

Before Their Coming Together

*And of Jesus Christ, the birth was thus: For his mother Mary having been betrothed to Joseph, **before their coming together** she was found to have conceived from the Holy Spirit, (Matthew 1:18 YLT)*

NIV [revised]	ESV [revised]	NASB [revised]	KJV [revised]	HCSB [revised]
18This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: [For] His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together , she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.	Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When [For] his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.	Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when [For] His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.	Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When -as [For] his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together , she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.	The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After [For] His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together [it was discovered] that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

του δε ιησου χριστου η γεννησις ουτως ην μνηστευθεισης γαρ της μητρος αυτου μαριας τω ιωσηφ **πριν η συνελθειν αυτους** ευρεθη εν γαστρι εχουσα εκ πνευματος αγιου (Mat 1:18 Greek NT TR)

The clause “before their coming together” is nestled between two portions of this verse.

In English, it can be read one of two ways: (1) in conjunction with the former part of the verse, or (2) solely in conjunction with the latter part of the verse.

The Virgin Birth doctrinal claim hinges on this phrase being applied strictly to the latter part of the verse.

Notice how the English translations can lead us to believe that is the case:

In every instance, there is a comma after “Joseph” (preceding “before”), and then, in most cases (YLT, ESV, NASB, HCSB) there is no comma after “together”, causing the phrase to flow into the latter part of the verse without interruption.

As we’ve already pointed out, in most cases (ESV, NASB, KJV, HCSB), the Greek word preceding “mother” is translated as “when”, “when as” or “after”, suggesting a *cause & effect* in this verse. Although, the Greek word, “gar” simply means “for” and is translated as such throughout the entire New Testament.

One translation (NIV) inserts the word “but” suggesting something contrary to what has already been stated, and another translation (HCSB) flips an action (“discovered”) out of order, compared to all the other translations.

Given all this there is no wonder that most understand this clause to be solely in conjunction with the latter part of the verse, but let's look at the Greek.

(Mat 1:18 Greek NT TR) του δε ιησου χριστου η γεννησις ουτως ην μνηστευθεισης γαρ της μητρος αυτου μαριας τω ιωσηφ πριν η συνελθειν αυτους ευρεθη εν γαστρι εχουσα εκ πνευματος αγιου

The word translated as “before” is “prin” (highlighted and underlined once above).

According to Thayer's Greek Definitions, it is an adverb which means “before, formerly”.

This is followed by another word “e”, which is *not translated here* in English (highlighted and underlined twice), likely because it is a grammatical tool.

This word is “*a primary particle of distinction between two connected terms*”, according to Thayer's.

These words “prin e” are used together once in the book of Matthew, once in Mark, twice in Luke, and three times in Acts.

Read how they are translated in English and notice how they *connect* that which comes before it with that which comes immediately after it:

(Mar 14:30 Greek NT TR) και λεγει αυτω ο ιησους αμην λεγω σοι οτι σημερον εν τη νυκτι ταυτη πριν η δις αλεκτορα φωνησαι τρις απαρνηση με

(Mar 14:30 YLT) And Jesus said to him, 'Verily I say to thee, that to-day, this night, before a cock shall crow twice, thrice thou shalt deny me.'

(Luk 2:26 Greek NT TR) και ην αυτω κεχηρηματισμενον υπο του πνευματος του αγιου μη ιδειν θανατον πριν η ιδη τον χριστον κυριου

(Luk 2:26 YLT) and it hath been divinely told him by the Holy Spirit—not to see death before he may see the Christ of the Lord.

(Luk 22:34 Greek NT TR) ο δε ειπεν λεγω σοι πετρε ου μη φωνησει σημερον αλεκτωρ πριν η τρις απαρνηση μη ειδεναι με

(Luk 22:34 YLT) and he said, 'I say to thee, Peter, a cock shall not crow to-day, before thrice thou mayest disown knowing me.'

(Act 2:20 Greek NT TR) ο ηλιος μεταστραφησεται εις σκοτος και η σεληνη εις αιμα πριν η ελθειν την ημεραν κυριου την μεγαλην και επιφανη

(Act 2:20 YLT) the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the day of the Lord—the great and illustrious;

(Act 7:2 Greek NT TR) ο δε εφη ανδρες αδελφοι και πατερες ακουσατε ο θεος της δοξης ωφθη τω πατρι ημων αβρααμ οντι εν τη μεσοποταμια πριν η κατοικησαι αυτον εν χαρραν

(Act 7:2 YLT) *and he said, 'Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken: The God of the glory did appear to our father Abraham, being in Mesopotamia, before his dwelling in Haran,*

(Act 25:16 Greek NT TR) *προς ους απεκριθην οτι ουκ εστιν εθος ρωμαιοις χαριζεσθαι τινα ανθρωπον εις απωλειαν πριν η ο κατηγορουμενος κατα προσωπον εχει τους κατηγορους τοπον τε απολογιας λαβοι περι του εγκληματος*

(Act 25:16 YLT) *unto whom I answered, that it is not a custom of Romans to make a favour of any man to die, before that he who is accused may have the accusers face to face, and may receive place of defence in regard to the charge laid against him .*

Can you see how the word translated as “before” in these verses **connect** that which comes before it with that which comes immediately after it?

...to-day, this night, before a cock shall crow twice...

...not to see death before he may see the Christ...

...a cock shall not crow to-day, before thrice...

...the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the day...

...being in Mesopotamia, before his dwelling in Haran...

...it is not a custom of Romans to make a favour of any man to die, before that he who is accused may have the accusers face to face...

Now look at Matthew 1:18:

(Mat 1:18 YLT) *And of Jesus Christ, the birth was thus: For his mother Mary having been betrothed to Joseph, before their coming together she was found to have conceived from the Holy Spirit,*

...having been betrothed to Joseph, before their coming together...

The proper rendering of the phrase “before their coming together” is that **it is connected to the first part of the verse.**