

Gospel of Matthew

Chapter 1:7-25

“God With Us”

All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Teaching: We left off last week having covered the **first 6 verses of Matthew’s gospel** ... looking at the first part of the family tree of Christ.

If you were here then you’ll remember that Matthew started with Abraham (the father of the Hebrew nation) ... then traced Christ’s lineage through Isaac and Jacob and down through King David. That gets us through **verse 6**. This morning ... we pick it up in **verse 7** with Solomon, the son who inherited his David’s throne.

But as we jump back in, let me remind you that Matthew’s purpose here is to show the Jews that Jesus was the Christ and therefore ... the rightful and eternal heir to the throne of David ...

Verses 7-11: WOW! But remember ... there are no wasted letters in God’s Word!

So when we read down through this list there’s no doubt that these people are in the line of Christ for a good reason. But honestly ... what exactly that reason is ... only God, knows.

But one name that does jump out is Jeconiah in **verse 11**. Just to remind you ... it’s not unusual for characters in the Bible to have more than one name ... and Jeconiah is one such character. In fact, he has three names; Jeconiah as here, in the Hebrew it’s Jehoiachin and in the **book of Jeremiah** the Hebrew version is shortened to Coniah (**Jeremiah 22:24**).

And the history of Jeconiah is significant because if you go back to **Jeremiah, chapter 22 verses 24-30** you’ll find that Jeremiah, the prophet spoke a curse on Jeconiah. And since Jeremiah was a true prophet of God ... what he spoke had to come true (**Deuteronomy 18:22**).

And in **those verses**, among other things, he said of Jeconiah **“no man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah”**.

So the skeptic of Christianity will say that’s a problem. If Jeremiah was a true prophet of God and he said this guy’s descendants were cut off from the throne of David and yet he’s listed in the ancestry of Jesus, then Jesus could not be the rightful heir to King David’s throne.

Q. So what's the deal here? – I love this because only God could use this kind of bait to show skeptics such truth.

Go back to **Matthew** and jump forward to **verse 25 of chapter 1**. Note with me that it says Joseph “**kept [Mary] a virgin until she had given birth**“ ... which, of course, gives us one of the tenants of Christianity ... the virgin birth of Christ.

But in a practical sense ... what that means is that Joseph is not Jesus' father. He may have been the best “dad” ever, but it is God who fathered Jesus. So Jesus didn't inherit this hereditary curse that was in Joseph's bloodline.

The point can also be made, that in the lineage of Christ recorded in **Luke's Gospel** ... Jeconiah isn't listed at all, but King David is. That's because not only was Christ's earthly father, Joseph a descendant of King David, but Christ's mother, Mary was also a Davidic descendant. The lineage recorded here in **Matthew** is that of Joseph and in **Luke** it's Mary's.

And as a side note ... Jeconiah held the throne for 3 months before he was taken captive to Babylon and just as Jeremiah had prophesied, not one of Jeconiah's descendants ever sat on the throne.

Verses 12 - 16: Matthew's now led his Jewish readers all the way through the lineage of Jesus on the side of his adopted father, Joseph ... starting with Abraham and running through King David to establish Christ, not just as a Jew, but as the rightful heir to the throne of David.

The word Messiah is Christos (khris-tos); and simply means “anointed one”. In other words, the one God has appointed or commissioned.

Verse 17:

Q. Why all the 14's? -- I have no idea! First ... you have to count Jeconiah before and after the deportation to make all three groups equal 14 and this seems to be the way Matthew wrote it. So it's intentional.

Some say that it was to be a memory aide. If each group has 14, it's easier to know if you miss one. And that may be so because similar memory aides are written into the **Psalms**.

It's also been proposed that because Matthew's goal is to show the Jews that Christ is the rightful heir to the throne of David, he emphasizes 14 because that's the number of letters in the Hebrew version of David's name.

At the end of the day ... this is just another one of those things that we'll have to ask God about when you see Him.

Verses 18-19: Having completed the Lord's genealogy, Matthew begins telling the Lord's story in an, almost, narrative style.

So let's first look at this word "betrothed". Some of your Bibles may say "espoused" ... and as we read it in English ... many of us subconsciously replace it with the word "engaged".

And it is similar, but not exact in a few important ways so ... let's contrast those. For instance ...

- 1.** While an American engagement indicates an intent to get married ... a Jewish betrothal is married.
- 2.** An American engagement is for an unspecified period of time and can vary greatly, but a Jewish betrothal is for a period of 12 months.
- 3.** An American engagement can be called off without further to-do, but to get out of a Jewish betrothal requires a certificate of divorce and just like the marriage match ... to be released from a Jewish betrothal required the initiation of the groom's father ... not the couple.
- 4.** Another important fact is that although they were considered married during the period of betrothal ... it did not include conjugal rights. They could not consummate the marriage until the one-year betrothal had passed.

Another thing I want to draw to your attention in **verse 18** is the phrase "**before they came together**".

Q. If an event never happened, can you have a before? If I say to you "I ran the marathon before I visited the moon" ... could that be a true statement if I've never visited the moon? No - of course not!

And the same thing is true here. If Mary was with child before she and Joseph came together sexually, this could only be a true statement if she and Joseph did have sex at some time.

Q. Now ... why am I making this point that seems so obvious? – Because part of the inappropriate veneration that the Roman Catholics shower upon Mary is what they call "her perpetual virginity" ... the unbiblical notion that she and Joseph never consummated their marriage.

And when you have some long-held belief like that ... you don't wanna let something like a clear reading of the scripture get in the way of it so ... when **Matthew 13:55-56** plainly tell us that Jesus had four half-brothers and, at least, two half-sisters ... you explain that away by calling them cousins no matter what the text actually says.

Mary was indeed a woman blessed of God (**Luke 1:42**), but she was not the sinless virgin that she's portrayed to be in some corners.

And by extension of that ... they force their priests into a vow of “perpetual virginity”, which, of course, has no biblical basis and has proven to be nothing short of cruel and dangerous.

At our last Wednesday night Q&A ... a long discussion broke out about whether or not it's possible to achieve the lofty goals that God calls us to. Well ... **verse 19** will set you back if you come down on the side that says you can't.

Again ... being betrothed was, in the eyes of God and Jewish law, the same as being married except that no physical contact was allowed. So, to have a physical relationship prior to the actual wedding ceremony was fornication. But, at the same time, to have a physical relation with someone other than the person to whom they were betrothed was adultery.

So, Mary here is found to be pregnant. She and Joseph were betrothed. Joseph knew that the two of them had not had physical relations and yet he finds that she's pregnant.

Now here's the point where we, especially us guys, need to stop and ask ourselves, if we were in that same situation ...

Q. What are the options that we would have considered?

- 1.** Joseph could have announced Mary's infidelity and invoked the law under which they lived. He could have had Mary would be stoned to death.

Remember what the Pharisees said to Jesus in ...

John 8:4 ... "... this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 "[and] the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women ...

- 2.** It's hard to believe that he wasn't, at least tempted to vent his anger and just shame her with a divorce.
- 3.** He could have vented in an even more personal ... hands on way. He could have allowed his anger to become violent; he could have scolded her, beaten her and then invoked the law asking to be the first stone thrower.
- 4.** Or ... he could have stood by her and accepted the blame for the sin of fornication with her. Pretending to be the father of this illegitimate child for the sake of protecting his pride and reputation.

And I have no doubt at all that each of those ideas, along with several others, ran through his mind.

Q. And can't you just imagine all of the things Satan whispered in his ear? Things to hurt him and anger him and discourage him.

But above his own thoughts and above the whispers of Satan ... this man heard the voice of God!

I'm sure you ladies are already aware, but men tend to be a little possessive and jealous. For most of us guys, if you wanna see our testosterone driven tempers get out of control ... mess with our wives! That's probably the most volatile area in a man's emotional inventory.

I picture myself in this situation and try to imagine if I could, at that moment, stop and seek God's guidance.

Q. Would I consciously pause and ask “Lord, how do You want me to handle this situation? Lord, show me what can I do to protect my wife’s feelings and reputation.”?

Ladies ... plug your husband's name in that space!

Q. How would you handle it?

Now let's look at what Joseph's response really was. Notice first that Matthew identifies him as “**a righteous man**” or “**a just man**”.

Righteous doesn't mean perfect ... it means to have a “right standing with God”.

So, when we look at Joseph's actions ... we can't say “Well ya, but he had some special deal with God”. No ... he had the same deal with God that we do.

If you've accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior then you also have a “right standing” with God. Which means that what he did ... we can do also.

Q. So what exactly did he do? Read **verse 19** again.

Remember the law of the land at that time prescribed that as an adulterer she be stoned to death. Realistically if Joseph had beaten her, shamed her and then divorced her, but spared her life we could rightly call that mercy, but he not only spares her life, he does what he can to make sure she experiences no shame.

It says he didn't want to disgrace her and this is before he had reassurances from the angel in **verse 20**. At this point he has to be completely convinced that she was unfaithful to him ... and yet ...

Q. What do you think men? -- Your wife cheats on you and your first thought is how can I protect her from any harm and all shame?

Just to be balanced ... a few commentators that I read ... interpreted the phrase “**send her away**” as divorce, but I’m not sure how they arrive at that because in the Greek New Testament both phrases (“**divorce**” and “**send away**”) can be found and one means “**divorce**” and one means “**send away**”.

And our interpretation is aided by **Luke 1:39-40** because we find out there that in fact, Joseph didn’t divorce her, but rather ... he sent her away.

Verse 20: An angel ... a messenger from God confirms what Matthew’s spent the **1st half of this chapter** establishing when he refers to Joseph as “**son of David**”.

In fact, other than David’s true sons, there are only two people referred to as “**son of David**” in Scripture; Joseph and Jesus.

And I suspect the title ... spoken by an angel ... and coming to him in a dream ... all combined to get Joseph’s attention. He doesn’t seem to hesitate or ponder the message - he just obediently responds, as we’ll see in **verse 24**.

You know ... scripture doesn’t devote a lot of words to Joseph as the earthly father of the Messiah, but just as God didn’t make a mistake when He picked Mary to be the vessel through whom He brought Christ into the world ... He didn’t make a mistake when He picked this righteous man to be His earthly steward and trainer.

Joseph really does provide a great example of what a “**righteous man**” is. An example for us to follow.

Verse 21: Name Him Jesus for He will save His people from their sins.

Iesous (ee-ay-sooce’), Jesus (Jehoshua) on in unadulterated English ... Joshua, which, of course, we would shorten to Joe. Nothing magic in the name ... but the One named ... is amazing!

And yet again Joseph walks by faith as **verse 25** says that he obediently named the child Jesus.

Verse 22: Speaking to the Jews and again trying to show them that Jesus fulfilled all of the Old Testament messianic prophecies, Matthew uses this phrase “**that it might be fulfilled**” for the first of nine times in **this book**.

Here, he’s specifically quoting the prophet, **Isaiah** as he goes on in ...

Verses 23-25: Immanuel ... God with us!

It’s an important and challenging title in that it brings us face to face with the fact that Jesus was 100% God at the same time that He was 100% man. Doesn’t work with human math, but our God’s not limited to time, space or human math!

And despite the difficulty that we might have with the comprehension of this ... what matters far more than understanding it ... is believing it.

Because to miss this fact is to err in the belief that before Jesus donned human flesh ... He somehow laid down His deity. But He DID NOT! If he did then Matthew's a liar and God was never actually with us.

But Jesus is God ... He was with us in the flesh ... and He remains with us in the Spirit.

Conclusion: The question that I've a hard time shaking off in **this text** though is ...

Q. "What can we learn from the example of Joseph"? -- I mean, God recorded these things about Jesus' earthly father for a reason.

The verse that captures it for me is ...

2 Corinthians 10:5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

The battles that matter really are fought in the spirit which means that all other battles are just a diversionary tactic of the enemy.

Speaking of the Apostle Paul, Charles Spurgeon once said ...

We are plainly taught how mistaken we are when we set the imminent saints of the olden times upon a platform by themselves, as if they were a class of super-human beings ... they fought the common fight, and won by strength available to all believers; let us esteem them as our brethren, and with them pursue the sacred conflict in the name of the common leader. [L]et us run as they ran, that we may win as they won, and may glorify God in our day and generation as they did in theirs.

Q. Okay ... but what is this battle plan that Paul puts forward in 2nd Corinthians? -- He says ... "destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God".

Q. And how do we do that? He says ... by "**taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ**"

Q. Do you realize that there's a battle going on for your mind? -- Not just a battle within your mind, but a battle for your mind.

The real spiritual battle for control of the members of our bodies takes place in the mind.

And just imagine all that was going on in Joseph's mind ... imagine all that he DID NOT give in to!

To "speculate" in the context of this verse means to compute or reason with conceit. It's saying to God "Hey don't worry about me Lord, I've got this all figured out. I'll let you know if I need any counsel or instruction, but right now it appears that I won't."

And the "lofty things" that Paul says here are "raised up against the knowledge of God" are when we know God's precepts and even commandments, but defiantly choose our own way instead. We elevate our own thinking above God's knowledge.

The opposite then is to **tak[e] every thought captive to the obedience of Christ!**

To do anything else ... to try shortcuts ... to look for easier or faster methods is, in itself, to elevate our own thinking above God's knowledge.

And Joseph ... Joseph had this nailed! In my opinion, his example is one of the most powerful that we find in scripture ... he simply did NOT allow the thoughts bouncing around in his head to take control ... he took them ... **captive to the obedience of Christ!**

May we do likewise!