

CHAPTER 1

This evangelist begins with the account of Christ's parentage and birth, the ancestors from whom he descended, and the manner of his entry into the world, to make it appear that he was indeed the Messiah promised, for it was foretold that he should be the son of David, and should be born of a virgin; and that he was so is here plainly shown; for here is,

I. His pedigree from Abraham in forty-two generations, three fourteens (v. 1-17).

II. An account of the circumstances of his birth, so far as was requisite to show that he was born of a virgin (v. 18-25). Thus methodically is the life of our blessed Saviour written, as lives should be written, for the clearer proposing of the example of them.

◀◀ MATTHEW 1:1-17

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

Concerning this genealogy of our Saviour, observe,

I. The title of it. It is *the book* (or the account, as the Hebrew word *sepher*, a book, sometimes signifies) *of the generation of Jesus Christ*, of his ancestors according to the flesh; or, It is the narrative of his birth. It is *Biblos Geneseos* — a book of *Genesis*. The Old Testament begins with the book of the generation of the world, and it is its glory that it does so; but the glory of the New Testament *herein* excelleth, that it begins with *the book of the generation of him that made the world*. As God, *his outgoings were of old, from everlasting* (◀◀ Micah 5:2), and none can declare that generation; but, as man, he was *sent forth in the fulness of time, born of a woman*, and it is that generation which is here declared.

II. The principal intention of it. It is not an endless or needless genealogy; it is not a vain-glorious one, as those of great men commonly are. *Stemmata, quid faciunt?* — *Of what avail are ancient pedigrees?* It is like a pedigree given in evidence, to prove a title, and make out a claim; the

design is to prove that our Lord Jesus is *the son of David*, and *the son of Abraham*, and therefore of that nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. Abraham and David were, in their day, the great trustees of the promise relating to the Messiah. *The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed, of the dominion to David and his seed*; and they who would have an interest in Christ, as *the son of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed*, must be faithful, loyal subjects to him as *the son of David*, by whom *all the families of the earth* are to be ruled. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him (^{<117B>}Genesis 12:3; 22:18), and to David that he should descend from him (^{<107D>}2 Samuel 7:12; ^{<188B>}Psalms 89:3, etc.; 132:11); and therefore, unless it can be proved that Jesus is a *son of David*, and a *son of Abraham*, we cannot admit him to be the Messiah. Now this is here proved from the authentic records of the heralds' offices. The Jews were very exact in preserving their pedigrees, and there was a providence in it, for the clearing up of the descent of the Messiah from the fathers; and since his coming that nation is so dispersed and confounded that it is a question whether any person in the world can legally prove himself to be a *son of Abraham*; however, it is certain that none can prove himself to either a son of Aaron or a *son of David*, so that the priestly and kingly office must either be given up, as lost for ever, or be lodged in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Christ is here first called *the son of David*, because under that title he was commonly spoken of, and expected, among the Jews. They who owned him to be *the Christ*, called him *the son of David*, ^{<162>}Matthew 15:22; 20:31; 21:15. Thus, therefore, the evangelist undertakes to make out, that he is not only a *son of David*, but that *son of David* on whose *shoulders the government was to be*; not only a *son of Abraham*, but that *son of Abraham* who was to be *the father of many nations*.

In calling Christ the *son of David*, and *the son of Abraham*, he shows that God is faithful to his promise, and will make good every word that he has spoken; and this.

1. Though the performance be long deferred. When God promised Abraham a son, who should be the great blessing of the world, perhaps he expected it should be his immediate son; but it proved to be one at the distance of forty-two generations, and about 2000 years: so long before can God foretel what shall be done, and so long after, sometimes, does

God fulfil what has been promised. Note, Delays of promised mercies, though they exercise our patience, do not weaken God's promise.

2. Though it begin to be despaired of. This *son of David*, and *son of Abraham*, who was to be the glory of his Father's house, was born when the seed of Abraham was a despised people, recently become tributary to the Roman yoke, and when the house of David was buried in obscurity; for Christ was to be *a root out of a dry ground*. Note, God's time for the performance of his promises is when it labours under the greatest improbabilities.

III. The particular series of it, drawn in the direct line from Abraham downward, according to the genealogies recorded in the beginning of the books of Chronicles (as far as those go), and which here we see the use of.

Some particulars we may observe in the genealogy.

1. Among the ancestors of Christ who had brethren, generally he descended from a younger brother; such Abraham himself was, and Jacob, and Judah, and David, and Nathan, and Rhesa; to show that the pre-eminence of Christ came not, as that of earthly princes, from the primogeniture of his ancestors, but from the will of God, who, according to the method of his providence, *exalteth them of low degree*, and puts *more abundant honour upon that part which lacked*.

2. Among the sons of Jacob, besides Judah, from whom Shiloh came, notice is here taken of *his brethren: Judas and his brethren*. No mention is made of Ishmael the son of Abraham, or of Esau the son of Isaac, because they were shut out of the church; whereas all the children of Jacob were taken in, and, though not fathers of Christ, were yet patriarchs of the church (⁴⁰⁸Acts 7:8), and therefore are mentioned in the genealogy, for the encouragement of the *twelve tribes that were scattered abroad*, intimating to them that they have an interest in Christ, and stand in relation to him as well as Judah.

3. Phares and Zara, the twin-sons of Judah, are likewise both named, though Phares only was Christ's ancestor, for the same reason that the brethren of Judah are taken notice of; and some think because the birth of Phares and Zara had something of an allegory in it. Zara put out his hand first, as the first-born, but, drawing it in, Phares got the birth-right. The Jewish church, like Zara, reached first at the birthright, but through

unbelief, withdrawing the hand, the Gentile church, like Phares, broke forth and went away with the birthright; and thus *blindness is in part happened unto Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles become in*, and then Zara shall be born — *all Israel shall be saved*, ^{<8125>}Romans 11:25, 26.

4. There are four women, and but four, named in this genealogy; two of them were originally *strangers to the commonwealth of Israel*, Rachab a Canaanitess, and a harlot besides, and Ruth the Moabitess; for *in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek, nor Jew*; those that are *strangers and foreigners* are welcome, in Christ, to *the citizenship of the saints*. The other two were adulteresses, Tamar and Bathsheba; which was a further mark of humiliation put upon our Lord Jesus, that not only he descended from such, but that is decent from them is particularly remarked in his genealogy, and no veil drawn over it. He took upon him *the likeness of sinful flesh* (^{<8183>}Romans 8:3), and takes even great sinners, upon their repentance, into the nearest relation to himself. Note, We ought not to upbraid people with the scandals of their ancestors; it is what they cannot help, and has been the lot of the best, even of our Master himself. *David's begetting Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias* is taken notice of (says Dr. Whitby) to show that the crime of David, being repented to, was so far from hindering the promise made to him, that it pleased God by this very woman to fulfil it.

5. Though divers kings are here named, yet none is expressly called a king but David (v. 6), *David the king*; because with him the covenant of royalty was made, and to him the promise of the kingdom of the Messiah was given, who is therefore said to inherit *the throne of his father David*, ^{<8113>}Luke 1:32.

6. In the pedigree of the kings of Judah, between Joram and Ozias (v. 8), there are three left out, namely, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah; and therefore when it is said, *Joram begat Ozias*, it is meant, according to the usage of the Hebrew tongue, that Ozias was lineally descended from him, as it is said to Hezekiah that *the sons which he should beget should be carried to Babylon*, whereas they were removed several generations from him. It was not through mistake or forgetfulness that these three were omitted, but, probably, they were omitted in the genealogical tables that the evangelist consulted, which yet were admitted as authentic. Some give this reason for it: — It being Matthew's design, for the sake of memory, to reduce the number of Christ's ancestors to three fourteens, it was requisite

that in this period three should be left out, and none more fit than they who were the immediate progeny of cursed Athaliah, who introduced the idolatry of Ahab into the house of David, for which this brand is set upon the family and the iniquity thus visited *to the third and fourth generation*. Two of these three were apostates; and such God commonly sets a mark of his displeasure upon in this world: they all three had their heads brought to the grave with blood.

7. Some observe what a mixture there was of good and bad in the succession of these kings; as for instance (v. 7, 8), wicked *Roboam begat* wicked *Abia*; wicked *Abia begat* good *Asa*; good *Asa begat* good *Josaphat*; good *Josaphat begat* wicked *Joram*. Grace does not run in the blood, neither does reigning sin. God's grace is his own, and he gives or withholds it as he pleases.

8. The captivity of Babylon is mentioned as a remarkable period in this line, v. 11, 12. All things considered, it was a wonder that the Jews were not lost in that captivity, as other nations have been; but this intimates the reason why the streams of that people were kept to run pure through that dead sea, because from them, as *concerning the flesh, Christ was to come. Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it*, even that blessing of blessings, Christ himself, ^(~~2388~~) Isaiah 65:8, 9. It was with an eye to him that they were restored, and the desolations of the sanctuary were looked upon with favour *for the Lord's sake*, ^(~~2017~~) Daniel 9:17.

9. *Josias* is said to *beget Jechonias and his brethren* (v. 11); by *Jechonias* here is meant *Jehoiakim*, who was the first-born of *Josias*; but, when it is said (v. 12) that *Jechonias begat Salathiel*, that *Jechonias* was the son of that *Jehoiakim* who was carried into Babylon, and there begat *Salathiel* (as Dr. Whitby shows), and, when *Jechonias* is said to have been written *childless* (^(~~2020~~) Jeremiah 22:30), it is explained thus: *No man of his seed shall prosper. Salathiel* is here said to *beget Zorobabel*, whereas *Salathiel* begat *Pedaiah*, and he begat *Zorobabel* (^(~~1388~~) 1 Chronicles 3:19): but, as before, the grandson is often called the son; *Pedaiah*, it is likely, died in his father's lifetime, and so his son *Zorobabel* was called the *son of Salathiel*.

10. The line is brought down, not to *Mary* the mother of our Lord, but to *Joseph the husband of Mary* (v. 16); for the Jews always reckoned their genealogies by the males: yet *Mary* was of the same tribe and family with *Joseph*, so that, both by his mother and by his supposed father, he was of

the house of David; yet his interest in that dignity is derived by Joseph, to whom really according to the flesh he had no relation, to show that the kingdom of the Messiah is not founded in a natural descent from David.

11. The centre in whom all these lines meet is *Jesus, who is called Christ*, v. 16. This is he that was so importunately desired, so impatiently expected, and to whom the patriarchs had an eye when they were so desirous of children, that they might have the honour of coming into the sacred line. Blessed be God, we are not now in such a dark and cloudy state of expectation as they were then in, but see clearly what these prophets and kings saw as through a glass darkly. And we may have, if it be not our own fault, a greater honour than that of which they were so ambitious: for they who do the will of God are in a more honourable relation to Christ than those who were akin to him according to the flesh, ^{<1023>}Matthew 12:50. *Jesus* is called *Christ*, that is, the *Anointed*, the same with the *Hebrew* name *Messiah*. He is called *Messiah the Prince* (^{<2025>}Daniel 9:25), and often God's *Anointed* (^{<1010>}Psalms 2:2). Under this character he was expected: *Art thou the Christ — the anointed one?* David, the king, was anointed (^{<0663>}1 Samuel 16:13); so was Aaron, the priest (^{<1082>}Leviticus 8:12), and Elisha, the prophet (^{<1106>}1 Kings 19:16), and Isaiah, the prophet (^{<2311>}Isaiah 61:1). Christ, being appointed to, and qualified for, all these offices, is therefore called the *Anointed — anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows*; and from this name of his, which is as ointment poured forth, all his followers are called *Christians*, for they also have *received the anointing*.

Lastly. The general summary of all this genealogy we have, v. 17, where it is summed up in three fourteens, signalized by remarkable periods. In the first fourteen, we have the family of David rising, and looking forth as the morning; in the second, we have it flourishing in its meridian lustre; in the third, we have it declining and growing less and less, dwindling into the family of a poor carpenter, and then Christ *shines forth* out of it, the *glory of his people Israel*.

◀118▶ MATTHEW 1:18-25

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The mystery of Christ's incarnation is to be adored, not pried into. If we *know not the way of the Spirit* in the formation of common persons, nor *how the bones are formed in the womb of any one that is with child* (◀118▶ Ecclesiastes 11:5), much less do we know how the blessed Jesus was formed in the womb of the blessed virgin. When David admires how he himself was *made in secret, and curiously wrought* (◀119▶ Psalm 139:13-16), perhaps he speaks in the spirit of Christ's incarnation. Some circumstances attending the birth of Christ we find here which are not in Luke, though it is more largely recorded here. Here we have,

I. Mary's espousal to Joseph. Mary, the mother of our Lord, *was espoused to Joseph*, not completely married, but contracted; a purpose of marriage solemnly declared in words *de futuro* — *that regarding the future*, and a promise of it made if God permit. We read of a man who *has betrothed a wife and has not taken her*, (◀120▶ Deuteronomy 20:7. Christ was born of a virgin, but a betrothed virgin,

1. To put respect upon the marriage state, and to recommend it *as honourable among all*, against that doctrine of devils which *forbids to marry*, and places perfection in the single state. Who more highly favoured than Mary was in her espousals?

2. To save the credit of the blessed virgin, which otherwise would have been exposed. It was fit that her conception should be protected by a marriage, and so justified in the eye of the world. One of the ancients says, It was better it should be asked, Is not this the *son of a carpenter?* than, Is not this the *son of a harlot?*

3. That the blessed virgin might have one to be the guide of her youth, the companion of her solitude and travels, a partner in her cares, and a help meet for her. Some think that Joseph was now a widower, and that those who are called the *brethren of Christ* (◀121▶ Matthew 13:55), were Joseph's children by a former wife. This is the conjecture of many of the ancients. Joseph was *just man*, she a *virtuous woman*. Those who are *believers* should not be *unequally yoked with unbelievers*: but let those who are religious choose to marry with those who are so, as they expect the

comfort of the relation, and God's blessing upon them in it. We may also learn, from this example, that it is good to enter into the married state with deliberation, and not hastily — to preface the nuptials with a contract. It is better to *take* time to consider before than to *find* time to repent after.

II. Her pregnancy of the promised seed; *before they came together*, she *was found with child*, which really was *of the Holy Ghost*. The marriage was deferred so long after the contract that she appeared to be *with child* before the time came for the solemnizing of the marriage, though she was contracted before she conceived. Probably, it was after her return from her cousin Elizabeth, with whom she continued *three months* (~~416~~ Luke 1:56), that she was perceived by Joseph to be with child, and did not herself deny it. Note, Those in whom Christ is formed will show it: it will be *found to be* a work of God which he will own. Now we may well imagine, what a perplexity this might justly occasion to the blessed virgin. She herself knew the divine original of this conception; but how could she prove it? She would be *dealt with as a harlot*. Note, After great and high advancements, lest we should be puffed up with them, we must expect something or other to humble us, some reproach, *as a thorn in the flesh*, nay, *as a sword in the bones*. Never was any daughter of Eve so dignified as the Virgin Mary was, and yet in danger of falling under the imputation of one of the worse crimes; yet we do not find that she tormented herself about it; but, being conscious of her own innocence, she kept her mind calm and easy, and committed her cause to *him that judgeth righteously*. Note, those who take care to keep a good conscience may cheerfully trust God with the keeping of their good names, and have reason to hope that he will clear up, not only their integrity, but their honour, as the sun at noon day.

III. Joseph's perplexity, and his care what to do in this case. We may well imagine what a great trouble and disappointment it was to him to find one he had such an opinion of, and value for, come under the suspicion of such a heinous crime. *Is this Mary?* He began to think, “How may we be deceived in those we think best of! How may we be disappointed in what we expect most from!” He is loth to believe so ill a thing of one whom he believed to be so good a woman; and yet the matter, as it is too bad to be excused, is also too plain to be denied. What a struggle does this occasion in his breast between that jealousy which is the rage of man, and is cruel

as the grave, on the one hand, and that affection which he has for Mary on the other!

Observe,

1. The extremity which he studied to avoid. He was *not willing to make her a public example*. He might have done so; for, by the law, a *betrothed virgin*, if she played the harlot, was to be stoned to death, ⁽⁶²²³⁾Deuteronomy 22:23, 24. But he was *not willing* to take the advantage of the law against her; if she be guilty, yet it is not known, nor shall it be known from him. How different was the spirit which Joseph displayed from that of Judah, who in a similar case hastily passed that severe sentence, *Bring her forth and let her be burnt!* ⁽⁶³²⁴⁾Genesis 38:24. How good it is to *think on things*, as Joseph did here! Were there more of deliberation in our censures and judgments, there would be more of mercy and moderation in them. Bringing her to punishment is here called *making her a public example*; which shows what is the end to be aimed at in punishment — the giving of warning to others: it is *in terrorem* — *that all about may hear and fear*. *Smite the scorner*, and the simple will beware.

Some persons of a rigorous temper would blame Joseph for his clemency: but it is here spoken of to his praise; because *he was a just man*, therefore he was not willing to expose her. He was a *religious, good man*; and therefore inclined to be merciful as God is, and to *forgive* as one that was *forgiven*. In the case of the betrothed damsel, if she were defiled in the field, the law charitably supposed that she *cried out* (⁽⁶²²⁶⁾Deuteronomy 22:26), and she was not to be punished. Some charitable construction or other Joseph will put upon this matter; and herein he is a *just man*, tender of the good name of one who never before had done anything to blemish it. Note, It becomes us, in many cases, to be gentle towards those that come under suspicion of having offended, to hope the best concerning them, and make the best of that which at first appears bad, in hopes that it may prove better. *Summum just summa injuria* — *The rigour of the law is (sometimes) the height of injustice*. That court of conscience which moderates the rigour of the law we call a *court of equity*. Those who are found faulty were perhaps *overtaken in the fault*, and are therefore to be *restored with the spirit of meekness*; and threatening, even when just, must be moderated.

2. The expedient he found out for avoiding this extremity. He was *minded to put her away privily*, that is, to give a bill of divorce into her hand

before two witnesses, and so to hush up the matter among themselves. Being a *just man*, that is, a strict observer of the law, he would not proceed to marry her, but resolved to *put her away*; and yet, in tenderness for her, determined to do it as privately as possible. Note, The necessary censures of those who have offended ought to be managed without noise. The *words of the wise are heard in quiet*. Christ himself *shall not strive nor cry*. Christian love and Christian prudence will *hide a multitude of sins*, and great ones, as far as may be done without having fellowship with them.

IV. Joseph's discharge from this perplexity by an express sent from heaven, v. 20, 21. *While he thought on these things* and knew not what to determine, God graciously directed him what to do, and made him easy. Note, Those who would have direction from God must *think on things* themselves, and consult with themselves. It is the *thoughtful*, not the *unthinking*, whom God will guide. When he was at a loss, and had carried the matter as far as he could in his own thoughts, then God came in with advice. Note, God's time to come in with instruction to his people is when they are *nonplussed* and at a stand. God's comforts most delight the soul *in the multitude* of its perplexed *thoughts*. The message was sent to Joseph by an *angel of the Lord*, probably the same angel that brought Mary the tidings of the conception — the angel Gabriel. Now the intercourse with heaven, by angels, with which the patriarchs had been dignified, but which had been long disused, begins to be revived; for, when the *First-begotten* is to be *brought into the world*, the angels are ordered to attend his motions. How far God may now, in an invisible way, make use of the ministration of angels, for extricating his people out of their straits, we cannot say; but this we are sure of, they are all *ministering spirits* for their good. This angel appeared to Joseph *in a dream* when he was asleep, as God sometimes spoke unto the fathers. When we are most quiet and composed we are in the best frame to receive the notices of the divine will. The Spirit moves on the calm waters. This dream, no doubt, carried its own evidence along with it that it was of God, and not the production of a vain fancy. Now,

1. Joseph is here *directed* to proceed in his intended marriage. The angel calls him, *Joseph, thou son of David*; he puts him in mind of his relation to David, that he might be prepared to receive this surprising intelligence of his relation to the Messiah, who, every one knew, was to be a descendant from David. Sometimes, when great honours devolve upon

those who have small estates, they care not for accepting them, but are willing to drop them; it was therefore requisite to put this poor carpenter in mind of his high birth: “Value thyself. Joseph, thou art that *son of David* through whom the line of the Messiah is to be drawn.” We may thus say to every true believer, “Fear not, thou son of Abraham, thou child of God; forget not the dignity of thy birth, thy new birth.” *Fear not to take Mary for thy wife*; so it may be read. Joseph, suspecting she was with child by whoredom, was afraid of *taking her*, lest he should bring upon himself either guilt or reproach. No, saith God, *Fear not*; the matter is not so. Perhaps Mary had told him that she was with child by the Holy Ghost, and he might have heard what Elizabeth said to her (^{<416>}Luke 1:43), when she called her the *mother of her Lord*; and, if so, he was afraid of presumption in marrying one so much above him. But, from whatever cause his fears arose, they were all silenced with this word, *Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife*. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from our fears, and to have our doubts resolved, so as to proceed in our affairs with satisfaction.

2. He is here *informed* concerning that *holy thing* with which his espoused wife was now pregnant. That which is conceived in her is of a divine original. He is so far from being in danger of sharing in an impurity by marrying her, that he will thereby share in the highest dignity he is capable of. Two things he is told,

(1.) That she had conceived *by the power of the Holy Ghost*; not by the power of nature. The Holy Spirit, who produced the world, now produced the Saviour of the world, and *prepared him a body*, as was promised him, when he said, *Lo, I come*, ^{<510>}Hebrews 10:5. Hence he is said to be *made of a woman* (^{<414>}Galatians 4:4), and yet to be that second *Adam* that is the *Lord from heaven*, ^{<415>}1 Corinthians 15:47. He is the *Son of God*, and yet so far partakes of the substance of his mother as to be called the *fruit of her womb*, ^{<412>}Luke 1:42. It was requisite that his conception should be otherwise than by ordinary *generation*, that so, so though he partook of the human nature, yet he might escape the corruption and pollution of it, and not be *conceived* and *shapen* in iniquity. Histories tell us of some who vainly pretended to have conceived by a divine power, as the mother of Alexander; but none ever really did so, except the mother of our Lord. His name in this, as in other things, is *Wonderful*. We do not read that the virgin Mary did herself proclaim the honour done to her; but she hid it in her heart, and therefore God sent an angel to attest it. Those who seek not

their own glory shall have the honour that comes from God; it is reserved for the humble.

(2.) That she should bring forth *the Saviour of the world* (v. 21). *She shall bring forth a Son*; what he shall be is intimated,

[1.] In the name that should be given to her Son: *Thou shalt call his name Jesus, a Saviour*. Jesus is the same name with Joshua, the termination only being changed, for the sake of conforming it to the Greek. Joshua is called *Jesus* (⁴⁷⁵Acts 7:45; ³⁹⁸Hebrews 4:8), from the Seventy. There were two of that name under the Old Testament, who were both illustrious types of Christ, Joshua who was Israel's captain at their first settlement in Canaan, and Joshua who was their high priest at their second settlement after the captivity, ³⁶¹Zechariah 6:11, 12. Christ is our Joshua; both the *Captain of our salvation*, and the *High Priest of our profession*, and, in both, our Saviour — a Joshua who comes in the stead of Moses, and does that for us which the *law could not do, in that it was weak*. Joshua had been called *Hosea*, but Moses prefixed the first syllable of the name *Jehovah*, and so made it *Jehoshua* (⁴³⁶Numbers 13:16), to intimate that the Messiah, who was to bear that name, should be *Jehovah*; he is therefore *able to save to the uttermost*, neither is there *salvation in any other*.

[2.] In the reason of that name: *For he shall save his people from their sins*; not the nation of the Jews only (he came to *his own*, and they *received him not*), but all who were given him by *the Father's choice*, and all who had given themselves to him by *their own*. He is a king who *protects* his subjects, and, as the judges of Israel of old, *works salvation* for them. Note, those whom Christ saves he saves *from their sins*; from the guilt of sin by the *merit of his death*, from the dominion of sin by the *Spirit of his grace*. In saving them from sin, he saves them from wrath and the curse, and all misery here and hereafter. Christ came to save his people, not *in their sins*, but *from their sins*; to purchase for them, not a liberty *to sin*, but a liberty *from sins, to redeem them from all iniquity* (³²⁴Titus 2:14); and so to redeem them *from among men* (⁶⁴¹Revelation 14:4) to himself, who is *separate from sinners*. So that those who leave their sins, and give up themselves to Christ as *his people*, are interested in the Saviour, and the great salvation which he has *wrought out*, ⁶¹²Romans 11:26.

V. The fulfilling of the scripture in all this. This evangelist, writing among the Jews, more frequently observes this than any other of the evangelists. Here the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in our Lord Jesus, by which it appears that this was he that should come, and we are to look for no other; for this was he *to whom all the prophets bore witness*. Now the scripture that was fulfilled in the birth of Christ was that promise of a sign which God gave to king Ahaz (²⁰⁷⁴Isaiah 7:14), *Behold a virgin shall conceive*; where the prophet, encouraging the people of God to hope for the promised deliverance from Sennacherib's invasion, directs them to look forward to the Messiah, who was to come of the people of the Jews, and the house of David; whence it was easy to infer, that though that people and that house were afflicted, yet neither the one nor the other could be abandoned to ruin, so long as God had such an honour, such a blessing, in reserve for them. The deliverances which God wrought for the Old-Testament church were types and figures of the great salvation by Christ; and, if God will do the greater, he will not fail to do the less.

The prophecy here quoted is justly ushered in with a *Behold*, which commands both attention and admiration; for we have here the mystery of godliness, which is, without controversy, great, that God *was manifested in the flesh*.

1. The sign given is that the Messiah shall be *born of a virgin*. *A virgin shall conceive*, and, by her, he shall be manifested *in the flesh*. The word *Almah* signifies a *virgin* in the strictest sense, such as Mary professes herself to be (⁴¹³¹Luke 1:34), *I know not a man*; nor had it been any such wonderful sign as it was intended for, if it had been otherwise. It was intimated from the beginning that the Messiah should be born of a virgin, when it was said that he should be the *seed of the woman*; so the seed of the woman as not to be the seed of any man. Christ was born of a virgin not only because his birth was to be *supernatural*, and altogether extraordinary, but because it was to be *spotless*, and pure, and without any stain of sin. Christ would be born, not of an *empress* or *queen*, for he appeared not in outward pomp or splendour, but of a virgin, to teach us spiritual purity, to die to all the delights of sense, and so to *keep ourselves unspotted* from the world and the flesh that we may be presented *chaste virgins to Christ*.

2. The truth proved by this sign is, that he is the Son of God, and the Mediator between God and man: for *they shall call his name Immanuel*; that is, he shall be *Immanuel*; and when it is said, *He shall be called*, it is meant, he shall *be, the Lord our righteousness*. *Immanuel* signifies *God with us*; a mysterious name, but very precious; *God incarnate* among us, and so *God reconcilable* to us, at peace with us, and taking us into covenant and communion with himself. The people of the Jews had *God with them*, in types and shadows, dwelling between the cherubim; but never so as when the *Word was made flesh* — that was the blessed *Shechinah*. What a happy step is hereby taken toward the settling of a peace and correspondence between God and man, that the two natures are thus brought together in the person of the Mediator! by this he became an unexceptionable referee, a days-man, fit to *lay his hand upon them both*, since he partakes of the nature of both. Behold, in this, the deepest mystery, and the richest mercy, that ever was. By the light of *nature*, we see God as a God *above us*; by the light of the *law*, we see him as a God *against us*; but by the light of the gospel, we see him as *Immanuel*, *God with us*, in our own nature, and (which is more) in our interest. Herein the Redeemer *commended his love*. With Christ's name, *Immanuel*, we may compare the name given to the gospel church (²⁶⁸⁵Ezekiel 48:35). *Jehovah Shammah* — *The Lord is there*; the Lord of hosts is with us.

Nor is it improper to say that the prophecy which foretold that he should be called *Immanuel* was fulfilled, in the design and intention of it, when he was called *Jesus*; for if he had not been *Immanuel* — *God with us*, he could not have been *Jesus* — *a Saviour*; and herein consists the salvation he wrought out, in the *bringing of God and man together*; this was what he designed, to bring *God* to be *with us*, which is our great happiness, and to bring *us* to be *with God*, which is our great duty.

VI. Joseph's obedience to the divine precept (v. 24). *Being raised from sleep* by the impression which the dream made upon him, *he did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him*, though it was contrary to his former sentiments and intentions; *he took unto him his wife*; he did so speedily, without delay, and cheerfully, without dispute; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. Extraordinary direction like this we are not now to expect; but God has still ways of making known his mind in doubtful cases, by hints of providence, debates of conscience, and advice of faithful friends; by each of these, applying the general rules of the written word, we should, therefore, in all the steps of our life, particularly the great turns

of it, such as this of Joseph's, take direction from God, and we shall find it safe and comfortable to do as he bids us.

VII. The accomplishment of the divine promise (v. 25). *She brought forth her first-born* son. The circumstances of it are more largely related, ~~☞~~ Luke 2:1, etc. Note, That which is *conceived of the Holy Ghost* never proves *abortive*, but will certainly be *brought forth* in its season. What is *of the will of the flesh*, and *of the will of man*, often miscarries; but, if Christ be *formed* in the soul, God himself has begun the good work which he will perform; what is *conceived* in grace will no doubt be *brought forth* in glory.

It is here further observed,

1. That Joseph, though he solemnized the marriage with Mary, his espoused wife, kept at a distance from her while she was with child of this Holy thing; he *knew her not till she had brought him forth*. Much has been said concerning the perpetual virginity of our Lord: Jerome was very angry with Helvidius for denying it. It is certain that it cannot be proved from scripture. Dr. *Whitby* inclines to think that when it is said, *Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born*, it is intimated that, afterwards, the reason ceasing, he lived with her, according to the law, ~~☞~~ Exodus 21:10.

2. That Christ was the *first-born*; and so he might be called though his mother had not any other children after him, according to the language of scripture. Nor is it without a mystery that Christ is called her *first-born*, for he is the *first-born of every creature*, that is, the Heir of all things; and he is the *first-born among many brethren*, that in all things he may have the pre-eminence.

3. That *Joseph called his name Jesus*, according to the direction given him. God having *appointed* him to be the Saviour, which was intimated in his giving him the name *Jesus*, we must *accept* of him to be our Saviour, and, in concurrence with that appointment, we must call him *Jesus, our Saviour*.