

Title: “You shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins”

Gospel of Matthew 1:18-25 (NASB)

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. <sup>20</sup> But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup> Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled: <sup>23</sup> “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.” <sup>24</sup> And Joseph arose from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took *her* as his wife, <sup>25</sup> and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

Gospel of Luke 2:8-11 (NASB)

And in the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; <sup>11</sup> for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Good morning, everyone. Merry Christmas! We have come to the end of the Advent season, with the fourth candle of our wreath lit this morning. Tonight, we will light the middle candle, the Christ candle, and celebrate birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

A moment ago in the Scripture reading, we heard the story of the birth of Christ, and we read about the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him this: Matthew 1, verse 21 (NASB) – “And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins.”

I have taken the title of my sermon today from this verse, though I have shortened the verse a little bit. The title is: “You shall name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

This name, “Jesus,” means “Jehovah saves” or “Yahweh saves.” As you recall, “Yahweh” is the name of God in the Old Testament (from the letters YHWH), and in English we often render this name “Jehovah.” The name “Jesus” means “Jehovah saves,” and it tells us the primary mission for which He came to earth: to bring the Lord’s salvation to His people.

Let’s look at what the angel said to the shepherds in the field, in Luke 2:10-11 (NASB) – “And the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; <sup>11</sup> for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

A great joy for all the people. A Savior has been born: Christ the Lord.

In today's message, I would like to cover these four points:

1. The background: the genealogy of Christ.
2. The Incarnation: God become man.
3. The mission: to save His people from their sins.
4. The birth in Bethlehem.

Part 1. The background: the genealogy of Christ.

Many of you have heard this before: the Gospel of Matthew is the most Jewish of the four gospels. Matthew is very keen to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, as the one who has fulfilled the various prophecies of the coming Messiah. He begins his gospel with a genealogy. Genealogies were important to the Jews, and it is especially important here, where Matthew is keen to show Jesus as being descended from Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, and descended from King David. In accordance with prophetic promises, the Jews were expecting a messianic king who is descended from the line of David.

Let's read the opening lines of this gospel. Matthew 1:1-6 – “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham: <sup>2</sup>To Abraham was born Isaac; and to Isaac was born Jacob; and to Jacob was born Judah and his brothers; <sup>3</sup>and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar; to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron, Ram; <sup>4</sup>and to Ram was born Amminadab; and to Amminadab, Nahshon; and Nahshon, Salmon; <sup>5</sup>and to Salmon was born Boaz by Rahab; and to Boaz was born Obed by Ruth; and to Obed, Jesse; <sup>6</sup>and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her *who had been the wife* of Uriah; <sup>7</sup>and to Solomon was born ...”

Well, I don't want to read the entire genealogy – all those names might be a bit boring to read. But you see here in the first part of this genealogy some familiar names: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons and it was from Judah that King David is descended. You see some other familiar names here. It is interesting that some women are named here. Usually, genealogies concern themselves just with the men and the sons that they fathered, though once in a while, a woman might be named in a genealogy. This one names four women. Most of these women, or maybe all of them, are not Jews. Three of these women are of morally dubious reputation – Tamar, Rahab, and the wife of Uriah – that was Bathsheba. This shows us that God is often gracious, despite our flaws and sins. It also shows that there are Gentiles in the lineage of the Messiah. As I told you last week: God loves the Gentiles, too.

At the conclusion of this genealogy, we read this: Matthew 1:15-17 – “and to Eliud was born Eleazar; and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; <sup>16</sup>and to Jacob was born Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. <sup>17</sup>Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to *the time of* Christ, fourteen generations.”

When I was seven years old, I received my first Bible. And one of the things I did shortly after that was to open the Bible to the very beginning of the New Testament. I read these words for the first time. And I thought it was so cool that the lineage from Abraham to Jesus could be divided

into three sections, each fourteen generations long. Fourteen: that's the number seven, doubled. Many years later, I learned that the number fourteen was a special number to some Jewish writers at this period of time.

Recently I learned something rather interesting about Matthew's usage of the number fourteen which I would like to share with you. The Jews at this period of time practiced a method called *gematria*, where Hebrew letters were assigned a numerical value and then special meaning was highlighted when you add up the numerical value of the letters of a word. Something interesting is highlighted when you look at the letters of the name of King David. The consonants in the name *David* in Hebrew (דָּוִד) add up to fourteen. The first and last letter in the name *David* is called *dalit* (ד) and it is the fourth letter in the Hebrew alphabet and has the numerical value of 4. The middle letter is called *vav* (or *waw*) (ו) which is the sixth letter of the alphabet and has the value 6. That's  $4 + 6 + 4 = 14$ . It seems that Matthew is stressing the connection with David when he stresses his outline of three sets of fourteen generations. This is something his Jewish audience would have noticed when they read this genealogy.

Well, I thought this was quite an interesting piece of information, so I shared it with you today. Matthew is stressing that fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies that a descendant of David would rule as king over the nation.

Let's move on to Part 2. The Incarnation: God become man.

Let's read Matthew 1:18 – “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.”

She was found to be with child *by the Holy Spirit*. This is a miraculous conception. She was not made pregnant by a man – not by Joseph or any other man. She was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Matthew's audience probably already knows this story, so he doesn't give any more details of how this happened. But Luke does.

Let's read Luke 1:26–38 (NASB95) – Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” <sup>29</sup>But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this was. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; <sup>33</sup>and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.” <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” <sup>35</sup>The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup>And Mary said, “Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.”

It has been said that Mary is the first person ever to accept Jesus – the first person to accept Jesus ... because she humbly accepted God’s will that she bear this son. He is to be named Jesus and He will reign on the throne of His father David. Verse 35 says that she will conceive when the Holy Spirit comes upon her, as Matthew 1:18 said.

This is a miraculous birth. It is important that this be a virgin birth. Jesus will take on human flesh through this birth and be born as a man. But He will be without the sin nature that all other human beings are born with. This is what we call the Incarnation of the Son of God.

If you remember, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned by eating of the fruit that was forbidden to them. God warned Adam that he would die if he broke this one rule, but that is what he did, and death came as a result.

Let’s read Romans 5:12 (NASB95) – “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

Sin and death spread to all mankind because of Adam’s sin. But God has a solution to this problem. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for this sin by His death on the cross. Jesus was born fully human, but without the sin nature, so that He could accomplish our salvation.

Romans 5:17 (NASB95) – “For if by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”

For those who receive the grace of God and put their faith in Christ, they will receive the gift of righteousness and eternal life.

This leads us to Part 3. The mission: to save His people from their sins.

This is the reason He came to earth. 1<sup>st</sup> John 3:5 (NASB95) – “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.”

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:18 (NIV) – “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.”  
Christ, the righteous one, died for the sins of us, the unrighteous ones.

Romans 5:8–9 (NASB95) – “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

Under the Old Testament system, animals were sacrificed to make an atonement for sins. These animals had to have no physical blemish. But this system was temporary, and the New Testament speaks of this system as having no long-term effect in removing our sins. An absolutely perfect sacrifice is needed for that.

Commenting on the Old Testament system, the Epistle to the Hebrews 10:3-4 (NASB95) says this – “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. <sup>4</sup>For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”

Jesus is that perfect sacrifice that is needed to take away our sins. Hebrews 10:10-12 (NASB95) – “By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. <sup>11</sup>Every priest [in the Old Testament] stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; <sup>12</sup>but He [Christ], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.”

Verse 14 – “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”

This is the sacrifice of atonement that brings us reconciliation with God. And it is the restoration of our relationship with our creator that is the purpose for which Christ came into the world.

2 Corinthians 5:17–21 (NASB95) – “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup>Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

We are new creations when we put our faith in Christ. We become reconciled to God. And we Christians, you and me, have now been given the ministry of reconciliation, to bring this message to the ends of the earth to tell people the good news of how to be restored to a right relationship with our creator. Verse 20 says we are ambassadors. We are ambassadors of Christ to this world. To bring the ministry of reconciliation. To be reconciled to God – the vertical relationship – and to be reconciled with each other – the horizontal relationship.

Part 4 – The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Luke 2:4–14 (NASB95) – “Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, <sup>5</sup>in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup>In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; <sup>11</sup>for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased”.”

For verse 14, the wording in the King James Version is more familiar to me: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

On earth peace, good will toward everyone.

These words remind me of what I read a few minutes ago about the ministry of reconciliation in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. This is the purpose that Jesus came into the world: to bring reconciliation between man and God. We are ambassadors for Christ, with a message of reconciliation to this world.

On earth peace, good will toward everyone.

Merry Christmas to you all. God bless you.