

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY
TEACHER'S PACKET

CHRISTMAS STUDY

All grades

He Humbled Himself...

He Humbled Himself...

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word

Objective To show Christ's humility in His birth, life, and death. To teach the students that we worship Christ not just for His birth, but also for dying and conquering the grave.

Key Verses

Matthew 1:18-2:12

Philippians 2:5-11

Memory Verse - 1 John 4:4

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world."

Hook

Ask the class what they did/plan to do for Christmas.

Ask them if they know what the word "humble" means.

After giving them a chance to respond, define the word for them.

Biblical humility is "being focused on God and others, not self.

Even when a humble person focuses on others, it is done out of a desire to love and glorify God."

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

For this lesson will be looking at the Christmas story as told in Matthew 1-2, but really we will be transitioning to Philippians 2:5-11. There is a humility in Jesus' life which is almost unfathomable. Jesus, the Messiah, King of all mankind, came into the world in the most lowly way imaginable. He was not born in a palace, attended by servants and helpers. He did not have a royal crib prepared with the finest blankets. Jesus was born into the most impoverished conditions and laid in an animal's feeding trough. Wise men from the east came seeking a new King, so they naturally went to the palace in Jerusalem, but Jesus was not there. Searching the Scriptures, they determined that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, and following the sign of the star they eventually found the boy and worshipped Him.

Philippians 2:5-11 shows us that we should not be surprised by this humble beginning to Christ's life. In fact, all of Christ's life would be defined by humility. The very act of restraining His divinity and coming in the likeness of men was far more humbling than being born outside and placed in a manger. Philippians reminds us that His humility was most profoundly shown in Jesus' birth, but also in His death. He obeyed the Lord and took the death that we deserve so that we might be given life. We worship Jesus, like the wise men did, not because He was born (though that in itself is incredible), but because He lived a perfect, sinless life, and in humility He died for us. Jesus' birth is amazing and shocking, but His life and His death are the reason we praise Him.

The interpretation/exegesis of the passage. What does this passage mean? How does this passage apply to my life?

LOOK

Sometime after Jesus' birth, perhaps as much as two years after, wise men in the east (we don't know how many there were) made a pilgrimage to meet the new King of the Jews. These wise men had studied the stars and been shown, by the Holy Spirit no doubt, that the Christ had been born. The wise men did what anyone who wanted to see the King would do, they went to the palace, the King's house. There was one big problem. Jesus, the new King, wasn't born in the palace. In fact, the news that a new King had been born came as a bit of a shock to a man called Herod, the current king. He didn't like the idea that someone might come and take away his power. He determined that no new king would be allowed to take over, so Herod tried to trick the wise men. He told them to find where the new king had been born. Then He would go and kill whoever that was to make sure that he would always be in control.

LOOK (Continued)

The Wise Men saw through this and after they found Jesus in a small house in Bethlehem, they worshipped Him and left a different way so that Herod would not know where Jesus was. Herod shouldn't have worried about Jesus like that though. Jesus didn't want to become the king of a small, unimportant nation. Jesus wanted to become the King of all Heaven and Earth, but more importantly, He wanted to become the King of your heart. Jesus wouldn't be born in a palace. He would never wear a crown of gold, and He would never command a vast army of troops to conquer the world. Jesus would become the King by taking the lowest place of all.

Jesus is not just the Son of God, but He is also God the Son. The very thought of God limiting Himself to become human is simply mind-blowing, but that's just what Philippians 2 tells us. It says that He humbled Himself taking on the appearance of man. Jesus, God Himself, became a human baby, and submitted Himself to the care of a human mother and father. Jesus would take the humble place His whole life. The King of Heaven and Earth would wash His own disciples' feet. He would allow John the Baptist to baptize Him in the Jordan River. And most importantly of all, He would allow Himself to be arrested, beaten, and eventually crucified.

Jesus humbled Himself even to the point of death. You could say that Jesus' death was the whole point of His life. He came to die on a cross, so that you and I could live forever. He came to save us by taking our place. When we think about Jesus as a baby on Christmas day, we need to remember that we worship Him not for being born, but for dying. We worship Him because death could not keep Him in its grip (Acts 2:24), and three days later Jesus rose from the grave, conquering sin and death forever. Because of what Jesus did, God the Father has "given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

It is likely that there will be many unsaved students here for Christmas. Finish the class by presenting the gospel in its fullness. All the students to ask any questions they might have about Jesus or their need for a Savior, and then present an opportunity for them to respond.

Record the names of any students who surrender their lives to Christ.

Memorize: 1 John 4:14

Pray: Thank the Father for sending His Son into the world to save sinners. Thank the Son for taking the humble place, even humbling himself by dying on a cross. Praise Him for His goodness and for His salvation.

Parent Question: Why did Jesus die on a cross?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Philippians 2 and Matthew 1:18-2:12 By David Guzik

Jesus, the ultimate example of humility.

Many regard Philippians 2:5-11 as a hymn of the early church that Paul incorporated into his letter. Some commentators go so far as to suggest stanza and verse arrangements for the "hymn." This is possible, but not a necessary conclusion; Paul was capable of such inspired, poetic writing himself (example: 1 Corinthians 13). For reasons which we will examine later, this passage is often known as the kenosis passage.

1. (5) Paul applies the lesson before he states it.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

a. **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:** Paul will, in wonderful detail, describe for us the **mind** of Jesus in the following verses. But here, before he describes the mind of Jesus, he tells us what we must *do* with the information.

i. "Paul does not give all that is in the mind of Christ in these verses. He selects those qualities of our Lord which fit the needs of the Philippians at that moment. . . . This lack of unity among the Philippian saints became the occasion for perhaps the greatest Christological passage in the New Testament that sounds the depths of the incarnation." (Wuest)

b. **Let this mind be in you:** It is all too easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it from a distance. God wants us to be awed by it, but also to see it as something that we must enter into and imitate. **Let this mind** means that it is something that we have *choice* about.

i. Remember also that this **mind** is something granted to us by God. 1 Corinthians 2:16 says that *we have the mind of Christ*. But **let this mind** shows us that it is also something we must *choose* to walk in. You have to **let** it be so.

2. (6a) Jesus was **in the form of God**.

Who, being in the form of God,

a. **In the form of God:** This describes Jesus' pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

b. **Being:** This is from the ancient Greek verb *huparchein*, which "describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same." (Barclay)

i. "Paul, by the use of the Greek word translated 'being,' informs his Greek readers that our Lord's possession of the divine essence did not cease to be a fact when He came to earth to assume human form. . . . *This word alone is enough to refute the claim of Modernism that our Lord emptied Himself of His Deity when He became Man.*" (Wuest)

c. **Form:** This translates the ancient Greek word *morphe*. It "always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it . . . the words mean 'the being on an equality with God.'" (Expositors)

i. "*Morphe* is the essential form which never alters; *schema* is the outward form which changes from time to time and

from circumstance to circumstance." (Barclay)

ii. "'God' has a form, and 'Jesus Christ' exists in this form of God." (Lenski)

iii. Wuest explains that the ancient Greek word translated **form** is very difficult to translate. When we use the word **form**, we think of the *shape* of something; but the ancient Greek word had none of that idea. It is more the idea of a *mode* or an *essence*; it is the essential nature of God, without implying a physical shape or image. "Thus the Greek word for 'form' refers to that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature."

3. (6b) Jesus did not cling to the privileges of deity.

Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

a. **Did not consider it robbery:** The ancient Greek in this phrase has the idea of something being grasped or clung to. Jesus did not cling to the prerogatives or privileges of deity.

i. Wuest defines the ancient Greek word translated **robbery** as, "A treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards."

b. **To be equal with God:** It wasn't that Jesus was trying to *achieve* equality with the Father. He *had it*, and chose not to cling to it. Jesus' divine nature was not something He had to seek for or acquire, but it was His already.

i. Lightfoot wrote that it was not "a prize which must not slip from His grasp, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards." Jesus was willing to let go of some of the prerogatives of deity to become a man.

4. (7) Jesus made Himself of **no reputation.**

But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

a. **But made Himself of no reputation:** The more common (and well-known) translation of this is that *He emptied Himself*. From the ancient Greek word *emptied* (*kenosis*) came the idea that Jesus' incarnation was essentially a self-emptying.

i. We must carefully think about what Jesus *emptied* Himself of. Paul will tell us plainly in the following verses, but we must take care that we do not think that Jesus emptied Himself of His deity in any way.

ii. Some develop the *kenotic theory* of the incarnation to the point where they insist that Jesus divested Himself of many of the attributes of deity - such as omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, and even suffered the elimination of His own divine self-consciousness. Yet Jesus did not (and *could* not) become "less God" in the incarnation. No deity was *subtracted* (though he did renounce some of the rights of deity); rather humanity was *added* to His nature.

iii. "During his humiliation, as God and equal with the Father, was no encroachment on the Divine prerogative; for, as he had an *equality of nature*, he had an *equality of rights*." (Clarke)

iv. "His condescension was free, and unconstrained with the consent of his Father . . . the Son of the Highest can, at his own pleasure, show or eclipse his own glorious brightness, abate or let out his fullness, exalt or abase himself in respect of us." (Poole)

v. "Even as a king, by laying aside the tokens of his royalty, and putting on the habit of a merchant, when all the while he ceaseth not to be a king, or the highest in his own dominions." (Poole)

b. **Taking the form of a bondservant:** This describes *how* Jesus emptied Himself. Though he took **the form of a bondservant**, Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity, or of any of His attributes, or of His equality with God. He emptied Himself *into* the form of a **bondservant**, not merely the form of a man.

i. **Taking** (the ancient Greek word *labon*) does not imply an *exchange*, but an *addition*.

c. **Coming in the likeness of men:** This further describes how Jesus emptied Himself. We can think of someone who is a

servant, but not in the **likeness of men**. Angels are servants, but not in the **likeness of men**. In fairy tales, Aladdin's genie was a servant, but not in the **likeness of men**.

i. The word for **likeness** here *may* refer to merely the outward form of something. While Jesus did have the outward form of humanity, the outward form reflected His true humanity, which was added to His deity.

ii. "It was a likeness, but a real likeness, no mere phantom humanity as the Docetic Gnostics held." (Robertson)

5. (8) The extent of Jesus' self-emptying.

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.

a. **He humbled Himself and became obedient:** Jesus **humbled Himself** when He **became obedient**. This was something that Jesus could only experience by coming down from the throne of heaven and becoming a man. When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be **found in appearance as a man** in order to become **obedient**.

i. One key to Jesus' obedience on earth was the endurance of suffering. This again was something He could only learn by experience after the incarnation. As it is written: *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered* (Hebrews 5:8).

ii. Indeed, **He humbled Himself**.

- He was humble in that he took the form of a man, and not a more glorious creature like an angel.
- He was humble in that He was born into an obscure, oppressed place.
- He was humble in that He was born into poverty among a despised people.
- He was humble in that He was born as a child instead of appearing as a man.
- He was humble in submitting to the obedience appropriate to a child in a household.
- He was humble in learning and practicing a trade - and a humble trade of a builder.
- He was humble in the long wait until He launched out into public ministry.
- He was humble in the companions and disciples He chose.
- He was humble in the audience He appealed to and the way He taught.
- He was humble in the temptations He allowed and endured.
- He was humble in the weakness, hunger, thirst, and tiredness He endured.
- He was humble in His total obedience to His Heavenly Father.
- He was humble in His submission to the Holy Spirit.
- He was humble in choosing and submitting to the death of the cross.
- He was humble in the agony of His death.
- He was humble in the shame, mocking, and public humiliation of His death.
- He was humble in enduring the spiritual agony of His sacrifice on the cross.

iii. We can imagine that it was possible for the Son of God to become man and pay for the sins of the world without this great humiliation. He might have added the humanity of a 33-year old man to his deity. He might have appeared before man only in His transfigured glory, and taught men what they needed to hear from Him. He might have suffered for the sins of man in a hidden place of the earth far from the eyes of man, or on the dark side of the moon for that matter. Yet He did not; **He humbled Himself**, and did it for the surpassing greatness of our salvation and His work for us.

b. **To the point of death, even the death of the cross:** This states the extent of Jesus' humility and obedience.

i. Crucifixion was such a shameful death that it was not permitted for Roman citizens (such as the people of Philippi). A victim of crucifixion was considered by the Jews to be particularly cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23 and Galatians 3:13).

ii. Robertson called the **death of the cross** "The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross."

iii. **Even the death of the cross** shows that there is no limit to what God will do to demonstrate His love and saving power to man; this was and forever will be the ultimate. "What must sin have been in the sight of God, when it required such abasement in Jesus Christ to make an atonement for it, and *undo* its influence and malignity!" (Clarke)

iv. "The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet." (Spurgeon)

c. **Even the death of the cross**: All of this was a great display of the power of Jesus. Remember that because of Paul's past experience among the Philippians, they were tempted to think of God's *power* as being expressed only in exaltation and deliverance and not in terms of glorifying God through humble service and endurance.

i. In this, Paul reminded the Philippians that his current place of humble circumstances (his Roman imprisonment) could still show forth the glory and power of God, even as Jesus did in His humility.

C. Jesus, the ultimate example of exaltation after humility.

1. (9) The exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

a. **Therefore God has also highly exalted Him**: This is the general heading for the material in the next three verses. These words describe how God has exalted Jesus. Indeed, **highly exalted** could also be translated "super exalted."

i. "The Greek elegancy imports superexalted, or exalted with all exaltation." (Poole)

ii. "Now, just pause over this thought - that Christ did not crown himself, but that his Father crowned him; that he did not elevate himself to the throne of majesty, but that his Father lifted him there, and placed him on his throne." (Spurgeon)

b. **Given Him the name which is above every name**: This goes beyond giving Jesus the Divine name Yahweh. When we consider the Hebrew concept of **the name**, it also implies that God declares that Jesus has a *character* and *person* above all.

i. This verse, with its clear statement of Jesus' deity, is powerful ammunition against those who deny the deity of Jesus Christ. There is no higher name than Yahweh, and Jesus has that **name**.

2. (10-11) The subjection of the whole creation to Jesus.

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

a. **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow**: Not only is Jesus exalted by the Father, but the whole world is brought into submission to the Son.

i. "Paul does not imply by this a universal salvation, but means that every personal being will ultimately confess Christ's lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair." (Kent)

b. **Those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth**: This conveys the absolute totality of all creation recognizing the superiority of Jesus Christ.

i. In this, Paul draws on the idea of Isaiah 45:23: *I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath*. Notice that in Isaiah, it is to Yahweh that all knees bow and tongues confess. In Philippians it is to Jesus, showing that Jesus *is* Yahweh.

ii. **Those under the earth**: "Either the dead, who are hid in the earth, and shall be raised by the power of Christ . . . or, devils, and wicked souls." (Poole)

c. **Every knee should bow . . . every tongue should confess:** The combination of **tongues confessing** and **knees bowing** gives evidence that the idea is a complete submission to Jesus, both in word and in action, and one that is required of all.

i. The totality of this recognition of Jesus' deity and exaltation has caused many to envision this happening in a formal way after the final judgment, when every creature in heaven and hell is required to bow their knees and make the confession **that Jesus Christ is Lord**.

d. **That Jesus Christ is Lord:** From this we can say that there is a sense in which Jesus *returned* to heaven with more than He had than when He *left* heaven. Not only did He return with His humanity still added to his deity (although a resurrected humanity), He also returned with the recognition planted among men of who He was and the worship He deserved - something unknown until the Incarnation and the full revelation of His person and work.

i. "He has always (in Paul's view) shared in the Divine nature. But it is only as the result of His Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Exaltation that He *appears to men* as on an equality with God, that He is *worshipped by them* in the way in which Jehovah is worshipped." (Expositors)

ii. "He might have used the miraculous powers inherent in His Divine nature in such a way as to compel men, without further ado, to worship Him as God. Instead of that He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering and death." (Expositors)

iii. All this must be seen in reference to the humiliation described in Philippians 2:6-8; our tendency is to long for the exaltation, but to forsake the humiliation.

e. **Jesus Christ is Lord:** The confession of Jesus Christ as **Lord** reminds us to consider the great significance of this word *kurios*, especially as it was understood by the early church, who used the LXX as their Bible - where *kurios* was consistently used to translate the tetragrammaton, standing for the name *Yahweh*.

i. We also should not miss the significance that at a later time in the Roman Empire, all residents of the Empire were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring that *Caesar is Lord*, and burning a pinch of incense to an image of the emperor. Though the Roman state saw this only as a display of political allegiance, Christians rightly interpreted it as idolatry - and refused to participate, often paying with their lives.

ii. Paul has no doubt who is really Lord - not the Caesar whom he will stand trial before; *Caesar* may be a high name, but it is not the name above all names, the name which belongs to Jesus Christ!

f. **Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father:** Remember that Paul did not give this description of Jesus in Philippians 2:5-11 simply for the theological education of the Philippians.

- He gave it to equip them to endure the hardship they were experiencing.
- He gave it help them to understand Paul's hardships.
- He gave it to help them to practice real Christian unity in the midst of hard times.

i. This picture of Jesus has helped them to understand how to assess the ministry of Paul, which seemed weak at the present time.

ii. This picture helped them to understand the context of God's revelation of power - how God delights to show His power through humble actions.

iii. This picture has equipped them to act in a way towards each other that will promote unity in the body of Christ.

iv. This picture has shown them how to follow Jesus' pattern of patient, humble obedience - something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

Matthew 1:18-2:12

B. The Birth of Jesus Christ.

1. (18) Mary, while engaged to Joseph, is found to be with child as a result of a miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

a. **Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows:** Matthew doesn't really tell us about the *birth* of Jesus; Luke does that. Matthew instead tells us *where Jesus came from*, and it tells the story through the eyes of Joseph.

b. **After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph:** There were essentially three steps to marriage in the Jewish world of Jesus' time.

- *Engagement:* This could happen when the bride and groom to be were quite young, and was often arranged by the parents.
- *Betrothal:* This made the previous engagement official and binding. During the time of betrothal the couple were known as husband and wife, and a betrothal could only be broken by divorce. Betrothal typically lasted a year.
- *Marriage:* This took place after the wedding, after the year of betrothal.

c. **She was found with child of the Holy Spirit:** Matthew plainly (without the greater detail found in the Gospel of Luke) presents the virginal conception and subsequent birth of Jesus. However, the virgin birth was difficult for people to believe back then, even as it is also doubted now by some.

i. We should consider what a great trial this was for a godly young woman like Mary, and for Joseph her betrothed. "Her situation was the most distressing and humiliating that can be conceived. Nothing but the fullest consciousness of her own integrity, and the strongest confidence in God, could have supported her in such trying circumstances, where her reputation, her honour, and her *life* were at stake." (Clarke)

ii. The truth of the supernatural conception of Jesus was disbelieved by many then and was later twisted into lies about the parentage of Jesus. References are made to these suspicions in passages like John 8:19 and 8:41. Lies spread that Mary had become pregnant from a Roman soldier. Here, Matthew set the story straight - both then and now.

iii. "There was no other way of his being born; for had he been of a sinful father, how should he have possessed a sinless nature? He is born of a woman, that he might be human; but not by man, that he might not be sinful." (Spurgeon)

2. (19) Joseph seeks a quiet divorce.

Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

a. **Joseph her husband:** The previous verse told us that *Mary was betrothed to Joseph*. This comment shows that even though they were not formally married, Joseph was still considered Mary's **husband** by betrothal.

b. **Being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example:** Being a **just man**, Joseph knew that if Mary had been unfaithful to him it would be impossible to go through with the marriage. Yet his nature as a **just man** also did not want to make this an unnecessary hardship or stigma upon Mary. Joseph made the understandable decision to seek a quiet divorce.

c. **To put her away secretly:** This refers to breaking an engagement by divorce. In Jewish culture of that time, a betrothal was binding and one needed a divorce to break the arrangement.

i. "Their being betrothed was a thing publicly taken notice of, and he could not put her away so privately but there must be witnesses of it; the meaning therefore must be, as privately as the nature of thing would bear." (Poole)

ii. "When we have to do a severe thing, let us choose the tenderest manner. Maybe we shall not have to do it at all." (Spurgeon)

3. (20-21) An angel speaks to Joseph in a dream, convincing him not to divorce Mary.

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 will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

a. **Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream:** This was not *the* Angel of the LORD, but simply **an angel of the Lord**. Perhaps it was Gabriel, who is prominent in the announcements made to Mary and Zacharias (Luke 1:19 and 1:26). Yet those were actual angelic visitations; this was presented to Joseph **in a dream**.

i. The dream came **while he thought about these things**. Joseph was understandably troubled by Mary's mysterious pregnancy, her future, and what he should do towards her. Though he had decided to *put her away secretly*, he was not comfortable with that decision.

b. **Joseph, son of David:** The address **son of David** should have alerted Joseph that something was particularly significant about this message. **Son of David** is a reference to Joseph's legal lineage to the throne of David.

c. **That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit:** It seems that Mary had not told Joseph that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This shouldn't surprise us; how could she (or how could anyone except God) explain such a thing? This angelic word to Joseph was persuasive.

i. There is no explanation as to *how* this happened, other than what we have in Luke 1:35. "This wonderful conception of our Saviour is a mystery not much to be pried into, and is therefore called an overshadowing, Luke 1:35." (Trapp)

ii. "There is no hint of pagan deity-human coupling in crassly physical terms. Instead, the power of the Lord, manifest in the Holy Spirit who was expected to be active in the Messianic Age, miraculously brought about the conception." (Carson)

d. **You shall call his name JESUS:** The name **JESUS** ("The Salvation of Yahweh") was fairly common in that day (Josephus mentions 12 different men named "Jesus" in his writings), but it is supremely blessed in our day. As was later said by the Apostle Peter, there is *no other name under heaven by which men must be saved* (Acts 4:12).

i. "The name which the angel commanded Joseph to give to Mary's Child was one that was common at the time...its full significance was "The Salvation of Jehovah.'" (Morgan)

e. **For He will save His people from their sins:** The angelic messenger briefly and eloquently stated the work of the coming Messiah, Jesus. He will come as a *savior*, and come to **save His people from their sins**.

i. This description of the work of Jesus reminds us that Jesus meets us *in* our sin, but His purpose is to save us **from** our sins. He saves us first from the *penalty* of sin, then from the *power* of sin, and finally from the *presence* of sin.

ii. "Salvation *from sins* is an element in the Old Testament hope (*e.g.* Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-31) and in later Messianic expectation...but not the dominant one. Its isolation here warns the reader not to expect this Messiah to conform to the more popular hope of a national liberator." (France)

iii. Wonderfully, it says **"His people"**. If it had said, "God's people," we might have thought it was reserved for the Jewish people alone. But it isn't belonging to Abraham that brings salvation from sin; it is belonging to Jesus, being one of **His people**.

4. (22-23) The virgin birth as the fulfillment of prophecy.

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

a. **That it might be fulfilled:** This is the first use of this important phrase which will become a familiar theme throughout Matthew.

b. **"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel":** Matthew rightly understood that the supernatural conception of Jesus was prophesied in Isaiah 7:14.

i. There has been some measure of controversy regarding this quote from Isaiah 7:14, primarily because the Hebrew word *almah* can be translated as either **virgin** or "young woman."

ii. We know the Isaiah passage speaks of Jesus because it says **the virgin shall be with child**, and that conception would be a *sign* to David's entire house. Those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus like to point out that the Hebrew word in Isaiah 7:14 translated **virgin** (*almah*) can also be translated as "young woman." The idea is that Isaiah was simply saying that a "young woman" would give birth, not a virgin. While the *near fulfillment* of the Isaiah prophecy may have reference to a young woman giving birth, the *far* or *ultimate fulfillment* clearly points to a woman miraculously conceiving and giving birth. This is especially clear because the Old Testament never uses the word in a context other than **virgin** and because the Septuagint translates *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 categorically **virgin** (*parthenos*).

c. **Immanuel:** This title of Jesus refers to both His deity (**God with us**) and His identification and nearness to man (**God with us**).

i. Jesus is truly **Immanuel**, *God with us*. "Christ, indeed, was not called by this name Immanuel that we anywhere read of...but the import of this name is most truly affirmed and acknowledged to be fully made good in him." (Trapp, on Isaiah 7:14)

ii. "In what sense then, is Christ GOD WITH US? Jesus is called Immanuel, or *God with us*, in his *incarnation*; *God with us*, by the influences of his *Holy Spirit*, in the *holy sacrament*, in the *preaching* of his word, in *private prayer*. And *God with us*, through every *action* of our life, that we begin, continue, and end in his name. He is *God with us*, to *comfort*, *enlighten*, *protect*, and *defend* us, in every time of *temptation* and *trial*, in the hour of *death*, in the day of *judgment*; and *God with us* and *in us*, and we *with* and *in* him, to all eternity." (Clarke)

iii. We can deeply meditate on the meaning of this name - **Immanuel**.

- It shows how low God bent down to save man; He added the nature of one of His own creatures to His own divine nature, accepting the weaknesses, frailties and dependency that the creature experiences.
- It shows what a great miracle it was that God could add a human nature to His own and still remain God.
- It shows the compatibility between the unfallen human nature and the divine nature; that the two could be joined shows that we are truly made in the image of God.
- It shows that we can come to Him; if He has come to us, then we can come to Him. "Then, if Jesus Christ be 'God with us,' let us come to God without any question or hesitancy. Whoever you may be you need no priest or intercessor to introduce you to God, for God has introduced himself to you." (Spurgeon)

iv. "John Wesley died with that upon his tongue, and let us live with it upon our hearts. - 'The best of all is God with us.'" (Spurgeon)

5. (24-25) Joseph marries Mary after the angelic announcement.

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

a. **Did as the angel of the Lord commanded:** Joseph's obedience is notable. He did not doubt nor waver; he instantly understood the truth and the importance of the angelic messenger that came to him in the dream.

b. **Did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son:** The words **did not know her till** imply that Joseph and Mary had normal marital relations after Jesus' birth.

i. This emphasizes that Jesus was conceived miraculously. "Matthew wants to make Jesus' virginal conception quite unambiguous, for he adds that Joseph had no sexual union with Mary until she gave birth to Jesus." (Carson)

ii. This also denies the Roman Catholic dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary. "The marriage was thus formally completed, but not consummated before the birth of Jesus. The Greek expression for *not until* would normally suggest that intercourse did take place after the end of this period...There is no biblical warrant for the tradition of the 'perpetual virginity' of Mary." (France)

iii. This is an unbiblical doctrine which did not appear earlier than the fifth century after Jesus. It should be placed with the dogmas of Mary's Immaculate Conception, assumption into heaven, and present role as a mediator for believers. Each one of these is man's invention, meant to exalt Mary in an unbiblical manner.

c. **And he called His name JESUS:** They did what God told them to do. Though it was a fairly common name, it had a genuinely great meaning and would come to be the greatest name, the name above all names.