

## The Wonderful Babe of Bethlehem.

Text: Mat 1:18-25

1) His wonderful mission in this world

Suggested Hymns:

2) His wonderful Person

633, 627, 23 pt 1, 283, 26

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 1:18-25, <sup>18</sup> *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.* <sup>19</sup> *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.*

<sup>20</sup> *But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.* <sup>21</sup> *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*

<sup>22</sup> *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:* <sup>23</sup> *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."* <sup>24</sup> *Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, <sup>25</sup> and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Why is there all this commotion at Christmas time, this buying and selling, this exchange of gifts, this singing and merry-making? Ask the average person, and he will not be able to give the correct answer. At best he will say that we observe Christmas because Christ was born, but he will not know who Christ was, nor for what purpose He came.

We Christians alone are fully informed. We know from the Christmas Gospel that Mary brought forth her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Is that the reason for all our joy? Is this the basis for our celebration? Most certainly. We can and we should rejoice in this Child. His coming brought joy from the very beginning.

No sooner had the great event taken place than an angel messenger came down from heaven to inform lowly shepherds, *“Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ”*<sup>11</sup> *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*<sup>1</sup>

His message was followed by the most marvellous Christmas song ever heard upon this earth, for the multitude of the heavenly host praised God and said, *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”* Now the shepherds came with haste and worshiped the Christ Child in the manger and spread the story of His birth, glorifying and praising God. And ever since, people have observed this birth of Jesus as an event of outstanding importance.

Surely, this must be an extraordinary Child to receive so much attention! And so it is. We observe this day as the anniversary of the birth of the most wonderful Child ever born, wonderful as to His person, and wonderful as to His work.

The Babe of Bethlehem is the Joy of our life, the Centre of our worship, the Object of our love, and the Foundation of our faith. That is why we exclaim,

*Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her king;  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing.*

Let us, on the basis of our text, consider *The Wonderful Babe of Bethlehem*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## **1. The Wonderful Babe Of Bethlehem His Wonderful Mission In This World**

Never in history has been recorded a birth so wonderful as the birth of Jesus. To Mary, a virgin of Nazareth, the angel Gabriel had promised a Son who was to

be born in a miraculous manner, without a human father. Joseph, the carpenter, engaged to Mary, found that she was to become a mother.

Not knowing the facts in the case, he was minded to put her away secretly, since he feared that she had been unfaithful to him. Our text says, <sup>18</sup> *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.* <sup>19</sup> *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.*

It was then that God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream to tell him, “*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.*” A miracle Child was to be born, contrary to the course of nature, of a virgin, through the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit. As Gabriel had informed Mary on the occasion of the annunciation, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*”<sup>2</sup>

And to Joseph he said, “*And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.*” All this was in fulfilment of the prophecy of old that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin. What Isaiah foretold, what the angel of the Lord promised both Mary and Joseph, is today fulfilled in the birth of the Babe of Bethlehem.

Upon the command of Caesar Augustus, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to be registered. “<sup>6</sup> *So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered.* <sup>7</sup> *And she brought forth her firstborn Son.*”<sup>3</sup> Jesus who was laid upon hay and upon straw, whom the angels praised, whom the shepherds adored, is this Son of a virgin. That must be a wonderful Child whose birth is surrounded by such miraculous circumstances. Wonderful He is also because of His exalted mission in this world.

Our text says, “*you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.*” The very name “Jesus” explains His mission on earth. The Hebrew name for Jesus is Joshua and means “the Lord, Jehovah, saves.” Joshua, the son of Nun, had once upon a time saved Israel and had led his people into the land of promise. He was a type of this Jesus, this Saviour of His people,

who was to lead men into the promised land of eternal rest in heaven. The Babe of Bethlehem has come to be the Saviour of the world.

But what was the emergency? From what was He to save His people? From their sins. Was that so noteworthy and so exceedingly important? Most certainly. Because sin is man's worst enemy. Sin closed the doors of Paradise; separated man from his Maker; made of men helpless slaves that were compelled to do sin's bidding; and brought the curse of God, sickness, sighing, tears and heartache, death and damnation, from which no man could save himself.

As a result of the fall of man all people are born in sin, corrupt by nature, and unable to keep the Law of God. ***“They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one”*** says Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

And in all the world there was none found who could atone for his own transgressions or make good the wrongs of others. If the justice of God was to be satisfied, if the world was to be reconciled to God, if mankind was to be saved from eternal destruction in hell, a Saviour had to be found, one acceptable to God, one who could fulfil the Law in man's stead and assume the curse and the punishment of the human race. Otherwise man would be hopelessly lost in time and eternity.

Thanks be to God, the Christmas message of the angel is ***“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”*** And to Joseph the angel of the Lord said, ***“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”***

But was this Child of Mary able to measure up to the requirements? There is no question about it. For in that manger bed lies a true man, but One who is holy and spotless from His very birth. For did the angel not tell Mary at the annunciation, ***“that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God?”***<sup>5</sup> He never had to say with David and all men, ***“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.”***<sup>6</sup>

In Bethlehem the promise of the Prophet was fulfilled, ***“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”*** which is translated, ***“God with us.”*** In yonder manger lies the only Child that

ever came into this world without sin. And as He began His life, so He continued it, holy, perfect, and undefiled.

Were you born in iniquity? You certainly were, but here is One who came to take your place. By His holy conception and His sinless birth He atoned for your sinful conception and birth. He was made of a woman, made under the Law to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

While we are unable to measure up to the demands of God's Law, Jesus who took our place fulfilled the Law perfectly, and His righteousness became ours. He was to save His people from their sins also by His passive obedience, by assuming our guilt, suffering our curse, enduring the torments of death and hell, which should have been meted out to all mankind.

The tiny hands of that precious Babe of Bethlehem were one day to be pierced by the cruel nails of the cross; His side was to be riven by the Roman spear; His head was to be crowned with thorns; His body was to be bruised and beaten that He might pay the full penalty of your sins and redeem you from all iniquity.

This happened just as He said, *"the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*<sup>7</sup> His very conception and birth is the guarantee of the finished redemption of all people, causing the angelic host to sing, *"Glory to God,"* and prompting Simeon to exclaim, as he held the Christ Child in his arms, *"For my eyes have seen Your salvation."*<sup>8</sup>

We have so much cause for Christmas joy which no one can take away from you.

‘To you this night is born a child  
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;  
This little child, of lowly birth,  
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

This is the Christ, our God and Lord,  
Who in all need shall aid afford;  
He will Himself your Saviour be,  
From all your sins to set you free.<sup>9</sup>

He shall be called Jesus, Saviour, this Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. He redeemed all men from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Hence, we sing,

He opens us again the door  
Of Paradise today;  
The angel guards the gate no more:  
To God our thanks we pay.<sup>10</sup>

That was the exalted mission of this wonderful Babe, wonderful as to His work and wonderful as to His person.

## **2. The Wonderful Babe Of Bethlehem His Wonderful Person**

Who is this Child? It is the Christ, our God and Lord. True, He seems to be nothing more than a mere human being. Who could detect in this lowly Babe His divine origin? God, however, saw to it even before His birth that this Child should be known as the Son of God.

Gabriel said to Mary, *“that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.”* Isaiah had foretold that His name was to be called the *“Mighty God,”* and in our text another prophecy of Isaiah is quoted, *and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, “God with us.”* This Jesus is therefore the Child concerning whom the Prophets had witnessed, whose coming the believers in Israel had eagerly awaited, who was to bring salvation to all men.

In short, He is the promised Messiah of Israel. No less an authority than God Himself vouches for this truth by means of His Christmas messenger, saying, *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* This Child is more than a mere man; more than a holy human being; more than a unique and wonderful Babe. For this Child is true man, but at the same time also true God, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God.

In Him was life, and the Life was the Light of men. To Him the Father in heaven could say, *“You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God.<sup>11</sup>*

*<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.<sup>12</sup>*

Can there be a more appropriate name for Him than Emmanuel, that is, God with us? God is now in deed and in truth with us human beings. In Christ God Himself came down to earth and assumed our human nature, a true man, the God-Man Jesus Christ. *“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”<sup>13</sup> <sup>16</sup> “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

*<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.<sup>14</sup>*

As we stand before that manger bed, must we not exclaim with humble devotion, *“Here is Jesus who is ‘true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, my Lord,’ my Saviour, my God!”* And again, *“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful!”*

This Emmanuel alone could be our Jesus, our Saviour from sin. His mission would have been futile, had He been any other person than true God and true man. How could a mere man have succeeded in appeasing God’s wrath? How could a mere man ever have attempted to atone for the sins of the world? How could God ever have been able to place Himself under the Law or to suffer and die in the room of fallen sinners unless He had been at the same time true man?

None less than the God-Man could ever hope to be Jesus, who could save His people from their sins. But now the difficulty is solved. In His infinite wisdom and His boundless mercy God found a way of escape for sinful mortals. His solution of the problem lies in the manger of Bethlehem. This is the true God and eternal Life.

*He will on you the gifts bestow  
Prepared by God for all below,  
That in His kingdom bright and fair  
You may with us His glory share.*

How can we refrain from praising God because of the birth of this miracle Child, this Virgin's Son, holy and spotless, the Son of God, the Messiah, Christ, the Lord, our Saviour and Redeemer? He saved all men, but many have no faith in Him. Many still continue in sin and unbelief. He saves His people from their sins, but many do not acknowledge themselves sinners and are lost in spite of this wonderful Child.

Is Jesus Christ your Saviour? He came for you, too. Receive Him in humble faith; let His birth be the source of your Christmas joy also. Join the shepherds and exclaim, "*Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.*"<sup>15</sup> You shall not be disappointed. You shall find in that manger bed Him whose blood cleanses you from all sin, who made peace between man and God, and who reopened the gates of heaven for you.

By faith in Him you have a living Father in heaven, who provides for your every want, who answers all your prayers, who forgives all your sins, and who promises to lead you, at the last, to the Paradise of God. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:10

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1:35

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2:6

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 14:3

<sup>5</sup> Luke 1:35

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 51:5

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 20:28

<sup>8</sup> Luke 2:30

<sup>9</sup> Hymn 23

<sup>10</sup> Hymn 26

<sup>11</sup> John 1:1-2

<sup>12</sup> John 1:14

<sup>13</sup> <sup>1</sup> Timothy 3:16

<sup>14</sup> <sup>1</sup> John 4:9

<sup>15</sup> Luke 2:15