

The Gospel of Matthew
Week One
Matthew 1:1-25

Day One

1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: 2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, 3 Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, 4 Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,

vs. 1&2 – Matthew’s gospel was written by a Jew for Jews to prove that Jesus was the Promised One, the Messiah. Matthew began his gospel with a genealogy, tracing Jesus’ lineage back to Abraham. His purpose was to establish first and foremost that Jesus was a Jew and had impeccable credentials in that regard. A fellow Jew could never accept a Messiah who was anything else, and Matthew knew that very well. He also wanted to prove that Jesus fulfilled the Abrahamic promise that from Abraham would emerge one who would bless the families of the earth.

What’s more, I’m sure there were many rumors concerning Jesus’ lineage, since the circumstances around his birth were so unusual and even controversial. The Jews knew who Jesus’ mother was and Mary was of course a Jew. The questions arose as to who His father was and Matthew wanted the reader to know that His father was a Jew as well.

Matthew also established that Jesus was a son of David, thus capable of fulfilling the promise to David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever. Most Jews would have interpreted this to mean that a long succession of David’s sons would occupy that position. Jesus does it by means of the fact that he lives forever.

v. 3 – The start of Jesus’ genealogy is less than stellar, for right away we see twins, Perez and Zerah, fathered by Judah, and Judah’s daughter-in-law was the mother! You can read this story in Genesis 38, and then consider the fact that the Bible never hides or “sweeps under the carpet” stories that reflect badly on the main characters. Judah was the leader of a family tribe and he played a significant role in Israel’s history, but he mistreated his daughter-in-law. That story is included in the inspired Word and Judah is part of Jesus’ family tree and heritage.

Sin is part of every saint’s background and life, for the only sinless One was and is Jesus. No one can claim any special standing before God, nor was Jesus the Promised One because of His human lineage. Jesus was a part of the human experience by identifying with his family in their imperfect humanity. He derived his humanity from his mother but His divinity from God the Father through the Holy Spirit. He was fully God and fully man.

Day Two

5 Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, 6 and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, 7 Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, 8 Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

v. 5 -- While the family tree is made up of men, there are two women mentioned up to this point: Tamar and Ruth. Ruth was a Gentile who married a Jew, so Jesus had some Gentile blood in his lineage. I find this most significant, for Jesus wasn't a "pure" Jew, which was most important to the Jews. I wonder if any Jew at that time could claim to be a purebred, yet they acted like any Gentile blood was a crime against Judaism. That attitude led to the ethnic superiority that they evidenced in their dealings with Gentiles both before and after Jesus' earthly ministry.

v. 6 – Then we have the story of Solomon in Jesus' family tree as well. That means we have incest, interracial marriage, adultery and murder hanging around Jesus' tree. I don't know of any story that exemplifies the grace of God more than Solomon. The Lord took the life of the first child between David and Bathsheba. Their next son, however, was Solomon:

But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and lay with her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon. The LORD loved him; and because the LORD loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah (2 Samuel 12:23-25).

Someone else said that you haven't emphasized the grace of God enough until someone accuses you of emphasizing it too much. When I think of God's awesome grace, I think of this story and marvel. **Where have you fallen short of being a channel and source of God's grace to someone who doesn't deserve it?** Reflect on the story of Solomon and then determine how you can improve.

vs. 7&8 – Then Jesus' family tree listed the names of kings who followed after David and Solomon, some of whom who were good and others who were nasty. So now we have corruption added to the mix of incest, adultery and murder. It is interesting that the Jews were more interested in ethnic purity in their background than righteousness. It was important that they know that their ancestors were Jews, and not necessarily moral or righteous Jews.

You can now understand why it was so difficult for the Jews to break out of their cultural limitations. They were focused on being a Jew and believing that their Jewish-ness was the means to a special relationship with God. This is why they struggled with what Paul wrote and the apostles acted out:

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:27-29).

Yet Matthew wrote to Jews to reach Jews with the message of the Gospel. He did not hide the fact, however, that the gospel was not exclusively a Jewish right or privilege. The Jews were to be the carriers of the gospel to all the nations; instead, many of them tried to own rather than share the gospel.

Day Three

9 Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, 10 Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, 11 and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

v. 9-11 – Jesus had many kings in His family tree, but some of them were not righteous and contributed to the Babylonian captivity when Judah was carried into exile due to their wickedness. Leadership does make a difference. Good leadership can lead the people in the right direction; poor leadership can ruin a family, church, company or nation for decades or forever!

This is why much more time and effort, in my opinion, must be devoted to leadership training and development. While on-the-job training is important, there should be formal training as well in whatever discipline the leader devotes his or her time and effort.

There is a problem, however, when leadership succession isn't addressed properly. The Old Testament kings practiced the divine right, where usually the eldest son inherited the throne from his father. The problem with this is that the successor often wasn't the most qualified leader.

I have seen this same tendency in some churches, where the family and the sons are automatically placed into leadership just because they are family. In most cases, but not all, this is a glaring weakness, for a relationship is promoted over giftedness and skill. I am not against sons or daughters going into ministry after their parents. I am not in favor, however, of it being an automatic process. It should be earned and there should be objective outsiders who help make it happen properly and without bias.

At the end of the day, each person is responsible for his or her leadership development. No one can do it for you. **So what are you doing to be the best leader you can be in the circumstance where God has you? What can you do to improve? What is your long-range plan for leadership growth and development?**

Day Four

12 After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, 13 Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, 14 Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud, 15 Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. 17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

vs. 12-16 – I am wondering from whom Matthew got this genealogy. Did every Jew have this kind of detailed family tree? Was it a matter of public record? It would seem that Jews did keep this kind of genealogy, because ethnic purity was so important to them. It is obvious why they struggled so with the message that the gospel was for everyone, since they thought they “owned” God because they were Jews.

I grew up attending an ethnic Catholic church. Many of those people were more concerned about preserving their culture than they were about worshipping God, or so it seemed to me when I was growing up. It always impressed me that our church then was too limited and narrow; we only worshipped with people who had our same ethnic heritage, allowing for a few who married into it as well.

Today, I will only attend a church that includes a lot of people who don't look like me. I think that is the way a church should be because that is what heaven is going to be like:

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" (Revelation 7:9-12).

The church should be a place of great diversity because that is how God's creation is. Our worship should honor God's love for all His people and not just a few. I still don't care for churches filled with believers of one type, such as Spanish churches, Korean churches or Messianic congregations. It is my humble opinion that these churches should work to broaden their membership so that they don't fall into the same attitude of superiority or exclusivity that the Jews had.

v. 17 – I wish I had some insight into the number fourteen and why there were fourteen generations in each stage of Matthew's history, but I don't. I have read some interpretations, but I think they are frivolous. It is best not to force any insight into a passage if you don't have any. I do know that there were more than 14 generations

because Matthew skipped some names. I don't think his point was to provide a detailed, monotonous genealogy. Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus was both the son of Abraham and David, thus fulfilling the basic requirements of what the Jews knew the Messiah was to be. He wanted to show that God moved through history in an orderly but predetermined fashion to bring about His promises. Any Jew reading his list would have had to acknowledge that truth.

From that point, Matthew went on to present more proof of his stated premise: that Jesus was the Messiah, the Promised One of God.

Day Five

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

v. 18 – Matthew and Luke are the only two who give us information about Jesus' birth. This account focuses more on Joseph, while Luke on Mary. There is no doubt that Jesus' birth was the subject of much discussion in Israel. Some knew that Mary was pregnant before she was married and assumed it was due to Joseph and Mary having premature relations. This is indicated by the veiled insult thrown at Jesus by the Jews in John 8:

“Then said they to him, ‘We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God’” (John 8:41 KJV).

So Joseph is engaged and found that his wife was pregnant “through the Holy Spirit.” Keep in mind that Joseph and Mary had no theology of the Holy Spirit as we do today. This was a foreign concept to them, so Joseph especially didn't know what to make of all this because no angel had yet appeared to him.

How would you feel if you were Joseph in this situation? Angry? Upset? Betrayed? Confused? Notice that God intervened in their marriage to change their plans and future, and He didn't ask the permission of either partner. He just declared His sovereign will and changed the course of their lives and history.

v. 19 – This verse tells us a lot about Joseph, whom God chose to be Jesus' earthly father. He was a righteous man, yet I am sure many righteous men would have wanted to make a public spectacle of what they considered to be Mary's sin and unfaithfulness. Joseph was not that kind of man. He considered divorcing Mary quietly. He was concerned for her even though he felt she had done wrong.

There is so much I can learn from Joseph's behavior here. **How about you?** When wronged, I want to make a public show of my wrong and tell someone, anyone, how I have been offended. I want people to know that I was in the right and the other party was

in the wrong. I want to be vindicated and don't mind helping bring that about. I need to be more like Joseph. I need to learn what it means to be a righteous man.

Joseph wasn't overlooking what he considered to be a grievous sin. He was willing to deal with it, but do it in a manner that protected the other person. I need that attitude. The Church needs that attitude. **Do you need it as well?**

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 4:21-23).

Day Six

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

v. 20 – Joseph was considering his options concerning Mary, when an angel appeared to him in a dream. While Joseph's mind was at rest, his spirit was not and God spoke to him in his sleep. It is interesting how prominently angels and dreams figured into the Christmas story. God is a great communicator and has many media at His disposal. If your heart is know God's will and plan, then it is God's heart to tell you what it is.

Matthew reiterated two points in this one verse. First, he reemphasized that Joseph was a son of David, thus making Jesus the same. Then he also pointed out that Mary was pregnant by the Holy Spirit and not by Joseph. These two points were critical for Jews whom Matthew was trying to convince of Jesus' humanity and divinity.

The angel told Joseph not to be afraid. What was he afraid of? Perhaps he was afraid of what people would say or think. Maybe he was afraid of raising a child that wasn't his own. At any rate, the angel calmed his fears and commanded him not to fear, but to proceed with his plans of taking Mary as his wife. I find it interesting that the angel endorsed the plan of marriage, something ordained of God, as perfectly natural for a man and woman to do.

v. 21 – The angel went on to predict the child's gender and ordered Matthew to assign the boy the name of Jesus, which is a form of Joshua, which literally means salvation. The angel had every confidence that the baby would be born, would be a boy and would have the name Jesus. God is in control of everything. There was no danger that Mary would miscarry or the baby would be born with problems. God was overseeing this entire process and it would proceed as God intended. That did not mean that Mary and Joseph would not have to endure some difficult circumstances around the birth. God orchestrated those as well.

We are so fragile as humans. A day without water, a few days without food, or a month without rain and we are hurting. God must stay involved with every detail of our lives or we will suffer and perish. I am glad God is in control and I rejoice over the truth found in Acts:

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'" (Acts 17:24-28).

Are you anxious or nervous about some aspect of your life, family or work? Then don't be! God is in control. The Christmas story reaffirms that God is working to order your affairs, so there is no need for anxiety. If you are going through a tough time, God knows! He knows because He is involved and is teaching you something through the trial. Learn from Him, but don't doubt His love or faithfulness.

Day Seven

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"- which means, "God with us." 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

vs. 22&23 – Matthew regularly indicated how events in Jesus' life and ministry were a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. Notice his wording: "What the Lord said . . .". There was no doubt in Matthew's mind that God spoke through men, specifically the prophets. When they spoke, they spoke the word of the Lord. I only point this out because some are ambivalent about just what the Bible represents. Some say it is myths of men, but the writers believed it was (and is) the word of God.

Matthew referred to Isaiah 7:14 here concerning a virgin giving birth and naming the baby Immanuel. Without Matthew's help, we would not know how to apply this verse, for the context in Isaiah seems to relate to the time of Isaiah. Yet Matthew, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, helps us see that verse as a prophetic utterance concerning the birth of Jesus. This is why we need to interpret the Bible with the help of the Bible whenever possible.

In this first chapter, Matthew made it clear that Jesus was God, for He was Immanuel – God with us. This isn't a reference to the fact that God was helping His people by being near to them. This was a reference to the fact that Jesus was God and dwelt among His people as a man! Don't let anyone tell you that the disciples were ambivalent about who

Jesus was, only coming to know Him as God as time went on. They knew He was God when He was present with them, they knew after His resurrection and they knew in the days that immediately followed His ascension.

v. 24 – Joseph did not waste any time. He immediately set about to do what God wanted. I am always surprised by how many people procrastinate where the things of God are concerned. They wait, they find excuses, they delay some more, or they put things off until this or that is done. This wasn't the case with Joseph. He woke up and acted on what the angel had told him to do.

Imagine how comforting this was to Mary! She must have been living in anxiety, not knowing what Joseph would do. The angel appeared to him as well as to her and worked out all the details. God is a great administrator, in a manner of speaking. He covers all the details in a timely manner and gets the job done. You can rely on Him to handle all your affairs. **Are you trusting Him like you should, or are you anxious and worried?** Fear not! He can dispatch angels to do His bidding and orders the affairs of men on earth.

v. 25 – Joseph made a home for Mary, but did not have physical relations with her until after Jesus was born. What discipline! Joseph was indeed a righteous man! When the baby was born, He followed the angel's command and named the boy Jesus. Matthew leaves out the details around Jesus' birth that Luke included, but they were not as important to Matthew's gospel purpose. Matthew wanted to prove that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and did not intend to provide a full history of his life or birth, unless the details contributed to his purpose. I admire his focus as a writer.