

# GOD WITH US

## Part 8: JESUS

### Message 13 – Son of David, Son of God

#### Introduction

Only Matthew and Luke gave us infancy narratives of Jesus *and* genealogies tracing His family history. Both writers had unique purposes, thus their narratives reflect their interests and the audiences they were trying to reach. Matthew was a Jew writing to the Jews about the King of the Jews. His infancy narrative has many *royal* themes. Jesus is the long-awaited King, the Son of David, whose arrival fulfilled many of the O.T. prophecies. Royalty come from afar to worship Him; while the current king tries to kill Him. Luke, on the other hand, was writing as a Gentile to the whole world. Jesus is the Son of Adam Who has come to save humanity; women are emphasized as playing key roles; He is born amidst a worldwide census; His birth was humble; the first to receive the news were lowly shepherds who hear that a Savior for *all* the people has been born.

#### MATTHEW: THE SON OF DAVID

##### Matthew's genealogy of Jesus: 1:1-17

Matthew's genealogy traces the lineage of Jesus through His legal 'father' Joseph, and His royal line back to king David (Jesus is the promised Son of David), and to Abraham (Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel). Read 2 Samuel 7 for God's promise & David's response. And Isaiah 23:5; Jeremiah 23:5. For the promise through Abraham, read Gen. 12:1-7; 15:1-6; 22:15-18; 20:7; Matt 3:9; 8:11. The genealogy is shaped into three groups of 14 stages (probably with some editing, which was acceptable in that day). What is most significant is the inclusion of 5 women in the genealogical record, as it was not customary to include the mothers. This is particularly noteworthy given Matthew's emphasis on Joseph's role in the birth story (1:18-25) *and* the overall Jewish emphasis on the *fathers* in genealogies. When we examine the list carefully, we gain insight into Matthew's reason for including these women.

**Tamar:** Matt. 1:3 (Gen Ch.38; Gen 49:10), was the daughter-in-law

of Judah, one of the 12 sons of Jacob. Her scandalous story is found in Genesis 38. After the death of two of her husbands, and after her father-in-law Judah refused to give her the last of his sons as a husband (according to the Jewish law of preserving an heir of the deceased) Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute to conceive a child through Judah himself. Thus, Tamar, in a most unusual way, took radical action to produce a suitable heir and preserve Judah's role in the line of promise (and the largest and most famous tribe.)

**Rahab:** Matt. 1:5 (Josh. Ch.2 & Ch.6), was a Canaanite prostitute in Jericho. When the city fell to the invading Israelites, she and her family were preserved because of her belief in Yahweh, the God of Israel. She ended up marrying Salmon (tradition says he was one of the spies that met Rahab when they spied out Jericho). They had a son named Boaz, an heir in the line of promise. Rahab, a foreigner and a prostitute yet with great faith, found her way into the sacred line of promise.

**Ruth:** Matt.1:5 (Ruth 4:8-22), was also a foreigner – a young Moabite woman. She was widowed after her Jewish husband died in Moab. She returned to the land of Israel with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi felt disgraced and that God was against her. Yet, at Naomi's direction (and with the hand of God blessing her) Ruth met and married a kinsman-redeemer/relative named Boaz. Together, Ruth and Boaz produced a son in the line of promise: Obed – the grandfather of king David. A woman from the much-hated Moabite nation found her place in the sacred line of promise.

**Bathsheba:** Matt.1:6 (2 Sam Ch.11; 12:24), is the unnamed woman in the genealogy, being called simply *the wife of Uriah*. (Some translations insert her name, although it is not there in the original.) She became pregnant through king David's act of adultery. Her faithful warrior/husband was later murdered by David to cover up the illicit pregnancy. David married Bathsheba to try to cover up his sins; but his sins were revealed by God through a prophet. Though that son died after birth, God blessed David and Bathsheba and gave them a son named Solomon, carrying on the line of promise. What was Matthew's reason for including these 4 unique stories? Perhaps to prepare the reader for the 5<sup>th</sup> woman.

**Mary:** Matt 1:16; (Lk 1:26-38; 2:5-19). The story of Mary being with child by the Holy Spirit likely resulted in all sorts of rumors and accusations (she was unfaithful, she had an affair, etc.).

Matthew was reminding his Jewish audience: *God works in unusual ways. In the past, He used unusual people and unexpected circumstances to continue to fulfill His promise to us. Do not be surprised at the story of this young virgin woman. This will not be the first surprising story in our history ... nor will it be the last!*

*God works in unusual ways! He can take our stories – no matter how messed up or crazy they may be – and weave them into His plan and purposes. The key is that, at some point, we must take a step of faith with the desire to be part of God’s grand story. Looking back over the stories of the 5 women in the genealogy, we can see that they each responded in faith to some move of God in their lives. This is key. “God is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Perhaps you think that your past, or your present is too messed up for God to redeem it and weave it into His grand plan. Take heart from these 5 women in Jesus’ line. God uses unusual people to bring about His grand plan in this world.*

### **God’s message to Joseph: 1:18-25**

In keeping with this Jewish emphasis on the patriarchy of the child, Matthew recorded the divine message given to Joseph surrounding the supernatural conception of the child. Joseph would have “divorced” Mary quietly due to her apparent unfaithfulness. The 1-year Jewish betrothal period was a time of exclusive devotion, though the marriage had not yet been consummated. Thus, a breach of faithfulness during the betrothal period required a formal certificate of divorce. The angel’s message in a dream convinced Joseph that this was an act of God. He obeyed the divine command to take Mary as his wife and to name the child Jesus – “God saves.” Matthew also emphasized prophecy and fulfillment. The birth of Jesus fulfilled the Isaiah prophecy concerning the virgin bearing a child and calling him “Immanuel,” God with us (Isaiah 7:14).

*Joseph’s swift obedience to a difficult command is impressive. He knew the opposition (and possible ridicule) that would come as a result of his marriage to Mary. He knew his life would never be the same, being called to be the human father to the Son of God. Yet, he obeyed, not worrying about the consequences or outcomes of his obedience. Obedience is always a step of faith in the direction that God is calling you to. God does not tell us what the results will be; but He does promise to be faithful. “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1Thessalonians 5:24).*

## The Visit of the Wise Men: 2:1-12

Scholars speculate that the events of Matthew 2 occurred a year or more after the birth of Jesus. The family was now living in a “house” (2:11). Herod sought to destroy the baby boys in Bethlehem “from 2 years and under” (2:16), indicating Jesus’ likely age range at that time.

The Persian wise men were advisors to kings in their own land. Their job was to study the skies and the scriptures (from various religions) in the attempt to determine the will of the gods above, and to advise kings accordingly. They had access to the prophecies of Daniel (taken captive from Israel when a young man) who had been a “wise man” in Babylon centuries before them. Based on their study of Daniel’s prophecies, along with their observance of unusual movements in the stars above, they determined that a “*king had been born to the Jews.*” They came to Jerusalem and went straight to Herod the Great’s palace asking to see the newborn king.

***“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him” (2:2).***

Herod, in his final years, was a paranoid man. He killed several of his own wives and sons suspecting them of trying to overthrow him. He was in no mood to hear about any “new born king.” He sought to determine where and when this child had been born, so that he might kill him. The wise men were guided by God to avoid Herod, thus thwarting his scheme to kill Jesus.

***“After coming into the house, they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (2:11).***

To a Jewish reader, the message would have been clear with the words, “*they fell to the ground and worshiped Him.*” Only GOD was worthy of worship. The gifts were fitting: Gold was the currency of kings; frankincense was used in the worship of gods; myrrh was the burial spice for mortals. Jesus: King, God and man.

*What special “gift” can you bring to Jesus this Christmas? The gift of time? The gift of treasure? The gift of talents? Ask God, right now, what gift He wants you to bring to Jesus.*

## The Escape into Egypt: 2:13-23

Again, Matthew shows how God used *Joseph the father* to protect the child (important for Jewish readers). The angel continued to appear to Joseph in dreams, giving him specific instructions for how to escape Herod's wrath. After a time sojourning in Egypt, they came back to Israel; but wishing to avoid the district of Judea where Herod's son Archelaus was ruling, they settled back in their former home in Nazareth up in Galilee. The theme of entry into and exodus out of *Egypt* would have reminded Jews of their own "birth" as a nation.

## LUKE: THE SON OF GOD

Luke's infancy narrative is much more complex than Matthew's. He interweaves the announcement and birth of John the Baptist in parallel to that of Jesus. He focuses on the role of the mothers in these key events. The role of Joseph fades into the background.

### The Angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary: 1:26-38

Mary seems not to have been surprised that God was fulfilling His promise to send "the son of David" to Israel. (She knew and believed His promises to this effect.) Yet, she was surprised that *she* had been chosen; and she was *baffled* as to *how her pregnancy would come about* since she and Joseph were still in the betrothal period preparing for their marriage.

***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God." And Mary said, "Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her (1:35-38).***

She submitted to God's plan and soon after became pregnant through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Note: The word "overshadow" (Lk.1:35) was used to describe the blocking of sunlight by clouds. The theological idea here is that the Holy Spirit would block any aspects of the sin nature from being transmitted through Mary to the seed within her. "For that reason" (the overshadowing of the Spirit) "*the holy child shall be*

*called the Son of God.*” Jesus was born sinless not because His mother Mary was sinless; but because the Holy Spirit overshadowed Jesus from the impact of sin through her.

### **Mary’s visit to Elizabeth: 1:39-56**

The mother of Jesus (Mary) and the mother of John the Baptist (Elizabeth) were relatives. Having heard from the angel about Elizabeth’s pregnancy, Mary hurried to the hill country of Judah in the south to visit her (and to ‘compare notes’ about their special conceptions). John the Baptist *“leaped in the womb”* of Elizabeth the moment Jesus entered the room, in the womb of Mary and Elizabeth was *“filled with the Holy Spirit.”* The Baptist was already performing his role as Spirit-empowered *forerunner, who would herald the arrival of the Messiah!*

Mary’s song of praise to God – the Magnificat – “magnifies” the Lord for His grace toward her, in choosing such a lowly person for such a lofty role in His plan. She knew what that plan meant:

*“He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever” (1:54,55).*

God was fulfilling His promises to Abraham . . . through her!

### **The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem: 2:1-7**

Here we have the only record of the actual birth of Jesus. The census required each family to return to their city of ancestry. For Joseph, this meant Bethlehem, since he was a descendant of David. The city was overrun with visitors registering for the census, they, Joseph and Mary had to stay in the stable beneath (or behind) the local hotel. It was in such humble conditions that Jesus was born, and laid in a feeding trough.

### **The Announcement to Shepherds: 2:8-20**

Culturally speaking, shepherds were an unlikely group to be chosen to first receive the news of Jesus’ birth. They were very low on the social ladder and were generally regarded as untrustworthy and unclean. Constant contact with animals made them unclean in terms of temple worship services. Yet, these shepherds, living just two miles from Jerusalem, were likely raising sheep that would be used in the temple services. They

received the glad news with joy and went quickly to find the baby “*lying in a manger.*” (Fitting, as they would never have been allowed to enter the Bethlehem hotel, and they definitely knew where all the feeding troughs in Bethlehem were!) They made known all that the angels had told them about the child, and “*Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart*” (2:19).

*In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has come “to seek and save that which was lost” (19:10). In particular, outsiders and outcasts become insiders with God through the love of Jesus. How fitting, then, that shepherds (outsiders and outcasts) should welcome Jesus into the world. Do you share Jesus’ passion for outsiders and outcasts? Is there someone in your sphere of influence that is being overlooked, put down, pushed away? Maybe God wants to use you to reach out to that person with His love this Christmas. Find the “shepherd” in your world, and bring the good news to them: “For today, in the city of David, there has been born FOR YOU a Savior who is Christ the Lord.”*

### **The Presentation of the Child at the Temple: 2:21-38**

Not only was circumcision on the 8<sup>th</sup> day customary, but it was also Jewish law that every firstborn son was to be dedicated to the Lord (see Exodus 13). The offering of a pair of turtledoves may indicate that the family was of humble means. What Luke really wished to emphasize, however, was *the Spirit-filled prophets* who appeared to identify the child as the God-sent Savior. Simeon came “*in the Spirit*” into the temple and blessed the child with a prayer of thanksgiving to God (2:29-32). Similarly, Anna the prophetess came up and blessed the child.

***“At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (2:38).***

### **The growth of the child: 2:39-40**

With a brief note, Luke *records that the family returned to Nazareth where Jesus “continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.”*

## The Genealogy of Jesus: 3:23-38

Luke deferred his genealogy until the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Because his intended audience was Gentiles, not Jews, there would have been no need to prove the Abrahamic and Davidic legitimacy of Jesus at the very front of the story. Looking more closely . . . Luke's genealogy differs from Matthew in two ways: First, he traced the physical line of Mary rather than the legal line of Joseph. Second, he went all the way back to Adam, "*the son of God*," to show that Jesus came to be the Savior for all of Adam's fallen descendants. This served as a fitting introduction to the public ministry of Jesus. He had come to "seek and to save lost humanity" wherever they might be found.

Note: Mary also had Davidic royal blood in her lineage. She can be traced back to another of king David's sons with Bathsheba, Nathan, (Lk 3:31; 1 Chronicles 3:4,5).

### Discussion Questions

1. The stories of people in the Bible teach us not just about the people themselves, but also about GOD. What aspects of God's character stands out the most to you through the birth stories?
2. How do the stories of the women in Matthew's genealogy encourage you? Is there one story in particular that intrigues you?
3. What do you respect the most about Mary . . . about Joseph . . . as you read about how they played their roles in the birth and early life of Jesus?
4. What are you most thankful for about the coming of Jesus?