

To Fulfill What The Lord Had Spoken

In the first four verses of our text, we learn that the “genesis” of Jesus is from the Lord through a virgin birth and that this virgin-born son came to save His people from their sins. Today we look especially at verses 22 and 23 to see that this great event was prophesied long ago in the Scriptures:

Matthew 1:18-25

² Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”

(which means, God with us). ²⁴ When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵ but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

The Christian faith is unique in many ways. One of those uniquenesses is that God spoke about the great redemptive moments in history many hundreds of years before they actually occurred. In fact, one of Matthew's chief intentions in his gospel account is to display the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Verse 22 is something of a formula, found 10 or 11 times in Matthew (five of them in the first two chapters: 1:22, 2:5,15,17, and 23). Furthermore, in Matthew, there are 54 citations of Old Testament verses to show that Jesus fulfills, in detail, all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Some scholars suggest that, in all, Jesus fulfilled over 300 specific Old Testament prophecies!

There are two important implications of these things:

- 1) **We must trust the Lord.** No other god can do this, because in order to predict the future one has to be able to control the future, and only the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ controls history. We live in a pluralistic society which begs for our tolerance and our humility, and it is appropriate that Christians would be asked to be more tolerant and more humble than we are; but no one should expect us to be less certain than we are. Our God has surely spoken, and Jesus Christ is surely His Son, and we trust Him.
- 2) **We must rejoice.** Why? Because God not only predicts and controls history, but He also does so on our behalf. When He decreed the virgin birth of His Son, He also ordained that He would be called “God with us.” One can see in the life of Jesus what it means to have God with you: when Herod tries to destroy Him as an infant, God sends baby Jesus to Egypt; when Satan tempts Jesus in the wilderness, God sends His Word and His angels to assist Him; when Satan tries to snuff out His life on a wooden tree, God gloriously raises Him from the tomb. And What the angel is telling Joseph in this dream is that God is not only with Him, but God is also with us! This means, of course, that nothing can come between us and the love of God. Nobody can stop us from ascending to His glorious throne. Nobody can keep us from knowing His blessings for all eternity. This is why we worship through lessons and carols: we hear the amazing promises of

God fulfilled completely in Jesus Christ, then with gratitude in our hearts, we, like Zechariah and Mary and the angels and the entire heavenly host, rise up to sing our praises.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some predictions about Christ in the Old Testament that He fulfilled? What difference does it make to you to know these things?
2. What are some predictions about Christ in the Old Testament that He fulfilled? What difference does it make to you to know these things?
3. How should we conduct ourselves when discussing religion with people with various beliefs and backgrounds?
4. Why is Advent and Christmastide such a joyful season? How can we rejoice knowing that this season causes some people to be very sad due to death or poverty or illness or distance from family?
5. When have you been most encouraged by the promise that God is with us? Why does that truth encourage you?