

## THE MESSIAH ARRIVES - MATTHEW CHS. 1 & 2

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.” (Isa. 7:14).

- I. The Genealogy and Birth of the Messiah-King (Mt. 1:1-17). A person may wonder why Matthew’s gospel begins with something as dull as family tree. However, the genealogy is indispensable. It lays the foundation for all that follows. Unless it can be shown that Jesus is the legal descendant of David through the royal line, it is impossible to prove that He is the Messiah-King of Israel. Matthew begins where he must – with the documentary evidence that Jesus inherited the legal right to the throne of David through His step-father Joseph. This genealogy traces the *legal* descent of Jesus as the King of Israel, the genealogy in Luke’s gospel traces His *lineal* (blood line) descent as the son of David. Thus through Jesus (“*Salvation*”), (*Heb.* Jeshua (“The Lord is Salvation”), *Christ* (*Gr.* Christos – “anointed”) God’s covenant promises to David, (2 Samuel 7: 16 – Psalm 89:29), will all be fulfilled. As **Jesus is alive** there can be no other claimant to the throne. The title “Son of Abraham” presents our Lord Jesus as the One who is the ultimate fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham in the Abrahamic

Covenant, “*In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*” ( Gen 12: 1-3).

The testimony of the Apostles: “*Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and know, that You are the Holy One of God*”, (AV – “*that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God*”). (John 6:68,69).

**Jeconiah** (aka Jehoiachin) “is Joseph’s ancestor in the line of David through Solomon. Second Samuel 7:12-17 unconditionally promises the perpetuity of the Davidic kingdom through Solomon (vv. 12-13). But, Jeconiah, who was in that line, was so wicked that God cursed him, not allowing his descendants to be king (Jer. 22:30). This posed a dilemma, How can both the promise and the curse be fulfilled? The answer is, “*Through the Virgin Birth.*” Joseph was legally in that line through David, Solomon and even Jeconiah. But Jesus is not a physical son of Joseph, and so dodges the curse while still fulfilling the legal requirement of being a son of David. Jesus, through Joseph, is in the legal line to David and Solomon without being under the physical curse.” (Van Langingham).

**Women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ** - It is unusual for women to be named in genealogies, Matthew names five: **Tamar** was a Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah (Gen. 38: 13-30). **Rahab** (v.5) was a gentile and a prostitute

(Josh. 2:1). **Ruth** (v.5) was a Moabite woman (Ruth 1:3) and a worshipper of idols. **Bathsheba** (“Uriah’s wife”) (v.6) committed adultery with David (2 Sam. 11). And **Mary** (v.16) bore the perceived stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Each of these women is an object lesson about the loving workings of Divine Grace to save sinners of both genders.

**Notes: Joseph’s** is the only entry in the genealogy where the term **begat** is not used.

**David** is the only entry where the title **King** is used.

**“Of Whom”** - The pronoun **whom** is singular and in the feminine gender referring to Mary alone. This underscores the fact that Jesus was not Joseph’s literal offspring.

**The 14 generations is unclear.** Some have suggested that it helps memorization. At a deeper level, Vanlaningham suggests; “the name David (Heb. “dwd”) adds up to 14 on the basis of Hebrew numerology 4 (“D”) + 6 (“W”) + 4 (“D”), and since there are three letters this may account for three sets of 14. Matthew give us no clues for its significance however, this is not a pure genealogical record but it makes a theological statement about Jesus as the son of David.

- II. Jewish Marriage Practices - The groom takes the initiative and approaches the father of the prospective bride. If the bride’s father agrees to the marriage the

groom pays a price called a *Mohar*, a sort of reverse dowry that compensated the bride's family for any financial loss they may incur without her help in the family business. The couple exchanged vows and were considered legally married. Dissolution of the marriage during betrothal required a formal divorce. The couple did not cohabit for a year while the groom prepared living quarters, often attached to his father's house. After the year the groom and his friends would surprise the bride and her family, the wedding feast would begin, further vows would be exchanged, and the marriage consummated. It was during the year of betrothal that Mary's pregnancy was discovered. Marriage would have been tacit admission by Joseph that the child was his. Joseph being a **righteous man** and kind as well, intended to divorce her secretly by writing a bill of divorcement in the presence of two or three witnesses rather than suing Mary and her family to recoup the Mohar but angelic intervention changed Joseph's mind.

**The Virgin** - (Gr. *Parthenos* - A young woman who is presumed to be with no sexual experience- a virgin.) A similar word in Heb. *Alma* means essentially the same thing as *parthenos*. In the NT *parthenos* is used exclusively.

III. **The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judah**- He who was conceived and birthed by her was from the Holy Spirit. Bethlehem was a small village about 6 miles from

Jerusalem. Hebrew scholars in Jesus day clearly expected Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the Messiah ( Mic. 5:2; John 7:42). Jesus birth was in the days of Herod the King. This king is Herod the Great, the first of several important rulers from the Herodian dynasty who were named in scripture. This Herod, founder of the famous line ruled from 37-4 BC.

He is thought to have been Idumean, a descendant of the Edomites, offspring of Esau. Herod was ruthless, cunning, paranoid and a puppet under Rome. His atrocities include killing three sons, his wife and his wife's mother to protect his regime. He loved opulence and grand building projects, and many of the most significant ruins that one can see in modern Israel date back to the days of Herod the Great. His most famous project was the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. That project took several decades to build and was completed after his death.

- IV. The Magi – The term magi was used for priests and wise men among the Medes, Persians and Babylonians. These persons were supposed to be adept in that secret learning which in remote antiquity had its seat in Egypt, and later in Chaldea. Merrill Unger goes further and points out that there were five classes of them. Those who expounded sacred writings, interpreters of signs, conjurers, exorcists, sooth-sayers, magicians, diviners and astrologers. Pharaoh and many kings had an assembly of them. It is with such men that Daniel and

his fellow exiles interfaced. They are described as “ten times wiser than all the magicians and astrologers” (1: 20). Initially, neither Herod nor the Magi knew where the baby Jesus was located in Herod’s domain until the leaders of the Jews told Herod and the Star led the wise men and stopped over the site of the house where the young child lay. Note: The Jewish leaders could not bring themselves to go 5 or 6 miles to see the long expected Messiah.

#### V. The Wise Men (Magi) worship and offer Kingly gifts.

Upon entering the house, (not the manger), they saw the Child with his mother Mary and they bowed down and worshipped Him. The Kingly treasures they brought spoke volumes. **Gold** is a symbol of deity, glory and kingship. **Frankincense** /incense is an ointment or perfume; it suggests the fragrance of the life of sinless perfection. **Myrrh** is a bitter herb, it presages the sufferings He would endure in bearing the sins of the world. MacDonald point out that the bringing of gifts by Gentiles is reminiscent of the language of Isaiah 60:6. Isaiah predicted that Gentiles would come to the Messiah with gifts, but mentions only gold and frankincense. “They shall bring gold and incense and they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord”. Why was Myrrh omitted? Because Isaiah was speaking of Christ’s second advent- His coming in power and great glory. There will be no Myrrh then because He will not suffer then. But in Matthew the myrrh is included because His first coming

is in view. In Matthew we have the sufferings of Christ; in this passage in Isaiah, the glories that shall follow. The wise men being Divinely warned went home by another route.

Lesson: No one who meets Christ with a sincere heart ever returns the same way. True encounters with Him transforms all of life.

VI. The Escape to Egypt –( 2:3) - From an infant the threat of death hung over our Lord. It is apparent that He was born to die, but only at the appointed time. Lesson: Anyone who walk as in God's will is immortal until his or her work is done.

As the wise men had been warned in a dream so here Joseph is warned in a dream to flee to Egypt.

VIII. Herod's Slaughter of the children-His Death-

The flight to Egypt was ordered to save the child from the wrath of Herod who ordered the slaughter of boy children two years old and younger in Bethlehem and surrounds. The weeping which followed the killings was a fulfillment of the words of **Jeremiah the prophet** (Jer. 31:15). In this prophecy **Rachel** represents the nation of Israel. The grief of the nation is attributed to Rachel, who was buried in **Ramah** (near Bethlehem). As the bereaved parents passed by her tomb, she is pictured as **weeping** with them. In his effort to eliminate this young rival, Herod gained nothing but dishonorable mention in the annals of infamy. No one knows the length of time the family spent in Egypt however, numerous commentators believe in light of the

dates that the time could have been a matter of weeks. It wasn't long after Herod's killing spree that he died what has been recorded as a revolting death per Josephus. The evil of the man carried to his death bed when he ordered the execution of another man.

IX. The Return From Egypt – After Herod's death an angel assured **Joseph** that it was now safe to return to Israel. Arriving he heard that Herod's son Archelaus was now King. His fear of returning to that region was confirmed by God in a dream. He therefore traveled north to the region of Galilee and settled in Nazareth. For the fourth time in this chapter Matthew reminds us that prophecy was being fulfilled as the prophets said He would **be called a Nazarene**. It means that He would be treated with contempt. Nazareth was a town viewed with contempt by the general populace. Isaiah 53:3 says He would be **“despised and rejected of men”**. Nathaniel expresses this by the proverbial question; “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

It is amazing that when the Almighty God came to earth, He was given a nick-name of reproach. Those who follow Him here on earth have the privilege to share His reproach. (Heb. 13:13).

As the saying goes; **“Wise Men Still Seek HIM!”**

Blessings and an early **Merry Christmas!**



