



## **LESSON 1 . . . Understanding Who Jesus Is (Matthew 1:1-25)**

**T**his book, the first of the four New Testament gospels, was written by Matthew, also called “Levi” (Mk 2:14; Lk 5:29). He is a Jewish tax collector, or publican, who becomes one of the original twelve disciples. One day Jesus sees Matthew sitting at his tax booth. What does Jesus say to him and what is Matthew’s response (9:9)?

**NOTES**

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Jesus may say those same words to you during this study. If you hear His voice, will you follow Jesus, as Matthew did?

The book of Matthew is the first book in the New Testament because it is the bridge between the Old Testament and the New. At the time of its writing, more than 400 years have passed since the last Old Testament prophecies. Jews all over the world are awaiting the promised Messiah. Matthew refers to Old Testament passages about sixty times. He makes it clear Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and the eternal King. The key verse is the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:17. Write it below:

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Matthew’s gospel places great emphasis on Jesus’ teaching ministry. None of the other gospels contain as much detail of His teaching. The Sermon on the Mount is an example (chps. 5-7). In the first chapter, Matthew gives us **two** ways to understand who Jesus is. First is . . .

### **Research His genealogy (1:1-17).**

Matthew begins: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ* (1:1a). Our Savior’s proper name, *Jesus*, comes from the Hebrew name “Joshua,” which means “Yahweh saves.” *Christ* is His title. It comes from the Greek word CHRISTOS (kris-tos´), which means “anointed one.” It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word “Messiah.” When Jesus is called Christ, He is being called the Messiah. When we say “Jesus Christ,” we are saying “Jesus the Messiah,” and thereby declaring our faith in Jesus as the long-awaited Anointed One of Israel and the Savior of the world.

Jesus Christ is then declared *the son of David, the son of Abraham* (1:1b). The next sixteen verses present Jesus’ *generation*, or genealogy, because

lineage is very important to Jews. Therefore, Matthew begins his gospel by showing Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, the father of all Jews and the first person to whom the messianic promise was given. What does God promise Abraham in Genesis 22:18?

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In these first seventeen verses, we meet forty-six people whose lives span 2,000 years. It was unusual for women to be listed in Jewish genealogies. Yet, four women are names in verses 3-6. The first is *Thamar*, or Tamar, (1:3), a Canaanite, who seduced her father-in-law Judah. This encounter resulted in twin sons, *Phares* [Fair'-ez] and *Zara* [Zair'-uh] (Gen. 38). The second woman is *Rachab*, or Rahab, (1:5). What does Hebrews 11:31 reveal about her?

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God's grace not only spares her life but also places her in the messianic line. Rahab, a Gentile, becomes the wife of Salmon, mother of Boaz, and an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

The third woman *Ruth* (1:5) was also a Gentile. She becomes the wife of *Booz*, or Boaz, and great-grandmother of David. The fourth woman is Bathsheba. Though she is not identified by name, God inspires Matthew to write of her: *and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias* (1:6b). She is called *the wife of Urias* (Uriah) because God never wants us to forget David's horrible sin of adultery. David was completely and eternally forgiven, but what he did was completely and eternally wrong. Therefore, what does David write in Psalm 51:3?

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Jesus is traced through Joseph, who is listed as *the husband of Mary*, not the father of Jesus (1:16a). Joseph was not Jesus' physical father, but was His father by law. Verse 17 reveals that Matthew traces Jesus Christ's genealogy in three sets of fourteen generations: (1) before the monarchy—*Abraham to David*, (2) during the monarchy—*David until the carrying away into Babylon*, and (3) the Babylonian exile *unto Christ*, or Messiah.

Matthew doesn't mention every ancestor of Christ. He traces the genealogy in memorable terms because his audience doesn't have a copy of the Old Testament and would have to rely on memory. Detailed records were kept at the temple for inheritance purposes, but they were all destroyed in 70

A.D. when the Roman general Titus demolished the temple. The only Jew today who knows his or her genealogy is Jesus Christ.

To his original Jewish audience, Matthew gives a genealogy that documents Jesus' ancestry, so they can see He fulfills the requirements of the promised Messiah, or Christ. To understand who Jesus is, **research His genealogy** and . . .



### **Reflect on His birth (1:18-25).**

God reveals His sovereign grace by choosing Mary to be Jesus' mother. Mary, to *whom was born Jesus* (1:16b), was just a common woman, but she was also very devout in her devotion to the Lord. She demonstrates her faith and submissiveness when the angel Gabriel is sent to tell her she will conceive a baby by the Holy Spirit. She is a virgin and unmarried, so this would be humiliating. How does she respond (Luke 1:38b-c)?

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The fact Jesus was born to Mary, even though she had no physical relations with Joseph, needs to be explained. Therefore, Matthew explains how the birth of Jesus Christ took place. While Mary and Joseph were engaged and before they had physical relations, what does Matthew reveal (1:18c)?

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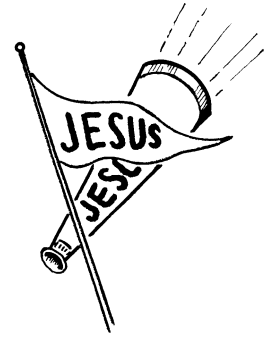
When the angel first announces to Mary that she is chosen to be the mother of the Messiah, she asks the obvious question, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?* (Lk 1:34b). So, Mary is the first person to doubt the Virgin Birth. To explain, the angel tells her the Holy Spirit will come upon her and the power of the Most High will overshadow her and the baby will be called *the Son of God* (Lk 1:35).

Before Mary and Joseph had a physical relationship, she was *with child*. Joseph knows the child is not his. Since he is Mary's *husband* (fiancé) and is *a just man*, he doesn't want to disgrace her publicly. Therefore, he decides to privately *put her away*, or break off the engagement (1:19).

In Jewish culture, marriage vows were declared at betrothal, or engagement, and a divorce was required to end the relationship. After the engagement declaration, there was an interval of a year before the bride would live with the groom and the marriage be physically consummated.

Joseph also doubts the Virgin Birth. As he considers the situation, an angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream. The angel tells him not to be afraid

to take Mary as his wife. Then, to remove any doubt of her purity, the angel also tells him that what is conceived in her is of *the Holy Ghost* (1:20). In Joseph's dream, the angel also tells him Mary will bear a son and he is to name Him *JESUS* (Mt 1:21a). Remember, the name *Jesus* means "Jehovah saves." The angel explains the purpose for the name, *for he shall save his people from their sins* (1:21b). From these first verses, Matthew explains Jesus did not come to save His people from Roman tyranny or to set up an earthly kingdom, but to save His people *from their sins*.



The angel also tells Joseph this birth is keeping with God's eternal plan that He spoke through the prophet Isaiah 700 years earlier (Isa. 7:14). What is that plan (1:23)?

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*Emmanuel* was not used as a proper name or a title for Jesus, but to describe Him as God incarnate—God coming to earth in flesh and blood. How does John 1:14a express this fact?

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When Joseph wakes up, he does as the angel of the Lord has commanded, even though it might be humiliating. He takes Mary as his wife, which means that shortly after the dream, the marriage ceremony takes place. However, Mary remains a virgin until after she brings *forth her firstborn son*. Then, continuing to be obedient, Joseph names the baby *JESUS* (1:25).

Why is the Virgin Birth so important to the Christian faith? Because Jesus Christ has to be free of the sinful nature passed on to all humans through Adam.

Since the Bible tells us Joseph and Mary didn't have normal marital relationships until after the baby is born, this squelches any doubts about Jesus' conception. Jesus Christ is the long-awaited Messiah and the virgin-born Son of God. Do you really believe that? What does Jesus declare in John 8:24b?

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To understand who Jesus is, **research His genealogy** and **reflect on His birth**.