

The Story of Christmas – Pt. 3

“The Story Contains a Special Progeny”

(12/17/23)

A couple of weeks ago, in honor of the Christmas season, we started a four-part series which we’ve entitled “*The Story of Christmas*”.

The two previous titles in this series are as follows:

I. The Story Begins with a Promise

II. The Story Continues with a Prophecy

And that brings us to part three of the Story of Christmas—

III. The Story Contains a Special Progeny

The dictionary defines the word *progeny* as: “*A descendant or the descendants of a person; a person who comes from a particular parent or family.*”

The story of Christmas is all about a very special family—the family of King David.

You see in 2Samuel 7, God promised David that the Messiah would come from his family line and that He would sit on the throne of His father David forever—a promise that God later affirmed thru the prophet Isaiah in a passage that is directly tied to the story of Christmas:

Isaiah 9:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The promise that the Messiah would be a descendant of David didn't originate with David but actually was first given to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 where God promised that Messiah would come through his lineage.

As God then became more specific (*"In Isaac your seed shall be called"*...then through Jacob...then through Judah...and then through David)—as God became more and more specific as to what family Messiah would be born into—it allowed Satan to focus his attacks more and more.

You need to see the story of Christmas as the story of redemption—which means the Messianic line (the family of redemption) became the main focus of spiritual warfare!

As we've been saying for the last couple weeks—the story of redemption started in the Garden of Eden with a promise that someday God would send a Savior Who would defeat the devil ("crush his head" by destroying his authority over this world) and return the world back to God to be ruled by His Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan was there and heard this promise and he determined to fight against God's plan of redemption with every resource at his disposal to keep this Redeemer from being born.

And so, as God revealed more and more what family the Messiah would be born into—the focus of his attack became the progeny of King David—or in other words, the family of the Royal/Messianic line.

In fact, Satan’s attack was so effective that at one point it looked like he would succeed in wiping out the royal line altogether.

The back story was that after King Ahaziah died, his wicked, demonic mother set about to kill every one of his sons in the royal line (her grandsons in the messianic line)—so that she could take the throne and rule.

She wound up killing them all—all except for a single heir:

2 Kings 11:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. ² But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons *who were* being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed. ³ So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD for six years, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

I just wanted you to see that the story of redemption has been a war that Satan declared on the Jewish people as they were chosen by God to be the instrument through which Messiah would be born—

- Whether we’re talking about Pharaoh ordering the death of all the Jewish baby boys in the book of Exodus.
- Or Haman getting King Darius to sign a hasty decree in the book of Esther that on a certain date all the Jews in Persia would be put to death.
- Or Herod the Great in the gospel of Matthew ordering all the Jewish boys born in Bethlehem two years old and under be killed.

We celebrate Christmas with the words, “*Peace on earth, goodwill toward men*”—but understand that, that peace came through a difficult and hard-fought war!

The story of redemption from Genesis 3 to the birth of Christ is the story of Satan’s war against God’s Messiah to keep Him from reigning so He couldn’t crush Satan’s head and destroy his authority over the earth.

One of the main ways he tried to do this was by *corrupting* the royal (Messianic) line through idolatry and immorality, which at one point seemed to bring Satan victory over God's plan of redemption.

As we turn to the N.T., the first book we encounter is the gospel of Matthew.

Matthew was a Jew, a Levite, whose gospel is called, "*the Gospel of the King*" because it was written primarily for Jewish readers to present to Israel her long awaited Messiah and King.

Matthew begins his gospel with a genealogy—the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

Now I think it safe to say that the genealogies in the Bible don't excite or bless most Christians—in fact I think most of us just skip over the genealogies in Scripture.

However, to the Jews genealogies were not only important—they were vital!

You see genealogies traced lineages through families and tribes—these were legal documents which proved property ownership.

Remember land in Israel was portioned according to tribes and then broken down further according to families—they needed their family genealogy to prove ownership of their land.

But genealogies also established the right of succession as in the case of the priesthood and the monarchy.

No man could legally occupy the office of a priest in Israel who could not trace his genealogy back to Aaron; or reign as king in Israel who could not trace his genealogy back to David.

Once again, Matthew wrote his gospel to present to Israel Jesus as their King—which means he’s going to have to prove genealogically that Jesus is qualified to be Israel’s King.

In other words, if you’re going to present someone as the Messiah and King of Israel, you’d better be able to prove that he is—first of all—a Jew, a descendant of Abraham (the father of the Jewish people).

And secondly—that he is a descendant of David through Solomon (the royal line) which meant he had the *legal* right to rule in Israel as king.

This is why Matthew starts out his gospel with the words—

Matthew 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Now as I said, if Matthew is going to prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and King of Israel, he first needs to prove that Jesus was a Jew by tracing His lineage back to Abraham.

Abraham became the *primogenitor* of the Jewish people by virtue of the covenant that God made with him that he would one day be the father of a great nation and that through his Seed (singular—Messiah) all the nations of the earth would someday be blessed. (Explain)

Matthew 1:2, 6 (NKJV)

² Abraham begot Isaac, Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot Judah and his brothers...⁶ and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by her *who had been the wife* of Uriah [Bathsheba].

At this point we need to understand that Matthew is tracing the lineage of Jesus through the royal line back to David.

As we have already said—the royal line descended from David through his son Solomon.

By doing this Matthew was proving that Jesus had the legal right to rule as King in Israel.

Now that's all well and fine until we get to one of David's descendants—Jeconiah (v.11) also known as 'Jehoiakim'.

Jehoiakim was so influenced by the devil and so evil—that God cursed him and his descendants and said that no descendant of his would ever sit upon the throne of David ever again.

At this point, I can imagine, the devil must have celebrated because in his mind he had won.

The royal line had been cursed which meant the Messiah could not rule as king because God had said that no descendant of Jehoiakim would ever sit upon the throne of David ever again!

“Checkmate!” the devil figured. “I’ve won! No Messiah means no King and no King means no Kingdom which means no one will take away my throne! I will now rule forever as the god of this world”.

However, the devil celebrated his victory a little too quickly—you see he didn't read the *“fine print”*.

As you read the gospels you discover that Jesus actually had two *different* genealogies—one in Matthew chapter one and the other in Luke chapter three—why?

The genealogy in Matthew's gospel traces Jesus' genealogy back to David through the royal line of Solomon—the line that Joseph, Jesus stepfather, descended from.

Matthew 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary [Not *“the father of Jesus”*], of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ.

You see Jesus was born of Mary but not of Joseph—Joseph was His stepfather—His real Father was of course God the Father.

This meant that the blood curse placed on Jehoiakim and his descendants, a blood curse that Joseph bore—was not transferred to Jesus who was not a blood descendant of Joseph.

And yet, as Jewish law mandated, all the rights of the adopted father were legally transferred to his adopted son which meant that—all the legal rights of Joseph were transferred to Jesus, his adopted son.

That was very important because it meant that through Joseph, Jesus received the *legal* right to be King since Joseph descended from David through Solomon—the royal line!

That's great but God had promised David that one of his blood descendants would sit on his throne one day forever—what about that?

Well, you see that's where Jesus' genealogy in Luke's gospel comes into play—which is the genealogy of Mary.

You see in Luke's gospel he traces Jesus' genealogy back to David—but instead of going through Solomon the royal (and cursed) line he goes from Mary to David back through *Nathan*, another son of David—a line that didn't have the blood curse upon it.

This allowed Jesus to be a literal blood descendant of King David without carrying upon Himself the blood curse God put upon the royal line starting with Jehoiakim.

All of this teaches us that—God can be trusted to keep His promises in your life no matter how desperate or impossible things look! (Elaborate)

Let's spend the rest of our time looking at Mary and Joseph since they are so pivotal to the story of Christmas—being that they were the final descendants in the lineage of the Messiah before his birth.

God's announcement to Mary

Luke 1:26-37 (NKJV)

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" ²⁹ But when she saw *him*, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.* ³⁶ Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. ³⁷ For with God nothing will be impossible."

What do we know about Mary?

Well, we know that she was a Jewess of the tribe of Judah, a descendant of David, and a virgin.

She was engaged to a carpenter in Nazareth named Joseph (Matt. 13:55), and apparently both of them were poor (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:24).

It is probable that both Joseph and Mary were quite young when they were betrothed.

Girls were often betrothed as young as thirteen or fourteen, and boys when they were fifteen or sixteen.

According to Jewish custom, a betrothal signified more than an engagement in the modern sense—a Hebrew marriage involved two stages, the *kiddushin* (betrothal) and the *huppah* (marriage ceremony).

The marriage was almost always arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom—often without consulting them (often when they were both babies—and sometimes before they were even born!).

A contract was made and was sealed by payment of the *mohar* (the dowry or *bride price*) which was paid by the groom or his family to the bride's father.

The *mohar* served to compensate the bride's father for wedding expenses and to provide a type of insurance for the bride in case of her husband's death (life insurance)—or in the event the groom became dissatisfied and divorced her the *mohar* became "*alimony in advance*."

The contract was considered binding as soon as it was made and the man and woman at that point were considered legally married even though the marriage ceremony (*huppah*) and consummation often did not occur until as much as a year later. (Explain)

Given the maturity with which Mary handled herself in the face of this incredible encounter I'm going to guess she was no younger than 16 yrs. old.

Mary's response was to surrender herself to God as a willing servant—"Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:38)

All this took more trust than we might think—I mean, think about it, she is agreeing to a "*suspicious pregnancy*" in a society that had a death penalty for adultery.

At very least, she risked losing Joseph as her husband.

Did Mary fully comprehend at that moment all the implications of what the angel was saying—probably not, but she would in the weeks and months to follow—for this blessing would not be without cost.

Philip Yancey in his book, *“The Jesus I Never Knew”* had this to say concerning Mary—
“Often a work of God comes with two edges, great joy and great pain: and in that matter of fact response, Mary embraced both. She was the first person to accept Jesus on His own terms, regardless of the personal cost.”

And cost Mary it did—it cost her, her reputation, as she was ostracized from her family and friends as an immoral woman (if she had lived in Puritan times, she would have been forced to wear the scarlet letter “A” for the rest of her life).

One author put it this way—
“We all dream of being used by God for some great work for His glory; and we fancy ourselves, like Mary saying, *‘Behold, the servant or the maidservant of the Lord’* not realizing that it’s often a two-edged sword in that the greatest blessings often go hand in hand with the deepest sorrows.”

And yet that is the cross that Jesus commands all of His followers to carry if they are truly going to be His disciples—total surrender regardless of the cost.

God’s pronouncement to Joseph

Matthew 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

So, verse 18 tells us that during this betrothal period, before Joseph and Mary had consummated their marriage, she was found to be pregnant.

We know from Matthew and Luke’s gospels that the Holy Spirit had impregnated Mary with the Son of God—but Joseph didn’t know that at first.

He naturally thought she had been unfaithful to him (committed adultery)—and even after Mary told him what the angel Gabriel had said, he still didn't believe her.

You guys put yourselves in Joseph's sandals—what would you have thought if your fiancée came to you pregnant and saying she was still a virgin but had been impregnated with the Seed (Son) of God by the Holy Spirit—without sex?

One author put it this way—

“Can you think of a greater test of a man's love for a woman? On the one hand, he might have imagined a wicked tryst with another man—but this was not the Mary that Joseph knew and loved. On the other hand, how could he really believe the story she'd told him about the angelic announcement? Joseph didn't know what to think. His heart was broken, his plans ruined, his pride bruised, but he still loved this Hebrew maiden...”

In fact, he loved her so much that he didn't demand his rights—he didn't seek revenge.

You see Jewish law said that adultery was punishable by stoning and so legally Joseph had every right to accuse Mary openly and publicly as an adulteress and then to demand justice by having her stoned.

Instead, we read—

Matthew 1:19-21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, **and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."**

The name *Jesus* is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word Y'shua, which is short for Jehovah-Shua, which means, "*Jehovah is salvation.*"

When Jesus was born into this world, Rome was in power—and it ruled the world with an iron fist.

For most people living at that time this wasn't a problem especially with regard to the god or gods they worshipped—for as long as a person acknowledged Caesar as lord (their supreme deity)—Rome would allow them to worship any other god or gods of their choosing.

But for the Jews who were fiercely monotheistic as the people of the one true and living God—this was absolutely unacceptable. (Elaborate)

Not to mention paying taxes to Rome and having these pagan gentiles living in and controlling their land—it was more than most of them could bear.

Now the Jews living at this time had been taught from the time they were little children that when Messiah came, He would deliver them from Roman oppression.

That He would defeat and drive them out of the land of Israel and would set up a new Kingdom where He Himself would rule from Jerusalem over the whole earth.

However, you need to understand that they were looking for a *political* Messiah who would bring a political kingdom of material blessings.

The Jewish people weren't looking for a Messiah that would save them from their *sins* and establish a Kingdom of righteousness.

What they wanted was a Messiah who would bless their lives on a physical and material level—a Messiah that would feed them, clothe them, heal them, take care of them and keep their enemies at bay—that was the Messiah they were looking for—that was the Messiah they would support.

What they didn't want was a Messiah who demanded they change the way they were living—they didn't want a Messiah who would tell them how to live—that they stop living in rebellion against God and start living in obedience to Him and His laws.

And so, it was common for people back then to look at the coming messiah as a social savior, as a problem solver, but not as a Savior who wanted to save them from their sins—this is also true today (Explain).

Listen, in closing, the greatest problem facing the human race isn't Islamic fundamentalism; it isn't global warming; it isn't world hunger, or disease, or if we're talking about America, it isn't even the economy.

The greatest problem facing the human race is and always has been the problem of sin.

And before God can save a person from this present evil world system and allow them to live with Him in His glorious Kingdom someday—He has to first save them from their sins.

That's what Jesus came the first time to do—He came to save us from our sins (and ultimately from the consequence of sin—hell)—that's the story of Christmas!

Now when Jesus returns to the earth at His Second Coming—He will save us from bad circumstances and problems and establish His Kingdom upon this earth where we will live with Him in a Kingdom of righteousness and peace—but first things first!

Someone has written these words and I think that they are very appropriate—

*“If our greatest need had been for information—God would have sent us an educator.
If our greatest need had been for technology—God would have sent us a scientist.
If our greatest need had been money—God would have sent us an economist.
If our greatest need had been pleasure—God would have sent us an entertainer.
But our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.”*

And now the stage is set for the culmination of the Story of Christmas!