

Jesus Is The Key.

Text: Matt 1:18-25

Suggested Hymns:

625, 26, 23, 839, 25

1) To the text

2) To the Christmas event

3) To life

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 1:18-23, ¹⁸ *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.* ¹⁹ *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.*

²⁰ *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.* ²¹ *"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."*

²² *So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:* ²³ *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

During the Advent Season we sang the hymn:¹

O come, Thou key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the path that leads on high,
And close the path to misery:

*Rejoice, rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.*

Today, in our text we have its answer. The Key of David, Jesus Christ, has come. Rejoice! and again I say, Rejoice!

Many and mysterious are the names given to the promised and hoped-for Messiah in the Old Testament. The Children of Israel must often have pondered on their meaning and use.

The Advent hymn quoted used two others, Rod of Jesse and Dayspring from on high. There are scores more, Rose of Sharon, Ancient of Days, Desire of Nations, etc.

From the vantage point of our New Testament times we can see them, as it were like bits and pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Each one said something else about the Messiah, and then one day the pieces were all assembled and the picture was complete, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.

But for the moment let us see Jesus as The Key in its simplest and most obvious meaning as that which locks and opens. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Jesus Is The Key To The Text

JESUS is the Key to unlock the text. Note again how it begins, ¹⁸ *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows*; and how it ends, *and you shall call His name JESUS*. Its meaning, the central thought and its heart is ²¹ *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*

Let there be no mistake about it. Our Christmas text is all about Jesus. His is the name, He is the One who will unlock its meaning for us so that, hearing, we may believe.

Jesus is, of course, the Key to unlock all Scripture. It was claimed at one time that every inch of rope in the British Navy could be identified because woven through every yard of it was an unbroken red thread. Cut into the God-woven strands of Scripture at any point, and a similar identifying theme is revealed. All the Bible is all about JESUS.

The Bible opens with the theme of Jesus. We read in Genesis, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ... And God said.”* In his

gospel John explains that the Word God spoke became flesh in the person of Jesus, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.

The writer of Hebrews assures us that the love whereby God redeemed us was the same love whereby He created us and all things — and that love is personified in the name and person of Jesus.

And it is also on this theme that the Bible closes, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”* If you want to find the final purpose of all Scripture; if you want to unlock its ultimate meaning, do not use a human key because the bias of the human mind wrests against Scripture.

Rather let the leading of the apostle Philip guide you. When the Ethiopian eunuch had trouble unravelling the prophecy of Isaiah, he asked for help. Philip sat down next to him in his chariot, and he *“opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.”*²

2. Jesus Is The Key To The Christmas Event

Certainly and secondly, as the Key to all Scripture, JESUS is the Key to the event we commemorate today. Today we are celebrating the birth of JESUS.

Well, isn't this saying the obvious? Not so. For see how the world's celebration of Christmas tries, and just about succeeds, in nudging Christ out of the picture. The commercialising of Christmas by the business world has been done to excess. In the media it seems that all that matters is Retail Sales.

People are more concerned about Christmas parties instead of JESUS' birth. Then there are those pleasant, and in themselves harmless, traditions that have over the centuries attached themselves to Christmas.

Most apparent are the customs of the Christmas tree, the exchange of gifts and the festivities, Santa Claus and sleigh bells. Sadly, instead of using the angel's message, ¹¹ *“For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”*³ and the angels song, ¹⁴ *“Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”* the tendency in printed media and TV is to make use of the angels' song as a pious dream for an unattainable *“peace on earth”* and an end of man's inhumanity to man.

Or else, in the depths of sentimentality, Christmas is simply a Children's Day — a counterpart to Mother's Day and Father's Day. It becomes the day *“that is*

peculiarly and uniquely the festival of childhood,” and so the INFANCY of Jesus is extolled instead of the birth of JESUS.

It is true, Jesus came among us as a weak and helpless baby, but He was still Immanuel —God with us. From one of His little curled fingers the universe could swing like a trinket. It is true, Jesus came to bring peace on earth and to exhibit God’s goodwill toward men, but He would not accomplish this by any summit meeting of the heads of state, nor by organising a society for the prevention of cruelty to man.

Rather Jesus would fulfil His mission and accomplish His ministry by accepting the guilt of man’s sinning to the end of time and dying for them. ***You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.***

Christmas is a happy festival, and we surround it with all its beloved customs and traditions. But only if they all point to the central fact, the key to the event, namely, that although we bow in adoration before an infant in a manger, we are worshiping God in all His majesty, might, and mercy. Remember how Jesus said, ***“My glory will I not give to another,”***⁴ and then remember that only Christ makes Christmas.

3. Jesus Is The Key To Life

But, finally, we must this day rediscover JESUS as the Key to life itself. Jesus nativity is not in and by itself redemptive. The angel had said, ***“He shall save His people from their sins,”*** and some 33 years would have to pass before He could cry out, ***“It is finished.”***

First Jesus will have to grow up out of infancy into boyhood subject to His parents. He shall have to step out into manhood to be tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He shall have to experience all that our flesh experiences: hunger and thirst, pain and anger, disappointment and misunderstanding, denial and betrayal. And then hate, violence, and death at last. All these things must still come to pass, for Jesus was to be tempted in all points as we are.

And yet there is Gospel in His birth; there is Good News in His incarnation. Although for Jesus being conceived by the Holy Spirit and being born of the Virgin Mary was a step down and a humiliation, since He is God, for man it is

tidings of great joy that God did not despise our world or hold our flesh in contempt.

God became man and entered our earth. Despite what man had done in and to the flesh, despite the groaning of the whole creation by reason of man's long sinning, God did not disdain it; He inhabited it. He came on Christmas into our sin-spoiled world. He came in the same helpless, dependent way in which we enter it.

Jesus was voluntarily limited by the same limitations of our bodies — with hands that could reach only so far and do only so much, with feet that could run only so fast, and lips that could only use the inadequacies of human speech.

Of His own free will He even accepted a mind restricted, according to His human nature, in its knowledge by time, space, and the culture of His day, ignorant as our minds are of the future.

In short, when God became man, He emptied Himself. He did not always and not fully use His majesty of God, but through His state of humiliation He gave us new hope and courage and even pride in our creatureliness. For He made do with His body and its limitations. He made do with His human mind. He showed us that even with our frail bodies it is possible to obey, to serve, and to glorify God.

The perfection of His achievement will encourage us to be like Him, to live as He did, to die with Him. In JESUS we discover what man once was before sin came and also what he might strive to become when Christ dwells in him.

The world and all that was in it was good in the eyes of the Creator. He intended man to enjoy the body he inhabited and the world he dwelt in. This is still His intent and desire despite man's disobedience and sin. To that end He sent His Son into our world to blot out man's guilt and set his feet once again on a road of peace and a pathway of joy.

And so having found in JESUS the Key to *“open wide our heav'nly home and make safe the way that leads on high,”* let us now find Jesus the Key to *“close the paths to misery”* as the hymnist writes.

Let us keep the feast in the joy of our family circles, in the exchange of gifts, in songs and merriment. Who has better reason than the Christian to celebrate a happy and glorious Christmas? Amen.

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

¹ Hymn 2

² Acts 8:32

³ Luke 2:10

⁴ Isaiah 42:8