

**Advent Reading for Sunday, December 3, 2017**  
***“Immanuel, a Son Born of a Virgin”***  
**(Isaiah 7:14)**

Our first reading is of Isaiah’s astounding promise: *“Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”* When Matthew penned his gospel some 700 years following Isaiah’s death, describing the birth of Jesus, he explained that Mary *“was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit”*. (Matthew 1:18) After giving additional details, Matthew went on to explain: *“Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL’, which translated means ‘GOD WITH US’”*. (Matthew 1:23)

As we begin to prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus, there is no greater foundational truth for us to know than this: Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother, Mary, by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and without a human father. Because this was a unique, one of a kind event in the entire history of the world, we can understand why God graciously sent an angel to encourage Joseph, to whom Mary was betrothed: *“Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 1:20). This was assurance enough for Joseph, and he joyfully obeyed God’s command.

The truth of the virgin birth is also affirmed in Luke’s gospel when the angel, Gabriel, explained to Mary, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born to you will be called holy, the Son of God”* (Luke 1:34-35).

The biblical explanation of the virgin birth explains why Jesus’ name would also be called Immanuel; even though He was born of a woman like each one of us, His conception was not like ours at all, for He was conceived through the Holy Spirit. This is why His name would be called *Immanuel – God with us!* The great foundational truth of our faith, one we must never forget is that the infant born those long years ago in Bethlehem was God!

While he used different words, the Apostle John explained this identical truth as follows: *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and lived among us”* (John 1:14). He came as the revelation of God and His love to us, and to be the Savior of all who would believe. His coming is referred to as the Incarnation, meaning that Jesus was God in human flesh. When the Apostle Paul was writing to the young pastor, Timothy, he explained, *“Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith; Christ was revealed in a human body”* (1 Timothy 3:16 NLT).

This amazing prophecy of the virgin birth reminds us that our salvation comes from the Lord. It originated with Him through no initiative of our own, and it must be to His glory. The virgin birth also made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person; Jesus is fully God, yet fully man, and He always will be. In His infinite wisdom, God chose a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Jesus, so that in observing His life we might see both His humanity and His deity.

**Giving Thanks - Thank You, Father, for this amazing prophecy! Help us to give thanks for this great truth today and every day!**