

Session 40

MATTHEW 1

Matthew 1

Memory Verse

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

– MATTHEW 1:21, CSB




Matthew 1


THEOLOGICAL THEME: The genealogy of Jesus is an important bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament and the fulfillment of messianic prophecy.

CALL TO ACTION: The long-promised Messiah has come, and His name is Jesus. Do you know Him? Have you surrendered to Him?

When was the last time you looked at a familiar story from a different viewpoint? Maybe you read a favorite book to your kid or listened to them read it to you. Maybe you revisited a Bible story to share with others. This can also happen when you listen to someone who is new to faith talk about the Bible. Revisiting familiar events and accounts something gives opportunity to consider them with a fresh perspective.

It has been said, “familiarity breeds contempt.” We can easily overlook the opportunity to learn from something we have heard before. But it’s foolish for us to overlook the value of certain Scriptures because they are familiar. Today, we are studying one of the most known passages of the Bible. Commit now to being open to what God wants to say to you through these verses.

 When has looking at something from a different perspective helped you see or experience it in a new way?

 Why do you think the idea, “familiarity breeds contempt,” is often true?

Session Summary


Matthew's account of Jesus's arrival on earth is focused on Jesus as King. Beginning with the genealogy of His earthly father showed that Joseph was from the line of Abraham and David. The genealogy of Jesus fulfilled prophecy regarding the line of the Messiah.

Jesus's genealogy also illustrates that God fulfilled His plan to bring about the Messiah from broken, common people. This is a reminder to that Jesus came for all. We can be encouraged even when we feel insignificant or disqualified due to our failures. If those in the lineage of our Lord were blessed to be named in connection to Jesus, He also can use us for His glory when we obey Him and surrender our lives to Him.

1. The Genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17)

The New Testament opens with the genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1. Matthew was written by the disciple of Jesus, named Matthew, who was a tax collector before he was called to follow Christ. The fact that Jesus chose someone like Matthew to be one of His closest friends and disciples is a reminder that Jesus did not just come for the most popular or beloved people who have it all together. Tax collectors were hated and not esteemed by the Jewish people. They were often looked at as traitors because they carried out the orders of Rome and often took advantage of their position to line their own pockets.

When a genealogy appears in Scripture, we may be tempted to fast forward or skim right over that portion of the text because we don't see the relevance, or the names are hard to pronounce. We must remember every word of the Bible is important to God, or it would not be included. This list of Jesus's ancestors is like a bridge from the Old Testament to the New Testament connecting the people of God to the long-awaited Messiah.

 What is your typical response when you come up a list of names in Scripture like this one? Why?

When listing our own ancestors, we are likely to focus on the most important, impressive, or well-known names in our lineage, but that is not what God did here. One unique aspect of this genealogy is the inclusion of several women. This was highly unusual in ancient culture as women were often disregarded. But we see God includes and values both men and women.

Another notable piece in this genealogy is that there are men and women listed who had scandalous pasts and mistakes, and some who were Gentiles, those outside of God's chosen people, the Jews. Through this, we are reminded the Lord has always had a plan for all the people of the earth and not just the Jewish nation. Even though Matthew wrote this book primarily to the Jews, he made clear that God's redemptive plan was for both Gentiles and Jews. He also stressed some key Jewish figures in the lineage of Christ as proof that Jesus was the Messiah the Jews had longed for.

? What does the varied backgrounds and stories of those included in this genealogy teach you about God's heart?

Matthew anchored Jesus as a descendant of the Patriarchs of the faith so it would be conclusive that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy they had been waiting to see fulfilled. Connecting Jesus to the Abrahamic covenant highlighted His kingship and gave evidence of His identity as Immanuel, God with us. The way that Matthew referred to fourteen generations may be more of an idiom than a precise number. The genealogy is organized to flow for the sake of memorization as was common in Jewish culture.

? Application: Which name in this list stands out to you most and why?


2. The Nativity (Matthew 1:18-21)

The details about the Jesus's earthly parents are also important to understand. While the nativity story in Luke 2 gives more specifics of the birth of Christ, Matthew focused on where Jesus came from and how these events happened from the perspective of Joseph. Much can be learned by approaching these events from the viewpoint of Joseph.

A typical marriage in Jewish culture during that time had three stages. Engagement could happen when the two parties were quite young and was often

arranged by the parents. This was the initial promise of eventual marriage. Next was the betrothal which made the engagement official and binding. During this stage a man and woman were known as husband and wife. A betrothal was only broken by divorce and typically lasted for one year with the final stage of marriage occurring at the end of the year.

Mary and Joseph were betrothed when Mary learned she was carrying Jesus. During betrothal, the man and woman were not physically intimate, so it was weighty (and seemingly impossible) when it was found that Mary was with child. Imagine how shocking it was for Joseph to hear this news. He likely went through a range of emotions. Scripture tells us he was a just man and wasn't looking to punish Mary or seek revenge of any kind for what was assumed to be infidelity. With a plan in place to treat her kindly but not to complete their marriage, Joseph resolved to divorce her quietly.

 **What do these verses show you about Joseph and his character, even before he knew everything that was taking place? What can we take away from this?**

With his mind weighed down by the situation at hand, Joseph was visited by an angel in his dreams. Although he made what he considered to be good and just plans for dealing with the pregnant Mary, God had other plans entirely. The angel addressed Joseph as a son of David, a highlight that should have caught his attention. Joseph's connection to the line of David was key to fulfilling the promises about the coming Messiah.

 **When was a time you thought you had a good plan but realized God had a better plan for you?**

God laid out His plan for Joseph and gave him the next steps. To call the angels announcement to Joseph overwhelming is likely a drastic understatement. As a Jew, Joseph would have been taught the signs of the Messiah's coming and would have connected the dots when the angel told him to name the child Jesus, who would save the people from their sins.

? Application: Where are you currently seeking God in a confusing situation? How can you trust Him, even if you can't see what He's doing clearly?

3. The Prophecy (Matthew 1:22-25)

Matthew declared all this had come to pass so that Scripture and prophecy could be fulfilled just as the Lord promised. This reinforces that a divine plan was unfolding, and Joseph had been chosen to play a role in these events that would change the world forever.

Both Mary and Joseph had to wrestle with their own fears and insecurities to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing, and they were the His chosen instruments to bring about the coming of the Messiah.

? How can you relate to feeling insecure and unqualified to be used by God for His plans? Where are we putting our confidence when we do this?

Many of us find ourselves like Joseph, facing unusual or surprising situations, and we come up with what seems to be a good and even righteous plan in our minds. But how do you respond when the Lord speaks and directs you in a different way? Joseph heard from the angel and responded in obedience because he trusted God's plans were better than his own. We have that same opportunity on a regular basis.

In response to the dream, Joseph obeyed every detail the Lord revealed to him through the angel and didn't delay. Joseph took Mary as his wife and refrained from being with her, so she remained a virgin until after the birth of Christ. He submitted to the Lord and was used by God to bring about His will and plans including, including naming the child Jesus.

Where is God inviting you to join His plans today?

Joseph understood the importance of the angelic messenger who visited his dreams. We may think if an angel miraculously spoke to us, we would also respond like Joseph. But God has given us His Spirit who continues to speak into our lives each day. The amazing truth is God chooses to use ordinary people like Mary, Joseph, and you to do His will on this earth. He sent the long-awaited Messiah as God with us, and He saves all who trust in Him. Joseph chose to trust God over his own plans and that made all the difference.

Application: Where do you need to step out in faith, displaying trust in Jesus and not yourself or your own plans?

Conclusion

There is much to be learned from revisiting the story of Jesus's birth in Scripture. Matthew gave an account of the lineage of Jesus which only further legitimized His fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. This chapter also focused on the perspective of Joseph and gives insight into the kind of man God chose to father His own Son during Jesus's time in human flesh.

Joseph was a man of honor and respect who had planned one course of action with his pregnant bride to be but chose to believe and obey the Lord when given different instructions. He did exactly as the angel commanded him and is an example in how to trust God even when circumstances are highly unusual or when you feel like the least likely person to be used by God.

What new perspective have you gained by revisiting Matthew 1 today?

 How can we as a group encourage one another to trust God over our own thoughts and plans?

 How can you seek a gospel conversation with another person by sharing the events surrounding Jesus's birth?

Memorize

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