Matthew - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

The Name Above Every Name: Papers on the Excellency, Exaltation and Supremacy of Christ, Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made1 of a woman, made under the law; and it is of this mystery, the ground-work of redemption, that Matthew writes in this chapter. There are indeed other characteristics of the divine and holy Child here mentioned. As this gospel specially presents Christ as the Messiah, in the fulfillment of promise to the Jewish nation, His lineage, as born into this world, is traced down from the two great roots of Jewish promise, Abraham and David. Not only therefore does Matthew show Him to us as “come” of a woman, and “come” under law, but also as the promised seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and as Son of David, and hence as heir to David’s throne and kingdom. It is thus a chapter in which the divine and human glories of our blessed Lord are mingled and displayed. By “mingled” we simply mean that the character of the Person of Christ is such that all that He is as God and as man is told out in His name and in His work. For example, if we think of Him as the Offspring of David, we are at once reminded that He is also David’s Root, that David’s Son is also David’s Lord.

This will be very clearly seen by a consideration of the meaning of the name Jesus, which Joseph was instructed to give to the Child when He should be born. As may be seen from Hebrews 4:8, Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, or Jehoshua, which signifies “Jehovah is salvation,” or “whose salvation is Jehovah.” There is therefore ample justification for the common observation that the name Jesus means Jehovah the Saviour. If so, what a subject for contemplation, yea, and for adoration, is thus brought before our souls! A child born into the world, of lowly parentage in man’s esteem, is declared, divinely declared, to be Jehovah the Saviour! Yes, the God who heard the groaning of His people Israel in Egypt, who saw their affliction, heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, knew their sorrows, and came down to redeem them out of Egypt, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; He who said unto Moses, “I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by [the name of] God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” (Ex. 3:6-8; 6:2-3); it was He, the same God, the same Jehovah, the El Shaddai known to the patriarchs, who now came into this world as a Babe. But if a Babe, He came, blessed be His name forever, as the Saviour of His people. Surely we may say that the shadows were fleeing away, and that the darkness, which had hitherto shrouded God from His people, was fast disappearing. It was indeed the blessed dawn of the day of grace.

The moment we speak of the birth of Jehovah the Saviour, the mystery of the incarnation constrains our attention. It had long been foretold, and, so far from its being veiled under dubious language, it was exactly and minutely described, so that Matthew could write, “All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 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.” Even the very place of His birth had been foretold: “But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Mic. 5:2). Moreover, the holy nature of His humanity was by no means dimly shadowed forth in the type of the meat-offering, especially in the unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, telling out as it did the truth communicated to Mary by the angel, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). It is the miracle of miracles, and for that very reason the revelation of the heart of God, when looked back upon in the light of the purpose of His coming into the midst of sinful men.

Before entering upon the purpose of His advent, it may be profitable to dwell upon some of the circumstances of His birth. There was the greatest contrast imaginable at the time between heaven and earth. All heaven (and what wonder?) was astir and in movement; but the whole earth, save a few pious souls, was still and almost unexpectant. The angel of the Lord sped on his joyful way to apprise, not the governing powers, or the great of the earth, but a few godly shepherds, of the marvelous event: “Fear not,” he said unto them, “for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all [the] people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” and so forth. The angel of Jehovah was not alone, for as soon as he had announced the glad tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God and said, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill [or “pleasure,” or “delight “] toward [in] men.” As has been strikingly said, “God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus....and every voice unites in sounding forth these praises. What love like this love? And God is love. What a purely divine thought that God has become man.” And yet this stupendous event had nothing in it to compel the observation of men. Busy with their own thoughts and objects, they did not even perceive it, though it took place in their midst; and so absorbed were they in their self-seeking that there was no room for the infant Saviour in the inn! Such are men, although among them were the objects of God’s eternal counsels in grace, which He was about to accomplish through the One who, while the Creator of all things, was yet born into the world a homeless stranger!

The name Jesus was given in connection with His work, “for,” it was added, “He shall save His people from their sins.” The term “His people” will, in this gospel, undoubtedly mean Israel; and indeed, in the angelic announcement to the shepherds in Luke, it says that the good tidings of great joy were for all the people, that is, for the Jews. Not that the object of the Lord’s coining into the world is in either case to be limited to the chosen people, but in these scriptures they only are in view. The wider aspect is stated by John when, in allusion to the prophecy of Caiaphas that “Jesus should die for that nation,” he adds, “And not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” This makes it plain, moreover, that the death of Christ—His finished work, which He accomplished in, and through, His death—is the alone foundation on which He will save His people from their sins. We thus read in Leviticus 16, after the details given concerning the rites and sacrifices, together with the confession of the people’s sins by the high priest on the great day of atonement, “For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord” (Lev. 16:30). Nor can this foundation truth be too constantly insisted upon; for as it is written concerning sins in the old dispensation, “Without shedding of blood is no remission,” so now it is equally true that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, alone cleanseth from all sin.

When, therefore, the angel said, “He shall save His people from their sins,” he looked onward, or at least the mind of the Spirit had respect in the words, to a time beyond the cross. For Israel could not be saved, as the prophets plainly testified, apart from repentance and the efficacy of the atonement. Simeon, when he enjoyed the unspeakable privilege of holding the Lord’s Christ in his arms, plainly foretold also that the glory of Jehovah’s people Israel would be accomplished through the rejection of the holy Babe on His presentation to the people. The sufferings of Christ must precede His glories, whether in heaven or on the earth; even as He Himself said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” It was this fact that tested the hearts of men, and called forth their determined enmity. If they could have taken Jesus by force and made Him a King, and if He would but have placed Himself at their head and led them, all carnal as they were, against their enemies, and delivered them by His power, they would gladly have hailed Him as their Messiah, even if they had immediately after rebelled against His authority. But He who came as Jehovah the Saviour must first stand in, and repair, the breach which the sins of His people had made between them and their God. And so fully did He take up their cause and responsibility that, as in their place, He cried, “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee.” Blessed Lord, we cannot fathom Thy sorrow and grief, but we can thank Thee in that Thou madest the sins of Thy people Thine own, and hast borne them away forever!

Considering then this scripture in its application to Israel, it will refer to the salvation of the earthly people from their sins—from their sins and their consequences—and to their restoration and blessing in a future day in the land of promise. It is indeed in one aspect what Zacharias prophesied, when his tongue was loosed at the circumcision of his child, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David... that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us... that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:68-75). First, then, Jesus will save His people from their sins before God; for a part of the new covenant runs, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34); and, moreover, He will save them from the consequences of their sins in delivering them out of the hands of their enemies, in gathering them out from every land where they have been scattered, and in establishing them in their own land in blessing under His own peaceful and glorious reign. All this would have been fulfilled to them at once had they but received their Messiah; and even after they had crucified Him, had they but owned their guilt, and bowed in heart to the testimony of the apostles, their sins would have been blotted out, and the times of refreshing would have come from the presence of the Lord in connection with the return of Christ (Acts 3); but, alas! through their unbelief they forfeited all these blessings, and they have now to wait until, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, they will cry, in the gladness of their hearts, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

Still, beloved reader, while it is true that this promise refers primarily to Israel, let it not be forgotten that the same glorious work, which constitutes the foundation on which their sins will be removed, is the only ground on which any of us can know forgiveness. Through Israel’s fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, and hence it is that the apostle could write to the Corinthians that it was delivered to him that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Well then may we praise God continually for His wondrous grace, the grace which took occasion through the unbelief of Israel to reveal all His purposes concerning those who should be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ; and well, too, may our hearts be filled with gratitude at the mention of the name of JESUS, for He it is who has secured everything for us.

Three Marys, Mary the Mother of Our Lord

Were it not that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, one might almost fear to touch upon the subject of this highly favored and blessed among women. Another reason has perhaps, hindered many believers from the study of her privileges and character, and that is the sinful idolatry of which she has been made the object by so many millions of professed Christians. The antidote to this tendency—so grieving to the Spirit of God, and so dishonoring to the Lord Himself—is to be found in considering the notices of this elect vessel which are preserved in the gospels. This is the task which we have been led to undertake, in the hope that we may understand more fully, as taught of the Holy Spirit, the marvelous grace of God in singling out this dear woman for this unspeakable honor, and also the fruits of that grace as displayed in her simple and unwavering confidence in the Lord, and in her devoted and humble life.

clickbible.org