



# *Christmas*

## THE KING ARRIVES

### MATTHEW 1:18-25

The birth of the King!

### FIRST THOUGHTS

The Old Testament contains more than three hundred prophecies about the promised coming of the **Messiah**. Some were written thousands of years before Jesus was born. The miraculous birth of Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Messiah. Many prophecies were fulfilled before the birth of Jesus. Some were fulfilled after His birth (Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 1:23). All of the prophecies were 100 percent accurate and complete with the birth of Jesus.

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Matthew 1:1-17, Matthew listed the **ancestors** of Jesus. This may seem unimportant to us, but it shows how Jesus came from the line of **Abraham** and David, just as the prophecies said He would.

Matthew quotes more from the Old Testament than the writers of the other Gospels. Matthew's target group for his Gospel was the Jewish people. The Jews were waiting for, looking for, and hoping for their Messiah to come. Matthew wants his readers to understand that Jesus is the Messiah. The name *Jesus* means "God saves."

## EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 1:18-25)

### 1. The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18)

#### VERSE 18.

<sup>18</sup> *This is how the birth of Jesus **Christ** came about. His mother Mary was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they married, she learned she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Jesus' **conception** was **supernatural**. That means it did not happen like a normal pregnancy. It happened while Mary was a virgin and engaged to Joseph. The **prophet** Jeremiah wrote that God would cause a new thing to happen. The virgin birth of Jesus was the new thing God did. It was a supernatural event and the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Jewish families were proud of their ancestors and their **heritage** (family history). Each family kept careful records of their ancestors so they could prove who their fathers, grandfathers, and so on were. Matthew presented Jesus' family tree in three sections: 1. Fourteen generations from Abraham to King David. 2. Fourteen generations from King David to the beginning of the exile to Babylon. 3. Fourteen generations from

the end of the exile in Babylon until Jesus was born. Matthew wanted his readers to understand that Joseph was not the father of Jesus. Matthew carefully wrote in verses 1-16 that each listed person was the father of the next one in the list. Matthew changed his words in the last part of verse 16 when he wrote, “Joseph was the husband of Mary.”

In nearly every nation’s history, the royal family and the royal line depended on ancestry. Matthew wrote about the human **heritage** of Jesus in Matthew 1:1-17 and His divine heritage in Matthew 1:18-25. Matthew listed the family tree of Jesus to show how He fulfilled the prophecies that the **Messiah** would be a **descendant** of **Abraham** and King David. Matthew also wanted his readers to know that Jesus was the Messiah. Remember that these three words have the same meaning: Messiah is the Hebrew word and **Christ** is the Greek word for our English word **Savior**.

Verse 18 states that “before they married,” Mary knew she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary and Joseph were not yet living together and she was pregnant! Mary knew that Jewish Law said that a pregnancy outside of marriage was a crime to be punished by being stoned to death.

**Why did Matthew think it was important to carefully explain the circumstances of Mary’s pregnancy?**

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## **2. God Promised to Send the Messiah (Matthew 1:19-23)**

### **VERSE 19.**

<sup>19</sup> *Because Mary’s husband, Joseph, was a good man, he did not want to disgrace her in public, so he planned to divorce her secretly.*

When a couple became engaged, they were often referred to as husband and wife even before the wedding ceremony. This union was so strong that to break the engagement required what we would call a divorce.

Joseph was in shock, shamed, and embarrassed to learn that his fiancée was pregnant. Who could Joseph talk to? The news about Mary would soon become common knowledge in the small town of Nazareth through the gossip of the people.

Matthew described Joseph as “a good man.” Joseph knew the Jewish law would let him end their engagement and the reason would be all Mary’s fault. Matthew wrote that this good man began making plans to quietly divorce Mary.

## **VERSES 20-21.**

<sup>20</sup> *While Joseph thought about these things, an angel of the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, “Joseph, descendant of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the baby in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> “She will give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”*

Joseph thought about what he must do, but he was directed in a dream to take Mary as his wife. The child was also identified in the dream as the promised Messiah. Joseph obeyed the instructions given to him in the dream.

When I was young and I had a decision to make, my grandfather would advise me to “sleep on it.” Perhaps this kind of good advice goes back to early New Testament times! Joseph probably tossed and turned until he finally went to sleep, and then he learned in a dream what he should do. In the dream, the angel explained that everything was OK in his relationship with Mary. After reminding Joseph that he was a relative of King David, the angel explained the part that Joseph would have in God’s plan for the world: 1. Take Mary as his wife. 2. Name the baby *Jesus*. The name *Jesus* means “God saves.”

## **BIBLE SKILL: Jesus' Family Tree (Matthew 1:1-17)**

The first 17 verses in the Gospel of Matthew give a list of the ancestors of Jesus. A chart showing our ancestors is called a *family tree*. A study of our family tree is called *genealogy*.

Most Americans do not know their family tree more than two generations. They do not know anything about their ancestors before their grandparents. Jewish families kept family records that went back hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years.

### **Why did Matthew list the family tree of Jesus?**

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**Write the names of two important leaders of the Jewish nation that Matthew listed in the genealogy of Jesus?**

Ab\_\_\_\_\_ and Da\_\_\_\_\_

### **VERSES 22-23.**

<sup>22</sup> *All this happened to bring about what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and they will name him Immanuel," which means "God is with us."*

The angel explained God's plan to Joseph. Memorizing Scripture verses was so much a part of Joseph's education that he may have recalled the **prophet** Isaiah's words when the angel spoke to him: "The virgin will be pregnant. She will have a son, and she will name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The name *Immanuel* means "God is with us."

God came to live with people in the person of Jesus. Because Jesus came to live with us and die among us, He fulfilled the meaning of His name. He became *the* **Savior**, who is able to save us from our sins.

Do you think it was difficult for Mary to tell Joseph she was pregnant? YES NO

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Joseph and Mary Obeyed God (Matthew 1:24-25)

#### VERSES 24-25.

<sup>24</sup> *When Joseph woke up, he did what the Lord's angel had told him to do. Joseph took Mary as his wife, <sup>25</sup> But he did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to the son. And Joseph named him Jesus.*

Joseph obeyed God's instructions delivered by an angel in a dream. Mary also obeyed God's instructions, told to her by an angel, that she would give birth to Jesus (Luke 1:26-38). Joseph took Mary as his wife and named the child *Jesus*.

#### KEY DOCTRINE: *Obedience (Matthew 1:24)*

Matthew wrote about the obedience of Joseph. The words *obey* and *obedient* occur over 450 times in the Bible.

What is obedience to God? It is more than doing right things and not doing wrong things. Obedience to God is more than behaving like His people. Obedience is not just following the law. True obedience, in the eyes of God, means to surrender my will to the authority of God. Obedience to God is when my heart accepts Him as Lord. It is when I accept His right to command and my duty to obey (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

Abraham showed his faith by obeying God without question. How did Abraham show obedience in these verses?

Genesis 12:1-9

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Genesis 22:1-18

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Through the Old Testament prophets, God promised that the **Messiah** would come, but He gave no time schedule. When it was time for the Messiah to be born, Mary and Joseph obeyed God.

Obedience is required for followers of Jesus. We can trace the word obey as a thread woven through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

**What were the three things Joseph did to obey God?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## IN MY CONTEXT

What would the people in your church say if an unmarried girl became pregnant? Not very many years ago she would have been seen as a great sinner.

How would her fiancé feel if he knew he was not the father of that baby? Maybe that helps us to understand the situation Mary and Joseph faced. In that time Mary could have been stoned to death! But Mary and Joseph obeyed God.

How important is obedience in the last recorded words spoken by Jesus? (Read Matthew 28:19-20.)

Think about your experience with obedience. Answer these questions in your heart:

1. When you pray, do you spend more time asking God for things than you do asking God to show you His will so you can obey Him?
2. When you spend your money, do you ask God to help you so you can obey His will with your money?
3. When you read your Bible, do you look for God's promises to you and skip over His commands to you?
4. When you prepare to go to church, do you think more about whom you will see than about seeing God more clearly?
5. When you worship in church, do you ask God to show you His will and promise to obey Him?
6. When you feel God leading you to do something for someone else, do you try to follow His leadership?
7. When you are at work, do you think other people know you are trying to obey God?

## MEMORY VERSE

*"She will give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."* —Matthew 1:21



# Christmas

## THE KING ARRIVES

### MATTHEW 1:18-25

#### PLAN AHEAD

Review the resources page for ideas to make your teaching more effective.

Review the pupil material for Scripture and lesson format. Use this Leader Guide to supplement your teaching.

Ask \_\_\_\_\_ to sign the hymn, “The Birthday of a King” (Let’s Sign Hymnal # 407).

Introduce the lesson with a brief discussion of the importance of the **genealogy** list in the first verses of the Gospel of Matthew. Ask \_\_\_\_\_ to study this Scripture Search (Genealogy of Jesus) including the Bible verses, and also the Bible Skill (Jesus’ Family Trees) in the pupil material and summarize these for the class.

#### **SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-6.** **See also Luke 3:23-38.)**

The Jews did not usually put the names of women in the list of ancestors, but four women are named in this list. They are Tamar (verse 3), Rahab (verse 5), Ruth (verse 5), and Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, (verse 6). Three of them were guilty of serious sins. Tamar had sex with her father-in-law (Genesis 38:1-30). Rahab was a prostitute in Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21). Bathsheba had sex with David before she became his wife (2 Samuel 11-12). This shows how God uses all people, men and women, obedient and disobedient. Jesus came to save all people (Matthew 9:12-13).

## EXPLORE THE TEXT (MATTHEW 1:18-25)

### 1. The Virgin Birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:18)

Matthew may have included much detail because some Greek myths told about gods fathering children, but none of those stories are like the virgin birth of Jesus.

Ask if anyone in the class has a problem believing the virgin birth? Encourage discussion of our accepting with faith the record we have in the Bible.

### 2. God Promised to Send the Messiah (Matthew 1:19-23)

Ask \_\_\_\_\_ to study Dig Deeper (Joseph) and summarize it for the class.

#### DIG DEEPER: *Joseph*

The angel told Joseph he should not hesitate to take Mary as his wife. To take her meant to complete the marriage. In a Jewish wedding at that time, the man would go to the bride's house and take her from there to his own house. Then they would have the wedding meal to complete the marriage.

The angel explained to Joseph the truth about this situation. The child inside Mary was not because of sex with a man. The power of the Holy Spirit had done this. Joseph was not the father of the child. But by his marriage to Mary, he would legally become the father of Jesus.

### 3. Joseph and Mary Obeyed God (Matthew 1:24-25)

Encourage discussion of the difficult situation Mary and Joseph experienced in their community and with their families.

Briefly summarize the marriage customs of the Jews in New Testament times. Use some of the reference books in your church library, or search online.

Ask class members to share their responses to the study question at the end of this section.

## IN MY CONTEXT

Use the study questions in the first part of this section in the pupil material to encourage discussion of the theme of this lesson.

Use the study questions in the second part of this section to close with a challenge: Does this lesson call for us to be more obedient? What areas are difficult to obey – tithing, witnessing, prayer, **worship**, lifestyle?