



### **Scripture: Matthew 1:1-17 (NIV)**

*This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of King David.*

*David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.*

*After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abihud, Abihud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Elihud, Elihud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.*

*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 Messiah.*

### **Devotion:**

Why would God include genealogies in the Bible? Many people find them boring and skip over them while reading. However, genealogies are far more than a list of hard to pronounce names. They tell us that the people we read about were real. They had families and a history, just like we do. More importantly, they show us that Jesus' earthly family was far from perfect. His ancestors included liars, manipulators, prostitutes, and murderers. Shocking? Yes. Scandalous? Absolutely - but also encouraging. It shows us that God can use anyone for His glory. He saves us, redeems us, and transforms us. No one is beyond His help and saving grace. God has a plan for the world, and He has a plan for each of us. Whatever our past looks like, it is God who determines our future. Will you choose to accept His grace and follow Him today?

## **Prayer:**

*Dear Lord God, thank You for sending Your Son into this world in physical form. Thank You for placing Him in the right family at the right time in history - and that You have done the same for us. We live in a challenging world right now, but we know You have placed each of us here for a reason. You don't make mistakes! Thank You that our past does not hinder our future with You. Thank You that Your mercies are new every morning. Help us to walk in obedience to You as we live with intention the rest of our days. Amen.*



**Scripture:** Matthew 1:18-25 (NIV)

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.*

*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. 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.”*

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).*

*When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

**Devotion:**

What word do you think came to the minds of Mary and Joseph’s family, friends, and community when they found out Mary was pregnant? Indecent? Scandalous? Sinful? Angels visited Mary and Joseph to explain this amazing miracle to them, but they’re the only ones we know of who received a divine explanation. The community would have been shocked, even outraged, at this seemingly obvious sin by Mary and by Joseph’s refusal to divorce her. Saying “Yes” to God meant they would have to endure gossip, glares in the marketplace, and lost relationships. We don’t know everything Mary and Joseph endured, but we know it couldn’t have been easy. God doesn’t call us to easy either. His ways are often shocking to the casual observer. He will call us to do things that others won’t understand, but He will be with us every step of the way. Sometimes we’ll be mocked when we say “Yes” to God. Sometimes we’ll lose relationships. As followers of Jesus Christ, persecution will come. Yet, like Mary and Joseph, we can be bravely obedient to God and be part of something miraculous. Something sacred and holy. Will you say “Yes” to God, even when it’s hard?

## **Prayer:**

*Oh God, Your ways are beyond our comprehension. We don't always understand them, but we trust You. We trust that You have a good plan and that shocking and unexpected is part of that plan. We know You're calling us to be bold and to live uncommon lives. Will You help us step out in faith and say "Yes" to You, even when we're afraid? Will You fill our hearts with peace and courage? We accept Your strength and the joy You give us for the journey ahead. Amen.*





**Scripture:** Luke 2:1-7 (NIV)

*In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register.*

*So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.*

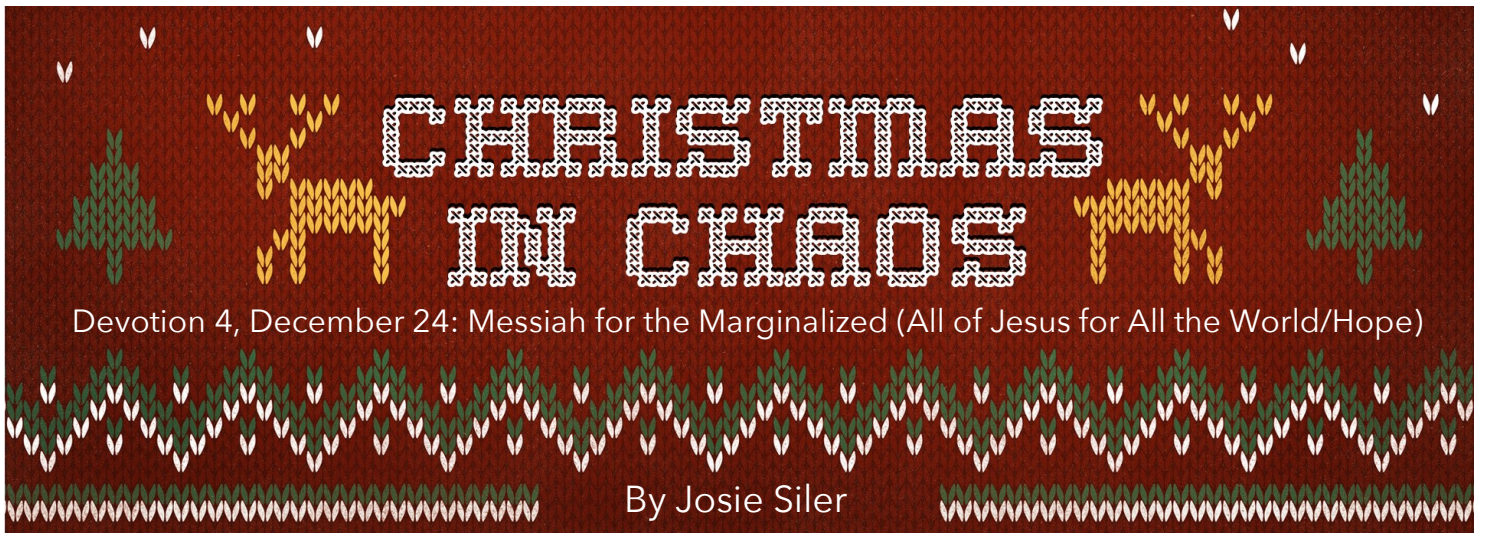
**Devotion:**

We don't know how far along Mary was when she had to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but any stage of pregnancy would make this already difficult journey even more challenging. It seems like terrible timing, but from God's perspective, everything was falling into place. Prophecy said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem so God had to get Mary there before she gave birth. But Mary and Joseph weren't the only travelers to Bethlehem. The little town was bursting at the seams and when it came time for Jesus to be born, it was in less than ideal circumstances. Mary and Joseph welcomed their little miracle into the world and beheld the face of God. The King of kings and Lord of lords was wrapped in ordinary cloths and placed in an ordinary manger. Everything about Jesus is unexpected. His lineage, his conception, and the story of His birth are scandalous, shocking, and nothing short of miraculous. Amid ordinary life, the extraordinary has happened. That's what God does in our lives too. In the midst of our regular, ordinary lives, He does the extraordinary. He takes the mundane and makes it holy. He takes our small offerings and multiplies them for His glory. Will you choose an extraordinary life? Will you choose Jesus?

**Prayer:**

*Lord God, we're amazed at how You work. To think that You use ordinary people to accomplish Your purposes is extraordinary. It's shocking that You would send Your beloved Son to earth as a helpless little baby. We can't even fathom the love You have for us, Your creation. You went to extreme measures to show us Your love and to save us. We don't take that lightly and we're so thankful. Help us live extraordinary lives with Jesus. Amen.*





**Scripture:** Luke 2:8-20 (NIV)

*And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”*

*Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,*

*“Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”*

*When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”*

*So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.*

**Devotion:**

Imagine for a moment you’re a shepherd. You’re living out in the fields with your sheep, who are resting safely for the night. You’re hoping to get a little rest too, even though you’re on the lookout for thieves and predators. It’s a dark night and the blanket of stars almost makes you forget how cold the night air has become. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appears out of nowhere and tells you the Messiah has arrived. You haven’t even begun to process this information when the entire sky erupts with the light of a great company of heavenly visitors. Their praises pierce the silent night with praise, and then they’re gone just as fast as they arrived. Talk about unexpected! And it’s not just the appearance of the heavenly visitors, it’s who they appeared to. The Son of God has arrived on earth as a human and God decides to announce this miracle to shepherds living outside with stinky sheep? Shocking! Immediately, the shepherds went to find Jesus, surprising Mary and Joseph with their late-night visit. Shepherds were among the first humans to meet the

Lamb of God. It's a fitting beginning to Jesus' life on earth. He grew up and became the Good Shepherd. He befriended the outcast, touched the lepers, saved those who followed Him, and laid down His life for us, His sheep. Jesus came for everyone, including you and me. Will you listen to your Shepherd's voice today? Will you follow Him where He leads you?

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, You continue to amaze us. It's incredible to think of You announcing Jesus' birth in such a spectacular way to an ordinary group of shepherds. We're so thankful that You sent Jesus for all of us, and not just the rich or the intelligent or the influential. Jesus, You're one of us, yet You're so much more. You're our Good Shepherd, our Savior, and our Lord. We love You so much! Help us to recognize Your voice in the midst of a noisy world. Give us courage to follow You wherever You lead. It's so good to know that we don't walk alone, but have such a Good Shepherd to lead us. We place our faith and our hope in You, Jesus. You are our God. In Your precious Name, amen.*





**Scripture:** Matthew 2:1-12 (NIV)

*After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

*When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:*

*“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.”*

*Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”*

*After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.*

**Devotion:**

King Herod may have been pleasantly surprised by how far the Magi came to see him, but he was furious when he learned the shocking reason they had come. They came looking for a new king, and they brought gifts. The star led them to Jesus and they immediately bowed down and worshiped Him. These unexpected visitors presented Jesus with expensive gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When it was time for them to leave, God warned them not to go back to Herod, but to return home a different way than they had arrived. These men, the Magi, had a singular purpose. They invested a great deal of time and money to find Jesus with the sole purpose of worshiping Him and honoring Him with their best treasures. Do we long to worship Jesus with that kind of intensity? Do we seek to give Him the things we treasure? The best of our time, our

resources, and our talents? He deserves the best of us. He deserves all of us. Will you offer Him the gift of yourself today as a holy and living sacrifice?

**Prayer:**

*God, because of Your mercy, we offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to You—this is our true and proper worship, according to Your Word. Lord God, transform us by renewing our minds. Help us focus our thoughts on You. We offer You the best of ourselves. The Magi searched for You, Jesus, but You came to us. Thank You that we don't have to traverse deserts to find You, Lord. You're already with us! We choose You as our King and the Lord of our lives. We love You Lord, and worship Your holy Name. Amen.*