

Christmas—and the Greatest Question of All Time

An Advent & Christmas Message for 2016

Dr. Jack C. Whytock

The greatest question in the Bible is, “*Who do you say that Jesus is?*” (Matthew 16:15). This is not only the greatest question in the Bible but the greatest question of all time to ask. I want to ask you this question this Christmas. *I want to know if you are clear about who is this baby Jesus and also are you clear about your relationship with Him?* I want to take you to the very first verse, of the very first chapter, of the very first book of the New Testament to answer the first part of this question about, “*who is this baby Jesus*”. And as we proceed you will then have to answer the second part of this question – “*what do you say?*”. I can only lead you there, but I cannot answer it for you.

Matthew chapter, one verse one reads: “*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*” (KJV) When families have a new baby they often enter it into a family register or book, the names of the ancestors, and then their new infant’s name. Well in many ways that is what we are reading here in Matthew chapter one. Here are the ancestors and here are the baby’s names. This baby we discover in Matthew chapter one He has a name which is above every name -- right from his birth!

Today when kings and queens are crowned the long list of all their names and titles are read out—yes read out because most cannot keep them all straight! These names are often given for heroic leaders of the past. But there is a difference here with this first mention of Jesus’ names. It is not only about heroic names of the past but rather it is about names where a prophecy was attached and a promise made. So let’s begin.

1. Jesus—the son of Abraham (vs.1d) What a strange name to give to baby Jesus here in verse one. Why this name? Because it hearkens back to a promise that blessings are going to come from Abraham’s line and Abraham’s seed and this will bless the whole world (Genesis 12:3). Well, at the birth of Jesus you see it fulfilled in the very next chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. Magi—wise men—from the East come to see baby Jesus and worship Him and bring gifts. They are Gentiles, not Jews, and they represent the promise now fulfilled that Jesus is the son of Abraham, and the *nations-the peoples* of the earth are being blessed in Him. That is why the last two verses of Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 28:19-20) speak of the command to go to all the *nations* and tell them about Jesus Christ and bring them under His reign. What a child of

promise—He brings blessings to all peoples! Have you seen any blessing yet in Jesus Christ for you? Do you believe that Jesus is a blessing for all kinds of peoples of all cultures and races and generations? Matthew is telling us this baby is for all the world a blessing!

2. Jesus—the son of David (vs.1c) Here is another name for this baby Jesus in verse one. What is the great symbolism of Judaism? Answer, it is the Star of David. I walked some students around recently in King William's Town, South Africa and tried teaching them to observe the details around them. I pointed to an old building and to a window high up near the peak of the roof. I asked what it was? I was told a window. I said "look again." Eventually someone said it. It looks like a star, but why? I said "because it is the Star of David." That building many, many years ago was a Jewish synagogue. David was the greatest of all the kings of the Jews, yet he was also a disappointment. But there was a promise that one day, one greater than David the King would come (2 Samuel 7:16). This is fulfilled in Jesus. He is in the royal line of the Jewish kings but He is the greatest of all the kings and He will reign forever and forever. There is no earthly king like Him. He stands over all the earthly kings and leaders and He reigns in the hearts of His followers and citizens of His kingdom. This little baby is the greater King David and He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The child who reigns over the hearts of people! Have you submitted to His reign over you or are you living as your own king? Until you submit to His rule then you are not true to Christmas.

3. Jesus—the Christ (vs1b,16) Here is a third name in verse one for this baby. "Christ," means "the anointed one", the Messiah. In Matthew chapter three you learn of Jesus' public anointing by the Holy Spirit and the words of the heavenly Father at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:16). He has been set apart from all humanity—promised of old, now come to earth. This baby born of Mary is set apart from every child ever born. He is truly unique—He is truly anointed with power, with majesty, with glory, and with grace. Some are offended by such talk and rightly so unless it is true—and it is. He is the Christ—the anointed and there is no other like Him in all the earth and in all the ages.

4. Jesus—the Saviour (vs.1a, 21 25) Now the fourth name here in verse one and repeated in chapter one to be made perfectly clear so that no one will miss the point. The angel told Joseph to name the baby "Jesus". This was not an unusual name for it was a derivative of Joshua—one who saves BUT this time it is different. He will save from sin and He is born with this specific purpose—"to save his people from their sins". Yes, Christmas is the time to speak of

sin. We all have sinned and missed the mark and have gone our own way—a way of rebellion and pride and self-seeking—ours is the guilt and ours is the problem. This problem can only be resolved through this child Jesus. Jesus saves from guilt by the washing of His blood and Jesus saves from sin's dominion and power. We need the pardon and salvation of this child Jesus because we are sinners. What a child, what a Saviour—Jesus. Do you believe that this is who this baby is—the Saviour of His people? It is by belonging to Jesus, being one of His people that brings salvation from sin. Joseph was told so name Him Jesus. And Joseph obeyed and named Him, Jesus—the one who will save (Acts 4:12).

5. Jesus—Emmanuel—God with us (vs.23) We come now to the fifth name of Jesus in Matthew chapter one—*Emmanuel*, God with us. Imagine the power of this name—this baby is God in the flesh come to earth. The incarnation is miraculous, divine, extraordinary. There has never been anything like it in all of the generations of humankind. What a mystery—Jesus is both human and divine. Yes, Jesus knows your heart and thoughts and He has power over devils and over death—He is divine, yet also human and feels your sorrows. This was John Wesley's dying words—"The best of all is, 'God is with us'". This is wonderfully comforting but it is also awesomely jarring. This baby is God come to earth. Forget the sentimental aspects of Christmas and focus on the essence of the story. Here is the shock to the world -- the very identity of this baby is God in the flesh.

From the very first verse, of the first chapter, of the first book of the New Testament Matthew, through a genealogical record, comes the unique and awesome names placed upon this child of Mary and Joseph. **He is the son of Abraham**, the blessed seed who will bless all the nations and peoples of the world; **He is the son of David**, the blessed child king whom men and women must run to and bow down in submission and allow His reign to bear over their lives; **He is the Christ**, the one set apart as the anointed by God, set apart from all prophets and priests and leaders; **He is named Jesus** because we have a great problem which needs His saving power and work-- He saves from sin; and **He is Emmanuel**, the baby boy, is God come to earth.

Are you clear as to who this baby is? And what have you done with Him? May God bless you this Christmas season to know the most amazing story of history that has relevance for your life today and for all eternity.

The question and answer of the old Christmas carol sums it all up very well:

Question:

**What child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherd's watch are keeping?**

Answer:

***This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste, to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary.***

(adpt. William Dix c.

1865)