

Matthew Chapter 1 – The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Review

In the last lesson, we talked about how Matthew sets up his account of the life of Jesus the Messiah. Matthew sets up this account much as Moses did with Genesis. We talked about the significance of *Son of David* and *Son of Abraham* and concluded that Son of David points to the Kingship of Jesus as the prophesied King of Israel. Son of Abraham points to the seed promise of Abraham bringing about the covenant promise.

What is the point of this genealogy?

1. Of the seed of Abraham
2. Of the seed of David
3. Appropriate timing
4. To provide a mnemonic device for the readers

Any questions asked about this genealogy should have this purpose in mind. If the questions that are posed do not enhance the purpose, then the point is moot.

What about the curse of Jeconiah (Jeremiah 22:24)? Does this mean that this line cannot reign in Israel? A review of Luke's genealogy (Luke 3:23-27) is required before that can be addressed.

The argument is that Matthew demonstrates an illegitimate claim to the throne, but Luke demonstrates a rightful line to the throne.

The argument usually ends up with this being the line of Joseph, but Jesus is not really of that line, so it is ok if that line is cursed. This does not make sense to me. Why would a book dedicated to Jesus' rightful claim to the throne of David begin with an illegitimate line, and only after Luke writes his historical account does the rightful claim come into view?

Shealtiel and Zerubbabel are in both lines, converging after David. If both are men considered to be the son of Jeconiah, then are not both Luke and Matthew's lines tainted?

Although Jeconiah has the signet removed, Zerubbabel is stated to have the signet in Haggai 2.

I conclude that the curse of Jeconiah is that his immediate sons would not rule. The first person to rule in that line is Zerubbabel, not Shealtiel. I believe both lines (Matthew and Luke) can be used to demonstrate that Jesus has a rightful claim to the throne. But it is the line in Matthew that has the line of kings. I believe that Jeremiah's curse of Jeconiah does not have any impact upon the line in Matthew.

Based upon the human qualifications, Jesus has a rightful claim to the throne, being a Son of David. As we pointed out last time, we asked a question that cannot be answered. How many sons of David are alive at the time of Jesus?

Mark 6:3 – Jesus had four brothers that also would have a claim to the throne of David. There is no indication that the line of David only followed one line. In fact, the lineage in Luke proves that the line follows multiple veins.

Matthew Chapter 1 – The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Saying this genealogy claims an exclusive right to the throne of David is not true. God chooses the king. What God does say is that the Messiah would be a son of David. And this genealogy of Jesus demonstrates that He is a son of David.

What Matthew does in this account is to use the Hebrew Scriptures to give enough detail about Jesus to convince a Jewish reader that Jesus fits the promises of the Old Testament.

Looking forward to the first few chapters in Matthew:

How many babies were born in Bethlehem?

...at the appropriate time?

...of the line of David?

...fled to Egypt?

...were raised in Nazareth?

...were born of a virgin?

The individual details in this text do not prove that Jesus is the Messiah. All of them together provide enough evidence to make one conclude that Jesus is the Messiah. The text does not stop there. After these first two chapters, Matthew continues to demonstrate that Jesus is, in fact, the promised one of God, the Messiah.

Is Matthew the line of Joseph or Mary? When people got married the male assumed both lines as an adopted son from his wife's father. Consequently, both lines (Matthew or Luke) could come from either Joseph or Mary. The content of Matthew and Luke provides the answer to this question. Reading the text, we see who the writer focuses upon, is it Mary or Joseph. Does Luke focus upon Mary or Joseph?

Matthew 1:18-25 – Christmas Time

Spoiler alert – Matthew 2 is not about Christmas; I know that we like adding the magi into the manger scene, but the text does not bear this out. We will demonstrate this when we get there.

Read Matthew 1:18-25 – Who is the main character in this narrative?

It is Jesus. Jesus is spoken of directly and indirectly 15 times in the text.

Who are the characters in this narrative? Joseph, Mary, and an angel. Verse 18 is an introductory summary. It is a statement that encapsulates the point; the rest of the paragraph provides details.

Who is the paragraph about? It is about Joseph—his character, his thoughts, his plan, his divine message, his integrity, and his actions.

The main character is Jesus, how He was conceived and born, but the story is about Joseph. Mary is only spoken of, but we know nothing about her mental state or her thoughts from this text. We need to review Luke to see Mary's story and thoughts. The story in Matthew leaves one wanting.

What are Mary's thoughts? What is her perspective? What did she say to Joseph? Where is her instruction? What did she do?

Matthew Chapter 1 – The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

Why does Matthew not record Mary’s story? This could be due to a lack of opportunity, although this is unlikely. This is probably left out because it does not advance the point of the text. The point of the text is David, the kingly Messianic line, and the right of Jesus to be King of Israel.

In verse 18, the text simply states that Mary was found to be pregnant. There is no drama; there is no explanation; it just is.

What is the theological term usually associated with Mary becoming pregnant by means of the Holy Spirit? If you said the Immaculate Conception, you would be wrong.

On December 8, 1854, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.”

“The subject of this immunity from original sin is the person of Mary at the moment of the creation of her soul and its infusion into her body.”

“The formal active essence of original sin was not removed from her soul, as it is removed from others by baptism; it was excluded, it never was in her soul. Simultaneously with the exclusion of sin. The state of original sanctity, innocence, and justice, as opposed to original sin, was conferred upon her, by which gift every stain and fault, all depraved emotions, passions, and debilities, essentially pertaining to original sin, were excluded.”

“The person of Mary, in consequence of her origin from Adam, should have been subject to sin, but, being the new Eve who was to be the mother of the new Adam, she was, by the eternal counsel of God and by the merits of Christ, withdrawn from the general law of original sin.”

“Such is the meaning of the term ‘Immaculate Conception.’”

When Mary is found to be with child, there was no physical proof of the manner of the pregnancy. Before her becoming pregnant, Gabriel was sent to announce the conception to Mary (Luke 1:26-38). I am sure that Mary told Joseph what happened. Based upon the text in Matthew, Joseph did not believe her.

In verse 19, Joseph is said to be a righteous man. This is a literal translation. Using an adverbial present participle of “eimi” – “him being” “δικαιος δικaios.” When this word is used, we must ask if this is righteousness before God or right in behavior. They are not the same thing (Romans 3:10, 26; Luke 1:6). When conduct is the topic, it is the right acts of the subject that are on display, not his standing before the God of creation. What were Joseph’s right acts concerning Mary? He did not want to disgrace her, and he put her away privately.

These two actions display Joseph as being right. He is compassionate; the Law is not without compassion (Matthew 23:23).

The intent of the Law is clear—do not commit adultery. But instead of stoning, the practice was to divorce (Matthew 5:31-32, 19:3-9). The word for *divorce* (ἀπολύω apoluō) is the same word in Matthew 1. Joseph planned to divorce Mary secretly to preserve the Law but show mercy.

Matthew Chapter 1 – The Birth of Jesus the Messiah

This indicates that he believed Mary had committed adultery. It took an act of God to convince him otherwise.

After the revelation, Joseph married Mary and had other children with her. In this situation and with the information he had, he did the right thing at every turn.

After Joseph had planned this out, he had a dream. The word for *dream* is “ὄναρ onar.” There is another word for *dream* in Greek—“ἐνύπνιον enuphion,” which is part of the “ὕπνος hupnos” word group for sleep. “ὄναρ onar” is unique to Matthew:

1:20, 2:12, 13, 19, 22, 27:19 – What is this? Is this a dream, a vision, or a trance? Undetermined. But we do know that God communicated to Joseph and the magi (what is going on with Pilate’s wife?) according to the use of “ὄναρ onar.”

In the “ὄναρ onar,” he saw an angel. The communication is straightforward yet profound (read Matthew 1:20-21).

Son of David – This does not mean that Joseph is the rightful king of Israel. He would have a claim, but there is no king in Israel until God appoints a king.

Marry Mary (Miriam) – His love or desire for her is not mentioned. We can talk about betrothment and the fact that many in Israel did not marry for love, and sometimes the desires of the betrothed had nothing to do with them getting married. But that does not advance the point of this text.

The Fact – That which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, she will bear a Son and you (Joseph, singular) shall call His name Jesus.

Why this name? – Because He will save His people from their sins.

Some teachers try to change the “autos” “He/Him” into “my,” making this “He will save my people from their sins.”

His people – Israel, not the world

Their sins – The sin of breaking the covenant and forsaking YHWH

Save – this is a restorative statement, not an eternal life statement. This is national salvation on display. Remember the life, sacrifice, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ had many results. Matthew does not focus upon individual eternal life, being right before God. This is about the restoration of Israel and who will get into the Kingdom of Heaven.

This was done to fulfill.... We will deal with the prophecies of Matthew 1-2 and the fulfillment of those prophecies in the next lesson.

Verses 24-25 conclude the Christmas narrative by stating that Joseph, the righteous man, did exactly as was commanded by the Lord. “He did not know her until she gave birth” is a literal translation. Joseph took on the responsibility of marrying a woman who was pregnant with a child that was not his. He waited until after she gave birth to consummate the marriage. He then adopted Jesus, the Son of another, to pass down the rights of being a Son of David.