

MATTHEW 1

In the first ten chapters of Matthew, we have "The Revelation of the King." He reveals Himself to the Jews as to His Person (1-4), His principles (5-7), and His power (8-10). Remember that Matthew is seeking to prove that Jesus Christ is the King, "the Son of David." In this first chapter, he gives the human ancestry of Christ (vv. 1-17), then describes the birth of Christ (vv. 18-25). Thus, Jesus is the "root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22:16). He is "the root" in that He is eternal God and brought David into being; He is the "offspring" in that His humanity is linked to David in His birth (Rom. 1:1-4).

I. The Faithful Providence of God (1:1-17)

Providence is God's control of circumstances so that His will prevails and His purposes are fulfilled. Think of Satan's attacks against Israel and how he sought to prevent Christ from coming! Because of Abraham's disobedience, Sarah was almost lost and the promised seed ruined (Gen. 12:10-20). At one time, the royal seed was all slain, except for young Joash (2 Kings 11). This genealogy is not a dull list of names. It is a record of the faithfulness of God in preserving the children of Abraham as a channel through whom Christ could come into the world.

Matthew's genealogy is of Joseph, Jesus' father in the eyes of the law. Luke gives Mary's genealogy. Mary and Joseph were both descendants of David.

You can see the grace of God in this list of names. Note the four women mentioned: Tamar (v. 3, see Gen. 38); Rahab (v. 5, see Josh. 2; Heb. 11:31); Ruth (v. 5, see the Book of Ruth); and Bathsheba (v. 6, see 2 Sam. 12). Mary is also mentioned. These women illustrate the grace of God. Tamar was guilty of whoredom, yet God permitted her to be listed in the ancestry of Christ. Rahab was both a harlot and a foreigner. She was saved by her faith. Ruth was a Moabitess; and according to Deut. 23:3-6, she was excluded from the nation of Israel. Bathsheba was partner to David's awful sin, yet God forgave her and permitted her to be one of Christ's ancestors through Solomon. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20).

This genealogy is not complete, of course. Several names are left out. It was common among the Jews to leave out unimportant

names to help the children remember the lists. Three sets of fourteen names would be easy to remember. In 1:8, Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah are omitted, probably because of their relationship to Ahab's wicked daughter, Athaliah. No Jew today has his *legal* genealogy. All the records were destroyed in A.D. 70 when the temple was ruined. Jesus Christ is the only Jew alive today who can prove His rights to the throne of David.

II. The Fulfilled Promise of God (1:18-25)

"Betrothal" (engagement) among the Jews was as binding as marriage. When Joseph discovered Mary's condition, he naturally assumed she had been unfaithful to him. Note his prudence: "While he thought on these things" (v. 20). How important it is to be "slow to wrath" and to consider matters thoughtfully! (see Prov. 21:5)

According to Deut. 22:23-24, Mary could have been stoned. Indications are that the Jews did not obey this law but rather allowed the innocent party to divorce the unfaithful mate. It took great faith for Joseph to believe God's message in the dream. His love for God and for Mary made him willing to "bear reproach" for Christ. Imagine how the neighbors must have talked! In John 8:41, there is a suggestion that the Jews slandered Christ's birth, intimating that He was born of fornication. Satan has always attacked the truth of the Virgin Birth, for when he does, he denies the Person and work of Christ and the truth of the Bible.

The name Jesus means "Savior" and is a Gk. version of the Heb. name "Joshua." In the OT, there are two well-known Joshuas: the soldier who led Israel into Canaan (see the Book of Joshua), and the high priest mentioned in Zech. 3. Christ is our Captain of Salvation, leading us to victory. He is our Great High Priest, representing us before the throne of God.

Christ's birth fulfills the prophecy of Isa. 7:14. Read Isa. 7 very carefully. Ahaz was about to be attacked by Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel. The Lord sent Isaiah to encourage Ahaz (7:1-9) and to give Ahaz a sign. Ahaz acted very pious and refused the sign. So, God gave the sign to the whole house of David, not just to Ahaz (see 7:13). The sign is the birth of Immanuel ("God with us") to the virgin mother. This sign had nothing to do with Ahaz at that time. In Isa. 8, God gave Ahaz His sign, using the child of Isaiah to do this. (Note: the Heb. word in Isa. 7:14, and the Gk. word in Matt. 1:23, can only mean virgin.)

We must admire Joseph's immediate obedience (v. 24). He was careful to keep his relationship with Mary pure. In the Bible, only four ways are noted to get a body: (1) without a man or a woman—as Adam did, made from the dust of the earth; (2) with a man, but no woman—as Eve did, made from Adam's side; (3) with a man and a woman—as all humans are born; or (4) with a woman, but no man—as Jesus was born, having an earthly mother but no biological father. It was important that Jesus be born of a virgin that He might have a sinless human nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1). Since He existed before the creation of man, how could He ever be born of a human father and mother? Every new baby is a being that has never existed before. The modernist who denies Christ's virgin birth denies His eternal Godhead and deity. Either He is God, or He is an imposter.

"Fulfilled" (v. 22) is a favorite word of Matthew's. He uses it at least twelve times to show that Jesus completed the prophecies given in the OT Scriptures.

MATTHEW 2

I. The Homage Shown to the King (2:1-12)

These "wise men" were Magi, Oriental astrologers who studied the stars and sought to understand the times. They were Gentiles who had been especially called of God to come and pay homage to the newborn King. There may be a reference to the miraculous star in Balaam's prophecy in Num. 24:17. We do not know how many Magi there were, where they came from, or what their names were. Familiar Christmas traditions do not always have scriptural support.

Jesus' title, "King of the Jews," raised suspicion because Herod feared anyone who threatened his throne. He was a ruthless monster who even killed his own children to protect his throne. He had nine (or ten) wives and was known for his treachery and lust. An Edomite, he had a natural hatred for the Jews. Herod did not know God's Word, but had to ask the scribes. The scribes knew the Word, but did not act upon it. The wise men were both hearers and doers of the Word! How close the priests were to the Messiah, yet they did not go.

The visit of the Magi is an indication that the Gentiles will someday worship the King when the kingdom is set up on earth

(Isa. 60:6). Their experience is a good lesson in finding the will of God: (1) they followed the light God gave them; (2) they confirmed their steps by the Word of God; and (3) they obeyed God without question and He led them each step of the way. Note that they went home by "another way" (v. 12). Anyone who comes to Christ will go home another way and be a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

Matthew cites Micah 5:2 to show that Christ was born where the prophet had predicted. God bypassed proud Jerusalem and chose humble Bethlehem. King David had come from Bethlehem, and Christ is David's Son (1:1). For comparisons between David and Christ, see the outline for chapter 4.

II. The Hatred Against the King (2:13-18)

Just as Satan had tried to keep Christ from being born, now he tried to destroy Him after He was born (see Rev. 12:1-4). The flesh wars against the Spirit, and Herod (an Edomite) warred against Christ. We cannot help but admire Joseph for his faithfulness in obeying God and caring for both Mary and Jesus. Matthew quoted Hosea 11:1 to show that Christ would come out of Egypt. Herod slew not more than twenty infants, since there could not have been too many babies of that age in the town. Matthew saw in this a fulfillment of Jer. 31:15.

III. The Humility of the King (2:19-23)

Joseph used his "sanctified common sense" and did not return to Judea. God affirmed the decision, and the family moved to Nazareth. Matthew refers to what "was spoken by the prophets" (v. 23, note the plural) but does not give any specific references. The word "Nazarene" may relate to the Heb. word *netzer* which means "branch," a name for Jesus. This is why Matthew wrote "prophets" (plural) since Christ is called "the Branch" in Isa. 11:1 and 4:2; also Jer. 23:5 and 33:15, and Zech. 3:8 and 6:12. Because He lived in a despised place, Jesus was like a lowly branch; but the Branch would one day blossom with beauty and great glory.

Nazareth was an ignoble town. "Can anything good come from there?" asked Nathanael (John 1:46, NIV). Jesus was a humble King. He emptied and humbled Himself even unto death to save us (see Phil. 2:1-11).