

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 December 2022. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Thou Shalt Call His Name JESUS

Matthew 1:13-21

Of all the seasons of the year, Christmas is my favourite. I love to celebrate Christmas; and I love it for the *right* reason. Though I do enjoy the frosty, snowy landscapes, and the beautiful lights, and the family get-togethers, and the festive postcards, and the treasured memories with family and friends, and the joy of giving gifts to others, these things are not the real reason why I love Christmas. If I were languishing away on a hospital bed, or in a prison cell, with no one else in the world to talk to except the Lord, I would still sing and rejoice at Christmas time. Why? For two reasons. First, I would rejoice in the fact that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, the King of Israel, and the Saviour of the world, became part of our race, and was born as a Man. Secondly, I would rejoice in the fact that this Jesus who came down to dwell among us is my *personal* Saviour—that there was a day in my life when He saved me from my sin, and moved into *my* heart, to be the King of *my* life. Were it not for these two realities, Christmas celebrations would be a mere empty shell, and a mockery. Christmas is about the fact that Jesus came into our world, so that He could pay for our sins, and give us His gift of salvation, and come to live inside our hearts. By the way, while I do believe that there is good scriptural evidence that Jesus *was* born sometime within the month of December, what is important is not *when* Christ was born, but *why* He was born. The reason Christ was born was that He might fulfil the **Gospel**.

This morning, we will be examining the birth of Jesus Christ; and as we do so, we will see that the **Gospel message** was declared by God from the time of Jesus' conception. Many people have heard the word "Gospel"; but few people know what the Gospel is. Perhaps *you* don't really understand what "the Gospel" is: or perhaps you know it in your *head*, but not in your heart. If you don't know what the Gospel is—or if you do not know its saving power—it is my prayer that you will place your faith in the Gospel this morning. If you have already placed your faith in the Gospel, it is my prayer that you will get an even deeper understanding of the Gospel this morning, and that you will be drawn closer to your Saviour. The title of this message is *Thou Shalt Call His Name JESUS*.

Read Matthew 1:1-17.

I. Matthew's declaration of Jesus' kingship (vv. 13-17)

For the past two months, we have been examining the genealogy of the Lord Jesus, as recorded here in **Matthew 1**. We have taken a detailed look at most of the men (and even some of the women) in the lineage of Jesus, beginning with Abraham, and spanning 2,000 years to Joseph, the stepfather of Jesus. Matthew's purpose in giving us this genealogy is to show His Jewish readers that Jesus of Nazareth is, indeed, the Son of David, the King of Israel, and the Messiah. If Jesus be the Messiah, and the King of Israel, then His stepfather, Joseph, must be a descendant of many key people, including Abraham, Judah, Boaz, Jesse, David, Solomon, all the kings of Judah down to Jeconiah, and Salathiel, and Zerubbabel. If

Jesus be the Messiah, then He must meet *all* these scriptural requirements, and must fulfil all the prophecies that were made concerning Him; and He does exactly that!

Back in the 1800's, a Jewish convert to Christianity named **Alfred Edersheim** wrote an extensive work called *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*; and by his count, there are **456** verses in the Old Testament that point to, describe, or reference the Person and work of the coming Messiah. Another Bible teacher named **J. Alfred Payne** found **574** verses that point to the Messiah (with all types and prophetic pictures included); and every one of these verses points to Jesus.¹ During His earthly ministry, Jesus fulfilled at least **300 messianic prophecies** (and this does not even include the hundreds *more* prophecies that He will fulfil when He *returns* to earth one day to set up His Kingdom)! What we see laid out here in **Matthew 1** is only the “tip of the iceberg.” As we continue to study this book, we will learn about many more messianic requirements that Jesus fulfilled.

Now, we are not going to spend much more time on the lineage of Christ, because we have already covered it in detail. We have examined the covenant that God made with **Abraham**; and we have seen how Abraham's promised Seed, Jesus of Nazareth, has brought the blessing of salvation to all families of the earth. We have examined the covenant that God made with **King David**; and we have seen how Jesus is the promised King who was to spring from David's lineage. We have seen how Jesus is the *royal* Son of David through the genealogy of Joseph; yet, at the same time, He is the *blood* descendant of David through His mother Mary. With all this in mind, we now come to **verse 14**, where Matthew wraps up Jesus' genealogy. Let's read that verse again. (**Read verse 14 again.**)

As you know (if you have been listening to these messages), Matthew did not include *every* ancestor of Jesus in this genealogy. The names of Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, and Jehoiakim are left out of the genealogy. Also, the name of David is repeated twice—once at the end of the *first* grouping of 14 names, and once at the beginning of the *second* grouping of 14 names. This was not a mistake or an oversight on Matthew's part: rather, he was making a point. Matthew's Jewish brethren would have known that in Hebrew, the numeric value of the name “David” is 14. (The letter *dalet* is 4, the letter *vav* is 6, and the letter *dalet* is 4.) *That* is the point Matthew is making. By emphasising this number “14,” Matthew is declaring to his Jewish brethren, “Jesus is the Son of David. He is the King of Israel. He is *your* Messiah!”

My friends, if Jesus truly be the Son of David, then He is the One with whom we have to do. It's all about Him! If Jesus be the Son of David, then we *must* seek to understand *who He is*, and *why He came here*. Obviously, Jesus didn't set up an earthly Kingdom while He was here; and it is for this very reason that most Jewish people still reject Him as their Messiah. What they fail to see is that the Messiah was to come *twice*. When Christ returns to earth one day, He will restore the Kingdom; but before He could do this, He first had to save His people from their sins. That is why He came the *first* time! And this brings us to our second point. We've seen Matthew's declaration of Jesus' Kingship: now, we will take a look at...

II. The angel's declaration of the Gospel (vv. 18-25)

Read Matthew 1:18-21.

¹ “How Many Prophecies Did Jesus Fulfil?” <https://www.gotquestions.org/prophecies-of-Jesus.html>.

Matthew has gone to great lengths to show us that Jesus is the Son of David, through the lineage of His stepfather, Joseph. Now, he is showing us that Jesus is the *Saviour*. He didn't come to save Israel from her *earthly* enemies; He came to save His people *from their sins*. Yet, in order to save us from our sins, Jesus could not be any ordinary man. He Himself couldn't be a sinner; otherwise, He couldn't have saved anyone. That is why it was necessary that Jesus have a unique birth. In a moment, we will return to this **Matthew** passage; but first, let's take a look at the announcement that God gave to *Mary* concerning the birth of Jesus.

Read Luke 1:26-38.

In these verses, the angel Gabriel gave the first Gospel message to a young woman named Mary. He announced that God had chosen her to give birth to Son of God; and His name was to be called "Jesus." In Hebrew, Jesus' name is pronounced *Yeshua*; and it literally means "Jehovah saves." Jesus *is* Jehovah God; and He came to earth to save us from our sins!

Now, the Gospel message that Gabriel gave to Mary wasn't extremely detailed. Gabriel didn't tell Mary that this miraculous Child would one day die on the cross, be buried, and rise again. However, Gabriel *did* tell Mary that this Child would be the Saviour. He said something else that is an extremely important part of the Gospel message, as well. He informed Mary that *she* would give birth to this child, even though she was a *virgin*.

Mary was stunned when she heard this news. *She* was to have a baby? How? She was *betrothed* to Joseph; but she had never had a physical relationship with him. During the period of betrothal, a man and woman were *legally* married (on paper); but the man had not yet "taken the woman" into his house. This is why Mary asked, "***How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?***" This was the Hebrew way of saying, "How can this be, when I've never had a physical relationship with a man?" At this point in her life, Mary had not had intimate union with Joseph (or with any other man). She was morally chaste. She was a virgin. The word that is used here is the Greek word *parthenos*, which can *only* mean "virgin." It doesn't mean merely "maiden" or "young woman": it specifically means "virgin."

We live in a world in which the miraculous, virgin birth of Jesus is mocked and scorned, and held in contempt. Most people consider the virgin birth of Christ to be an outdated story, which modern man is too advanced to accept. Cults such as the Mormons pervert the story of Jesus' birth into a gross story of incest, in which God (who, they say, is really a glorified man) had a sexual relationship with His own "spirit child," Mary. As for the realm of "Christendom," most professing Christian religions have long since abandoned the belief that Jesus was born of a virgin. Some "Christian" religions still officially have the doctrine of the virgin birth on paper; but in practice, they ignore it, or deny it. However, regardless of whether man chooses to believe this doctrine or not, our eternal destiny depends upon it. There would be *no Gospel*—no "good news" of salvation—if Christ had not been born of a virgin. Jesus would *not be the Son of God* if He had not been born of a virgin. He would *not be the Saviour* if He had not been born of a virgin. If Jesus had had a human father, He would *not* have been the sinless God-Man; and He would not have been qualified to die in our place, as our Sin-bearer. If Jesus had had a human father, He would have been a sinner, just like everyone else, because He would have inherited a sin nature from his human father.

The Bible clearly teaches that the sin nature is passed down through the seed of the father. It all started with our father Adam. **Romans 5:12** says, “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*” That phrase “*all men*” includes even Mary, the human mother of Jesus. Mary was a sinner, just as her father Adam was; and she acknowledged that fact. In **Luke 1:46-47**, when Mary was rejoicing that God had given her the privilege of bearing the Son of God in her womb, she said, “*My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*” Mary acknowledged that Jesus was *her* Saviour. This means that she acknowledged that she was a *sinner*. Only sinners need to be saved from their sin!

This raises a question, though: “Why did Jesus not receive a sin nature from *Mary*?” The answer is simple: **sin is passed down through the man, not the woman.** Jesus was a true descendant of Adam because He received *genetic material* from Mary, who was a descendant of Adam; yet, the *male seed* that contributed to Jesus’ humanity was not provided by any human father. God miraculously created that sinless seed, and placed it in Mary’s womb. Jesus is *not* the biological son of Joseph; He is the Son of God. This means that He is the eternal God, in human flesh. He is the Son of God, *and* the Son of Man. He is 100% God, yet 100% Man. If He were simply a man, we would have no hope of salvation, because He would have been a sinner. A sinner cannot take the punishment for another sinner’s sin. Only a *sinless man* could take the punishment for our sin; and only the *God-Man* has the prerogative to pay our fine for us. Because Jesus is both God and Man, He is uniquely qualified to be the *Mediator* between God and man. As God, Jesus is the Lawgiver; and as the Lawgiver, He had the prerogative to come into our race, become one of us, and pay the price for sin *which His own law demanded!* As Man, Jesus was uniquely qualified to die in our place, to rise again, and to be our Advocate before God the Father. As both God *and* Man, He is the only one who is able to be the “go-between” between us and God the Father. The Bible says, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

With all this in mind, let’s return to **Matthew 1**, and examine the Gospel message that God gave to Joseph. This message was given to Joseph by an angel, while Mary was pregnant.

Read Matthew 1:16-25.

There are a couple important things in this passage that I wish to point out. First, look at **verse 16**. (**Read verse 16.**) Did you notice how careful Matthew was with his wording? Up to this point in the genealogy, Matthew had said, “so-and-so begat so-and-so.” Each man in the genealogy had begat a son, who begat a son, and so on. But then, in **verse 16**, the “so-and-so begat so-and-so” statements stop. We are now told that Jacob begat Joseph, who was “*the husband of Mary.*” We are not told that Joseph *begat* Jesus: we are told that Joseph was the “*husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.*” In the Greek language, the pronoun “whom” is very specific. Matthew doesn’t use the word *hū* (which is masculine): he uses the word *hes* (which is feminine). Simply put, the word “whom” refers not to Joseph, but to *Mary*. Matthew is going out of his way to let us know that Jesus was *not* the biological son of Joseph. He was the son of *Mary*; and Mary was a virgin.

Throughout this passage, Matthew repeatedly emphasises that Mary was a virgin. Look again at **verse 18 and 19**. (**Read verses 18 and 19.**) Did you notice that the angel of the Lord said, “*fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife”?* Why did the angel say, “*fear not to take unto*

thee Mary thy wife,” when Mary was already his wife? Because Mary was Joseph’s wife *legally* (on paper); but he had not yet “taken” her into his home. In other words, they had not had intimate relations. That is why, when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, he assumed that Mary had done something wrong. He knew that the baby wasn’t his; thus, he was thinking of quietly putting her away (divorcing her). According to Old Testament law, divorce was permitted *only* during the period of betrothal, when a couple was still not united physically; and it could be done simply by giving a certificate of divorce to the person privately, in the presence of two witnesses. This is what Joseph was minded to do.

But then, the angel of the LORD appeared to Joseph in a dream, and told him that something unique had happened. A one-time-in-history miracle had occurred: a virgin had conceived! The angel told Joseph that the *Holy Ghost* had caused this miracle to occur in Mary’s womb. After this, Joseph was not afraid. He believed the angel’s word, and took Mary for his wife.

Now, make no mistake about it: Mary and Joseph *did* have children together. In **Mathew 13**, the Bible tells us the names of Jesus’ four half-brothers. Their names were **James, Joses, Simon, and Judah**. Jesus had sisters, as well. Obviously, Mary did *not* remain a virgin for the rest of her life (contrary to what the Catholic Church says). The Bible clearly teaches us that Mary and Joseph had intimate relations *after* Jesus was born. **(Read verse 25 again.)**

Mary and Joseph *did* have children; but not until after Jesus was born. Until then, Mary remained a virgin. This miracle of the virgin birth of Christ was foretold 700 years before Christ’s birth, by the prophet Isaiah. Matthew mentions this fact in **verses 22 and 23**. **(Read verses 22 and 23 again.)** Let’s go back to Isaiah and read the verse that Matthew is quoting.

Read Isaiah 7:13-14.

Jesus was born of a virgin so that He could be the sinless Saviour of mankind. This is the piece of the Gospel message that the angel of the LORD delivered to both Joseph and Mary. The angel instructed them to call His name “Jesus” (which means “Jehovah is Saviour”) because *“he shall save his people from their sins.”* Without the message that *God became flesh*, there would be no Gospel. In **1 Timothy 3:16** Paul wrote, *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit* (raised back to life by the power of the Holy Spirit), *seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”* Because *God* was manifest in human flesh, He was able to die for our sins and rise again, thus conquering sin and death.

We’ve seen how the first pieces of the Gospel message were given to Mary and Joseph before Jesus was born. It was declared to them that this holy Child was to be born of a virgin. It was declared that He would save His people from their sins. These are all vital pieces of the Gospel message. Yet, what is the *complete* Gospel message? To answer that question, let’s fast-forward 30 years, to the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry.

III. Christ’s declaration of the Gospel

Read Luke 4:16-21.

In this passage, we find Christ reading from the Scriptures in the synagogue of His hometown, Nazareth. As the guest of honour, Jesus had the choice of what Scripture to read; and so, He chose to read from **Isaiah 61:1-2**. Why did He choose this passage? Because **Isaiah 61:1-2** is a prophecy of the Messiah. Let's take a look at that Scripture.

Read Isaiah 61:1-2.

Undoubtedly, everyone in the synagogue was familiar with this passage of Scripture. They had heard it before; and they knew that it was a prophecy of the Messiah. That's why they were shocked when Jesus closed the book and said, ***"This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."*** Jesus was claiming that *He* was the Messiah! He was saying, "I am the one who gave these words to Isaiah 700 years ago. I am the one who spoke those words about myself, through the pen of Isaiah. I am here to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." By the way, the Hebrew word for "acceptable" literally means "grace." It was the season of *grace*. God had sent His Son so that He might provide the gracious gift of salvation for sinners.

Now, you'll notice that there was a certain word that was used in **Luke 4:18**. It was the word "Gospel." Jesus said that He had come to preach the "Gospel" to the poor. What does "Gospel" mean? It means "good tidings," or "good news." What, then, *is* the "good news"? Well, whatever the "good news" is, it is something that *sets people free*. It is something that delivers captives, and opens prison doors to those who are bound. Whatever the "good news" is, it is something that heals and binds up those who are broken-hearted. Christ was not talking about being freed from a literal prison: He was talking about being freed from the prison house of *sin*. He was talking about being *saved*. Jesus had come into the world to save sinners from their sin.

Again and again throughout His ministry, Jesus proclaimed that He had come into the world to save sinners. Jesus said that ***"the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."*** That is good news! Yet, that is only *part* of the good news. Jesus came to save sinners: but *how* would He save them? That is a part of the Gospel that we absolutely must know! Jesus made it very clear how He would save us from our sins.

Read Matthew 16:21.

This is the Gospel message, my friends! The Gospel is the message that Christ provided salvation for us by dying for our sins in our place, and by rising again from the grave. From the very beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus proclaimed this message. He repeatedly claimed that He was soon going to be put to death by crucifixion, be buried, and rise again three days later. He also made it clear that He would do this in order to provide forgiveness of sins for us. In **Matthew 20:28**, Jesus told His disciples that He had come ***"not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."*** On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples that He was about to shed His blood for many, ***"for the remission of sins"*** (**Matthew 26:28**). *This* is the Gospel message that Jesus proclaimed.

For three years, Jesus preached the Gospel; and many people believed on Him, and were saved. Now, at this point, His followers didn't really understand *what Jesus was going to have to do* in order to make their salvation possible. They couldn't grasp the fact that He was going to die for their sins, and rise again. Even Christ's twelve disciples couldn't understand

that He had to die. However, *after* Christ arose from the grave, they understood the Gospel perfectly. Years later, the Apostle Paul defined the “good news” in clear, precise words.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

What Paul was saying here was not his own idea, or his own theology. As Paul said there in **verse 1**, this truth was not his own: he had “*received*” it. From whom had he received it? He had received it from *Christ Himself*. *Christ Himself* appeared to Paul on several occasions, and taught Paul the Gospel message—the message that by His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection from the grave, we are saved from sin, death, and hell. This is the Gospel message, my friends! Salvation is a free gift which has been provided by Jesus Christ through His death, burial, and bodily resurrection. This is the true message of Christmas!

IV. Your decision concerning the Gospel

We’ve seen what the Gospel is. However, there is one more thing that each of us must realise: **the gospel must be *received***. You and I have a responsibility to *believe* the Gospel. Jesus Himself solemnly warned us that we *must* believe the Gospel if we would escape the penalty of sin (which is separation from God in hell), and spend eternity with God in Heaven.

Read Mark 1:14-15.

Jesus said that in order to enter into the Kingdom of heaven, you must do two things. (And you cannot have one without the other.) First, you must **repent**. To “repent” does not mean to clean up your life, or to “reform” yourself in order to earn salvation. To “repent” means to turn in your heart, mind, and will to Jesus Christ, *from sin*. It means to confess your sin, to turn from it in your heart, and to ask Christ to take away your sin, and be your Lord.

Secondly, you must **believe** on Jesus Christ. To “believe” doesn’t simply mean to believe in your *head* that Jesus is the Son of God: it means to believe with your *heart*. It means to stop trusting in whatever you were trusting before (such as your own good works and religiosity), and to believe, with all your heart, that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection is all you need.

Despite *knowing* these truths, some of you here today have never truly repented and believed on Christ; and probably the reason why you have not done so is that you are not willing to humble yourself. Jesus said that He came to preach the Gospel to the “poor.” He wasn’t talking about those who are *materially* poor, because there are many people in Heaven who were *materially wealthy* on earth; and likewise, there are many people in hell who were *materially poor* on earth. Salvation isn’t for a certain economic class of people: it is for those who are willing to become “poor in spirit.” It is for those who are willing to humble themselves before Jesus, and admit that they need Him. If you have never humbled yourself before God, and placed your complete trust in what *Jesus* did for *you*, I urge you to do so!

Conclusion: This message has been directed mostly to those who are not saved; but it is also for those of you who *are* saved. You’ve placed your faith in the Gospel already; but what this means is that your life does not belong to you any longer. Christ saved you not simply that you might go to Heaven, but that you might be saved **from the power of sin**. The Gospel results in a radical *change of heart, mind, and will* in those who receive it. Christ “*died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*” Christian, if you are living parts of

your life for yourself instead of for Christ, then I urge you to ask the Lord for forgiveness and cleansing, so that He can have full control of your life, as He ought to have.

If you do not know Christ as Saviour, I urge you to be saved today. It's so simple. Just look to Jesus in faith. Look, in simple faith, to the One who died for you, and rose again, and run to Him. Repent of your sin, and trust Him alone, and He will save you! Then you will be able to understand and celebrate the *real* meaning of Christmas. You will enter into a new life, in which Christ will rule as King in your heart.