

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS
ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,
VICAR OF STRADBROKE, SUFFOLK;
Author of "Home Truths," etc.

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MATTHEW I. 1 17

1 The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;

3 And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

4 And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;

5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her *that had been the wife* of Urias;

7 And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;

8 And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;

9 And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;

10 And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;

11 And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:

12 And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;

13 And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;

14 And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;

15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;

16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David *are* fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon *are* fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ *are* fourteen generations.

THESE verses begin the New Testament. Let us always read them with serious and solemn feelings.—The book before us contains “not the word of men, but of God.” Every verse in it was written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. (1 Thess. ii. 13.)

Let us thank God daily for giving us the Scriptures. The poorest Englishman, who understands his Bible, knows more about religion than the wisest philosophers of Greece and Rome.

Let us never forget the deep responsibility which possession of the Bible entails on us. We shall be judged at the last day according to our light. To whomsoever much is given, of them much will be required.

Let us read the Bible reverently and diligently, with an honest determination to believe and practise all we find in it. It is no light matter how we use this book. Above all, let us never read the Bible without praying for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. He alone can apply truth to our hearts, and make us profit by what we read.

The New Testament begins with the history of the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. No part of the Bible is so important as this, and no part is so full and complete. Four distinct Gospels tell us the story of Christ's doings and dying: four times we read the precious account of His works and words. How thankful we ought to be for this! To know Christ is life eternal; to believe in Christ is to have peace with God; to follow Christ is to be a true Christian; to be with Christ will be heaven itself. We can never hear too much about the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of St. Matthew begins with a long list of names. Sixteen verses are taken up with tracing a pedigree from Abraham to David, and from David to the family in which Jesus was born. Let no one think that these verses are useless. Nothing is useless in creation. The least mosses, and the smallest insects, serve some good end.—Nothing is useless in the Bible. Every word of it is inspired. The chapters and verses which seem at first sight unprofitable are all given for some good purpose. He that looks carefully at these sixteen verses will not fail to see in them useful and instructive lessons.

We learn, for one thing, from this list of names, that *God always keeps His word*. He had promised that “in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.” He had promised to raise up a Saviour of the family of David. (Gen. xii. 3; Isai. xi. 1.) These sixteen verses prove that Jesus was the son of David and the son of Abraham, and that God's promise was fulfilled.—Thoughtless and ungodly people should remember this lesson, and be afraid. Whatever they may think, God will keep His word. If they repent not they will surely perish.—True Christians should remember this lesson, and take comfort. Their Father in heaven will be true to all His engagements. He has said that He will save all believers in Christ. If He has said it, He will certainly do it. “He is not a man that he should lie.”—“He abideth faithful: He cannot deny himself.” (Num. xxiii. 19; 2 Tim. ii. 13.)

We learn, for another thing, from this list of names, *the sinfulness and corruption of human nature*. It is instructive to observe how many godly parents in this catalogue had wicked and ungodly sons. The names of Roboam, and Joram, and Amon, and Jechonias, should teach us humbling lessons. They had all pious fathers; but they were all wicked men. Grace does not run in families: it needs something more than good examples and good advice to make us children of God. They that are born again are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John i. 13.) Praying parents should pray night and day that their children may be born of the Spirit.

We learn, lastly, from this list of names, *how great is the mercy and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Let us think how defiled and unclean human nature is, and then think what a condescension it was in Him to be born of a woman, and “made in the likeness of men.” (Phil. ii. 7.) Some of the names we read in this catalogue remind us of shameful and sad histories. Some of the names are those of persons never mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. But at the end of all comes the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though He is the eternal God, He humbled Himself to become man, in order to provide salvation for sinners. “Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor.” (2 Cor. viii. 9.)

We should always read this catalogue with thankful feelings. We see here that no one who partakes of human nature can be beyond the reach of Christ’s sympathy and compassion. Our sins may have been as black and great as those of any whom St. Matthew names; but they cannot shut us out of heaven, if we repent and believe the Gospel. If the Lord Jesus was not ashamed to be born of a woman whose pedigree contained such names as those we have read today, we need not think that He will be ashamed to call us brethren, and to give us eternal life.

MATTHEW I. 18 25.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

24 Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son: and he called his name JESUS.

THESE verses begin by telling us two great truths. They tell us how the Lord Jesus Christ took our nature upon Him, and became man. They tell us also that His birth was miraculous: His mother Mary was a virgin.

These are very mysterious subjects. They are depths which we have no line to fathom: they are truths which we have not mind enough to comprehend. Let us not attempt to explain things which are above our feeble reason: let us be content to believe with reverence, and let us not speculate about matters which we cannot understand. Enough for us to know that with Him who made the world nothing is impossible. We may safely rest in the words of the Apostles' Creed: "Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary."

Let us observe *the conduct of Joseph* described in these verses. It is a beautiful example of godly wisdom, and tender consideration for others. He saw the "appearance of evil" in her who was his espoused wife. But he did nothing rashly: he waited patiently to have the line of duty made clear. In all probability he laid the matter before God in prayer. "He that believeth shall not make haste." (Isai. xxviii. 16.)

The patience of Joseph was graciously rewarded. He received a direct message from God upon the subject of his anxiety, and was at once relieved from all his fears. How good it is to wait upon God! Whoever cast his cares upon God in hearty prayer, and found Him fail? "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Prov. iii. 6.)

Let us observe, in these verses, *the two names given to our Lord*. One is "Jesus:" the other "Emmanuel." One describes His office: the other His nature. Both are deeply interesting.

The name Jesus means “Saviour:” it is the same name as Joshua, in the Old Testament. It is given to our Lord because “He saves his people from their sins.” This is His special office. He saves them from the guilt of sin, by washing them in his own atoning blood; He saves them from the dominion of sin, by putting in their hearts the sanctifying Spirit; He saves them from the presence of sin, when He takes them out of this world to rest with Him. He will save them from all the consequences of sin, when He shall give them a glorious body at the last day. Blessed and holy are Christ’s people! From sorrow, cross, and conflict they are not saved; but they are “saved from sin” for evermore. They are cleansed from guilt by Christ’s blood: they are made meet for heaven by Christ’s Spirit. This is salvation! He who cleaves to sin is not yet saved.

“Jesus is a very encouraging name to heavy-laden sinners. He who is King of kings and Lord of lords might lawfully have taken some more high-sounding title. But He did not do so. The rulers of this world have often called themselves Great, Conqueror, Bold, Magnificent, and the like. The Son of God was content to call Himself “Saviour.” The souls which desire salvation may draw nigh to the Father with boldness, and have access with confidence through Christ. It is His office and His delight to show mercy. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” (1 John iii. 17.)

Jesus is a name which is peculiarly sweet and precious to believers. It has often done them good, when the favour of kings and princes would have been heard of with unconcern; it has given them what money cannot buy,—even inward peace; it has eased their weary consciences, and given rest to their heavy hearts. The Song of Solomon speaks the experience of many, when it says, “Thy name is as ointment poured forth.” (Cant. i. 3.) Happy is that person who trusts not merely in vague notions of God’s mercy and goodness, but in “Jesus.”

The name “Emmanuel” is seldom found in the Bible. But it is scarcely less interesting than the name “Jesus.” It is the name which is given to our Lord from His nature as God-man, as “God manifest in the flesh.” It signifies, “God with us.”

Let us take care that we clearly understand that there was a union of two natures, the divine and human, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a point of the deepest importance. We should settle it firmly in our minds that our Saviour is perfect man as well as perfect God, and perfect God as well as perfect man. If we once lose sight of this great foundation truth we may run into fearful heresies. The name Emmanuel takes in the whole mystery.

Jesus is “God with us.” He had a nature like our own in all things, sin only excepted. But though Jesus was “with us” in human flesh and blood, He was at the same time very God.

We shall often find, as we read the Gospels, that our Saviour could be weary and hungry and thirsty,—could weep and groan and feel pain like one of ourselves. In all this we see “*the man*” Christ Jesus: we see the nature He took on him when He was born of the Virgin Mary.

But we shall also find in the same Gospels that our Saviour knew men’s hearts and thoughts,—that He had power over devils,—that He could work the mightiest miracles with a word,—that He was ministered to by angels,—that He allowed a disciple to call Him “my God,”—and that He said, “Before Abraham was I am,” and “I and my Father are one.” In all this we see “*the eternal God*.” we see Him “who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” (Rom. ix. 5.)

If we would have a strong foundation for our faith and hope we must keep constantly in view our Saviour’s *divinity*. He in whose blood we are invited to trust is the Almighty God; all power is His in heaven and earth. None can pluck us out of His hand. If we are true believers in Jesus our heart need not be troubled or afraid.

If we would have sweet comfort in suffering and trial we must keep constantly in view our Saviour’s *humanity*. He is the Man Christ Jesus, who lay on the bosom of the Virgin Mary as a little infant, and knows the heart of a man. He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,—He has Himself experienced Satan’s temptations,—He has endured hunger,—He has shed tears,—He has felt pain. We may trust Him unreservedly with our sorrows: He will not despise us. We may pour out our hearts before Him in prayer boldly, and keep nothing back. He can sympathize with His people.

Let these thoughts sink down into our minds. Let us bless God for the encouraging truths which the first chapter of the new Testament contains: it tells us of One who “saves His people from their sins.” But this is not all: it tells us that this Saviour is “Emmanuel,”—God Himself, and yet God with us. God manifest in human flesh like our own. This is glad tidings: this is indeed good news. Let us feed on these truths in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving.