

Dear Friends,

On October 10 you were going about your business, you had probably finished supper. Folsom, CA fire-department was busy at the side of the road near Folsom Lake. A woman was on the way to the hospital, but the baby would not wait. The fire fighters helped deliver a healthy baby. Paramedic Richard Summy told the T.V. reporter, "*[The]Baby ended up being just fine, just like the mom.*" he said. Reporter: *Crews are trained for this, but for firefighters, it's still a thrill. "It was really a gratifying call, had a really happy outcome, and it was really good to be a part of."* Summy said.

Today we hear of a man, a hero of faith, who had to take care of an unexpected baby. A difference in this event is that our hero, Joseph found out ahead of time about an unexpected conception and birth. Never-the-less, he plays his role well and it all turns out well. Unlike other stories where you never hear of the baby again, this baby is world renown, because this isn't just any baby, this Jesus, the Savior. The Lord God informs us through an angel that this is Immanuel. **Immanuel Has Come** into the world. In fact it was Immanuel who was the object of Joseph's faith. It is Jesus, the Savior who enabled Joseph to live as a righteous man and be a hero of faith. Let's listen to this account and rejoice that **Immanuel Has Come**.

1. Miraculously vs. 18-20, 24,25

Whenever a baby is born under difficult circumstances whether in the hospital or out on some roadway, people will call it a "*miracle baby.*" The circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth are a true miracle. Immanuel came to us miraculously.

A. Matthew the writer informs us that this miracle was that Mary, of the town of Nazareth, was with child through the Holy Spirit

1. At first Joseph, Mary's fiancé, had every right to be upset. One of things that undoubtedly attracted him to her was that she was a woman of faith. She shared with him a respect for God's words and promises. He probably could not imagine her being pregnant until they were married. Yet at some point it became obvious to him that she was pregnant. She may have told him that this was God's handy work and we can imagine how difficult it would be to believe her. Never before in history had a virgin conceived a child on her

own. Since he was a good and godly man, he planned to end their relationship quietly.

2. The Lord sends an angel in a dream to stop Joseph. By calling Joseph a Son of David, the Lord seems to be reminding Joseph that he is from the family of King David from which the promised Savior would be born. In fact to help this promise along Mary had conceived a child by God, the Holy Spirit.

3. While Joseph believed what he was told, many today do not. In 1823 Thomas Jefferson wrote, *“The day will come when the mystical generation of Jesus by the Supreme Being as his father, in the womb of a virgin, will be classed with the fable of the generation of Minerva in the brain of Jupiter.”* (L.M. Graham, *“Deceptions and Myths of the Bible”*, Citadel Press, New York, NY, (1991), P. 304.)

The Christian church has always confessed with Joseph that this really happened. St. John many years later wrote in his gospel, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** (1:14)

B. Joseph’s confession or belief in the miracle is seen in his actions.

1. He did what the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. If he had any doubts, he would have hesitated or even gone through with a divorce.

2. We see his faith even more in his care for Mary and the child. Even though as her husband he would have been eager to be intimate with her, he did not demand his marital rights, but waited patiently. I would also point out he had to work hard at his trade as a carpenter, because now he would have another mouth to feed. That child was not his own. We hear of no complaint, but only of faithful service to the Lord, to Mary and to the Christ child.

3. Joseph is an excellent example that we may not always understand what the Lord is doing in our life or in the church. When he makes it clear what he wants done, we need to give faithful service. We trust that he is working things out for our salvation and that of others.

2. Purposefully vs. 21

In the Old Testament reading, Isaiah’s announcement that a virgin would be with child was a sign to comfort King Ahaz and the rest of God’s people. However, Jesus’ birth was more than a comforting sign. There was a greater purpose. Let’s explore the purpose for which Immanuel has come to us.

A. The angel in the dream tells Joseph that Mary's son should be given the name "**Jesus.**" "**Jesus**" is the same as the Old Testament name "**Joshua.**" The Hebrew word "**Joshua**" means "**God saves.**" What the angel had revealed to Mary is now shared with Joseph. Jesus was the long awaited Savior that God had promised to his people and to the world.

B. What the angel was pointing to is that Jesus was coming into the world for a purpose. He tells Joseph of this wonderful purpose. "**he will save his people from their sins.**" (21b) In Psalm 130 the writer calls on people, "**O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.**" (7,8)

What is he saving us from? The word "sin" in the original language means to "*wander from the path of righteousness.*" God has commanded every human he has created to be right with him. We wander from the right path in our thoughts, words and actions. Even doubting God's word is a sin. Jesus redeemed us or brought us back to God through his righteous walking of the path and his innocent sufferings and death. We are forgiven now and are right again with God.

Please note that when it says that he came to save his "**people**", the word also means "**crowd**". This refers to more than Jesus' people, the Jews. It refers to all people. Jesus came to redeem and save all nations.

3. Prophetically vs. 22, 23

I am sure no one predicted that firemen would on October 10th deliver a baby at Folsom Lake in California. When Jesus, Immanuel, came it was prophetically. His birth had been foretold.

A. What we read in Matthew, chapter 1 is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. (22)

1. Isaiah had foretold that a virgin would be with child and give birth to a son. When Mary gave birth to Jesus on that first Christmas the prophecy was fulfilled. This is not a surprise to believing Christians, because we understand that God who knows all things can tell us about future events. St. Peter writes, "**For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**" (2 Peter 1:21)

2. Other prophecies about Jesus are important to us. The first prophecy is in Genesis 3:15. You will recall the words, "**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush**

your head, and you will strike his heel.” This was a prophecy of Jesus’ victory over the devil at the cross. This was fulfilled on Good Friday.

The Lord fulfills his prophecies so the ones he has given to us will come true. We can be sure he will bring an end to the world. We can be sure he will take us, his children, home to heaven.

B. Of special interest is Isaiah’s revelation that this child is **“Immanuel.”** (23) **“Immanuel”** It means **“God with us.”** The immortal, eternal, holy God has made his dwelling among us. God has come to us to be our brother and Savior. God was with us that first Christmas, but he is also with us today. Jesus promised in Matthew 28:20, **“I am with you always.”** Rejoice! God is with you!

Conclusion: Joseph has been called *“the forgotten”* character of Christmas. Today we have had a little time to think about Joseph. We realize carrying out his role would not have been easy. However, like you and I, he heard and trusted the word of the Lord. He believed the angel that this child was the Son of God and the Savior. He too worshiped Jesus at Bethlehem. He also faithfully carried out his role as caretaker and provider for Mary and baby Jesus. I believe he did for one main reason. It is the same reason you and I gather and worship this Christmas. The same reason we faithfully carry out our God given roles. The reason is this, **Immanuel Has Come!** Our Savior has come to be with us and save us! Amen.