

## Matthew 1 – An Outline Commentary

### Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus

#### Verse 1

- *Genealogy*, (γένεσις genesis); translated as *birth* in v.18
  - Entire chapter is the genealogy; not just the first 17 verses
  - The purpose, mission, role, and identity of Jesus Christ is intimately connected with the history provided in this genealogy
- Jesus Christ – David – Abraham
  - V.17: Christ – David – Abraham → forms *inclusio*
- Significance of David
  - Messiah promised to be a “son of David”
- Significance of Abraham
  - Abraham’s “seed” will be a blessing to all nations (i.e., gentiles)

#### Verse 2

- Genealogy proper begins
  - Pattern of “X was the father of Y”
  - Whenever this pattern breaks, a significant point is being raised
- “Judah and his brothers” → first break in pattern
  - Judah the line of David, but promise of Messiah also to all of Israel

#### Verse 3

- Tamar → first of five women in genealogy
  - Aramean; i.e., not Hebrew/Israelite
  - “Incestuous” relationship with father-in-law Judah
    - Her pursuit of what she believed to be justice (levirate marriage)
    - Judah declares her to be more righteous than he

#### Verse 5

- Rahab → second of five women
  - Canaanite and a prostitute
  - She trusted in the God of Israel to deliver her when Jericho fell
    - In contrast to the “faithless” Israelites after the battle of Jericho (Jos 7:1)
    - She had a determined pursuit of deliverance
- Ruth → third of five women
  - A Moabitess
  - Israel specifically instructed to not allow Moabites into their fellowship
  - She placed her trust in the God of Israel
    - She trusted in the law of levirate marriage to bring her into community
    - She pursued what she believed to be justice

#### Verse 6

- The wife of Uriah → fourth of five women
  - Uriah was a Hittite; Bathsheba may also have been non-Israelite
  - Author of Matthew has a problem with Bathsheba
    - She intentionally and willingly entered into an adulterous relationship
  - In contrast to David and Bathsheba, Uriah was righteous
    - Uriah refused to violate taboos concerning those consecrated for war
    - Uriah refused an order from the king to maintain his vow to God

#### Verse 16

- “Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born”
  - Joseph is not the physical father of Jesus
    - So how can Jesus be said to be descended from David?
    - Some traditions interpret Luke’s genealogy as Mary’s, but evidence is against
    - Ancients believed only the male contributed to the offspring’s creation (i.e., the male seed)

- The woman was just a receptacle for the unborn child
  - The immaculate conception (sinless Mary) only came about once science showed that the female contributed half of the material of the offspring
- Mary → fifth of five women
  - The Old Testament explains how and why the other four women came to be included in the genealogy
  - V.18-25 will explain why Mary is included

#### Verse 17

- Fourteen generations
  - Cannot be literal 14 generations (assuming 20/40 yrs/gen)
    - Abraham to David – c.900 years (45/22)
    - David to Exile – c.400 years (20/10)
    - Exile to Jesus – c.500 years (25/12)
  - Jewish fascination with *gematria* (a type of numerology)
    - The name D-V-D (4 + 6 + 4) = 14
    - David is the center of this genealogy
    - The author's way of providing numerological support for Jesus' genealogy (?)
      - Moderns continue to be fascinated by numerology...

#### Verse 18

- “Now the birth of Jesus Christ” → “Now the *genesis* [v.1, *genealogy*] of Jesus Christ”
- Betrothed
  - Mary could have been as young as 12
  - Pledged to Joseph
- Found to be with child from the Holy Spirit
  - Reminder: only the “seed” contributed to a pregnancy
    - No human involvement in Mary's pregnancy
    - Jesus is 100% divine
  - Only two natural explanations
    - Mary was unfaithful, or Mary had been raped

#### Verse 19

- Joseph, a just man
  - He was a strict adherent of the Law
    - Mary now “damaged goods” whom he could no longer take as wife and he still be considered “righteous”
    - The Law demanded public examination of Mary, and at least prior to Rome's jurisdiction, stoning, if found guilty of adultery
- How will Joseph deal with this unfortunate turn of events?
  - What does the genealogy show upon encountering similar unfortunate events?
- Unwilling to put her to shame
  - However, Joseph's understanding of justice also includes mercy and compassion
  - The only merciful way out that he can think to do is a quiet divorce

#### Verse 20

- As he considered
  - *Considered* (ἐνθυμέομαι, enthymeomai) → derived from a word meaning fury, wrath, rage
    - Joseph is not quietly contemplating; he is furious and angry
    - This word occurs twice more
      - Matt 9:4 where Jesus forgives a paralytic man and the Pharisees about are “thinking evil” of Jesus
      - Acts 10:19 where Peter is shown a vision of unclean animals, commanded to eat, and then is “pondering” the vision
- An angel of the Lord → No natural explanation suffices
- Joseph, son of David → reminder of royal, Davidic lineage and God's promise to David

- Do not fear... is from the Holy Spirit
  - God's ways transcend processes that are codified in the Law
  - The ways of the Spirit are unpredictable, unexpected, unconventional
- To take Mary as your wife
  - Mary follows the pattern of the reason why this genealogy features other women
    - All incidents associated with the women (or in the case of Bathsheba, Uriah) exhibit a type of righteousness that is outside the conventions of the Law

#### Verse 21

- You [Joseph] shall call his name Jesus
  - Anticipating a legal adoption of Jesus into Joseph's lineage
    - This answers the question, how can Jesus be a descendant of David?
- Save his people from their sins
  - Anticipation of Jesus' mission
  - Messiah is not a military conqueror

#### Verse 22

- To fulfill → God is faithful

#### Verse 23

- Call his name Immanuel (which means, God with us)
  - Explanation of Jesus' mission and what it means "to save from sin"
  - Sin is faithlessness; therefore, save from sin is to return faith to humanity
  - Faithlessness alienates humanity from God; Jesus came to bring God to humankind

#### Verse 24

- He [Joseph] did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife
  - Joseph is shown to demonstrate the kind of righteousness [justice] that God embodies
    - God's justice transcends the code found in the Law
    - God's justice is his mercy
    - Mercy transcends the Law
    - "The righteous person, however, is not one who simply conforms to conventional expectations but one who is obedient to God's revelation no matter how scandalous it might appear to others." (*Reading Matthew: Reading the New Testament Series*)

#### Verse 25

- He [Joseph] called his name Jesus
  - Joseph legally adopts Jesus as his son
    - Jesus is "grafted in" to his human family
    - Jesus has a dual paternity: divine and human
    - Dual paternity conforms to mythologies of the period
- From Abraham to Joseph, there is direct, biological paternity
  - Biological paternity is broken with Jesus
  - The Holy Spirit ushers in a new age, a new *genesis*, where biological ancestry provides no advantage
  - Belonging to this new family is through "grafting in" through faith

#### Key Themes

- Relationships between justice, mercy, and law: Justice is mercy; mercy transcends law
- The true meaning of faithfulness: undivided pursuit of justice
- Two types of community: one based on blood; the other based on faith