

December 22nd, 2019

# The Gift of Jesus Christ

Matthew 1

## **The entrance of Christ into history**

The historian Philip Schaff wrote this in 1858 regarding Christ coming into the world:

“The entrance of [Christ] into history is the most momentous of all events. It is the end of the old world and the beginning of the new. It was the great idea of Dionysius to date our era from the birth of our Savior. Jesus Christ, the God-Man, the prophet, priest, and king of mankind, is, in fact, the centre and turning-point not only of chronology, but of all history, and the key to all its mysteries. Around him, as the sun of the moral universe, revolve at their several distances, all nations and all important events, in the religious life of the world; and all must, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, contribute to glorify his name and advance his cause. The history of mankind before his birth must be viewed as a preparation for his coming, and the history after his birth as a gradual diffusion of his spirit and progress of his kingdom. “All things were created by him, and for him.” He is “the desire of all nations.” He appeared in the “fulness of time,” when the process of preparation was finished, and the world’s need of redemption fully disclosed.”<sup>1</sup>

## **The greatest trouble in the world today: guilt**

And that is exactly how Matthew begins the New Testament. He says in v.1 “*The book* of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.” The entire OT was written for this moment, when Jesus Christ would come into the world. Perhaps you are here this morning and you are having difficulty in seeing how a Man born 2,000

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1: Apostolic Christianity, From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John A.D. 1-100*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 4th Printing 2011), pg. 56-57

years ago could have any relevance for your life. If that's you just consider that your greatest trouble in the world today is not your bank account, or your job, or your troubled relationships, or your poor health. No your greatest trouble is guilt. Not *merely* that you feel guilty, but that you are guilty. Your own heart testifies against you. You have been confronted with thousands if not millions of choices in your life. You could choose to do this or to do that. You could choose good or you could choose evil. And you and I have chosen evil countless times. We have broken the law of God that He wrote on our heart. We have ignored the voice of conscience, the voice of reason, and we have become guilty in the sight of a holy God.<sup>2</sup>

### **There's nothing we can do**

What can we do? There's nothing we can do. There's nothing any of us can do. The guilt and stain of sin is so deep that no one can cleanse themselves. **Jeremiah 13:23** says "Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil." All of humanity is hopeless and helpless if left to themselves.

### **The greatest of gifts**

That is why the coming of Jesus Christ into the world is the greatest news in the history of the world. Because He came into the world *not* to become famous or make money or to become some kind of guru. No Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That is the essence of His gospel: The gospel is the

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<sup>2</sup> If you are not convinced of your guilt, or if you think that overall your good deeds will outweigh your bad, let us take a simple test. God's first commandment says "You shall have no other gods before me" (**Exodus 20:3**). Everyone has a god. Everyone worships. Even the late atheist David Foster Wallace has said "There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everyone worships. The only choice we get is what to worship." You can figure out what you worship by asking: "What do I live for?" Whatever that is, *is* what you worship. If it's not the Holy God of Scripture. You've broken the first commandment: you have worshipped other gods. There are nine other commandments. Nine other commandments that demonstrate that you are guilty. Nine other commandments that demonstrate that on the Day of Judgment you will not be able to argue with the charges that are brought against you. **Revelation 20:13** says that "...you will be judged...according to what you have done."

reconciliation between God and man through the God-Man Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> He is the only hope of mankind. And Christmas is the story of God sending this greatest of gifts into the world.

### *The Big Idea...*

The gift of Christ is the greatest gift that God has given mankind, for in Christ sinners are reconciled to God

☆ The Gift of Jesus' Lineage

☆ The Gift of Jesus' Birth

☆ The Gift of Jesus' Name

## I. The Gift of Jesus' Lineage

### **Connecting the gospel to God's past promises**

Matthew begins his gospel with this genealogy. Why? Why does he start here? Because dear friends, there is precious truth hidden in this genealogy. Not only does Matthew connect it to the promises God made in the past, but he connects it with the trouble you face right now. First, let's see at how Matthew connects this genealogy to the promises God made in the past.<sup>4</sup> v.1 "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

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<sup>3</sup> "Christianity is the reconciliation and union of God and man in and through Jesus Christ the God-Man." Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1: Apostolic Christianity, From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John A.D. 1-100*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 4th Printing 2011), pg. 57

<sup>4</sup> "The full profit and advantage, therefore, to be derived from the reading of the Gospel will only be obtained when we learn to connect it with the ancient promises." John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVI*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. xxxviii

## The Son of David

First, we see that Jesus Christ is the son of David. When King David took the throne around 1,000 b.c. God told him in **2 Samuel 7:12-13** “When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” The key word is *forever*. One of David’s future descendants would take the throne and rule forever and ever. Matthew is telling us this Jesus is that descendent. One of the fascinating facts of history is that since Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. “...no genealogies exist that can trace the ancestry of any Jew now living.”<sup>5</sup> Meaning that any Jew who is still looking for another son of David, they would not be able to verify his genealogy. “Jesus Christ is the last verifiable claimant to the throne of David.”

## The Son of Abraham

Secondly, we see that Jesus Christ is the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of the nation of Israel. God tells him in **Genesis 22:18** “...in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Now the Apostle Paul tells us what this promise meant in **Galatians 3:16** “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.” In other words, it wasn’t all of Abrahams’s offspring that would bless the world, it was one offspring in particular—namely Christ. So Matthew in this first verse connects Jesus Christ to the promises that God made to both Abraham and David. This Jesus, is the one that Israel has been waiting for for thousands of years. The climax of all human history has finally arrived.

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<sup>5</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago, IL,; Moody Publishers, 1985), pg. 3

## Matthew's genealogy vs. Luke's genealogy

Before we go any further, we must say something about how Matthew's genealogy is different from Luke's genealogy recorded in **Luke 3:23-28**. If you were to compare them side by side you will find three differences.<sup>6</sup> **First**, Matthew begins in the past (with Abraham) and moves to the present (Jesus); whereas Luke begins in the present (with Jesus) and moves to the past. **Second**, Matthew—a Jew—traces Jesus back to Abraham to establish his Jewish heritage; but Luke—a Gentile—traces Jesus back to Adam, the father of all mankind, to show that Jesus is the hope for all peoples—both Jew and Gentile.<sup>7</sup> **Third**, Matthew and Luke record different names in their genealogies.<sup>8</sup> Some of these names are different simply because some of the Jews since the Babylonian captivity had more than one name. Just think about the book of Daniel. Daniel was both Daniel and Belteshazzar. Likewise Hananiah was called Shadrach; Mishael was called Meshach, and Azariah was called Abednego (**Daniel 1:7**). So some names are different *because* some Jews had two names. However this doesn't account for all the differences. In Matthew's genealogy the line flows from David to Solomon;<sup>9</sup> but in Luke's genealogy the line flows from David to Nathan.<sup>10</sup> Likewise in Matthew's genealogy, Joseph, Mary's husband, is said to be the son of Jacob,<sup>11</sup> but in Luke's genealogy Joseph is said to be the son of Heli.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the line from Joseph to David is completely different in these two genealogies. How do

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<sup>6</sup> cf. John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVI*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 84

<sup>7</sup> ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2008), pg. 1954

<sup>8</sup> Some names are just missing. It is a curious thing that Matthew records that there are 14 generations between Abraham and David, and David and the Babylonian captivity, and the Babylonian captivity and the coming of Christ, when there is some generations missing, e.g. Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are missing between Joram and Uzziah. For insight into this phenomena I would suggest John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVI*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 88

<sup>9</sup> v.6

<sup>10</sup> Luke 3:31; cf. 2 Samuel 5:14

<sup>11</sup> v.16

<sup>12</sup> Luke 3:23

we account for this? Some have suggested that Matthew records Joseph's genealogy and Luke records Mary's genealogy.<sup>13</sup> But I don't think that works, *because* you have to insert that into the text. In both gospels, it is always Joseph who is said to be the son of David (**Matthew 1:16; 1:20; Luke 1:27; 2:4; 3:23**); but Mary is never directly said to be a descendent of David. It doesn't mean that she isn't, it's just not mentioned. So you have to read that into the text that Luke is recording Mary's genealogy. So then how do we answer this discrepancy? How can the two genealogies give two different fathers for Joseph? Could Joseph have two different fathers? Yes. He could of had a physical father *and* a legal father. He had a physical father, his biological father—probably Luke's genealogy;<sup>14</sup> and a legal father from a second marriage who adopted him—probably Matthew.<sup>15</sup> This shouldn't be hard to accept. Jesus, who is the main purpose of establishing these genealogies, had two different fathers so-to-speak: Joseph was his legal father—the one who adopted him and raised him as his own; yet Joseph was not Jesus's physical father. Jesus had no physical father.<sup>16</sup> If you would like to study this more I would suggest looking at Calvin or the notes found in an ESV Study Bible.

### **How this genealogy give us hope**

Alright then, how does this genealogy connect us to the trouble we face right now? How is this genealogy a precious gift of grace? There are many *true* Christians who struggle with the assurance of their salvation: “Am I really a Christian? Does God really love me?” And that there are many non-Christians who believe that they are too wicked for God to love them. This genealogy

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<sup>13</sup> This is John MacArthur's view (see his commentary pg.3) and although compelling, it's not the view of Calvin or as the ESV Study Bible reports it “very few commentators defend this solution today” (pg. 1954).

<sup>14</sup> “Some commentators have suggested that Heli was Mary's father, but that there were no male heirs in the family, so Heli adopted Joseph as his “son” when Mary and Joseph were married.” ESV Study Bible, (Wheaton, IL.; Crossway, 2008), pg. 1954

<sup>15</sup> “...a second marriage is assumed (sometimes a levirate marriage; see note on Matt.22:24).” *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Although I disagree with MacArthur's view, he has some fascinating commentary on the need to come through Solomon's line (2 Samuel 7:13) but not through Jeconiah's line (Jeremiah 22:30). I would just argue that the above solution is a better explanation of the events.

brings hope to both groups. How? Because we don't find a list of heroes, we find a list of villains. We don't find those who qualified for salvation, we only find those who disqualified themselves in every way. Consider the type of people who are included in Jesus' family.

### **Pagans, villains and idolators oh my!**

First starting in **v.2**, we come to Abraham. Before God called him, **Joshua 24:2** tells us that he was a pagan who came from a family of moon worshippers. After God saved him, on two separate occasions, he pawned off his wife as his sister so that he could save his own skin (**Genesis 12:13; 20:2**).

Then we have Isaac, his son, who did the same thing with his wife Rebekah (**Genesis 26:7**).

Jacob is next, whose name means supplanter. He twice cheated his own brother Esau out of his birthright and blessing (**Genesis 27:36**).

Next we have Judah (**v.3**) who sold his brother Joseph into slavery (**Genesis 37:27**) and slept with his daughter-in-law Tamar who had disguised herself as a prostitute (**Genesis 38:15**).

Then we come to Rahab (**v.5**) was not only a foreigner, a Caananite, but she was a prostitute (**Joshua 6:25**).

The next woman we come to is Ruth who was a Moabite, one of the sworn enemies of Israel (**Judges 3:28**).

Next we come to King David (**v.6**), who the Scripture says was a man after God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**). But after God gave him the kingdom, he stole another man's wife and then murdered him. That's why we read in **v.6** that David was the father of Solomon *by the wife of Uriah*. Bathsheba was Uriah's

wife whom David stole. Uriah was the husband whom David murdered (**2 Samuel 11**).

Next we arrive at King Solomon (**v.7**) whom God blessed him with the greatest gift of wisdom the world has ever seen (**1 Kings 3:28**). Yet Solomon turned his heart away from God later in his life because of his many wives and turned to other gods (**1 Kings 11:4**).

Several generations later, King Manasseh (**v.10**) “...erected altars to the Baals, and made Asherahs and worshipped all the host of heaven and served them” (**2 Chronicles 33:3**). He built altars to false gods in the very house of the LORD. He sacrificed his sons to demons and “...used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and necromancers” (**2 Chronicles 33:6**). The Scripture says that Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do *more evil* than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel” (**2 Chronicles 33:9**).

In fact the whole nation of Israel, the very nation whom God had blessed above every nation on earth, had done so wickedly that **v.11** tells us God sent them away to Babylon. This was the curse that Moses prophesied against them in **Deuteronomy 28**, that if they turned their backs on the Lord their God, He would send foreign armies against them, and they would be carried away to other lands and scattered to the nations.

### **The notorious sinners in Jesus’ family**

Now then, let’s think about this carefully. Why are these people on the list? If God is sovereign over all things, if He is the God who declares the end from the beginning, the God who says “My counsel shall stand and I will accomplish all my purpose” (**Isaiah 46:10**); then why would God include such notorious sinners in the family of Jesus? Could not God have prevented prostitutes and pagans, incest and idolatry, murderers and demon-worshippers



from staining Jesus' family? Of course He could have. But if he kept all the notorious sinners out, then no one would be in Jesus family. The only types of sinners that are in Jesus' family are notorious sinners.

### **Lacking assurance?**

Dear beloved, if you are struggling with your assurance, find hope here. God designed this genealogy to show you that salvation does not depend on human merit.<sup>17</sup> There is no one worthy enough to be in Jesus' family. All of these listed are disqualified just like you. Jesus doesn't accept you because you are qualified. He accepts you because you trust in Him. **John 1:12** says "But to all who did receive him, who believe in his name, he gave the right to come the children of God."

### **Beyond the reach of grace?**

If you've never trusted Christ because you think you've sinned beyond the reach of grace, then take heart, it is only the devil that accuses you. That great enemy will insinuate that because you are a great sinner, that there is no hope for you. He will tell you that Christ is too holy to wrap His arms of mercy around such a foul sinner as you. There's only one way to respond to his accusations: 'Yes I am a great sinner. I am just like the sinners on this list. But if Jesus receives great sinners like them into His family, then certainly He will not deny a great sinner like me.' "When Satan charged Martin Luther with a long list of crimes, he replied, This is all true; but write another line at the bottom, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses me from all sins.'<sup>18</sup> Dear friend, don't listen to the accusations of Satan. Yes you are a great sinner, but Christ is a great Savior, and He promises that all who come to Him, He will never cast out (**John 6:37**).

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<sup>17</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. XVI*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 91

<sup>18</sup> John Bunyan, *The Works of John Bunyan Vol. 3*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2009), pg. 113

### **The precious gift of His genealogy**

Dear congregation, that is the gift of Jesus' genealogy. It is a gift because we see that Jesus' family is only comprised of great sinners who come to Him by faith.

## **II. The Gift of Jesus' Birth**

### **The circumstances of Jesus' birth**

Please look with me at **v.18** "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."

### **The historical fact of Jesus' birth**

What've we just read is not some tale told to perpetuate a Christian religion. These things are not myths or legends. These are historical realities—facts that transcend the realm of opinion. And this historical fact about the birth of Jesus Christ is more verifiable than the fact of George Washington or Adolf Hitler or any other hero or villain in the history of the world. In fact, there is more evidence for the birth of Jesus Christ than your own birth.

### **Jesus' humanity**

So then what do we know about the birth of Jesus? **First**, we know that Jesus was born truly man. **Galatians 4:4** says "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, *born of woman...*" Jesus had a human mother—Mary. And one only has to read the rest of this gospel to find that Jesus had a true body—he ate and drank and slept and increased in stature.<sup>19</sup> But it wasn't just a human body that Jesus had, He had a human soul. The Scripture says that he increased in wisdom (**Luke 2:52**). He shared the very feelings we've experienced: He felt agony of the soul (**Luke 22:44**); He loved Martha, Mary

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<sup>19</sup> A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 1999), pg. 380

and Lazarus (**John 11:5**); and He wept (**John 11:35**). Nobody, not Jesus' family, friends or enemies had difficulty believing that Jesus was truly man.<sup>20</sup>

### Jesus' Divinity

But it's the **second** thing about His birth that has divided all of humanity: Jesus was born truly God. He was conceived *not* by a human father, but by the Holy Spirit of God. Mary and Joseph had not yet come together, that's what **v. 18** says. Now put yourself in Joseph's place. Here he was betrothed to Mary. Betrothal was a legally contracted engagement between two families that included a dowry payment. Betrothal could last up to a year before the actual marriage ceremony took place. Betrothal entailed more than *mere* engagement. To end an American engagement is not a legal matter. But to end a Jewish betrothal would require divorce. That's what Joseph had in mind. Please look at **v.19** "And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly." Can you blame him? He discovered his fiancée to be pregnant. It wasn't his child. What was the obvious conclusion—the only conclusion that was reasonable for Joseph to make? She was unfaithful, she was with another man.

### The oldest prophecy in Scripture

However the Scripture will allow that conclusion. In Luke's account, when the angel Gabriel visits Mary to tell her that she has conceived, she says "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (**Luke 1:34**). No Mary did not get pregnant because she had been with another man, she conceived because the Holy Spirit of God overshadowed her, and miraculously she conceived. And this fulfills the oldest prophecy in Scripture. When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised them in **Genesis 3:15** that He would send One, One whom He called *the offspring of the woman*, and He would crush the head of the serpent thus

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<sup>20</sup> The Larger Catechism asks: Q. 39. Why was it requisite that the mediator should be man? A. It was requisite that the mediator should be man, that he might advance our nature, perform obedience to the law, suffer and make intercession for us in our nature, have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities; that we might receive the adoption of sons, and have comfort and access with boldness unto the throne of grace.

putting an end to sin. Now Scripture doesn't use that language anywhere else. It's always so-and-so was the offspring of *this man* or *that man*. But this One was called the *offspring of the woman*. The oldest prophecy in the Bible is the prophecy of the virgin birth.

### **The only one-of-a-kind miracle**

And if you're thinking at this moment "...but a virgin birth has never happened before." Of course it hasn't. This miracle is one-of-a-kind. It cannot be duplicated. In the Bible we read of breathtaking miracles that have been duplicated: there was *not* one, but ten plagues in Egypt; God *not* only parted the Red Sea but the Jordan River as well; there was *not* just one resurrection but multiple resurrections; *but* there has only ever been one virgin birth. It can never be duplicated, because Jesus Christ the God-Man can never be duplicated.

### **The visitation**

That's why Joseph had no other explanation for Mary's pregnancy other than that she had been unfaithful. It took a visitation from an angel of the Lord to convince Him otherwise. Please look at **v.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."

### **The brick wall and the virgin birth**

Several years ago, Rob Bell—now an apostate from the Christian faith—wrote a book called "Sex God" in which he likened all the doctrines of the Christian faith to a brick wall. He claimed that the brick wall would still remain standing even if some of the bricks were removed. And asked in a serpent-like way 'What would we really lose if we lost the brick of the virgin birth?' It was the same question the liberals of the 1920's were asking. They, like Bell, wanted to do away the miraculous because they considered to be a stumbling block to

the unbelieving world. So what do we lose if we lose the virgin birth? We lose Christianity. We lose Christ. We lose salvation. We lose our only hope of eternal life.

### **The virgin birth protects Jesus from original sin**

Why? For two main reasons. First, without the miraculous virgin birth Jesus would have been guilty of original sin. What is original sin? It is the sinful nature—both the guilt and corruption of sin—that is imputed to us from Adam. The WCF puts it like this: “[Adam] being the root of all mankind... conveyed to all [his] posterity,<sup>21</sup> [who] descended from [him] by ordinary generation<sup>22</sup>...the guilt of [his] sin...and [his] corrupted nature.”<sup>23</sup> That is why you don’t have to teach small children how to sin. God says in **Genesis 8:21** that “the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth.”<sup>24</sup> It is completely wrong to think that to be a sinner means that you do wrong things. That is only partially true—we do wrong things. But the deeper truth is that we are wrong things. We were born guilty. We were born under the condemnation of Adam’s guilt.

If Jesus was born like you or I, He would have also been born with original sin. But he wasn’t born like you or I—what the confession calls ordinary generation. He wasn’t born in an ordinary way. When the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary, He was conceived free of guilt, free of corruption. His human nature was completely untouched by the first Adam. That is why the Scripture calls Him the second Adam. **1 Corinthians 15:45** says “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam [Christ] became a life-giving spirit.” That’s the first reason Jesus had to be born through the miraculous virgin birth—because otherwise He would have been a sinner, and no sinner can be the Savior of the world.

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<sup>21</sup> or offspring

<sup>22</sup> or ordinary birth

<sup>23</sup> WCF 6.3

<sup>24</sup> also see Romans 5:12

## The virgin birth proves Jesus is truly God

The second reason why Jesus had to be born in this manner is because otherwise He could be not truly God. But look what the angel says to Joseph, starting in **v.21** “‘She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ (which means, God with us).” In other words, when Jesus was born, He didn’t begin to exist. The angel declared that Jesus was not *merely* human but *also* God Himself—truly man and truly God—two natures united in one Person forever.

This isn’t some neat fact of Christianity, but an absolute necessity. If Jesus wasn’t truly God, then He could have never revealed the Father to us. Jesus said in **Matthew 11:27** says “no one knows the Father *except the Son* and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”<sup>25</sup> Or **John 1:18** “No one has ever seen God; [but] the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”

If Jesus wasn’t truly God, then His entire life was a lie. This is what Jesus claimed everywhere in the New Testament.

He claimed to be the long awaited Messiah who fulfilled the law and the prophets (**Luke 24:44**).

He claimed to be with the Father before the world was created, and that He possessed all glory (**John 17:5**).<sup>26</sup>

“He claimed to have come into this world for the purpose to save the world from sin—which no merely human being can possibly do”<sup>27</sup> (**Luke 19:10**).

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<sup>25</sup> NIV

<sup>26</sup> A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 1999), pg. 169

<sup>27</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1: Apostolic Christianity, From the Birth of Christ to the Death of St. John A.D. 1-100*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 4th Printing 2011), pg. 108

He claimed to be the way the truth and the life and that no man could come to the Father except through Him (**John 14:6**).

“He invites all men to follow him, and promised peace and life eternal to every one that believes in Him” (**Matthew 11:28-29**).

When commissioning the disciples He claimed that all authority in heaven and on earth was His (**Matthew 28:18**).

And He claimed that He would come again on the clouds with great glory to judge the living and the dead (**Mark 14:62**)

Only the God-Man can make these claims.<sup>28</sup>

### **The precious gift of His birth**

Dear congregation, the fact that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, is not something to be embarrassed about. This is not a doctrine that we hide from the world, or from our sophisticated friends. It is a doctrine to live and die by. God became flesh for us. Immanuel “God with us!” For hundreds of years the people of God had to go to the tabernacle in the desert or the temple to meet with God. They would need a priest to mediate for them. But when Jesus Christ came into the world, He became the place that God meets with His people. His birth is the most precious of all gifts.

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<sup>28</sup> To add to all these reasons, we see the Larger Catechism add this splendid reason: Q. 38. Why was it requisite that the mediator should be God? A. It was requisite that the mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession; and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favor, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

### III. The Gift of Jesus' Name

#### He called His name Jesus

Please look with me at **v.24** “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

Now *Jesus* was a fairly common name at that time. It “...is a form of the Hebrew name Joshua...the basic meaning of which is ‘Jehovah (Yahweh) will save.’”<sup>29</sup> As one commentator notes “All other men who had [that] name testified by their name to Lord’s salvation. But *this* One who would be born to Mary...would Himself be that salvation.”<sup>30</sup> That’s what the angel said in **v.21** “...you shall call his name Jesus, for [because] *He will save* His people from their sins.”

#### What is the gospel?

Dear congregation, it’s in *the name* that Jesus was given at His birth that we have the most precious gift of all: the gospel. And there’s nothing more indispensable, nothing more vital than understanding what the gospel *is*.

Someone may say “I know what the gospel is. I am a sinner.”

“Well” I would say “What are you going to do about it?”

They say “I’m going to ask God to forgive me.”

I ask “Do you think that He will?”

“Yes,” they say, “I believe that God is a God of love, and that if I confess my sins, and ask Him to forgive me, He’ll forgive me.”

I say “Is that all?”

They say “Yes.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 1-7*, (Chicago, IL.: Moody Publishers, 1985), pg. 18

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> Martyn Lloyd-Jones from his message “Christmas: an Event in History.” Scripture: Titus 2:11-14



That's not the gospel. That is in fact a denial of the gospel. A Muslim or a Mormon or a Deist could pray those words and be far from salvation.

### How does Jesus save?

Well then, what is the gospel? What does Jesus' name *mean*? **v.21** *He will save* His people from their sins. Jesus will save. How? How will He do it? How does Jesus save us? *Not* by showing us *how* we should live. There are many today who look at the life of Christ and the teachings of Christ and can admire Him from a distance. They can utter the same things we hear in the gospels: "No one ever spoke like this man!" (**John 7:46**). No one ever lived like this man! That must be why Jesus came into the world—to show us *how* to live. He saves us, it is said, by showing us the type of life God requires. If you believe that then you are lost. You're under condemnation, because you have never lived up to His example.

Well then how does Jesus save? By becoming a curse. **Galatians 3:13** "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse *for us*." The reason Jesus was born was so that He would die *for us*. Jesus came into the world and assumed our legal responsibility before God and obeyed and suffered as our Substitute. The guilt for our sins were *imputed* to Him—that is, they were charged to His account.<sup>32</sup> **1 Peter 3:18** "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous *for* the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." The penalty for our sins must be paid in full, there must be a satisfaction rendered. That's why I said that that by merely confessing one's sins and asking for forgiveness is not enough. Mere words can not erase sin. Mere words cannot make you acceptable to God.

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<sup>32</sup> cf. A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 1999), pg. 406-408

## Does Jesus save all?

Well does Jesus do this for everyone? Look at His name again. **v.21** “... you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save *His people* from their sins.” Clearly Jesus does not do this for everyone. It is only *His people* that He will save from their sins. Who are His people? All those who come to Him. Jesus said “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and *whoever* comes to me I will never cast out” (**John 6:37**). What does it mean to come to Jesus? Properly speaking it’s not something that we do—that is, it’s not a work. **Ephesians 2:8** “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Grace on God’s part, faith on ours. And nothing else. No works on our part enter into the equation. Faith is not a work. It is falling helplessly into the arms of the Savior.”<sup>33</sup>

As Isaac Watts sings:

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,  
 Into Thy hands I fall;  
 Be Thou my strength and righteousness,  
 My Savior, and my all.

If you are here this morning, and you have not fallen helplessly into the arms of Christ, what’s stopping you? There is no other Savior. There’s not other God-Man, no other virgin birth, no other remedy for your sin. Don’t be afraid, only believe. If you come to Jesus, He has promised not to cast you out. Consider who we saw in His family line this morning. There is no one too wicked that Jesus will not save. But beware, there is no one good enough to be saved without Him.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas Taylor, *I Shall Not Die, But Live: Facing Death With Gospel Hope*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), pg. 66

<sup>34</sup> *ibid*

### How should we celebrate Christmas?

For the rest of us, dear believer, how should we celebrate Christmas? We were doing family devotions last night and the question came up: “What gift could you give to Jesus this Christmas that would make Him happy?”<sup>35</sup> Boys and girls, think about that. How can you honor Christ *most* this Christmas? Well think for a moment about that baby in the manger. How would that baby experience the love of His parents? By being held by them. If they were to scoop Him up out of that cradle and coo with Him and laugh with Him and delight over Him and talk with Him and embrace Him, that is the way that He would experience their love. That is how we honor Christ most this Christmas—by simply enjoying who He is—the God-Man, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the Great Serpent Bruiser. Oh what an astounding thing that on Christ’s birthday, it’s not we that give gifts to Him, it is He who has given the greatest gift to us: Himself. He is Immanuel—God with us.

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<sup>35</sup> Nancy Guthrie, *Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room*, (Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2010), pg. 60