

MATTHEW 1

THE GENEALOGY AND BIRTH OF JESUS

Thanks be to the name of the Lord for the blessed opportunity to immerse ourselves in the study of the portion of Scripture that comprises the New Testament! And what better subject could be presented to us here at the outset of this series of study, than a fourfold account of the earthly life and ministry of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ! Here we have four different Books that bear the names of the respective Evangelists who were inspired to commit them to paper; and together, they form a beautiful harmony of the history of Christ's life and ministry on earth. These inspired records contain everything that the Holy Spirit has thought proper to reveal to the Church concerning the Person, life, ministry, miracles, discourses, death, resurrection, ascension, and unchanging Priesthood of the Almighty Savior of the world. Truly, to know Him is life eternal!

These first four Books of the New Testament are called the Gospels, for the very simple reason that the Gospel of Jesus is their subject. The word *Gospel* means "glad tidings" or "good news," which is a very proper name for the message of hope and love that brings great joy to men, women, and children everywhere. Without a doubt, Christ and His salvation are the most wonderful tidings which were ever proclaimed to sinful, dying human beings! In fact, the Gospel is such a pleasant subject that one of the prophets declared that the very feet of those who were sent to preach it were beautiful (Isa. 52:7). Even angels themselves – as if they were eager to become the first heralds of such blissful tidings to a lost and fallen world – hastened to come down to the earth when the happy news broke out in heaven; and in a multitude together, they proclaimed the glorious message of redemption. "Glory to God in the highest," said they; "and on earth peace, good will toward men!" (Luke 2:10-14)

The Evangelist Matthew was commissioned by the Holy Spirit to be the inspired penman of the first Gospel that we find arranged in our Bibles. He opens his narrative with the genealogy of Jesus, through His reputed father Joseph. And then he carries on the history of Christ through the entirety of His continuance upon earth, particularly during His 3½-year-long ministry.

As we study the four Gospels, we will learn that although they all record the details of the life and ministry of Jesus, yet each of them was written with an emphasis on one key characteristic of the Savior. For example, Matthew's writings lay heavy emphasis on depicting Christ as the Jews' long-awaited Messiah. His targeted readership was primarily his own Jewish countrymen; and hence he quotes very often – in fact, 60 times! – from the Old Testament, which his intended readers would be very familiar with.

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The lineage of the Messiah from Abraham in 42 generations – verses 1-17
- ❖ An account of His birth, which shows that He was born of a virgin – verses 18-25

Before we enter upon our study of Matthew's Gospel, let us bow our knees in prayer, asking that the same gracious Lord Who called Matthew away from the tax-tables may, by the ministry of his writings, call many more souls from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to the living Savior. And if the Lord is pleased to use these simple pages to pour out the blessing of His Holy Spirit upon us as we study these delightful chapters, then may we be enabled to invite the Lord Jesus to our homes and hearts, as this Evangelist did. O that many publicans and sinners would sit down at the holy feast with Jesus and His disciples, so that very many may become partakers of this glorious Gospel of the ever-blessed God!

Matthew opens his Gospel with a written record of the genealogy of our Savior (verses 1-17). Let us observe the chief intention of this record, for it is not a needless genealogy; nor is it a vain-glorious one, as those of great persons often are. It proves that our Lord Jesus was truly from the nation and family out of which the Messiah had been promised to arise. The promise of blessing was made with Abraham and his descendants, and the promise of kingship was made with David and his children. It was promised to Abraham that Christ – the One Who would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth – would descend from his son (Gen. 12:3; 22:18). And to David also, the Lord said that the Kingly Messiah would be one of his own offspring (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89:3; 132:11). Therefore, if Jesus had *not* been the son of David and the son of Abraham, He would *not* have been the Messiah. That is why the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to set forth the proof of this fact in these faithful records. When the Son of God was pleased to take our human nature upon Himself, He came near to us in our fallen and wretched condition; nevertheless, He was perfectly free from sin. And while we read the names in His genealogy, we should not forget how low the Lord of glory stooped to save our human race!

When our blessed Lord submitted Himself to be born from an earthly parentage, He did not disdain to have even the chief of sinners reckoned among His ancestors. Not only was He the son of David and the son of Abraham (who, notwithstanding their faith and devotion to the Lord, were not without stains on their life's record); but He was also the son of the harlots Tamar and Rahab, and the son of the foreigner Ruth, and the son of the adulteress Bathsheba. Yes, He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), and He was connected with a long line of parents who were subject to every human infirmity. And yet, by the marvelous manner of His conception, He was born without any spot of sin! By the indwelling of "all the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9), He was incapable of sinning. He freely came down from heaven and took upon Himself the form of human flesh, so that we sinners might be made the sons and daughters of grace, and inheritors of everlasting life!

Let us now turn our attention to the latter portion of this chapter (verses 18-25), which describes the holy birth of our blessed Lord Jesus. He was born

so that we might enjoy a new birth – a birth that is not like our natural birth, in sin and sorrow; but a birth that is like His own, which was pure and without spot. He dwelt among us on earth, so that we might dwell with Him in heaven.

These verses begin by teaching us two great truths. They tell us how the Lord Jesus took our human nature upon Him, and became Man. They also tell us that His birth was miraculous, for His mother Mary was a virgin. These are very mysterious subjects indeed! There is no way for us to sound the bottom of these fathomless depths. We will not attempt to explain things which are above our feeble reason; but we will be content to reverently believe the faithful and inspired record, and not speculate about matters which we cannot understand. It is enough for us to know that with Him Who created the world, nothing is impossible.

What are the two names which are given to our Lord in these verses? One is JESUS, and the other is EMMANUEL. One describes His office, and the other His nature; but both are deeply interesting. The name *Jesus* means “Savior,” and it is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua* in the Old Testament. This name was given to our Lord because “he



saves his people from their sins.” This is His special office. He saves His children from the guilt of sin by washing them in His own atoning blood. He saves them from the dominion of sin by putting the sanctifying Spirit in their hearts. He saves them from the presence of sin when He takes them out of this world to rest with Him. And He will save them from all the consequences of sin when He shall give them a glorious body on the Great Last Day. Blessed and holy are Christ’s people! From sorrow, the cross, and conflict, they are not saved. But they *are* saved from sin for evermore! They are cleansed from guilt by Christ’s blood, and they are made fit for heaven by the Holy Spirit. This is salvation indeed!

Jesus is a very encouraging name to weary and heavy-laden sinners. He Who is King of kings and Lord of lords might lawfully have taken some more high-sounding title, but He did not do so. The rulers of this world have often called themselves Great, Conquerors, Bold, Magnificent, and such like; but the Son of God is content to call Himself *Savior*. Each and every soul which desires salvation may draw near to the Father with boldness, for we have access to Him with confidence through Christ. It is His office and His delight to show mercy. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved” (John 3:17).

Jesus is a name which is peculiarly sweet and precious to believers. It has often done them good when the favor of kings and princes would have been heard by them with unconcern. It has given them what money cannot buy – namely, inward peace. It has eased their wearied consciences and given rest to their heavy hearts. Happy is that person who does not trust merely in vague notions of God’s mercy and goodness, but in *Jesus Himself!*

But the other name in these verses is no less wonderful than that which we have just referred to! It is the name which is given to our Lord from His nature, as “God manifest in the flesh.” He is called *Emmanuel*, which means, “God with us.” Let us take care that we have clear views of our Lord Jesus Christ’s nature and Person! It is a point of the deepest importance. We should settle it firmly in our minds that our Savior is perfect Man as well as perfect God, and perfect God as well as perfect Man. The minute that we lose sight of this great foundational truth, we risk the danger of running into fearful heresies. The name *Emmanuel* encompasses the whole mystery: Jesus is “God with us.” He had a nature like our own in all things – the only exception being that He had no sin. We shall repeatedly find, as we read through the Gospels, that our Savior was often weary, hungry, and thirsty; He wept, groaned, and suffered pain – just like us. In all of this, we see “the Man Christ Jesus.” We see the nature which He voluntarily took upon Himself when He was born of the Virgin Mary.

Nevertheless, at the same time that Jesus was “with us” in human flesh and blood, He was also God. We shall also find, in the same Gospels, that our Savior was capable of things that no mere man could do. He knew people’s hearts and thoughts; He had power over devils; He could work the mightiest of miracles with a simple word; He was ministered to by angels; He allowed a disciple to call Him “my God”; and He said, “Before Abraham was I am,” and, “I and my Father are one.” In all of these things, we see “the eternal God.”

Do you desire to have a strong foundation for your faith and hope? Then keep in constant view your Savior’s Divinity. The One in Whose blood you trust in – He is the Almighty God, and nothing can pluck you out of His hand. If you are a true believer in Jesus, do not let your heart be troubled or afraid! But do you also desire to have sweet comfort in suffering and trials? Then keep in constant view your Savior’s humanity. He is “the Man Christ Jesus,” Who lay upon the bosom of the Virgin Mary as a little infant; and being a human being Himself, He knows the depths of the human heart. He can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Why? Because He Himself has experienced Satan’s temptations. He has endured hunger. He has shed tears. He has felt pain. Trust Him at all times with all your sorrows! Pour out all your heart before Him in prayer, and keep nothing back; for He can surely sympathize with You.

O Lord God! We rejoice that “unto us a child is born: unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and he shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor; the Mighty God; the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace!” Amen!