

# God With Us

## Matthew 1:18–25

The gospel accounts of Jesus' birth differ in their emphases. Mark skips any birth story, Luke highlights Mary, whereas Matthew features Joseph as the primary actor. Like Mary, Joseph must trust God with the loss of his life as he knew and imagined it and lean into an entirely new way of being.

Theologians and Christian communities through the centuries have always struggled with how to hold Joseph, husband of Mary. It feels awkward – Matthew makes clear in the preceding passage that only via Joseph is Jesus the son of David. Without Davidic lineage, the power of Jesus as the messianic fulfillment of the Hebrew scriptures falls apart. But to say Joseph is Jesus' father is awkward in light of the birth stories that suggest otherwise.

Some biblical commentators have solved this paternity paradox by concluding that Matthew presumes that the Christmas miracle included not only Mary's pregnancy by the Holy Spirit, but also, inexplicably, the incorporation of Jesus into Joseph's family. Joseph naming Jesus is a clue; at that time, it was customary for mothers to name their babies. What matters for Matthew is that Jesus fulfills scripture by coming from the Davidic line and that Jesus is unquestionably divine as well as human.

**O come, O come, Emmanuel. In these waning days of Advent, grant us the patience**

**to seek you. Free us from our fears and give us the strength to give names to things that matter. In these waning days of Advent, may our minds turn<sup>1</sup> towards Christ as we prepare for his birth. Amen.**

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### Additional Bible Readings

Isaiah 7:10–16

Psalms 80:1–7, 17–19

Romans 1:1–7

