant at this time, in the sense of committing sexual sin, the penalty was death. **Deuteronomy chapter 22, verse 23, "If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring both of them out of the gate of the city, and you shall stone them to death with stones. The young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbour's wife. So you shall put away evil from among you."** So, here, very clearly in the espousal, the betrothal period, if a young woman was found to have been impure, then she would be stoned, and there are some that suggest historically when they were brought out of the city gate, they would put her in a box with cow manure knee deep, and there they would stone her, and she would fall down into the manure, and then they would plant a tree there. Now awkward situation she's in, but also very serious situation to be pregnant at this time, and she hasn't done anything wrong. I mean, God just came to her. From the Gospel of Luke, God appeared to her, told her, ***'Mary, you've found favor in my eyes, and I have a plan, and here's the plan. You're gonna become pregnant, you're going to give birth to a child, and that child's not going to be an ordinary child, because that child is going to be the Holy One, the very Son of God, and this is the way it's going to work. You're not going to have any intimate relations, it'll be before you're married, it'll be during this time, and the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you, and you will be with child, Mary.'*** (cf. Luke 1:26-35) So, she was told that before, so she understood that. But here she is, now she's in this challenging situation because others don't know about it, very awkward. And the others include Joseph, very difficult time for him. Now the awkwardness of it may actually even come through in the Greek, the original Greek, at least there's some commentators, one particular commentator suggests this, and that is where it says **"she was found with child"**, when it says that, the Greek would indicate in the arranging of the words, this suggests, that it was as if Joseph discovered that she was with child, in the sense that maybe she didn't tell him that there was something going on. You know, he's with her, and he starts to know, *'You know, you're behaving peculiar Mary.'* Maybe there's something he picked up in her eyes, you know, looking at her. *'There's something going on that you're*

*not telling me, Mary,*' he started to say *'What's going on? What's happening here, there's something, I know, you got to tell me Mary.'* And then maybe she says *'I'm pregnant Joseph, I'm pregnant.'* Now that would have just, I mean, that's a knife right to the heart. Right? That's shocking, that hurts, that's painful. But then she'd go on to say, *'Listen, I haven't done anything wrong, I'm not pregnant because I've been unfaithful, listen, this is what, God has done this to me.'* And he probably said or at least was thinking, *'Ya right, Mary, God did it. Tell me another one.'* That's pretty clearly suggested to me in verse 19, because it says because then **"her husband, being a just man, not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away in secret."** So there's a good sense there that there's maybe a day or two or three or a time that follows where now he's thinking, *'You know I love that woman, I'm a godly man, I don't want to dishonor her, but this is wrong, and I'm gonna put her away, going to end this and divorce her and do it secretly.'* [Secretly, so she doesn't get killed.] And so she's working through that. But she hasn't done anything wrong. Actually she's a gal after the heart of God. Now, imagine being in that situation, imagine struggling through that.

*We can have those awkward moments too---when God has called us to do something for him*

You know, I mention that to you too, because I believe it happens in various ways in our lives too. When God comes and he calls us for a task, and God wants to set you apart for a work, there's no doubt there are times that follow that can be awkward, because other people don't understand, other people don't know. [I know about that, called to do this website, and perhaps to start a special ministry associated with it, and getting guff from my unsaved family, others in church failing to see what the Lord has called me to do, "getting it from all sides" because they don't share "the vision" God has given me. Oh yeah, I know about being in that awkward situation.] There can be seasons that follow that aren't easy. And yet God has come to you, and he's put something on your heart and he's spoken to you, and now he's called you for a work, and here you are. And it's a glorious work, a wonderful thing, but yet here you are in awkwardness, this uncomfortableness. I think of my in-laws, you know, sitting at that table that one day in San Diego, you know, wondering how am I gong to say this [that he's going to take their daughter he just married and go start a tiny church in central New England somewhere out in the boonies], you

know, my father-in-law, he's the type of guy that just takes care of his family, he's worked the same job for so long, and life has been so steady for this family, and now I've come into the picture, and I'm married to his daughter, and I've got to somehow tell him, *'I'm quitting my job, and I'm moving to New England, and am gong to go plant a church, only God knows how, I have no idea how this is going to work out, and she's leaving her job, and yeah, we're leaving.'* I remember looking at the table, I don't even know whether I looked him in the eye when I told him. [I don't feel so bad anymore, after transcribing this.] Blurted it out, you know, here it is! Got to say it. And then my father-in-law got up silently from the table and walked off. Very awkward. [It works out though. This pastor's start-up church is now in the hundreds of congregants, and most amazing, his father-in-law came to Christ a month before he died, really became born-again. God **always** justifies the work he begins in you, in the end, **always**.] Not easy to do. Maybe you've had such a situation like that in your life, and that happens when God says this, *'Fred I got a work for you, here's the work.'* Charles Spurgeon once said *"Every great favor brings a great trial with it as its shadows, and becomes thus a new test of faith."* And isn't that the truth. ***But then God will come, and he will confirm too, give you the grace to keep going.*** [I have a vision to promote believer unity between the Jewish and Gentile sides of the Body of Christ. But I too feel real awkward, having written all the associated articles and transcribed all these nourishing sermons for this website in promotion of that "vision" God has given me, and with no appreciable response as far as God providing a support-team to help promote or further that "vision." But a God-given vision is just that, not to be ignored. Inspiration comes, you gotta follow. It is God who gives the increase, who blesses his "visions" that he gives out to us.] But the experience of the Lord setting you up for a work, there's times where the faith is there, and there's times where it's not. Right? And then you start wondering, *'What in the world are we doing?'*

*Another example of God calling a person for a ministry,  
and the awkwardness that follows*

But there's that awkwardness and struggling and wondering, and *'How's is this going to work out?'* And thoughts go on and on. But yet the Lord gives the grace. He comes through with the word, and encouragement, confirmation. And you'll see here I believe with the story of Mary, the same thing. It's

amazing to be used by the Lord, to be called to do certain things. It's exciting, but at the same time there are those shadows, to have those trials that follow right behind that can unsettle. And you don't appreciate the trials and testing, but the Lord uses it. Just a few weeks ago, Bill and Sandy were up here, and as they stood up here, and as we were praying for them, because I know at that very moment, you may not have noticed it, they were struggling. Bill just quit his job, good career, house is up for sale, and told the family, had all the parties, all the well-wishers, and now it's time and off to the school of evangelism in San Diego they go. [He's now successfully pastoring a small congregation in Minot, South Dakota.] But just before, a couple days before we prayed for them here, word came that the sale of the house fell through. And that was so unnerving to them, so unnerving, *'Wait a minute, Lord, we've gone this far.'* And Bill was even telling me, *'We've had all these parties, man, we had so many people, barbecues, I mean, here we are, this is so awkward. What are people thinking?---like we're strange, we sold our house,'* and they were wrestling through it at the very last moment. And so as we were praying for them, I was trying to encourage them, and I even told them at another time, I said, *'You know when we're called by God, we are slaves.'* When God calls, we are slaves, and we follow. [I heard another analogy when I first came into the Truth, that God had just drafted me. Having just come out of the Navy, that meant something to me.] Whatever he wants to do he's going to do, to his glory, whatever corner, whatever distraction, whatever hardship, God calls. And the way the Lord worked it out, is they left for San Diego, house not sold yet, but their house recently sold while they were gone, and God worked all that out anyway. But it was clear, he was preparing them and testing them. Those shadows come, those trials. It happens in our lives. And the Lord, maybe he's calling you, maybe he's been speaking to you. Maybe there's something he's been saying in your heart, *'I've got a plan for you, I want to use you in a certain way.'* Well, if that's the case, maybe those shadows are going to come too, those trials and testings, good chance they will. Be encouraged if they do, it isn't that it has gotten out of control, it isn't that you've done something wrong, it isn't like *'Oh wait a minute, Lord, I didn't know this was part of the program.'* God is using it, he's going to glorify himself through it, he's going to prepare you, he's also going to glorify himself through it, he's going to prepare you, he's also going to give you the grace, you'll find he'll give you the grace. So it is our job to follow him, full-heartedly, regardless of

the cost, regardless of the corners and things that you didn't expect.

*Beautiful godly example of Joseph and his consideration for others*

Now, not only is it an awkward moment for Mary, but it's also an awkward moment for Joseph. Right? Joseph is now in a situation where for a moment, short time, he's got this fiancée that he's wondering, she's pregnant, and it's awkward for him. It was awkward for my wife when God put a call on my life, and we had to approach her family, and she now has a part of that. She was kicking and screaming, but it was awkward (she still does) [laughter]. But, as we see so clearly, God comes into Joseph's life, speaks into his heart, and gives the grace, gives the confirmation, and as he does, just think what it would do even to Mary. Now Joseph comes back and says, **'Mary, God has spoken to me. Get this, man, I had a dream, it was an angel of God right there.'** And he's like, **'This is God and this is what he said to me.'** **Verses 20-21, "But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit]. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."** You know, God gives the grace, he confirms. And not only does he use Joseph, but if you look at the narrative in Luke, right after the angel comes and says these things, Gabriel says to Mary what he says, then right there we read of Mary leaving, and going to be with Elizabeth. And then when she gets there, she discovers that *'Elizabeth, you're also pregnant? You're really old to be pregnant.'* [remember Elizabeth and Zacharias had been trying to have children almost forever, but she was barren, couldn't have kids, until God worked a miracle in her old age, like he did with Abraham and Sarah.] *'But your husband, Zacharias, he can't talk, hasn't been able to talk since then?'* And then, especially, as she walks through the door, Elizabeth says the whole blessing of *'The mother of the Lord'* thing. So Mary has another relative right after that she goes to be with who then confirms in that challenging situation, **'God is here, God has got his hands on your life. God is working.'** And I would also believe Simeon is also a confirmation, because John the Baptist is born before Jesus, and then we read of Simeon, the things that he says right there,

the prophecy, and certainly that prophecy to me would be an encouragement to Mary, God again confirming. And then when Jesus is born, you have the shepherds, you have Simeon, you have Anna, you have the wise men [the Magi from Parthia], you have all these things that continue, this is God, this is God, this is the work of God, this is the work of God in your life, confirming, confirming, confirming. And that happens in our lives, and I tell you, it's a neat thing to watch God confirm. Well, Joseph doesn't initially understand, verse 19, wants to put her away. Good man though, do is secretly [to protect her life]. But before he can act, in verse 20, before he can go through with it, he's thinking certain ways, God comes down, sends an angel in a dream, that whole appearance, that whole work of God, and says **'Here what's happening Joseph, this is real, what she said is true, she's pregnant, and it's supernatural, she has the Holy One of God, she has the Son of God forming in her womb. And this little baby, this is Jesus [Hebrew: Yeshua], he's going to save his people from their sins.'** So God intervenes, and confirms. You know, sometimes, as you're going about, and God's using you, and he's got you on a track, and God's saying some things to you, and sometimes there's times where you are misunderstanding, maybe going the wrong way, and he'll come in and redirect you too, and that will just show you the hand of God is in your life as well. But also, a confirmation, God is in this thing, isn't he, over and over, the things that God is doing, just keeping us on track. So, Joseph goes back to Mary, and I'm sure, man, Mary is like *'Ah, yes Joseph, look at what God's doing, this is a supernatural thing.'*

### *The Two Names Given To Our Lord*

You know, the angel says to Joseph, **"she shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS."** That name, of course is the Greek form of the Hebrew word *Joshua, Yeshua*, and that name condenses down from "*Jehovah saves*" [Hebrew: *Yahweh-shua, Yahweh-saves*, condensed down to *Yeshua*]. And so, *Jehovah-saves*, **"he will save his people from their sins."** And maybe that's true for you too, maybe you're in a season like that, a little difficult, a little uncomfortable now with people you know. But God has a wonderful purpose, stay to the course, keep your hand to the plow, and in the end what God is going to do is just beautiful, to his glory. **"And he will save his people from their sins."** And I tell you what, if it wasn't for Christ, desperate state for you and I, desperate deal. We are under,

man, we are down for the count, down for eternity if God didn't intervene, separated from God forever. The wages of sin is death, under the wrath and damnation of a Holy God. [Differing denominations have differing interpretations about hell. See

<http://www.unityinchrist.com/plaintruth/battle.htm>] But God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that while I was yet a sinner, he sent his Son and he died for me. And if I believe in him now, I'm saved. That's what it means to be saved. Those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. *'God I turn from my sin and I turn to you, and I ask you to be my Saviour. Father in heaven I believe what you did through your Son Jesus Christ, and that through that I am saved.'*

[saying that is the beginning process of salvation, which in reality is a lifetime process of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.] So today if you are without Christ, if you're not saved, if you're not sure, you can be saved. **"You shall bring forth a son, you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. So all this was done that it may be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah"**---long ago, 500 years before, you can read it in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Isaiah 7:14-16---**"that the virgin shall be with child and bear a son and they will call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us."**

From J.C. Ryle in his commentary on Matthew, p.5, we get this: *"The name "Emmanuel" is seldom found in the Bible, but it is scarcely less interesting than the name "Jesus." It is the name which is given to our Lord from his nature as God-man, as "God revealed in the body." It means "God with us."...clearly understand that there was a union of two natures, the divine and human, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ...The name Emmanuel takes in the whole mystery. Jesus is "God with us." He had a nature like our own in all things, except for sin."* But though Jesus was "with us" in human flesh and blood, he was at the same time truly God. We shall often find as we read the Gospels that our Saviour could be weary and hungry and thirsty. He could weep and groan and feel pain like us. In all this we see *the man* Christ Jesus. We see the nature he took upon himself, when he was born of the Virgin Mary. But we shall also find in the same Gospels that our Saviour knew men's hearts and thoughts. He could work the mightiest miracles with a word. He was ministered to by angels. He allowed a disciple to call him "my God." He said **"Before Abraham was born, I am! (John 8:58)** and **"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).** In all this we see *the Eternal God.*"

*Joseph takes Mary to be his wife*

**“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (verses 24-25).** Well Joseph, being aroused from his sleep, with all that, did exactly as he was told, takes Mary to be his wife, and it says in **verse 25, “he did not know her,”** intimately, I mean, they’re married now, but he didn’t “know her” until Jesus was born. Interesting there, it says “first-born son,” “he did not know her until she had her first-born son.” “First-born,” meaning that there were others. The Bible in no way teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary, the Bible very clearly teaches that Mary had other children, Jesus was the first-born, and then others came. **“And he called his name Jesus [Yeshua].”**

*Dark Time, Dry Time For Judah For Centuries---  
But Now The Holy Spirit Is Beginning To Work*

You know, final thought here as we come to the end. The nation of Israel, tribe of Judah at this time, is in a dark time. The nation, it’s been hundreds of years since there’s been a prophet. It’s been a long time since there’s been a word from God, and life has become a religion in many ways in the life of the nation of Judah. So it’s a dark time. Of course the Romans are pressing. It’s a dark time, it’s a difficult time. But then, at this moment, this work is beginning, and it’s a work that starts with the Holy Spirit. Joseph has even said **“of the Holy Spirit.”** There’s this work that begins. And now as we go from here in Matthew through the rest of the Gospel we’ll see it’s an incredible work that comes to the nation of Israel, Judah. Dark time for centuries, dry time for centuries. But now the Holy Spirit is beginning to work. There have been times where the Church [greater Body of Christ], you know, has been spiritually dead [see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history/IntroChurchHistory.htm>]. But four times historically in our country, if you look at it different ways, four times, two great awakenings and two other times, there’s been what we call “*An Awakening*,” where suddenly, though it was dark, the Holy Spirit started to work. Light started to shine, life started to come to our nation, in such a way, that there are times where hundreds of thousands of

people then turned to Christ, as the Church started to get excited about Jesus again, and passion came back into the worship, and God's people started to live holy, consecrated lives, and there was excitement about Christ and people could look at the Church and say *'That's what Jesus is all about, oh I see the Holy Spirit working in their lives,'* an awakening. I say that to you as a final note as we go, because there is an awakening that's happened right now in the nation of Judah, Judea as we study the book of Matthew. That's what's happening. It's dark, and then this light starts to show, this birthing, this work of the Holy Spirit. [condensed down from a transcript of an expository sermon on Matthew 1:18-25, given somewhere in New England.]

## ***A Jewish Great Awakening***

I will say that since 1970 (currently 46 years), there has been a huge spiritual revival going on which is so miraculous it defies imagination. But few Gentile Sunday-observing Christians, and strangely enough not even the Sabbath-observing Church of God Christians have really taken notice, and some have actually resisted noticing this miracle of the Holy Spirit. For over 1700 years, since 325AD when the Emperor Constantine and the proto-Catholic church virtually destroyed the Judeo-Christian churches of God in Asia Minor and throughout the Roman Empire, the Jewish branch of the Body of Christ has been essentially dead, wiped out (see <http://www.unityinchrist.com/history2/earlychurch3.htm>) . Now, since 1970, with the humble beginnings in the home of Martin Chernoff, the Messianic Jewish revival has mushroomed, as a direct result of the work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in the calling of an estimated 1 million Jews (so far) to belief in and acceptance of Jesus Christ, *Yeshua haMeschiach*, as their Saviour. Now recently, an estimated 1,000 congregations and 10,000 Jewish believers are in the nation of Israel itself, Israeli believers in *Yeshua haMeschiach*. See <http://www.unityinchrist.com/messianicmovement/messianicmovement.htm>.

### *About Matthew 1:23*

**“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (Matthew 1:23)** What follows is a direct quote of J. Vernon McGee on this subject of the virgin

birth. “Now let’s look at this a moment because it is very important. The liberal theologian has, of course, denied the fact of the virgin birth of Christ, and he has denied that the Bible teaches His virgin birth. Very candidly, I suspect that the Revised Standard Version was published in order to try to maintain some of the theses of these liberals. In fact, I am sure of this because of one of the doctrines they have denied is the virgin birth. In the New Testament of the Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1946, Matthew 1:23 reads thus: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means God with us).” In the Old Testament Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1952, Isaiah 7:14 reads like this: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.” Notice that in Isaiah they substituted “young woman” for the word “virgin,” even though in Matthew 1:23 they had used the word “virgin,” which is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14! The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was given as a sign. My friend, it is no sign at all for a young woman to conceive and bear a son. If that’s a sign, then right here in Southern California a sign is taking place many times a day, every day. They translated it “young woman” to tone down the word “virgin.” Let us look at Isaiah 7:14 in the original Hebrew language. The word used for “virgin” is *almah*. The translators of the RSV went to the writings of Gesenius, an outstanding scholar who has an exhaustive Hebrew lexicon. (I can testify that it’s also exhausting to look at it!) Gesenius admitted that the common translation of the word is “virgin,” but he said that it could be changed to “young woman.” The reason he said that is because he rejected the miraculous. So this new translation and others who have followed him, have attempted to say that *almah* means “young woman” and not “virgin.” Let’s turn back to Isaiah 7 and study the incident recorded there. This was during the time when Ahaz was on the throne [Kingdom of Judah, Jewish line of kings, Ahaz, father of Hezekiah]. He was one of those who was far from God, and I list him as a bad king. God sent Isaiah to bring a message to him, and he wouldn’t listen. So we read: “Moreover the Lord spake again to Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord.” (Isa. 7:10-12). May I say, it was pious hypocrisy for him to say what he did. God had asked Isaiah to meet Ahaz on the way to deliver God’s message to him that God would give victory to Ahaz. However Ahaz wouldn’t believe God and so, in order to encourage his faith, Isaiah tells

him that God wants to give him a sign. In his super-pious way Ahaz says, “Oh, I wouldn’t ask a sign of the Lord.” Isaiah answered him, “God is going to give you a sign whether you like it or not. The sign isn’t just for you but for the whole house of David.” Now here is the sign: “...Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). Obviously, if this refers to a young woman, it would be no sign to Ahaz, or to the house of David, or to anybody else; but if a virgin conceives and bears a son, that, my friend, is a sign. And that’s exactly what it means. When the word *almah* is used in the Old Testament, it means a virgin. Rebekah was called an *almah* before she married Isaac. I asked a very fine Hebrew Christian, who is also a good Hebrew scholar, about that. He said, “Look at it this way. Suppose you want to visit a friend of yours who had three daughters and two of them were married and one was single. He would say, ‘*These two are my married daughters, and this young lady is my third daughter.*’ Do you think he would mean a prostitute lady is my third daughter when he said ‘*young lady*’? If you would imply that she was anything but a virgin, he would probably knock your block off.” May I say, I would hate to be those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ when they must come into the presence of the Son of God. I’m afraid they are going to wish they could somehow take back the things they have said to malign Him [or his mother].”

### ***The Septuagint***

The fact that the word *almah* means “a virgin” is proven in the Septuagint. During the intertestamental period, seventy-two Hebrew scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes, worked down in Alexandria, Egypt, on the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. When they came to this “sign” in Isaiah, those seventy-two men understood that it meant “virgin,” and they translated it into the Greek word ***parthenos***. That is the same word which Matthew uses in his Gospel. My friend, ***parthenos*** does not mean “young woman”; it means “virgin.” For example, Athena was the virgin daughter of Athens, and her temple was called the **Parthenon** because ***parthenos*** means “virgin.” It is clear that the Word of God is saying precisely what it means.” [pp. 32-34, THRU\*THE\*BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES, MATTHEW Chapters 1-13, J. Vernon McGee, *emphasis mine*]