

Chapter One

Matthew 1:1-17

We thank God daily for every verse of the Scriptures, which were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 2:13). We pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance when we read our Bibles. Only the Holy Spirit can help us to understand what we read. Matthew tells us the story of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. No part of the Bible is as important as this. To know Christ is life eternal. To believe in Christ is to have peace with God. To follow Christ is to be a true Christian. To be with Christ will be heaven itself. We can never know too much about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew's Gospel begins with a list of names. Sixteen verses trace the parentage from Abraham to

David, and from David to the family into which Jesus was born. Let no-one think that these verses are useless. Nothing is useless in the Bible.

a) From this list of names we learn that *God always keeps his word*. He had promised that from Abraham's descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He had promised a Saviour from the family of David (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 11:1). These sixteen verses prove that Jesus was the son of David and the son of Abraham, and that God's promise had been fulfilled. Christians should remember this lesson and be comforted. God always keeps his promises. God cannot tell lies (Num. 23:19); he will always be faithful (2 Tim. 2:13).

b) From this list of names we learn *the sinfulness of human nature*. Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:13-15) and Jehoram (2 Kings 8:16-18) had good parents but they were wicked men. Grace does not run in families. We need the work of God to make us children of God (John 1:13).

c) Last of all from this list of names we learn *how great is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Think how unclean human nature is. Now think how he left the glories of his heavenly home to be born of a woman and 'made in human likeness' (Phil. 2:7). Some of the names remind us of shameful lives. But at the end of the list comes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though he is the eternal God, he

humbled himself to take human form in order that he might save us all. 'Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor' (2 Cor. 8:9).

We feel thankful as we read this list of names for it tells us that nobody can be beyond the reach of Christ's love. Perhaps we have sins that are as bad as any of those committed by people whom Matthew includes in his list. But sins can no longer shut us out of heaven if we repent and believe the Gospel. If the Lord Jesus was not ashamed to have so many wicked ancestors, he will not be ashamed to call us his brothers and sisters and give us eternal life.

Matthew 1:18-25

These verses tell us how the Lord Jesus Christ became a man and why his birth was miraculous: his mother Mary was a virgin. This may be difficult to understand, but it is enough for us to know that nothing is impossible to God who created the universe.

a) Let us think about *the behaviour of Joseph* described in these verses. It is an example of wisdom and thoughtfulness for others. He did not know that the expected child in Mary's womb was God's own son. He saw what could have been evil in Mary because she had become pregnant before they had married. But he waited until his way was made clear. He must have prayed about the problem because we are told that God spoke to him in a dream. The Lord told

Joseph not to be afraid of taking Mary as his wife. The child in her womb was from the Holy Spirit! How good it is to take all our worries to God. 'In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight' (Prov. 3:6).

b) Let us think about *the two names given to our Lord*. One describes his task and the other his nature.

The name *Jesus* means Saviour. It is the same name as Joshua in the Old Testament. Our Lord saves people from their sins. He saves them from the power of sin by putting the sanctifying Spirit into their hearts. He saves them from the presence of sin when he takes them out of this world to rest with him. He will save them from the results of their sin when he gives them a glorious body at the last day. Christ's people are not saved from sorrow and trouble; but they are 'saved from sin'. They are cleansed from guilt by Christ's blood. They are prepared for heaven by Christ's Spirit. This is salvation! But those who live with their sins are not yet saved. The name *Jesus* helps those of us bowed down under the weight of our sin. The Son of God was content with the name of Saviour. 'God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (John 3:17). Happy is the person who trusts in *Jesus*.

Immanuel is the other name given to our Lord and it means, 'God with us'. We must understand that *Jesus* is perfect man as well as perfect God, and perfect God as well as perfect man. We read in the Gospels

that Jesus could be weary, hungry and thirsty. He could weep and feel pain just like us. This shows us the man Jesus. But we also read that Jesus could see into people's hearts and minds. He had power over devils. He could work great miracles with a word. He spoke with angels. He allowed a disciple to call him 'God' (John 20:28) and he could say things like, 'Before Abraham was born, I am' (John 8:58) and 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30). In all this we see him 'who is God over all, for ever praised' (Rom. 9:5).

- We need constantly to keep this knowledge of the divinity of Jesus in our minds. We have been invited to trust in the blood of Jesus. Jesus is the one who possesses all power in heaven and earth and will allow no-one to take us from his hand. If we are believers in Jesus, our hearts need never be troubled or afraid.
- It is encouraging to be certain of the humanity of Jesus. As a baby, his mother Mary nursed him. As a man, he experienced the temptations of the devil. He endured real hunger, shed tears and felt pain. We may trust him with our sorrows; we may tell him everything that is in our hearts.

Let us praise God for the truths that the first chapter of Matthew contains. It tells us of the one who 'saves his people from their sins'. It tells us that this Saviour is 'Immanuel' God himself, and yet God with us, God made real in human flesh like us. This is good news! Let us believe these truths in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.