



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 7:10-16

"The Life of Christ: The Virgin Birth"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] You'll remember in the context of the Book of Isaiah at this point, Ahaz, the king of Judah, is very much disturbed over a confederacy between the king of Israel and the king of Syria. Rezin and Pekah are determined to advance against Judah and the heart of Ahaz is trembling like the leaves on a tree in a wind. And so now God, through the prophet Isaiah, desires to strengthen and encourage the king. And we read in the 10th verse,

"Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 'Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above'. But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD'. And he said, 'Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings'. (Now will you turn just a page to the 9th chapter and we shall read verses 6 and 7) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his

name shall be called 'Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace'. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." (Now will you turn just a page to the 11th chapter and I wish to read two verses of this chapter. The first verse and then in a moment the 10th) And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (This is, of course, is a reference to the first coming of our Lord Jesus, the stem, the rod that comes out of the stem of Jesse. This is a reference to David's son. Now in the 10th verse) And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek (or to him): and his rest shall be glorious. (This, of course, is a reference to David's Lord, a reference to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. Now finally, will you turn to the New Testament and the 1st chapter of the first book, the Gospel of Matthew, and we read verses 18 through 25, the historical fulfillment of much of this that we have just read in Isaiah. Matthew chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 25) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins'. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us'. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden

him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."

May God bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the prophecies of the Old Testament, history prewritten by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and we thank Thee of the certainty of their fulfillment. We thank Thee, Lord, for the way in which Thou hast, at the first coming of our Lord Jesus, fulfilled the great prophecies of his first coming. And in the light of this, Lord, we look forward to his Second Coming with assurance and certainty, because we know that Thou art faithful to Thy word. And so, we look forward to the day when the Root of Jesse shall be an ensign for the people and to him shall the Gentiles seek.

In the meantime, Lord, we thank Thee for this privilege of representing him. We thank Thee for being those who belong to that kingdom and who now have the opportunity ahead of time of introducing others to the King that they also may participate in the glories of personal salvation and worldwide salvation. And so, Lord, we pray that in the interval, the present season, the dispensation of the grace of God, we may be faithful to the commission to be witnesses of him not only here in Dallas, but to the uttermost part of the earth.

And we pray, O God, that this assembly of those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ may dedicate themselves to the glory of God and the fulfillment of Thy perfect will for us in this age. And so, Lord, we pray that Thou wilt work in our midst. May there be the sense of personal relationship to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and may it not be something merely formal, but may it be personal, in the heart, effective, and real.

And, O Father, we pray that through the ministry of this church, many shall come to know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and also that the church itself shall be edified and built up in the truth and prepared to meet our Lord Jesus Christ in the air.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this particular audience and especially, we pray, Lord, for those who may be here with deep problems and trials. And we pray, O God, that through the ministry of the word and the comfort and consolation that it brings, they may find that which will strengthen them. We commit to Thee all who are proclaiming Thy word today and may this be a day in which the gospel of Jesus Christ goes forth in real power.

We pray Thy blessing upon our country. We thank Thee also, especially, for those who have gone forth to minister the word in difficult places. For our missionaries and for our friends who are laboring outside of the United States in far away places. We commit them to Thee.

And we pray, O God, that today may be a day in which Thy perfect will is accomplished in the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and we commit ourselves to Thee in the name of the One who has given himself for us, our Lord Jesus himself. Amen.

[Message] Beginning this morning and continuing through the next eight Sundays after this Sunday, or nine in all, I want to give a series of messages centering around the life of Christ under the general theme of, highlights of the greatest life. And so, the Lord willing, on the following Sundays, we expect to consider the major events of our Lord's life.

Now it is proper that we begin with the birth. And so, the subject for this morning will be, "The Birth of the King." And inasmuch as the Gospel of Matthew is very well suited for this particular series of studies, I'm going to confine our series to the Gospel of Matthew. And so, really it will be, "The Highlights of the Greatest Life" according to the

Gospel of Matthew. So let's turn to the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Matthew for our Scripture and I want to speak to you now on the subject of, "The Birth of the King." The accounts of our Lord's birth while written from different standpoints each agree in the facts and in the manner of his birth.

Now Luke is very specific. He tells us very plainly and directly that Jesus was born of a virgin. In the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Luke and in the 35th verse, we have his description of that event. In Luke chapter 1 and verse 35, we read, "And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'." Matthew 2 is in very, very close harmony with the Gospel of Luke, for Matthew twice says, "Jesus is born of the Holy Ghost."

Now it is sometimes overlooked that the other gospel writers are also in harmony with this. For example, the Gospel of John, John himself, while he does not affirm directly the virgin birth, nevertheless indicates a very, very close harmony with it. In the 8th chapter of the Gospel of John and the 23rd verse, the Lord Jesus says these words, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

Now it's also interesting, too, that in considering the Gospel of John, you'll remember that at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, in the 2nd chapter, Mary apparently has understanding of powers that rest in her Son, that presuppose a supernatural origin. When the wine was lacking at the feast, she turns to him and indicates that she understands that his origin is supernatural. And so, she looks to him in that way.

It is also sometimes overlooked that in the early sayings about our Lord Jesus called by scholars called the *logia*, there is also a reflection of the fact that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. In Matthew chapter 11 and verse 19, we read, "The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, (Now notice those words "and they say") 'Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.'"

Now if you know anything about Jewish language of the time, you know that when men were called gluttons and drunkards or gluttons and winebibbers, this particular insult was flung at a person who was born in an illegitimate way. In other words, there is reflected in this saying, which was common, an understanding of the fact that there was something unusual about the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we find this even more directly stated in the Gospel of Mark for in the 6th chapter of the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is called the Son of Mary. We do not, of course, think much of that living in nineteen hundred and sixty-six in the 20th Century. But you see it was a very, very strict rule among the Jews that the children should be called by the name of their father and not by the name of their mother. And, as a matter of fact, this custom prevailed even when the father had died before the child was born. Whenever the child was named, he was named after his father. He might be called Yohanan ben Soki . That is, John the son of Soki, but always he was related to his father.

Now apparently, and it is reflected in our gospels, there was a feeling among the Jews that there was a cloud over the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. And for a long time they did not say anything about it because, as is evident from the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke, our Lord Jesus was a person who was so characterized by the grace of God that he commended himself both to old and young alike. He was a favorite in the village of Nazareth. That is the impression that you get from reading the Gospel of Luke. He grew in grace and in favor with God and men so that they knew and he was a person who was well liked in the little village in which he lived.

But the time came when this person who was so well liked began to express ideas that were regarded as heretical by the leaders of the Jews. And so, when it became evident to them that he had become an apostate from Judaism, they began to fling at him these terms of opprobrium: Son of Mary. Son of Mary was just as plain as if we were to say, "This man is a bastard." This is exactly what they were saying. And so, we find

reflected in the Gospel of Mark itself, the fact that a cloud existed over the birth of our Lord Jesus.

Now shortly after the time of the New Testament this term, which had been flung at him: "Yeshua ben 'Miriam", "Jesus the Son of Mary" not the Son of Joseph; this became widely known and publicized among the Jews. In fact, in *Yebamoth*, a Jewish writing of A.D. 70, Jesus is listed as "the bastard of a wedded wife." Now apparently, the evangelist Matthew was acquainted with these things that were being circulated concerning our Lord Jesus Christ and you can find him here right in the beginning of his gospel giving the genealogy of the Lord Jesus and then his birth of a virgin.

Now I think the significant fact about the things that I've been saying to you is simply this that it was recognized both by Jew and by Christian alike that there was something unusual about the birth of our Lord Jesus. Now that unusual fact about the birth of our Lord Jesus was simply this, that no one had positive proof of his father. They knew that he was the Son of Mary, but there was no agreement with regard to his father.

Now, of course, we who are Christians today are inclined to think, "Well, does this cast some aspersion upon the character of Jesus Christ?" Just the opposite. I think it indicates that there was an agreement upon the fact that there was something unusual about his birth.

Now, the Christians were convinced, of course, that he was born of a virgin. The Jews and unbelievers were convinced that he was born illegitimately, but the significant fact is that there was agreement that he was the Son of Mary and not of Joseph. In other words, they all agreed in belief and unbelief that Joseph was not the father of Jesus.

Now this, I think, is a very striking testimony to the truthfulness of the background out of which the New Testament has come to us. So I say that the Gospels, while they do not each specifically state the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, they unite in the confession in their substrata. They unite in the confession of the Apostles' Creed that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

Matthew is the royal gospel. It is the Gospel of the King. And so we should find as we look at it, Matthew attempting to set forth the birth and ministry of Jesus with special reference to the fact that he is to be the Son of David, King over Israel, and King to the uttermost parts of the earth. And so, in the beginning of his gospel as he sets forth his genealogy and his birth, he is interested in setting it forth as that which testifies to the Davidic origin and to the deity of the King. So the origin that he sets forth here and describes for us is designed by Matthew to bear the authentic stamp of deity.

Now let's look at our text, but before we do, let me just say a word or two about objections that have been raised to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Some have said with regard to the virgin birth that after all the virgin birth is the kind of thing that we read in ancient eastern literature. We find many who today rely upon this explaining that the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus is just a reflection of the fact that this type of literature circulated in the East.

We, of course, today know that men who are outstanding in the Christian Church deny the virgin birth. Frequently, their reasons for denying it are based upon these: "After all, this is written in mythological language and is not intended to be taken in a very, very literal way." And then some will say, "After all, there were many stories like this and this is just the church's desire to advertise its Lord. And so, it invented the story of the virgin birth in order that they might be able to proclaim with success the message concerning him."

Now if you know anything about the literature of the time, you know that the story of the virgin birth was not a very sensational story, because it is the story of a man who went up to the City of Jerusalem, who was found at night in the little village of Bethlehem, a simple carpenter with a simple wife, in a manger surrounded by some animals, and here this miraculous birth occurred.

Now this is surely not the kind of story to stagger the imaginations of the people of that time. It was not sensational like the birth of Caesar Augustus whose mother was



supposed to have entered the Temple of Apollo's and there she was visited by a serpent and the fruit of that union was Caesar Augustus. Nor was it as sensational as the origin of Pallas Athena who leaped fully armed out of the head of Zeus. Now these were sensational stories, but the story of a maiden in a manger in a little place called Bethlehem is not a very sensational story. So you see it is not on the face of it, the intention of the church to give us something sensational when they give us the virgin birth.

Others have said, "Well, after all, it's impossible" and "How is a person able to be born of a virgin? It's contrary to natural processes." By the way, the angel anticipated that, for the angel, when he spoke of the birth to Mary, he said to Mary that, "that which is impossible with men is possible with God." Sometimes, you know, I think that we think that we are smarter than the angels or we are smarter than the intelligent men of the Ancient East. I'm quite sure from what I know of them that they were extremely intelligent and when it comes to spiritual things, they are head and shoulders above us. They, of course, knew these objections just as much as we and yet, in spite of them, they set for the story of the virgin birth and expected to be believed because they knew in their hearts that it was the truth.

Alva McClain, the former president of Grace Theological Seminary, used to say and say properly that "A sinless man in the moral realm is a greater miracle than a virgin birth in the biological realm." And when we look at the life of our Lord Jesus and see the kind of life that he lived, it's obvious that this supernatural life must have a supernatural origin, and the virgin birth is the simplest and plainest and most logical explanation of it.

Still others have said, "Doesn't the Bible say that Joseph is his father?" In the 13th of Matthew, that statement is made. The reference, of course, is to his legal parenthood and Joseph did legitimize this union as we shall see. And as a result of this, Jesus was the Son of Joseph, but Son in the legal sense and not in the biological sense.

Well, Matthew begins his account in the 18th and 19th verses by telling us of the arrangements for marriage between the maiden Mary and the young man who was the father of our Lord Jesus, legally, Joseph. It was the days of Caesar Augustus; the man whom many wished to make God. That Jacob and Heli, if these are the two parents involved, contracted a marriage according to ancient custom. That is, they made the marriage themselves. Marriages were not made in heaven then either. They were made upon the earth, but they were made by the parents.

I've often presented this to young people and asked them the rhetorical question, "Would you do better if your parents made your marriage than if you did?" Now for those of you who are looking for a husband and have not found one yet, perhaps you would answer, "Yes" or vice versa. But I'm not so sure really that that's true. At any rate, it was the custom of the time and that's the way they did it. Fathers arranged for marriages and so a marriage was arranged.

Now out of this marriage there was to come the man who was really God, the God-man, our Lord Jesus. But I think you can see the kind of arrangements that would be made between Jacob and Eli concerning the young carpenter and the pious maiden whose name was Mary. Now, of course, the moment that this marriage was arranged by the parents, it was legal. That is, they were married. So Matthew says,

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, (That is, when the arrangements had been made) before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband..."

Now apparently from the account, this is not stated directly, but apparently from the account, Joseph had learned of the pregnancy of Mary, whether he had been told this by Mary herself, whether he had discovered it and she had kept quiet about it the text does not say. I am inclined to think because of the statement that is made in just a

moment, that Joseph was very much in love with Mary and that as a result of his love for her, the fact that she was pregnant caused a great deal of consternation to him. And I think, if I judge these characters correctly, that Mary had told him of the experience.

But Joseph, like so many of us, when confronted with such a miracle and after all, there never had been anything like this before; the closest thing to it was the supernatural birth of Isaac in the Old Testament, but that was by natural means, and yet supernatural, I'm quite sure I can understand something of the wrestling that took place in the heart of Joseph. I can imagine that after he was told this that he spent many a sleepless night. He wondered perhaps, "Should I really marry this young girl?" That is, "Should our marriage be consummated and should we begin to live together?" If it's not true, perhaps I should put her away according to the Old Testament law. If it is true, I hesitate to take her to be my wife for the simple reason that if this is of God and the Messiah is to be born of her, it seems almost unholy to begin to live with her.

Now Joseph apparently was about to reach a decision, which meant that he was going to put her away. I gather that is the force of the text when he says, "And not willing to make her a public example was minded to put her away privily." That is, he wasn't going to do it publicly, but he was just going to take the minimum of two witnesses and carry out the divorce according to the Old Testament. So Joseph apparently had made up his mind.

Now I would say that this is true because in the 20th verse, the tense of the word "while he thought on these things" is a tense that suggests that the action had been reached. That is, that the conclusion had been reached. And so having made up his mind and about ready to carry out something that was contrary to the will of God, the angel spoke to Joseph and said to him in a dream, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

Now this, of course, is something that we can never really fathom. We can only adore. Who could ever understand what it means to be born of the Holy Ghost? G.

Campbell Morgan used to say, "This is the holy mystery, the touch of God upon the simple life that made it forever sublime." She was found with child of the Holy Ghost. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. So in a restless night amid fitful sleep, Joseph had a visitor and the visitor told him in supernatural terms and direct language that this in Mary was of the Holy Ghost. Now what he meant by this was that the Spirit was the source of the vitalizing energy which gave to the embryo in her womb.

Now I want to say something about the doctrine of the virgin birth at this point that I hope will help to clarify your mind some of the theology of it. Who would ever expect a simple New Testament professor and preacher of the word to transform the doctrine of the virgin birth so that everybody now understands it in a new light? So I'm not having any kind of sense of transforming all of theological thought concerning the virgin birth.

But I do want to say this that the New Testament does not teach the doctrine of a virgin birth, the New Testament teaches the doctrine of a virgin conception, a virgin conception. In other words, our Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, but he was born naturally, born naturally.

Now I want you to notice that I'm not denying the so called doctrine of the virgin birth. That would make nonsense of everything that I've said up to this point. I just want you to think clearly that it was the operation of the Holy Spirit in the conception that is referred to here, not in the birth. Jesus was born as an ordinary person was born.

Now this, of course, nullifies the objection of many men such as Bishop Pike and a long line of other apostates in this matter at least, which say that the virgin birth is something that seems to deny the true humanity of our Lord Jesus. It is obvious that if Jesus was born as an ordinary person was born, and he was, having Mary's human nature, conceived by the Holy Ghost, he was just as much human as you and I are human apart from sin. And so, when we talk about the doctrine of the virgin birth we ought to remember that the doctrine is the doctrine of the virgin conception of the Lord Jesus.

We will have no problems with the doctrine of the virgin birth if we remember that our Lord Jesus did not have a common parentage within humanity. That is, his parent was Mary and he was conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was not the product of Joseph and Mary. He was truly God.

Furthermore, we will have no problem if we realize that he was no new creation. Jesus Christ did not possess a kind of camouflaged humanity. He was not a phantom who lived among men as if he were different from men. He was the possessor of a true humanity; hence, he was truly man. And then if we remember that the divine nature, which was communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, cannot be partaker of sin, if we just remember that it cannot receive pollution, then we, of course, will be able to understand how he can be truly God and truly man and yet at the same time sinless.

The Apostle Paul states the same thing in the Epistle to the Romans when he says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." He does not say "in the likeness of flesh" for Jesus had true flesh. He was truly a human being. He does not say "in sinful flesh" for he could not be our Savior. He did not come in sinful flesh. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh, in true flesh, but only the likeness of sinful flesh. You know, the Apostle Paul is so straight in his theology that I think that he must have taken the course in Romans in the Dallas Theological Seminary [Laughter]. You can see that there's a kind of unity in all of the New Testament in the fact of Jesus Christ's supernatural birth.

Now our text goes on to say, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS." What a tremendous thing this is, Jesus. This is a word which means Yahweh or Jehovah saves. Jesus, of course, is the Greek equivalent of Joshua and Joshua in the Old Testament meant "the Lord saves."

Do you know that every time Mary leaned out of the back door of their little house and called for Jesus to come to a meal, she preached the gospel? "Yahweh saves,

come home, supper's ready." All of the terms that attach to the growing up of a little boy attached to him and above all his name was significant from the beginning, Jesus.

Now, you know if you'd read this genealogy beforehand, you might have thought that Matthew is leading up to is a kind of political leader. Israel was looking for a great political reader. They wanted someone to loose the noose of the Romans about their neck. And so, Matthew describes the genealogy of our Lord Jesus in its royal lineage and he's traced back to David and he is the Son of David. And you might think that the thing that Matthew wants to present is the fact that this Jesus is the King who is going to slay the enemies of Jehovah.

Now that is true, I'm not trying to deny that, but you'll notice that the name that is given to our Lord Jesus is "Jehovah saves", because before our Lord Jesus can really be King over all of the earth, he must be King in the hearts of his subjects. The real problem that faced the Jews was not Rome. The real problem was their sin. And today the real problem that faces us is not Vietnam. If you'll read the newspapers and every time you open it up you read about Vietnam and you tremble because you think that's the problem of the United States, how far you are from the truth of God.

The real problem with humanity is sin and the problem with the Jews was not Rome; it, too, was sin. The rulers of this world are political rulers and isn't it interesting how they are referred to by human beings? We look back in our history and we think about Charles the Bold, Alexander the Great, Peter the Great, Richard the Lionhearted.

I was in Canada. They don't like the term "Lion" up there, they like to say "Li-yun" and after I preached at Canadian Keswick two weeks ago, a whole flock of Canadians came up who had never heard pure English [Laughter] and suggested that I learn how to pronounce the word "lion." [Laughter] And so, from that time on, I said, "Li-yun." I was talking on the Book of Revelation and they all smiled because they got it then. [Laughter]

But we like to say Richard the Lionhearted. In other words, we like to attach these names to the name in order to show how great men are. But in the New Testament

we read, "And thou shalt call his name JESUS." Why the simple Christian doesn't want to hear, Jesus the Great, Jesus the Lionhearted, Jesus the Bold. Why the Christian who knows our Lord Jesus as the one who has loved him and given himself for him, the simple name Jesus is the name that we revere more than any other for it speaks of how much he loved us and from what he has saved us. And so, we speak of Jesus and we're not ashamed of it. We like that name.

Bernard said, "The name of Jesus is honey in the mouth. It is a melody in the ear and it is joy in the heart". "Jesus! Oh how sweet the name. Jesus! Every day the same; Jesus! Let all saints proclaim, its worthy praise forever." That's our song.

Now at this point, Matthew stops, and I want you to notice how Matthew throughout his gospel, likes to interpret the facts of the revelation concerning Christ. As he is writing this a number of years after this birth, he stops at this point and says, "Now all this was done", (this is Matthew's comment) "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 'Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us'."

Now you know, I wish I had time, I've been studying Isaiah now for about a year and I've been through it a number of times and I'm back again in chapter 8 going through it. I just wish I had time to stop here and give you the whole sweep of the argument of that great central prophecy in the early part of the book, which begins in the 7th chapter and concludes in the 12th. Let me just point out from our Scripture reading this morning that the thing that Isaiah the prophet wants especially to get over is the fact that the one who is announced as the virgin born child of chapter 7, and in chapter 9 is described as,

"The Son that is given whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and he shall sit on the throne of David is the one who is the root out of the stem of Jesse,

and is to reign over all of the earth and to him the Gentiles shall seek for he shall be an ensign to all the peoples."

And Matthew in effect says, "At this point now the prophecy of Isaiah, that great prophecy of the Messiah to come, which speaks of him being born, which speaks of him in his first coming and which speaks of him as ruling, that great prophecy finds its fulfillment in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ here." But now he doesn't use the term "Jesus" but he uses the term "Emmanuel." Now you enough Hebrew, don't you by now, to know that "Emmanuel" mean "God with us." Literally "with us" "Emmanu" is God.

Now I think it's striking that in one text here we have, "His name shall be called Jesus." This is the name that looks at his human nature and also expresses the office, the work that he does, "Thou shalt call his name 'Jehovah saves' for he shall save his people from their sins." If I were to put that in English, I would say it something like this, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall Jesus his people from their sins." Then you would get the play on words that existed in the name of our Lord Jesus: Savior, Savior. That's his name. That means that he can save. And everywhere he went, Jesus, Jesus.

Now you go down south of the border and everybody's name is Jesus, but they can't save. They don't save. They are ridiculous characters of the reality our Lord Jesus who does save. But that's his human name, which expresses his office and his human nature. But Emmanuel, Emmanuel, Emmanuel, God with us, that's the name that expresses his deity. That's the name that expresses the fact that because he is "God with us" in human form, he can be our substitute upon the cross at Calvary and he can save us.

One is our comfort, for it's good to know that he was here. That he sat where we sit. "That he walked in our moccasins", as the Indians say. He was one of us and, therefore, we can take our problems to him. How often do we go to others with our problems instead of going to him, to go to the preacher, to go to the doctor? All of these may have their place, but ultimately our problem as a human being is to learn how to go



to him for he has the answers. He's our comfort because his name is Jesus, but he also is our hope because his name is Emmanuel, God with us and, therefore, he has the power to meet our needs.

Well, you know this was a great thing that happened to Joseph and I admire Joseph. Mary is certainly an admirable character, but Joseph is too, "Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife."

Now when he did this, in spite of the fact that the Jews about him, he new would have serious questions about the birth of Jesus, when he took Mary to his home and formerly made her his wife, he legitimized the union between the two. In other words, he recognized that this Son was his legal Son. Now this was all in accordance with the Jewish custom of the time. And Matthew concludes, "And knew her not (That is, he was not in the habit of knowing her the imperfect tense says. This implies that he did thereafter and that they did have children. And that, of course, is the teaching of the New Testament, "He knew her not." He was not in the habit of knowing her) till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."

Now I saved a few comments regarding Jesus for this point because you'll notice this is the second time that Matthew says, "His name shall be called Jesus." This is the name that is divinely given and divinely expounded. I think it's one of the most precious names of our Lord Jesus and I think it is very precious because it is the name that God gave him. It's the name that we ought not to be ashamed of.

Just the other day, I was preaching out in California in Oakland and a person came up to me afterwards, because I had referred to Jesus several times in the message as Jesus. He came up and said to me, like so many who are half taught in God's word, "Shouldn't you give the Lord Jesus his full title, 'the Lord Jesus Christ?'" Now I fully believe that our Lord's full title is the Lord Jesus Christ. But I merely said to him, "Have you ever read the Epistle to the Hebrews? Have you ever noticed how that author over

and over and over again refers to our Lord Jesus as Jesus? It's perfectly all right to speak of our Lord Jesus as Jesus.

You don't have to, like a parrot, every time you name the name say the Lord Jesus Christ. What a pedantic thing that is. Suppose I said it every time the Lord Jesus Christ and I never could say "Jesus" or I never could say "Jesus Christ", I'm sure my tongue would be terribly tongue tied. Listen, the name that is given our Lord is Jesus and it is divinely given and it is divinely expounded and whenever we take this name back to God, we take the name with which he is satisfied for he is the one who gave it. Not only that but, the name Jesus shows his genuine work, Jesus, Jehovah Saves. It's the name that reminds us of what he does. What a terrible thing to know our Lord Jesus, but not know him in that sense?

Suppose you knew Jesus, but you didn't know him as a Savior? Why this is the chief characteristic of the man, he saves. Suppose I knew Milton, but didn't know him as a poet? Suppose I knew Shakespeare, but didn't know him as a man of literature? Suppose I knew Bacon, but didn't know him as a philosopher? Suppose Johnny Unitas lived around the corner from my house and I all I know about him is that he sometimes goes into the grocery store and buys a quart of milk and I don't know him as anything more than Mr. Unitas? I don't even know that he plays for the Baltimore Colts. What a terrible to know Unitas and not know him as a quarterback. That's wear he shines. And so, what a terrible thing it is to know Jesus, but not know him as a Savior? Not know him in that which is the chief characteristic of the person.

May I stop for just a moment and ask you a question? Do you know him? And do you know him as a Savior? If you don't know him as Savior, you don't know him in his chief work for that's what he does, he saves souls. If you know him as a great teacher, a great leader, a great philosopher, a philanthropist, or any of these things, you don't know the true Jesus. You're just as ignorant of the man as I am of a man named Unitas whom I've never seen play football or didn't know that he ever had a football in his hands.

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus" and it's a name that is fully justified by the facts. Mr. Spurgeon used to like to say, "It's a name that is justified by the facts because he can truly do what his name says, he can save." And then he used to like to say, "I went into a cemetery once" (They're sometimes synonymous, you know? [Laughter] I didn't do that on purpose, men.) He went into the cemetery and he said he was looking around once and he saw a little tomb stone over a little baby and it had "Sacred to the memory of Methuselah Coning who died aged six months." Now there was a person who didn't live up to his name. [Laughter] "Thou shalt call his name Jesus", because he lives up to his name. He does save.

Now I don't have but just a few moments left, (My watch says three minutes after. I always go over five minutes) but I do want to say just a word about the importance of this doctrine. It's quite obvious that the doctrine of the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus, or if I may change it, the doctrine of the virgin conception, is one that is extremely important in relation to the word of God.

If you turn over to the Book of Luke, you will discover that at the opening of that gospel, in effect, Luke says, "I've done a great deal of research and I want to write to you a gospel in order, accurately" and then he begins to tell us about the virgin birth. Suppose Luke in his gospel is wrong on the very first thing that he investigated? How can we believe the rest of his book?

It is very important in relationship to the Son of God. Listen, whenever you read in a newspaper that Bishop So and So or the Reverend Doctor Such and Such has said that the virgin birth is no longer necessary to be believed. It is not an article of faith which we in the 20th Century should accept. It's not necessary for after all, he was truly human. Let me remind you that the choice is not between a virgin birth and an ordinary birth, the choice is between a virgin birth and an illegitimate birth. That is the choice. If, as a friend of mine once had told him by a business acquaintance, "Mary and Joseph just got in a jam", then we do have something that is very serious. The choice is not between

a virgin birth and an ordinary birth. It's between a virgin birth and an illegitimate birth. And so, the virgin conception of our Lord Jesus and his birth of Mary, Joseph his legal father only, is very important for the character of the Son of God and of all that surrounds him. And, of course, it is extremely important with regard to the kingdom of God. He is the Son of David. He's to rule and reign upon the throne.

In the Old Testament, you know, it is stated that David had two sons: Solomon and Nathan. Solomon was the legal heir to the throne. Joseph was the heir of the Solomonic line, but there is a prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, the 22nd chapter and the 30th verse [transcriber note: verse 29 and 30], which is very important,

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, 'Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: (The reference is to Jehoiachin who is in the line.) for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.'"

In other word, because of the sin of Jehoiachin or Coniah, a curse was pronounced upon that line and henceforth no person who was born according to the flesh upon that side of the line could ever sit upon the throne of David and yet it was the line that possessed the legal title.

How is it possible for someone then to reign upon the throne of David? Only if he possesses flesh of David and is preserved from the curse by means of legal relationship to the one who has the right to sit upon the throne according to the genealogy. In other words, if the Lord Jesus were really the Son of Joseph, he couldn't sit on the throne of David. But if he is born of a virgin and that union between Joseph and Mary is legalized and he becomes the legal son of Joseph, he has legal rights to the throne, but he doesn't come under the curse because he is not of Joseph's flesh. And since he is of Mary who is also of the line of David, our Lord Jesus is of the seed of David, according to the flesh,

possesses legal title to the throne, but does not come under the curse. In other words, the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus is an absolutely necessity for the kingdom of God upon the earth.

And, furthermore, it's very interesting that in 70 A.D. the records were destroyed and today the only records which have divine authority, which may be used to designate the rightful Son upon the throne, are the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. Do you know that if our Lord Jesus had come into the City of Jerusalem without legal title to that throne and if the Jews had known that, all they would have had to do would be to just point to the genealogy and say, "He doesn't qualify." But they knew, of course, that he did and because they knew that he did, we have authentic support for the fact that Jesus and Jesus alone is able to sit upon that throne.

Now one last thing, you'll notice this text says, "His name is Emmanuel" or "God with us." May I personally ask you, is he God with you? Have you really believed in him? Do you know what it is to have him save you? Have you put your trust in him? Has there been a time in your life when you said, "Thank you, Lord, for giving Jesus Christ to die for me. I do thank you for all that he's done and I take him as my personal Savior." If you've never done that, we invite you to do that. It's just as simple as that. You don't have to pray through; you don't have to do good works; you don't have to be baptized; you don't have to be confirmed. The only thing that God wishes of you in order to enter into this life is personal relationship to the One who loved you and gave himself for you. May God help you to make that decision. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he who was born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Ghost, the love of God the Father who gave the Son, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, be in abide with all who know him in

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sincerity until he comes again. And, O God, for those who do not yet know him, we pray  
for them. Give them no rest nor peace until they rest in him. For Jesus' sake. Amen.