

ure : Matthew 1:18-25.

Topic: The Birth of Jesus.

Text: Matthew 1:25b --- "...she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus."

Proposition: The birth of Christ is important for mankind because through it God sent into the world living proof of his limitless love for us, thereby giving to us both an infallible teacher and guide and a means to obtain an underserved but happy eternity.†

Date written: January 12, 1963.

Dates and places used:

1-13-63 - Montrose, Colo.

1-17-65 - First Presbyterian Church,  
Montrose, Colo., 11am

1-8-67 Aurora & Denver

1-14-68 Canon, Colo.

12-28-69 Pullman Park, 7<sup>th</sup> St  
for Jan. 8

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1-12-63 - [unclear]  
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1-12-63 - [unclear]

Introduction:

1. The Scripture that we read today, Matthew 1:18-25, normally is thought of as a Christmas reading. It and the first two chapters of Luke are the only portions of the four gospels that have anything to say about Christ's birth; so naturally they are used repeatedly at Christmas time. Luke's account is the most-frequently used, and is in much more detail. Matthew's account, though shorter, tells the same message as Luke's of the birth from a virgin of a child who was the offspring of the one Almighty God Himself.

2. At Christmas time we do not ~~like to think too~~ <sup>USUALLY</sup> ~~closely~~ or ~~too~~ ~~deeply,~~ ~~nor consider analytically,~~ ~~and scientifically~~ the "how and why" of Christ's birth. At Christmas we prefer to adore the Christ child, and to accept the home-centered joyousness, beauty and warmth of the season. This is well and good, so long as we only postpone, not permanently turn away from, serious consideration of the meaning of the birth of Christ. A claim that this

While interviewing a customer who was seeking a personal loan, a banker noticed the customer's wife had walked to the teller's window with the couple's 5-year-old son. When the little boy came over to the desk where his Dad and the banker were, he was curious about his Dad's notations on the loan application form, and asked, "Dad, are you taking a test?"

"Yes," replied his father, "and it looks like it will be the first test I ever failed."

(from Burroughs Clearing House, as in Quote, Dec.28,1969).

Probably many church-going people, perhaps many of us, would fail a test on what The New Testament really has to say about the birth of Christ. To help us be better prepared to pass such a test, to help us achieve a greater familiarity with The New Testament's materials about Jesus' birth and role on earth, let us do a little ~~xxxxxx~~ reviewing and summarizing of Scripture here.

first Christmas child was the one and only Son of God is just too strong a claim for many people. Because it is a stumbling block, it deserves honest thought. Such thought can, we feel, lead to truth, and to inspiration which is from God himself

3. We think it <sup>is</sup> ~~to be most~~ honest ~~most~~ respectful, ~~most~~ <sup>AND</sup> pleasing to God, to consider seriously who Christ is, ~~to~~ think about ~~the~~ how and why of his birth, to seek the true and everlasting values in it. The first thing of importance that Matthew 1:18-25 suggests is the stumbling block that we have already mentioned.

I. The New Testament accounts of Christ's birth proclaim him as the sole Son of God.

L. The first verse of our Scripture, verse 18, says of Mary, "she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit." The phrase which has been translated "Holy Spirit" refers to the creative power of God. A Hebrew phrase which is often translated "Holy Spirit" has the same meaning. The Old Testament knew of many births which took place ~~only~~

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through God's direct intervention. The birth of Isaac, the son of Abraham's old age, was one such case. Another was when Samuel was born to Hannah. In both these cases no child would have been born without God's direct intervention, according to the story teller. These were different births than that of Jesus, however, for Isaac and Samael were accounted for as having two human parents, whereas it is told that Jesus had no human father.

2. What are we to believe about such a story? Should we accept it literally, as being basic to our faith? If it is so basic, why don't Mark and John mention it, and why isn't more attention paid to the virgin birth by the rest of the New Testament? We should point out that Mark, John and Paul teach the same basic truth about Christ, that he is God's only Son, without reference to Christ's miraculous birth. Matthew and Luke, who bring us the virgin birth account, were very close to Jewish tradition, where it was common to speculate rather freely on the causes of unusual greatness in a person. Even if this account of

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Jesus' birth should come from such respectful and pious speculation, it is nonetheless based on faith in the unlimited power of the one God, and not on pagan mythology. However you wish to account for or receive the story as it is presented, the main point of the birth of Christ record is the main starting point, the chief foundation, of all the rest that The New Testament has to say about Christ. This main point is, of course, that Christ is the one mortal who is wholly and completely the Son of God.

3. This point is made clearly again in our Scripture when the Lord is quoted as telling Joseph in a dream to name the child "Jesus." The name "Jesus" is a form of "Joshua," and means "Yahweh (or God) is salvation". The salvation that this Jesus would bring would be that of freeing people from their sins, a task until now reserved for God alone.

4. Matthew ends his account of the birth of Jesus with words that should successfully and finally refute those who try to claim that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was always a virgin,

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5. Much more than Matthew, Luke amplifies and stresses the divine nature of Jesus. The Christmas star is told about here. In Luke we read of the Shepherds who at his birth heard the angels sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." Luke tells of Simeon, an old man who had waited for years in the temple to see the Messiah before dying, who when he saw Jesus ~~took~~ took the baby in his arms, blessed him, and said, "Lord, ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> ~~let~~ <sup>let</sup> ~~rest~~ <sup>rest</sup> thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation...".

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6. Matthew tells of the wise men from the east who followed the star to the Christ child, bringing rich gifts. He writes of the cruel King Herod who tried to kill the new child, and did cause other newborn baby boys of Bethlehem to be slaughtered; but Jesus escaped because God protected him by warning Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt.

7. Although the Gospel according to John has nothing to say about the birth of Christ, it strongly points out his divine nature from the very beginning. Speaking of Jesus as "the word" of God, John writes; in what we now call John 1:1-3, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Then in verse 14 he writes: "and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." Verse 18 gets specific: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known."

A little boy by the name of Timothy had bought his Grandma a Bible for Christmas and wanted to write a suitable inscription on the flyleaf. He racked his brain until suddenly he remembered that his father had a book with an inscription of which he was very proud. So Tim decided to copy it.

Imagine Grandma's surprise on Christmas morning when she opened her gift, a beautiful Bible, and found neatly inscribed the words, "To Grandma, with the compliments of the Author."

(from Sunshine Magazine, as in Quote for Dec 28, 1969)

We might take the words of that inscription and say that ~~Jesus~~ Jesus was given to the world with the compliments of the author-creator-God.

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Then John goes about presenting the Jesus of the rest of his book as this Son of God.

8. Although Mark has nothing about the birth of Jesus, he concurs also as to who Jesus is. Mark 1:1 opens the writing with these words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God."

9. In all this review of events related to Christ's birth, and in reading of some of the more familiar passages about it, we believe that there is value in again becoming familiar with the beautiful, true and timeless words and message. The key message, of course, is from the birth of Christ: Christ is the Son of God, the only person ever completely so.

II. How the Son of God entered mortality, became a man, is not as important as why he did.

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he will save his people from their sins."

2. Most of us admit that we "get by" undetected or unpunished for things that we shouldn't. When we are so successful, we usually try soon to pull other "fast ones", at other times and places. Perhaps not all, but most people at some time in their lives have done things that were dishonest or illegal enough to bring upon them some penalty or punishment if caught in the acts. Most aren't caught. The few that are caught are often made such effective examples of "why crime does not pay" that many of the undetected ones stop their waywardness.

3. Most pre-christian forms of religion expected that a wrongdoer would be severely punished when he was caught. The punishment would vary according to the severity of the crime or the whim of the judge, who usually was the monarch or his representative. The Jews, from whose religion Christ was reared, had such a system. You could pay for, or do penance for, some wrongdoing

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through prayer, fasting, sacrificing living animals or birds on the temple altars, or perhaps be executed by stoning or hanging. People lived in superstitious terror of the priests, who had worked out in detail the costs in sacrifice, money and punishment of most of the wrongs that people might commit. These priestly law-makers were also often the judges. They and their temple were powerful and rich. Jesus, God's Son, came upon this scene and told people that all they needed to do to be forgiven their sins was to repent, love God and be saved. Once they had done this they could stay freer of future sins by practicing attitudes and habits which he taught and demonstrated. This forgiveness was and is free. After forgiveness, gifts and offerings to God's work are simply signs of ones gratitude and love, not the price you pay for past wrongs.

4. Salvation from sin is certainly one message of the birth of Jesus. So is the message of peace on earth. So, also, is the theme of good will among men. That Christ always was, always has been, and always will be, as John insists, indicates for us that

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God himself is interested in each of us, and that he has eternal plans for all of us.

5. These, then, are the reasons why Christ became immortal, according to the story of his birth: to free mankind from sin, to bring peace, to promote good will among people, to show God's concern for each individual, to give to each person the promise of immortality.

III. As we come closer to understanding why the birth of Christ took place we can find his real and lasting significance for us.

1. In ascertaining why Christ came, we have also pointed to the real and lasting significance which he has for us. However, we have talked in rather general terms. It is important to remember that Christ forces none of his ways on us.

2. Each of us is different from any other person. Each of us makes choices differently from any other person. Each of us thinks a bit differently. Each of us has differing

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emotions. True, enough of us act, think, eat, play, worship, talk, dress, etc., so similarly that people can be grouped into general classifications for discussion purposes. Nevertheless, each person is different to at least some degree from others. In things ~~x~~ religious, therefore, each of us probably responds a bit differently from anybody else. We cannot believe, ~~either~~, that Jesus forces on us uniformity in acceptance of him and his ~~te~~achings. The significance that he has for each is somewhat different from his meaning to any other person.

3. Having granted this, we can still claim that the significance of Christ is that which daily living brings out. Christ is a way of life, an attitude, a certainty for the future. We express him differently, but as we express him in daily life we help build a society and a future which is based on true godliness. Christ is significant to us because he is food for the present and hope for the future.

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Conclusion:

1. We have seen that the birth of Christ proclaims Jesus as the Son of God;

2. that how the Son of God entered ~~m~~ortality is not as important as why he did; and that

3. as we come closer to understanding why the birth of Christ took place we find in him real and lasting significance, each of us finding this in terms of his own personality.

4. All of this brings us to conclude that the birth of Christ is important for mankind because through it God sent into the world living proof of his limitless love for us, thereby giving to us both an infal-  
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4. All of this brings us to conclude that the birth of Christ is important for mankind because through it God came into the world living, freed of his limitless love for us, thereby giving to us both spiritual life teacher and guide, and a means to gain an unreserved but happy eternity.

Father, we are grateful for thy undeserved but gracious and great love toward us, show first to the world so wonderfully and beautifully at the birth of Jesus. In gratitude and love we would try daily to be more like him, and to look forward to eternity with Thee and with Him.

Amen.

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