

**Keeping our Focus on Christ
Matthew 1:21–2:5**

This morning I would like to begin by reading you Matthew's account of the of the birth of Christ beginning in **Matthew 1:21** and concluding in **Matthew 2:4**, and it begins with the words of an angel spoken to Joseph in a dream and this is what he said. **"She [Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."** After this Matthew goes on to say, **"Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: (23) 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,' which translated means, 'God with us.' (24) And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, (25) but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. (2:1) Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, (2) 'Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' (3) When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. (5) They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet.'"**

This morning as we examine this text we will be seeking to answer this question: What terms were used in Matthew 1:21-2:4 to identify Christ? This is the question that we will be seeking to answer.

And what is my hope for this message as we seek to identify these terms? My hope for this message as we seek to identify these terms is that it might help us during this Christmas season to keep our focus on Christ.

It is so easy when our lives get filled with stuff, even good stuff, to lose this focus. It is so easy when so many things are happening around us, or to us, to lose this focus. But may we by the grace of God through the message this morning be encouraged to keep our focus on Christ so that blessings of such a focus might characterize our lives throughout this Christmas season, such

as having our hearts filled with gratitude for what Christ has supplied, what Christ wants to supply and what Christ will supply.

So what was the first term that was used to identify Christ in **Matthew 1:21–2:4**?

The first term used to identify Christ in Matthew 1:21-2:4 was the name “Jesus” (Matthew 1:21).

Let me read for you **Matthew 1:21**. “**She [Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus.**” And why did the angel tell Joseph to give the name “Jesus” to the baby that would be born of Mary? Let us continue to read the verse, “**For He [Jesus] will save His people from their sins.**”

So how is the name “Jesus” connected to His work of saving His people? The name Jesus is a form of the Hebrew word YESHOSHUA, JOSHUA, JESHUAH, JEHOSUAH and means “YAHWEH will save.”

Clearly in light of the work that the Christ child had been sent to do, which was to save His people from their sins, there could be no better name than “Jesus” which means “God will save.”

And does the world need to be saved from their sins? Absolutely! The Scriptures are very clear there is not a person born into this world who is not born into this world a sinner. What does **Romans 5:12** tell us? “**Therefore, just as through one man [in other words, Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.**” How? They all sinned in Adam.

And what was the consequence of this? What does **Romans 5:12** tell us? Death spread to all men; not just physical death but more significantly spiritual death as well, which is the separation of man’s spirit from God. And is this separation significant? Yes! It is very significant.

If Christ had not come to save His people and to deliver them from spiritual death there would be no hope of them escaping sin’s domination in this life or eternal damnation in the next (Romans 5:12).

But how did Christ intend to save His people from their sins? Christ explained all this to His disciples at the Last Supper when He took a cup

filled with wine and then told His disciples, according to **Matthew 26:28**, that the wine in the cup symbolically represented His own blood, the blood of His covenant, which was to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

Christ, by shedding His blood, or in other words through giving up His life, paid the debt that we owed to God because of our sin and in so doing made it possible for us to be saved (Matthew 26:28). Praise God!

Christ, by paying the debt that we owed to God, in effect purchased a gift for us, the gift of salvation. And how do we receive this gift that He has purchased for us? We receive it in the same way that we would receive any other gift. We receive it by faith.

What did Paul say to the Philippian jailer when he was asked by the jailer what must I do to be saved? Paul answered, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”**

Do you want to be saved from your sin and all its consequences? Then this morning I would encourage you, if you have not already done so, to reach out and by faith and take this gift. Therefore if this is something that you would like to do, then I would encourage you in the quietness of your own heart to pray a prayer something like this, **“Lord Jesus, I am a sinner and cannot save myself but you did what I could not do. Therefore from this day forward I will no longer be trusting in myself and my good works to save me but rather I will be trusting only in you and what you have done for me at the cross of Calvary. And now by your grace I gratefully receive from your hand the gift of salvation.”**

So let me ask you a question. When someone receives this gift, as hopefully someone or perhaps many have done this morning, will they be filled with gratitude? Absolutely! So now let me ask you another question. Can this same gratitude continue to fill our hearts and our lives? Absolutely! All we have to do is to focus on Christ; or in other words, all we have to do is to focus on Jesus, the one who came to save us from our sins.

So, what was the first term that was used in **Matthew 1:21** to **Matthew 2:4** to identify Christ? The first term that was used to identify Christ in **Matthew 1:21** to **Matthew 2:4** was the name **“Jesus.”** And why was He named Jesus? He was named Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.

So what is a second term that was used in **Matthew 1:21** to **Matthew 2:4** to identify Christ?

The second term used to identify Christ in Matthew 1:21-2:4 was the name “Immanuel” (Matthew 1:23). Let me now read for you **Matthew 1:23**. **“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated, means ‘God with us.’”**

Matthew 1:23 is quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah recorded for us in **Isaiah 7:14** given to the nation of Israel during a time of great distress to assure them that not only would God not forsake them but would one day in the future in fact be with them. And it was this prophecy that the angel told Joseph would be fulfilled at the birth of His son Jesus.

The child of Christmas was not just 100% man but also 100% God. Therefore the child of Christmas was to be named “Immanuel,” or in other words, “God with us.” This Christmas truth should be of great comfort to us. Why?

Because God lived with us as a man we can now confidently come before Him as our sympathetic high priest and find grace to help in the time of our need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Let me read for you **Hebrews 4:14-16**. **“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet with out sin. (16) Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

God did not remain in glory, detached from our circumstances. God did not remain in glory detached from our struggles. God did not remain in glory somehow detached from our suffering. No, He came to us and He lived with us as one of us. He became in His incarnation, “Immanuel.”

When Christ came into this world and became one of us He certainly did so in order to pay the debt we owed to God because of our sin. This is true but this was not the only reason He came into this world. He also came into this

world and suffered what He suffered in order that He might become our faithful and sympathetic high priest in order that we might confidently come before Him with expectation knowing that He will supply all that we need to live a life pleasing to Him.

Now let me ask you a question. Can this thought fill our hearts with gratitude? Absolutely! But now let me ask you another question.

Can this same gratitude continue to fill our hearts and our lives? Absolutely! All we have to do is to focus on Christ; or in other words, all we have to do is to focus on “Immanuel” our merciful, faithful, and sympathetic high priest who eagerly wants to supply for us all that we need. If we do this, how could we not be filled with gratitude knowing that we will never lack His supply if we would simply come to His throne of grace in the time of our need?

What was the first term that was used in **Matthew 1:21** to **Matthew 2:4** to identify Christ? The first term that was used to identify Christ in **Matthew 1:21** to **Matthew 2:4** was the name, **Jesus**. And why was He named Jesus? He was named Jesus because He will save His people from their sins. And when we focus on this reality it would fill us with unwavering gratitude. And what was the second term used to identify Christ? The second term was the name **Immanuel**. And why was Jesus called **Immanuel**? He was called **Immanuel** because He, without ceasing to be God, was willing to leave the glory of heaven to live among us as a man so that He might become our great and merciful high priest.

So, what was the third term that was used to identify Christ? The third term that was used to identify Christ in Matthew 1:21–2:4 was the term “King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:1-4). Let me now read for you **Matthew 2:1-4**. “**Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, (2) ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’ (3) When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (4) Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.**”

The Hebrew word used to refer to “the King of the Jews” is the word “Messiah” and the Greek word used to refer to the “King of the Jews” is “Christ.”

So when Christ was born, when the Messiah was born, was He the king of the Jews? Absolutely, for the terms “Christ,” “Messiah,” and “King of the Jews” all refer to the same person.

The magi were not mistaken when they sought the Christ child, the Messiah of the nation of Israel, for He truly was “the king of the Jews.”

And did He continue to be king of the Jews even after His own people rejected Him? Yes! Remember the question that Pilate asked Christ just prior to Him condemning Him to death? He asked Jesus incredulously, **“Are you a king.”** And how did Christ answer? He answered, **“Yes, I am a king.”** But after having said this He went to explain to Pilate that though He was a king, His kingdom, at least at that moment in time, was not an earthly kingdom but rather a spiritual one.

So let me ask you a question. Is Christ still the king of the Jews? And the answer is yes! Is Christ still ruling over that spiritual kingdom? Yes!

But now let me ask you this question: Will Christ’s present rule over this spiritual kingdom ever extended to an earthly kingdom? Yes, it will!

Christ, in fulfilling His promises to the Jews, will extend His rule, as the king of Jews, over the whole earth during His Millennial reign (Revelation 19:11-16). Let me read for you **Revelation 19:11-16.** **“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (12) His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him, which no one knows except Himself. (13) He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. (14) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. (15) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. (16) And on His**

robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

When Christ comes, as the King of the Jews, to set up His kingdom, He will come as the great equalizer. All the kings and monarchs of this world will at that time bow their knee to Jesus when He comes in His kingly glory.

He is presently reigning over a spiritual kingdom from the right hand of His Father’s throne, but there is a day coming when He will extend His kingly rule over this world and subsequently over the whole of this universe.

Is this thought of everything in this world one day being set right fill us with hope? It should it should, knowing that one day all the injustices, all the inequities will be set right. One day under the righteous rule of the king of this world, not only will everything be set right, we will enter into a period of prosperity that this world hasn’t seen since before the fall of man. This world does not need Obama, this world needs Christ, the king of the Jews, to come and to set up His earthly kingdom.

Does this thought of Christ, the Messiah of the nation of Israel, the king of the Jews, one day returning to set up His kingdom fill us with gratitude in light of His future supply? Absolutely! And can this same gratitude continue to fill our hearts and lives? Absolutely! All we have to do is to focus on Christ, the King of the Jews.

What are you thinking about? What are you focusing on? Is it the stuff of Christmas or is it on the Christ of Christmas.

Hopefully you will this morning choose to focus on the Christ of Christmas who was identified in our text as Jesus who has supplied us with the gift of salvation, as Immanuel who wants to supply us all that we need to live a life pleasing to Him, as king of the Jews who will one day set everything right.

May God give us the grace to focus on Christ, not only during this Christmas season, but always.