



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 1:18-25

“The Birth of the Redeemer”

TRANSCRIPT

[RECORDING BEGINS ABRUPTLY]

[Prayer] And may till night, Lord, as we consider the significance of his birth that may our minds and our hearts be open to the truth which Thou hast for us. May we be always subject to Thy word. May we always, Lord, allow the word to judge us and may we not judge Thy word. And now we commit each one here to Thee and pray that this class may honor and glorify Thee. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight our subject is the birth of Christ. And so we are turning to Matthew chapter 1, verses 18 through 25. And I think before we read the passage in Matthew 1:18-25 we ought to read the Old Testament passage in Isaiah chapter 7. So turn first to the Old Testament. Isaiah chapter 7, verses 10 through 16. We're just starting so find a seat, if you can. Ken [ph1:19] there's a seat over here.

Isaiah chapter 7, verses 10 through 16. Now before we read this section this passage in Isaiah is in one of the great Messianic sections of the book in which the prophet as he reflects on the words that God gives him is also by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reflecting on the future as well. So Isaiah chapter 7, and verse 10.

“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 let's turn over to the New Testament passage in Matthew chapter 1, verse 18 through verse 25. Matthew 1, verse 18 through verse 25.

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his Mary mother 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.”

Matthew is the gospel of the King and so I think it is appropriate that we use this Matthean passage for our study tonight of the birth of Christ. Here we notice the supernatural origin of the King. Now it is interesting to compare the accounts of the birth of the Lord Jesus. They are written from different standpoints.

Of course, in Mark's account we have very little of the birth of Christ. Some few opening statements are given with regard to his relationship to John the Baptist and then Mark plunges immediately into the ministry of the Lord. Mark, you see, presents the Lord Jesus as the servant of God. And of course we are not particularly interested in the genealogy of a servant. And so Mark does not have any genealogy.

John is a gospel that presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. And of course, God does not have a genealogy since he is one who exists from the beginning. He is eternal. And so in the Gospel of John we do not have a genealogy of the Lord Jesus.

In Luke we have a genealogy for Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of man and we are interested in the genealogy of the man, the Lord Jesus. And in his genealogy Luke takes the history of Christ all the way back to the first man, Adam. Matthew presents him as the King and, of course, we are interested in the genealogy of the King because we want to know whether he was right and title to the throne.

And I think it's significant that in Matthew instead of taking the genealogy of the Lord Jesus back to Adam, Matthew stops with David. For you see, our Lord is to sit and rule upon David's throne. So the gospel's present the birth of Christ in different ways. They do, however agree in the facts that they give.

Now it is true that only in Matthew and in Luke are we specifically told that the Lord Jesus was born of a virgin. In Luke chapter 1, and verse 35, we have that stated by Luke. We might turn over to that passage and read it. We ought to have it in mind as we think through this Matthean passage. Luke chapter 1, and verse 35. The angel is speaking to Mary and says,

“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.”

Now Matthew, as we have just read, also says that the Lord Jesus is born of a virgin. Now John does not say that, nor does Mark say that. But we must not make any mistakes here and think that the fact that Mark does not say that he is born of a virgin means that he did not know that fact. This was not within his purpose as he wrote the gospel.

As a matter of fact, in all of Mark’s statements you will find an implicit agreement with the facts of Matthew and Luke. For example, Mark never calls the Lord Jesus the son of Joseph, and yet he calls the Lord Jesus the Son of God, and he calls the Lord Jesus the son of Mary. But never does he call him the son of Joseph.

John, of course, while he does not specifically state the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus, nevertheless gives us so many statements of the Lord Jesus which make that a necessity that it is almost fruitless to begin for just to take one statement our Lord says, “I am from above, ye are from beneath.” And then later on as if the Jews themselves knew of these reports about his virgin birth, you remember, they sneeringly say to him after he has made these remarks, “We be not born of fornication,” for the recognized, apparently, and knew the reports of his virgin birth but did not accept them.

The question of the virgin birth immediately comes up when we think about the birth of Christ for while our salvation does not depend upon the manner of our Lord’s birth yet ultimately it does. Our salvation depends upon Christ but how he enters into human existence is tremendously important. And I think we’re going to see in a moment that he must be born of a virgin if he is to be our savior.

But the minute that you mention the term virgin birth frequently today you have objections because it is often stated by men, I think without really, serious, theological

reflection that it doesn't make any difference how Jesus Christ was born. That after all he could have been born just as an ordinary person and still be our savior. I think we're going to see that that is not the alternative that the New Testament presents us with.

Immediately all kinds of objections come and if we were to spend our time on the objections, why, it would take us the rest of the night. And I imagine that it would probably create more doubts than it would solve problems because the human mind is like that. If you talk about the negatives long enough soon we forget the positives. But let me just mention two or three common objections to show you how easily it is to refute them if we are willing to approach them with an open mind.

It is sometimes said, for example, that the stories of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ are similar to other types of Pagan stories and therefore they have managed to gain entrance into the New Testament and that we are not to believe them because they are just accretions which the Christian faith has derived from other sources. I have seen that in print frequently in our papers. Certain churches will advertise around Christmas time accounts of the birth of various men in the past, Jesus with Mohammad and Hindu and others, as if the birth accounts are all on the level one with another. And so we are often told that these are just like the birth accounts that you find in mythology.

But who would want to compare the story of the conception of the Lord Jesus with the birth, say, of Caesar Augustus? As if this is a parallel. You know the story, his mother was visited in the temple of Apollo by a serpent and the fruit of this union was Augustus. And we are asked to believe that that kind of an account is like the account that we find in the New Testament of the birth of this holy, pure, Son of God. Immediately, as far as I'm concerned, why this is just an entirely different thing from that which you find in the New Testament. And when someone compares them I often wonder if they have ever read the New Testament at all.

It is sometimes said that the reason that the New Testament contains the virgin birth is that that the early church wanted to advertise its faith. And so by this sensational

type of beginning of its books why this would create interest on the part of those who read. But this is not the kind of sensational story that you had in ancient times. For example in ancient times according to mythology Pallas Athena sprang out of the mind of Zeus fully armed. And if a goddess could spring out of the head of Zeus fully armed why that's a more sensational beginning than the virgin birth. This is a pale and insipid kind of an account in the light of these sensational types of stories that you find in mythology.

So as far as I'm concerned I think that these mythological objections have no weight whatsoever. There are some who say basing their viewpoints on the teaching of biology that it is contrary to natural processes to have a virgin birth. And I am certainly willing to correct that. Because, you see, Mary understood that and she received an answer to her problem. She said, in verse 36 of chapter 1, “Behold,” or rather then angel said, “And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.” And now to answer Mary's question, which she asked in verse 34, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” The angel says, “For with God nothing shall be impossible.”

So this is not a natural process. If the virgin birth were the result of natural processes I might wonder, too. But it is not the result of natural processes. The virgin birth is the work of God, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee,” Mary was told. So this is not natural process, this is the work of God.

Now it's a strange thing, too, to me that people can believe Genesis chapters 1 and 2 and yet they have difficulty with the virgin birth. I cannot understand that type of reasoning. That God can create Adam and Eve but we cannot have such a thing as a virgin birth. If we can have a creation of Adam and Eve surely God is able to bring to pass a virgin birth. And furthermore, if you think about a sinless man, the Lord Jesus Christ, a sinless man in the moral realm is a far greater miracle than a person born of a virgin in the physical realm. So this biological objection I cannot accept.

But what about the Bible itself? Does it not say, Dr. Johnson, that he was the carpenter's son? Yes it does. Matthew does say he was the carpenter's son. Does it not say his mother and does it not say thy father, do not these terms apply to the Lord Jesus? They certainly do. They apply to him in the legal sense, for Joseph was his father in the legal sense. And we are going to see that it is very important that Joseph be his father in the legal sense in just a moment. And Mary was his mother in the sense that she communicated, by the power of God, her human nature to him so that he was just as much a human being as any one of us in this room. But he was not the product of the union of Joseph and Mary.

Well now with that, just as something of an introduction, let's take a look at Matthew's account. And he begins by describing to us here Joseph's realization of the condition of Mary. He says in the 18th verse, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph,” now this means when he was more than engaged. Engagement may be broken today, engagements are often broken. Engagements mean merely that we have promised to be someone's wife or husband as the case may be. And engagements do not mean a whole lot today.

But to be espoused at this time was a legal matter and it was just as valid as a marriage, legally. So when the statement is made that they were espoused, or Mary was espoused to Joseph, it means that she had been promised. And that therefore she was really Joseph's though they had not begun to live together. Their types of marriages are different from ours. Their parents contracted the unions and that's, of course, a question is that type of marriage more successful than one that we contract ourselves? Well I know it would be foolish for me to pass any advice on to you today about that, I suppose that it would probably be better for us to select our own. I at least did a good job myself in selecting mine and I'm certainly glad that my parents did not select my wife for me.

How would you like it, young people, if your parents were selecting your husbands or wives? You wouldn't like it, would you? Well in those days they did select

them and so Joseph's parents selected Mary and the parents got together and the union was consummated in the sense that there was an agreement made between them. And Mary was espoused to Joseph. And the text says that, “Before they came together,” now marriage in those days, after they had been espoused, they would for a greater or lesser period of time live apart and then at the proper time when they were to be married or come together to begin to live together, it was usually the custom for a marriage feast to take place. And before the marriage feast it was the custom for the groom to go to the house of bride and they would have a marriage procession from the house of the bride back to the groom's house where they would begin to live and there they would have a big feast. And the feast would sometimes last for days, it might last for a week. And there they would begin to live together as husband and wife.

So the statement here, “Before they came together,” means before they had had the marriage feast and had begun to live together, suddenly Mary was found with child, she was pregnant, and the text says, “Of the Holy Ghost.” In other words the power of the highest had come upon her, the Holy Spirit had overshadowed her, and that Holy thing was in process of being born. As G. Campbell Morgan says, “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.

Now notice that statement, “Of the Holy Ghost,” for Matthew will repeat it again in just a moment to show that it is important in his eyes. He will say in the 20th verse, “For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” So that's important.

Now this posed quite a problem to Joseph, for Joseph was a just man. That means that Joseph was a man who tried to keep the Old Testament statutes. And the Old Testament statutes said that if a wife was found to be with child before they came together than a bill of divorcement could be written out. And so Joseph was a just man and he was faced with the necessity of carrying out the law of God in Deuteronomy

chapter 22, in verse 23 and following, you will find the specific Old Testament law with regard to it.

And since he was a just man he began to wrestle with the fulfillment of God's word. But he apparently loved Mary, had a high regard for her, and so he was betwixt the one desire to fulfill the word of God and the other desire not to make her a public example. And so he finally after he had reflected upon it probably Joseph had spent many a sleepless night. And as is often the case when we have weary sleep we dream. And so after he had said alright, I will just do this privately, I will carry out God's word but we will do it secretly. He had made up his mind, and as he was still tossing on his bed one night over carrying out this decision for, this verse 20, which says in the English text, “While he thought on these things,” in the Greek text means after he had thought on these things. He had reached a decision. But before he had carried it out, as he was, I say, perhaps tossing on his bed, he has a dream, “And 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.”

Now let's stop for just a moment on that expression, “Of the Holy Ghost.” This is a theological matter and I'm sorry, we're going to have to deal with a little theology. That should not disturb you, you cannot understand anything about the New Testament if you do not wrestle with theology. Theology is nothing more than the truth about God. And so the minute we open up the Bible we are plunged into theology for this book has as its theme God in Christ and what he has done for us.

What does it mean, “Of the Holy Ghost,” what does this mean? And does this not pose some kind of difficulty for us? Well now there is no real theological problem if we just remember to or three things. In the first place the Lord Jesus did not have a complete human parentage. Mary communicated to him his human nature but the Holy Ghost is responsible for his divine nature. We need to remember that.

Then the second thing, and that of course means that he is true God because he possesses divine nature, then we need to remember this fact and not slip back to think that he is, perhaps, some new creation. Some new being who was never existed before in the sense that his nature is different from any one who has ever lived up until that time. Jesus Christ had a true human nature. He is not an angelic being, he is not someone who is neither angel nor man, but he possesses true human nature. And he is a man. So we need to remember that. And one final thing that we need to remember is that the divine nature cannot receive pollution. So that means that there can be no sinful Son of God. The Lord Jesus then is true God, he is true man, and he is sinless, God-man.

Now the New Testament is very careful to preserve all of these facets about the Lord Jesus. He is God, and at the same time he is perfect and complete man, and at the same time he is sinless. Now we are going to see why all of these things are important as we go along. But I want to state them here and state them emphatically, because I do not think that you can really have a genuine Christianity if you do not preserve these things. Everyone of them is essential. He is the God-man. He is not God in a man, he is not God and a man, but he is the one divine person who possesses human nature. He is the God-man. One person who possesses two natures.

This is tremendously important. I think that one of the finest statements of this in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican church. It has in the midst of its statements something like this, “He entered into manhood in the womb of the blessed Virgin so that of her substance two whole and perfect natures were found together, never to be divided.” I think that’s approximately the statement. So that we have the nature of God, we have the nature of man, but one person, the divine person. He is a divine person because he existed before he took to himself human nature.

Now I want you to turn with me, if you will, also to Romans chapter 8, and verse 3, and we’re going to see, I think, how Paul is careful to preserve all of these facts when he refers to the Lord Jesus. Verse 3 of Romans chapter 8, “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.” Now do you notice that statement? That is tremendously important. “In the likeness of sinful flesh,” notice he does not say, “In sinful flesh.” He did not come in sinful flesh. He does not say, “In the likeness of flesh.” Otherwise he would not be man. He came in flesh but not in sinful flesh. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. Like our flesh but not of our flesh in its sin, yet possessed of genuine flesh. So you see, Paul’s statement is carefully worded to guard the fact that he was genuine man but he was not polluted with our sin. For he cannot be our savior if he himself needs salvation. And he would if he were a sinner, so in the likeness of sinful flesh.

When you looked at Jesus of Nazareth and you just saw him physically you would think another man only in the likeness of sinful flesh. As you observed him, as you saw him work, as you heard him teach, then you would be convinced that he was not as we are, though he appeared to be as we are. And yet at the same time because he was weary, because he could faint, we would know that he did possess human nature because the sword could pierce his side and there could come out blood and water we would know that he had human nature. But yet as we observed his teaching and saw him perform his mighty works we would come to know if we were open we would come to know that he was God.

Well let’s go on with Matthew’s account. While he thought on these things, the angel of the LORD spoke to him and said, “That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” And in the 21st verse now Matthew continues, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS.”

Now let’s stop here for just a moment. “Thou shalt call his name JESUS.” Do you know what the name Jesus is? Well Jesus is the Greek equivalent of Joshua. Now if Hebrews were speaking of Jesus in their tongue they would say, “His name is Joshua,” they would call him Joshua. In other words, Joshua in the Old Testament had the same

name as the Lord Jesus. Like John in English is John in French, so Jesus in Greek is Joshua in Hebrew.

Now both of these terms go back to the word Yesha in Hebrew, which means “to save” so that Joshua means, “The Lord’s salvation,” or the, “Lords is salvation.” The Lord’s salvation, the Lord’s savior, or that root. Now here, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS,” thou shalt call his name savior. Now immediately we have the word for he shall save his people from their sins, so that was his name, Jesus. It meant savior, the Lord’s salvation. “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall Jesus his people from their sins,” that’s the idea of it. He is savior.

Now, in other words, what is Israel being promised here is another Joshua who will take them out of Egypt and into the promised land. But this Joshua will not do it in a physical way, he will do it in a spiritual way. Here is one who will be responsible for a spiritual exodus from sin into salvation. So his name shall be called Jesus. This is what the angel said, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Jesus,” a savior, “who is Christ the Lord.”

So his name is Jesus. The Jews problem, you see, was not Rome. They thought our problem is Rome, what should we do about the Romans, how should we get out from under their yolk and what do we think today is our problem. Well our problem is East Berlin, what should we do about the problem that exists in Berlin? Or our problem is Vietnam, or our problem is the Congress or our problem is the Washington, you know. We think our problems are these political problems, but they are not our problems. Our problem is sin. And Israel’s problem was sin. And so they were promised Jesus who would save his people from their sins.

Isn’t it interesting that here the New Testament opens, “God’s great book,” and what would you expect God’s great savior to be called? Well I’m wondering if we would not expect something like this, “Jesus the Great.” But we don’t have anything like that. You know, when the world name’s its heroes it always adds some accolation like that,

Alexander the Great. Can't say Alexander, you have to say Alexander the Great. Charles, Charles the Bold. Richard, Richard the Lionhearted, you know. But when you come to the Bible and the savior, “Thou shalt call his name JESUS.” And those who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ revere now name more than this simple term Jesus, for that means that he is our savior.

Bernard once said, “Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, and joy in the heart.” And it is to those to know him as savior. We often sing a hymn which has a stanza that goes like this, “Jesus, how sweet the name, Jesus, every day the same, Jesus, let all saints proclaim, its worthy praise forever.” So as far as I'm concerned Jesus is a wonderful name and it's good enough, as far as I'm concerned, for me.

In fact Paul says, too, when he's discussing the Lord Jesus, you know, he says, “That as a result of what the Lord Jesus did in dying for us God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name at the name.” Of the great God? No. At the name of Jesus the Lionhearted? No. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.” Everyone should bow before the name of Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

Well Matthew, I think, must have had a warm heart because he cannot help but intrude himself now into the account and he's going to give us a little theological interpretation. I say you cannot study the New Testament if you do not deal with theology. And here you find Matthew, he's just started writing his book and has given us the genealogy here in the first 17 verses, and now he's beginning of the account of his birth and so he has to stop. Now wait just a minute here, at this point I want you to know that an Old Testament prophecy is being fulfilled by the birth of Christ. So Matthew's words come in at verse 22, “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 here Matthew says all of this is in fulfillment of the Old Testament. And the specific passage, you'll remember, is Isaiah chapter 7, and verse 14. I wish we had time to go back and just go through that whole section which begins with about the 6th or 7th chapters of Isaiah and goes on through the 9th chapter, for its remarkable Messianic passage in which the Prophet Isaiah, being one anointed by God, stands out as the type of the one who shall come. And Isaiah with the faithful in his family and his disciples stand out as the remnant of those who are expecting the redeemer to come.

And so the promise of the savior is given to him, given to Ahaz through him. And in the course of that section in the 7th chapter it is stated that, “The virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and they shall call his name Immanuel,” which is, “God with us.” And then Isaiah goes on through the 6th and 7th and 8th chapters as he describes this great salvation that is to come through the virgin's son. And finally in the 9th chapter as he's beginning to reach the climax or moving towards the climax, he says, “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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. And of his government there shall be no end.”

So you see as Isaiah looks into the future he sees this virgin's child, is now the King, the King who shall rule and reign upon the throne of David. And as he reaches the great climax in the 11th and 12th chapters he will talk about this root out of Jesse who shall triumph and shall establish his kingdom so that even the wolf and the lambs shall lie down together.

So in this particular passage Matthew has gone back into it, selected this verse, and said now right here is fulfilled, the first part of Isaiah's great Messianic psalm which begins in Isaiah chapter 7, “A virgin shall be with child, and his name shall be called Immanuel.” Now let's stop here for just a moment. Here we've been told in the verse or two above that his name shall be called Jesus. And now we are told that his name shall be called Immanuel. What does Jesus mean? Why Jesus means savior. What does

Immanuel mean? Why Immanuel in Hebrew means, “God with us.” In the one text we have his humanity stressed, he is Jesus. That was his human name, that was the name that they called him by. This was his historical name. If you had met him on the streets you would have called him Jesus. But he is to be called also Immanuel, “God with us.” So on the one hand we have his human name, on the other hand we have the name that stresses his deity.

And there is no contradiction between them. These two names bring out the two aspects of the person of Christ. And I want to say just another word or two about this because I think that at times we have little difficulty in understanding that our Lord can be one person and yet possessed of two natures.

Let’s think about an incident in his life. He one day, as he moved from Judea back towards Galilee, he went through Samaria and he stopped at a well. And the text in John chapter 4, in verse 6, said he was wearied. Now is God ever tired? Why of course not. God is not tired. And you remember when the woman of Samaria comes down to the well he says, “Give me to drink,” and that begins the conversation with this woman. And so here on the one hand we have the tired man. And in a moment this same person who is sitting by that well speaking to that woman and who is tired is suddenly saying, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I give unto them shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give shall be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Suppose I were to say something like that to you, “If you drink of the water that I give you why it will be in your well of your water springing up into everlasting life.” Well you would say, “Dr. Johnson has gone around the corner,” you know? [Laughter] And rightly so, and you’d probably say afterwards we will not have any more Bible classes out here in the Watkins’ home. Rightly so. But, you know, Jesus Christ can say that and as I’ve often said we sit and we listen to it and even if we are unbelievers somehow deep

down within our hearts there is something that says, “It’s alright for him to say it.” It’s alright for him to say it because he is Immanuel.

So he is one person who possesses two natures. And I don’t know how to illustrate this any more than something as simple as this. You know it is possible for a man to have one form of self-consciousness, but two forms of consciousness. Let me illustrate, I may go out, or let me say this, suppose I have a room on the second story of my home which I reserve for meditation and prayer. And let’s suppose I don’t have any heat in that room. And let’s suppose that I go up into that room and it’s cold outside and I kneel down to pray. Well I feel cold in my body but with my mind I’m speaking to God. I am one person but I have two forms of consciousness, one related to my body, the other related to my mind.

Now I don’t feel cold in my mind and I don’t pray to God with my body. They are absolutely separate in my self-consciousness. And yet the same person who feels cold in his body prays with his mind. One self-consciousness, two forms of consciousness. The Lord Jesus was one divine person, but he possessed human nature from the time of Bethlehem on. So he had consciousness of the physical and the human. He also had consciousness of the divine. He can, of course, be ministered to by men, and by angels he can be tiring. At the same time he can utter these wonderful statements which reflect the inherent deity that resides in him. On the cross he does not die as other men dies. He does not give up the ghost and bow his head as we would. But he bows his head and gives up the ghost. For he is the only man who is able to release his spirit to God and take it again. So he is a divine person who possesses human nature.

Now the practical significance of this is tremendous. Because, you see, since he is a man he can sympathize with me. He knows all of my troubles, he knows all of my trials. I know what you’re thinking, you’re thinking well now he was not a man such as I am, he was not a sinner. True, he did not have a sinful human nature but he was tested just as you. His testings did not come from within, his testings came from without. But

his testings were just as severe as yours, in fact I may startle you to say that your testings are as nothing in intensity compared to his. Because, you see, when you are tested, we'll say this is intensity, as you start out, when you get down about that far along the road you fall. Maybe some of you are very strong like Dr. Howard and you might get to there. And some of you might be like Mr. Prier because he teaches a Sunday school class and you may get that far, you see. And maybe there's some person in the room who's especially holy and can resist and you might even get there. But, you see, the Son of God started down the path of testing and he went on into intensity. He knows exactly what it feels like there. He knows exactly what it feels like there, he knows exactly what it feels like there, and he knows exactly what it feels like there, and so on.

So you see, every single bit of testing that you have he is able to experience. And furthermore, since he has overcome he is able to deliver you. For he not only knows your testing but he has the strength to enable you to overcome for he has overcome. And this is why we read in the New Testament he is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by him, seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them. In that he has suffered, being tempted he is able to suffer those who are being tested, you see, he's the man. He has felt all of our testings and now he's the God. Because he is God he is able to bear us up and hold us up. And, of course, if we commit ourselves to him he'll take us safely through everything. This is why we need a God-man, practically.

Well I don't want to get off in that, we're talking about the birth of Christ tonight. But you see, these things are the beginning of the story that goes on past the cross into the resurrection. Because he is my high priest now and therefore he sympathizes with me. And he has the strength to bear me up. And he's at the right-hand of God now and if you're a Christian why you can go right to him at any time, you don't have to go through any church or any priest or any person, you go right, directly to him. You don't come up in the backdoor of heaven and knock on the backdoor and say, “I wonder if I

can get in the backdoor.” Why, you have access into the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is your priest. In fact he represents you before God. You stand in the sun.

Well these are wonderful texts. By the way, where was the Lord Jesus called Immanuel in the New Testament? Would you mind starting out in Matthew and finding where he is called Immanuel? Never. “They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Never. But he is Emmanuel all throughout the New Testament, God with us. Why this very good ends, “Lo, I am with you always.” What does that mean, God with us? “Lo, I am Emmanuel to you, even to the end of the age.” So you see, he is Emmanuel, God with us constantly. This is his title, Emmanuel. And so we sing about Emmanuel, God with us. You know it’s wonderful to have a God like this.

Now at this point Joseph is raised from his sleep. No man ever had a more wonderful dream, I don’t suppose, than Joseph. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him and he took unto him his wife and knew her not. Now there is doctrine that some churches have propagated to the effect that Mary was a perpetual virgin. I appreciate the sentiment that is responsible for that doctrine. It is not, however, a biblical doctrine. The text here in verse 25 uses the imperfect tense which we may render, “And he was not in the habit of knowing her until she had brought forth her first born son, and he called his name Jesus.” As the rest of the New Testament, and also the Old Testament says, our Lord had brothers, but he was the first born.

So his name shall be called Jesus. You will notice, “And he called his name Jesus.” I wish I had time to talk about all of the wonderful things that you can say about this term “Jesus”. It was the name that was divinely ordered and expounded. It was the name by which our Lord was called among men. It was the name that was typically worn by Joshua but now is actually worn by him, he is the savior.

It is the name that identifies him with his people. It is the name that makes him one of us. It is the name which indicates his main work, for he is to be savior. That is his main work. And it is the name that is completely justified by the facts, for he is savior

to us. I don't think anyone ever wore a name more appropriately than the Lord Jesus Christ wore the name Jesus. Charles Haddon Spurgeon in one of his sermons says that, “Jesus wore the name of Jesus to infinite perfection.” He said, “I was once walking in a graveyard and I looked at a tombstone and on it were the words, ‘To Methuselah Coney who died at the age of six months.’” There was a baby who bore the name Methuselah who lived for six months. Not very appropriate, was it? But no person ever bore the name of Jesus more appropriately than the Lord Jesus Christ, for he was the savior.

Well now we finished with the Matthean account but before we close tonight I want to say just a few words about the importance of the supernatural birth of Christ. I would guess that it would be important because when Mary was approached by the angel he said to her, “Oh thou that are highly favored.” Apparently the birth is significant. And the angel says, “The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.” You notice not, “Above women,” though Mary surely takes a high place, but, “Blessed art thou among women.”

And you'll notice too as you think about Mary that it is never stated that Mary is to bless others. She is not one who dispenses blessings, she is one who receives blessing from God. She is blessed, she does not bless. She herself said, “My soul hath rejoiced and God, my savior.” She needed a savior.

But now in connection with the importance of the King's supernatural birth it's obvious that this is tremendously important from the standpoint of the word of God. Have you ever noticed how Luke begins his gospel? Let's turn over and read those verses, they are unique. If you could read these in the Greek text you would know they were unique because these words contain some of the finest Greek that you find in the New Testament, this opening four verses. They are a Greek period, and a period in classical Greek is of a very high caliber Greek. You find very few in the New Testament, primarily in the writings of Luke and the writer of the Epistle of the Hebrews. But he says,

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word. It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

And now he begins by telling us about a virgin birth. Suppose he was wrong in the very first thing that Luke tells us in his gospel. What confidence could we have in the New Testament if right at the beginning of his account he should tell us a lie? Well I would not have too much confidence. So it seems to me that this virgin birth account is very significant for the reliability of the word of God itself. But it also is tremendously important in connection with the Son of God. I said at the beginning that there are some who say that it is not necessary for us to believe the virgin birth in order to be Christians. Ad I suppose that there are many who are genuine Christians who do not accept the virgin birth. They have never been taught this. I guess it is conceivable that a person could put their trust in the Lord Jesus and not think of the implications of the fact that he was born as other men were born. It's just possible, I'm going to be broadminded enough or at least liberal enough to say that. I may have some doubts in my mind about that.

But if a person should be approached who is a so called believe in the Lord Jesus is approached with the doctrine of the virgin birth for the first time and he rejects that doctrine it is difficult for me to see how they can be a genuine Christian. Because the Holy Ghost will witness to the word of God and it would seem to me that when the light would come they would believe this doctrine which they have not been taught up to that time. But if you think about it a little you will come, I believe, to the conviction that I

have that it is absolutely essential if we see this in the New Testament. That we believe it and hold to it as a very fundamental fact of the Christian faith. Because, you see, the virgin birth is the means whereby the Lord Jesus entered into humanity. He did it by means of the virgin birth, the incarnation is the doctrine which has to do with his birth. The virgin birth is the means whereby he became incarnate and the angel said, “That holy thing.”

Now the reason that the angel said, “That holy thing,” and the reason that God allowed Jesus Christ to enter by means of a virgin birth is that he would be unsullied with our sin, he would not be touched with our sin. For you see, if he had sinned he needed someone to die for him. And so he must be the sinless Son of God and the New Testament testifies to this over and over again. John says that there was no sin in him. Peter says he did no sin. Paul said he knew no sin. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says simply he was sinless.

So over and over in the New Testament writers stress this. And if he were not born of a virgin he would not be sinless. And if he is not sinless he cannot be our savior. So it is important that we accept the virgin birth of Christ. And one other thing, we are not faced with the alternative of believing in a normal birth and a virgin birth. As if he were born legitimately. For you see, according to the testimony of the New Testament itself that is not the alternative. The alternative is virgin birth or bastard, for Joseph knew that he was not the father of Jesus. That’s specifically stated. So it is either virgin birth or illegitimate birth, these are the alternatives according to the Bible.

Now I think, as I say, therefore that this is a very, very important doctrine. And will you please not think too harsh of me if I just have a little bit of a question mark in my mind about any so-called “Christian” who does not accept the virgin birth knowing anything at all about the teaching of the word of God. Please do not think too harsh of me. But this is my faith and I believe it with all my heart.

One last thing, or not wait, I've said this before but let me just say it to get to the last thing, in relation to the salvation of God I've already said it, he must be born of a virgin in order that he might be our sinless substitute. So that he, untouched by sin, and untouched by the judgment for sin, may voluntarily take my place on the cross. So that he is able to step forward and say when there is no one else to redeem me I will redeem, for I in myself am free from sin. And I of my free will desire to redeem. And you see because he is a sinless human being he may be my substitute. And because he is a divine person that which he does has infinite value before God. So he is a divine person and that gives merit to that which he does. He is a human, sinless person so he may be my substitute. He is what he is because of what he has done. And what he has done has infinite merit because of who he is.

Finally in relation to the kingdom of God, I have just about two minutes here. I went over, I waited a couple of minutes, so you'll have to give me these two minutes [Laughter]. Now I'm going to do something that I did last time and I made a little diagram so that some of you might understand it just a little bit better. I say that it's necessary for the Lord Jesus to be born of a virgin in order that he might rule on David's throne.

Now David is the beginning of the line and that's why the genealogy begins with David. David had among his sons a son by the name of Solomon who was the legal heir, and he also had a son by the name of Nathan. Now the line came from Solomon down and in Solomon's line there rested the legal right to the throne. Any certain time in that line a man by the name Coniah, or Jeconiah, came along. He had right and title to the throne of David but because he did evil in the sight of the Lord the prophecy was stated in Jeremiah chapter 22, and verse 30, “Write this man childless, Coniah, no one of his seed shall ever sit on the throne of David ruling over Judah, in Judah.” So in other words the legal line is cursed. No one who is of the seed of David through that line shall ever have the throne. And that is so important that when Jeremiah gives that prophecy he begins with, “O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of God.” Very important prophecy.

Now ultimately there comes a man by the name of Joseph, our Lord’s legal father. He is of that line. He cannot sit on the throne of David because he is of the seed of Coniah and yet he has legal right. The title rests with Joseph. But Joseph cannot physically sit on the throne. Then down from Nathan, ultimately, there is a virgin by the name of Mary. She also is of the seed of David, according to the flesh. So that David’s son who is to be the King, if he has her nature has the nature of David. But he must also have title from Joseph. But he must not be Joseph’s son because if he’s Joseph’s seed then he comes out of the curse. So Joseph marries Mary and Jesus is born. But Jesus is not the son of Joseph, except legally. He is legally Joseph’s son and so he inherits the right to the throne. But he is not actually Joseph’s son so he does not come under the curse. He is the son of Mary actually in that he possesses her human nature. So he is of the flesh of David. So actually our Lord is the only person who can ever sit on the throne of David because he had no successors. And today the only person who has legal right to sit on the throne of David is Jesus. And his legal right is given in the New Testament.

So you see, the virgin birth is important from the standpoint of the word of God, it is important from the standpoint of the salvation of God, it is important from the standpoint of our Lord’s own nature, it is important from the standpoint of the kingdom of God. So it is important, you see, to understand all of the facets of our Lord’s birth.

Well our time is up, I meant to conclude with a little bit of exhortation to remind you that while he is God he is also God with us and is he with you. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for this word. We thank Thee for...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]