Emmanuel—God with Us

Key Verse: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." —Matthew 1:23

Selected Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew does not tell us about the birth of Jesus in detail as does Luke. Instead, he recounts the events through the eyes of Joseph. It was he to whom Mary was engaged. Prior to the consummation of their marriage, she was found to be expecting a child. Joseph, not willing to make of her a public example, was inclined to put her away quietly. However, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and told him not to fear in taking Mary as his wife because the conception occurred through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.—Matt. 1:18-20

The angel continued, saying, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet."—vss. 21,22

Our Key Verse illustrates the fulfillment of that which was spoken by God through the Prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 7:13,14, the prophet foretells Jesus' birth, saying that "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," and that these things would be a sign to the

"house of David." How marvelous is God's overruling that his divinely inspired Word from the Old Testament and New Testament can be relied upon as a harmonious basis for our faith in all the promises of the Scriptures.

"Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife." (Matt. 1:24) The Bible does not give many details about Joseph, but he was evidently a remarkable individual. He was told by a messenger to take Mary as his wife under what seemed very unusual circumstances, yet he did it without question.

There are surely lessons as consecrated followers of Christ that we might reflect upon because of Joseph's example. What about ourselves? Do we promptly do what the Lord wants us to do when we have ascertained his will? Thinking about our life after having commenced our course in the narrow way, do we ever fail to do what we have pledged to do? We understand that God does not speak to us now through angels, but if he did, would we not be sure to follow their instructions? If, on the other hand, God were to use human instrumentalities to give us needed counsel, might we reject such help, thinking that it is none of anyone else's business, and the matter is between ourselves and God?

At times, we may be near-sighted with regard to certain of our actions that are manifested to others. To the extent that we need counsel along one line or another, the Lord might raise up a brother or sister in Christ to direct our attention toward a more proper course in a patient, kindly, gentle manner. If we are rightly exercised, we will make the necessary adjustments and improvements in our lives so that we can be more pleasing to the Lord. The following passage may well be one we should meditate upon for this purpose. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."—Ps. 119:67 ■