

## Gospel of Matthew Chapter 1 -- John Karmelich

1. How does one write a book about Jesus and introduce him?
  - a) Let us say you are one of the original 12 disciples, and you decide you are going to write a book about Jesus' life and death. Where does one begin?
    - i) First of all, you think about a purpose for writing the book.
    - ii) It is not just a bunch of rambling notes of "things I remember about the guy".
    - iii) You organize it based on your purpose.
  - b) Matthew's purpose for writing this book was to convince people that Jesus is the promised king to the Nation of Israel.
    - i) This is a major task. For the most part, Jesus has already been rejected by the Jewish nation by the time this book was written roughly thirty years after Jesus death and resurrection.
      - a) The word Messiah literally means "king". Although the Nation of Israel had many kings in their history, "the" king would be one who would rule for forever.
      - b) Other than a relatively small group of Jewish followers, most of the believers of the first century were non-Jewish (also known as "Gentiles").
    - ii) Another problem for Matthew is he had to change people's pre-conceived notion of just what is the Messiah as much as who the Messiah.
      - a) The Jews were expecting someone to rule and reign from Israel and overthrow the Roman Government.
      - b) I'm fairly certain that if Jesus accomplished that task, he would have been accepted by the Jewish nation as their promised Messiah.
        - (1) He did not overthrow Rome at that time. Jesus was more than capable of doing this if he choose, but that was not His purpose.
        - (2) The Old Testament does promise that Jesus will one day rule from Jerusalem. I touched upon that in the introduction lesson and I'll take it on more of that issue as I work my way through Matthew.
      - c) Matthew's purpose was to show people that Jesus is the promised Messiah because he fulfilled all the Old Testament predictions made about Jesus over the centuries.
        - (1) Once Matthew could do that fact, then he could explain the purpose of the Messiah to pay the price for everyone's sin prior to a coming day when the Messiah would fulfill the Jewish's expectations of a ruling king.
    - c) OK, John this is old news for me. Why should I keep reading? Glad you asked! ☺
      - i) One thing for us, as veteran Christians to see, and to constantly remind ourselves is that God is constantly working in our lives to change our preconceived notions about God, Jesus himself and our own expectations and make us more dependant upon Him!
        - a) We can think, "I already understand about Jesus, just like the Israelites had their pre-conceived notion of who is the Messiah, therefore I don't have to review this stuff". You are missing a key point of bible study!
        - b) We need to remind ourselves that God is in control. It is too easy for us to focus on our lives, our own problems, or to depend upon our own resources and forget the source of all of our blessings as well as our hope.

- c) As believers, it is so easy to become dependant upon our own financial savings, the freedom we have as Americans, and our own intelligence. We pray to God, but still fail every now and then to remember that we are fully dependant upon God for all we do.
  - d) One of my favorite bible teachers once quipped, “I’m convinced God stays up nights thinking of new ways of asking me, “Do you trust me? Do you really trust me?””
    - (1) He meant that he was constantly getting into new dilemma’s and problems in which he would have to fully depend upon God in order to get through that situation.
2. Remember that Matthew gave up everything to follow Jesus.
- a) He was a tax collector for the Roman Government.
  - b) That means he turned his back on his Jewish people to “sell out” to the Romans.
  - c) He gave up his heritage and was an outcast in exchange for the financial reward of working for the Romans.
  - d) Yet Matthew gave all that up to follow Jesus.
    - i) Even as a former tax collector, he now no longer had any financial stability.
    - ii) Further, reading between the lines of the gospels, I doubt Matthew was ever accepted back by the Jews. To follow Jesus meant to be an outcast by the Jewish nation. If anyone understood what it was like to be an outcast, an outsider, one who gave up everything to follow Jesus, Matthew would be the guy.
    - iii) He is a perfect model for us to follow.
      - a) For us to be a follower of Jesus, we must be willing to give up everything to follow Jesus. For many in the world, that meant their standard of living, their friends, and often their lives.
      - b) It “kind of makes you wonder” who in the United States would still call themselves a Christian if it meant poverty, isolation or your life.
      - c) That thought scares me as well as it probably does you!
        - (1) As you get older, it isn’t so much that you would do it for yourselves, because you walk in maturity to realize that Jesus means everything. The hard questions would you be willing to do that for your spouse and children who financially depend upon you? That is what trusting Jesus is all about.
        - (2) That is an example of what Jesus meant by the statement:
          - (a) “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.”  
(Luke 14:26 NIV)
          - (b) It’s not about hating your family, it’s about trusting Jesus more than the love you have for anyone or anything else.
  - e) On that somber note, let us get back to Matthew.
    - i) Last time I checked the title page, this is a study of Matthew 1. ☺
3. Matthew Chapter 1 is a genealogy of Jesus from the beginning of the Jewish nation to his birth.
- a) The last part of the chapter focuses on some of the facts surrounding Jesus’ birth.
  - b) For many people, the first seventeen verses of Chapter 1 are a boring thing to read.
    - i) It’s just a bunch of names of Jesus’ genealogy from Abraham to Jesus.
  - c) It is important from a Jewish mind:
    - i) A religious Jew knows that the promised “Messiah” is a descendant of David.
    - ii) Therefore, Matthew lays out the verses to show a Jewish audience that Jesus does fulfill the “royal blood issue” that he was a direct descendant of David.

- iii) One of the great issues I'll get into later in the chapter is, "If Jesus is adopted by Joseph, does that still make him a "descendant" of David?
  - a) Many people are aware that Jesus was a descendant of David from both his mother's side and his father's side. His father (Joseph's) side is by adoption because of the Immaculate Conception.
  - b) So why does Matthew emphasize Joseph's side and not Mary's side to prove his lineage? If it were me, I would use Mary's side, but hey, I'm not in charge. ☺
  - c) Part of the answer is you have to "think Jewish".
    - (1) In that culture, the emphasis is on the male.
    - (2) It's not that Jewish culture was anti-women; if anything, women's rights in that culture were far superior to the surrounding nations.
    - (3) The view is that God called men to lead and the "leading roles" in this pedigree of Jesus were almost all men. There are a few women mentioned for specific reasons, but the emphasis is on the man.
    - (4) Joseph's line is chosen as there were expectations of a promised male-king. Joseph's family line was the "kingly" descendants of David, and that was the line people were watching for the Messiah.
    - (5) Mary's "line" was a descendant of David, but not the line where the kings came from. People were primarily looking at the "kingly" line for the Messiah.
      - (a) Since that is where people were looking, that is where God put Jesus! He was a direct descendant of the "king-line" of David through his stepfather Joseph, as well as a direct descendant of David through another branch of the family line via Mary.
- 4. With all of that stated, I want you to think about the genealogy and how it applies to our lives.
  - a) If you know your Old Testament, this genealogy has more embarrassing moments than it does proud moments.
    - i) If you heard Jesus being introduced this way by Matthew and you knew what the bible actually says about these ancestors, you would be saying, "Matthew, did you really have to mention those people? This is actually kind of embarrassing".
    - ii) One of my favorite Jewish commentators, Dennis Praeger, said it best: "God picked the biggest bunch of losers to be his chosen people." Dennis Praeger, who is a devout religious Jew, was insulting his own heritage. If you read the history of the characters of the Old Testament mentioned in the lineage of Jesus, you would read of every type of immoral sin one can imagine.
    - iii) The question to ask is, "Why would God pick *these* people to bring "The Messiah" in the world". If I were to make up a story of God becoming man, I would make his ancestors great hero's who never had any significant faults.
      - a) When you read this list, their personal life stories included adultery, incense, murder, cheating, and idolatry in the worse form. Their isn't a commandment of the Old Testament that isn't broken somewhere in this line. Yet, God choose them to bring Jesus in the world. Why?
        - (1) Here's a clue: "Instead, God has deliberately chosen to use ideas the world considers foolish and of little worth in order to shame those people considered by the world as wise and great. ... so that no one anywhere can ever brag in the presence of God." (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:27, 29, The Living Bible).

- (2) My paraphrase of this verse is, “Jesus can’t brag about his pedigree”. God allowed some rotten people to be part of the line of the Messiah. This way, no one can brag about their accomplishments *other than* what God has accomplished through them.
- (3) This leads of course, back to you and I. We are not “more special” than others because of our faith in Jesus. We may look at this “long list of losers” and say, “I was never *that* bad”. God, who is a perfect God, expects perfection from us. Although our faults are not on public display like this ancestral list of Jesus, our faults are wide open in God’s eyes. These people can only be saved in God’s eyes by trusting in God for forgiveness. They were there to bring forth a coming savior. They were part of a bigger purpose that they may, or may not have understood. We serve God for the same reason. This is God’s world and not ours. We may not fully understand our purposes and roles in life. If we serve God and live for Him to the best of our abilities God can and does use us for his ultimate glory.
- (4) Gee, I hate to stop when I’m on a roll, but I need to break down and start Verse 1 before I finish today’s lesson. ☺

5. A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:
- a) If you have to pick the two most famous people in the history of the Jews, these two are it.
  - b) Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation. He was specifically called by God to start the Jewish nation. A promise was made to him “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 22:18, NKJV).
    - i) In fact, Paul picks up on this in Galatians 3:16. Paul notes that the word “seed” is singular, referring to the fact that one particular person (Jesus) would come from Abraham to be the promised Messiah.
  - c) The other person picked is David.
    - i) As I mentioned in the introduction last week, King David, who came hundreds of years after Abraham, was the Jewish king to whom God told that a Messiah would come from his descendants. David is listed first as the term “Son of David”, to a religious Jew, refers to the Messiah.
  - d) My favorite commentary on the opening verse of the New Testament comes from the book: The Jesus I Never Knew, by Philip Yancey (Zondervan Publishing, 2002).
    - i) To paraphrase he said, “The mistake the Jews make is they fail to see Jesus as the Son-of-David, (i.e., their Messiah). The mistake the non-Jews make is they fail to see Jesus as the Son-of-Abraham.” Mr. Yancey ‘s point is that Christians often fail to see the “Jewishness” of Jesus in his life, role, purpose and ministry and simply focus on Jesus as one who paid the price for their sins.”
      - a) Jesus has a role to fulfill in our (non-Jews) lives as one who paid the price for our sins and further as one who lords over us who we look to daily as our guidance on how we should live our life.
      - b) What many Christians around the world fail to see is his “Jewishness”. He is an unconditional promise to the Jewish nation. The Bible explicitly calls on Christians to respect the Jewish aspect of Jesus and to respect the Jewish nation. God’s promises to the Jewish nation are not *yet* fulfilled as God the Father unconditionally promised David that the Messiah would rule from David’s throne, which is in Jerusalem. Right now, Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God the Father, or “The Father’s Throne”.

6. Verse 2: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,
- a) I have good news for you the reader. I am not going to do a detailed analysis of every person in this genealogy. ☺ I can't accomplish this in 10-12 pages and I don't believe it is Matthew's purpose for writing this chapter.
  - b) I just want to get some "big picture idea's" across and some things to contemplate that affect our lives as Christians.
  - c) The emphasis here is strictly on the direct descendants from Abraham to Jesus.
    - i) Nothing is mentioned of Abraham having another son by his maidservant Hagar.
    - ii) Isaac himself is the only son listed, as he is the "son of the promise" by God.
    - iii) Jacob's brother's get a brief mention, only because those 12 brothers in all began the 12 tribes of which the Israelites were typically divided.
      - a) The emphasis of this whole genealogy can be summarized by the statement "God's promises come true". God made a *different* promise that the descendants of the 12 sons of Jacob inherit the Promised Land (Israel) and therefore, I believe that little tidbit was included for that reason.
    - iv) Judah was one of the 12 sons of Jacob. He wasn't the oldest, nor was he his father's favorite.
      - a) He was simply picked by God among the 12 to carry on the Messianic line.
7. Verse 3: Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, <sup>4</sup> Ram the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon,
- a) Here we have another embarrassing moment in the Jesus' pedigree:
    - i) Judah had a daughter-in-law named Tamar. Judah's son, (her husband) died.
    - ii) Tamar, who didn't have any children, disguised herself as a prostitute and had sexual relations with her father-in-law Judah to produce the twins Perez and Zerah. The whole story is told in Genesis Chapter 38.
      - a) I warned you Jesus' pedigree had some embarrassing moments! ☺
    - iii) This is one example that Matthew "snuck" in the story simply to show that God's plan to have a descendant of Abraham, via David led to the Messiah. God's will got accomplished in the strangest of fashions!
  - b) The rest of the genealogy of this section Matthew got from 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles Chapter 4.
    - i) The Scripture gives little details about these other people.
8. Verse 5: Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, <sup>6</sup> and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,
- a) We get a few other little "embarrassing moments" tucked away in here as well.
  - b) Matthew went out of his way in Verse 5 to mention that Boaz' mother was Rahab.
    - i) Rahab is a prostitute mentioned in Joshua Chapters 2 and 6. She lived in Jericho and was part of a city that God ordered the Israelites to destroy as punishment for centuries of idolatry.
    - ii) When the Israelites first spied out the land, Rahab helped the Jewish spies by lying to the leaders of Jericho and saving the lives of the spies.
    - iii) In a way, she was one of the first "Gentile converts" because she trusted in the God of the Bible more than she trusted in her own "gods".
    - iv) The fact that God used a lying prostitute is a good sign that God can use anyone.☺
  - c) The information about the genealogy from Boaz to David comes from Ruth Chapter 4.

- d) The other little “dig” that Matthew snuck in here is about King David.
- i) The Bible has more verses dedicated to David than anyone else other than Jesus.
  - ii) Yet, the one fact Matthew choose to mention is David having an affair with Bathshiba. Bathshiba got pregnant from David, and David had her husband Uriah murdered to cover the event. (See 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel Chapters 11-12).
  - iii) The key point (in my humble opinion ☺) is simply to see that God ‘s plans get accomplished even through the mistakes man has made.
    - a) It doesn’t excuse those mistakes. We read a lot in the bible about the punishments those individuals suffered for their mistakes.
    - b) It is simply that God uses those events for the greater good.
    - c) That affair with Bathsiba eventually leads to marriage and to the next king, which was Solomon.
    - d) The application to you and me is that God doesn’t expect perfection from us, just trust in Him. God can and does use us despite our faults.
9. Verse 7: Solomon the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, <sup>8</sup> Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram, Jehoram the father of Uzziah, <sup>9</sup> Uzziah the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, <sup>10</sup> Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah, <sup>11</sup> and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.
- a) In four verses, we have all the kings of Israel from Solomon (a son of David) all the way until the time the Nation of Israel went into captivity.
  - b) To be technical, after Solomon, beginning with his son Rehoboam, Israel split into two nations, with the Northern alliance calling themselves “Israel” (the capital was Samaria) and the Southern Alliance calling themselves “Judah”. The kings of Judah are those listed here.
  - c) The Northern alliance was conquered by the Assyrian Empire and were scattered all over that empire. The Southern Alliance (Judah), the list shown above, lasted another hundred years in tact, was eventually captured by the Babylonians. After a series of rebellions, the Babylonian king completely destroyed Judah and everyone was taken prisoner into captivity. The land was desolate for 70 years.
  - d) If you know your Jewish history, or ever read 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, you will know that this list continues the embarrassment of this lineage.
    - i) Most of these kings were described as wicked idolaters. Other than a few good exceptions (e.g., Hezekiah, Josiah), most of these guys were bad news.
    - ii) In fact, by the time we get to Jeconiah, it is so bad, God put a curse on Jeconiah through the prophet Jeremiah:
      - a) This is what the LORD says: “Record this man (Jeconiah) as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.” (Jeremiah 22:30, NIV)
      - b) This curse/prediction by Jeremiah means that no direct descendant of Jeconiah will be the Messiah.
      - c) God “got around that problem” by the virgin birth.
      - d) You never read anywhere in the New Testament of Mary’s huband Jesus being the father of Jesus. Joseph is only recorded as the husband of Mary.
        - (1) Jesus genealogy through Joseph is through adoption. That is key.
      - e) We as Christians are also adopted into God’s family.
        - (1) “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we (Gentiles) might receive the adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5, NKJV).

- iii) In fact, there is a hint in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be both born and adopted. It is from Isaiah 9:6 (NIV translation)
    - a) “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.” (Isaiah 9:6 NIV)
    - b) Notice the first phrase says, “child is born”, as in being-born.
    - c) The second phrase says a “son is given”. Now how can a son be both “born” to someone and “given” to someone? Gee, how about a virgin birth (from Mary’s perspective), which is the “born-part” and adoption by Joseph which is the “given-part”?!
10. Verse 12: After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,<sup>13</sup> Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor,<sup>14</sup> Azor the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Akim, Akim the father of Eliud,<sup>15</sup> Eliud the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob,<sup>16</sup> and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.
- a) Here we have the genealogy under the period of captivity.
    - i) After 70 years of all the Jews being out of the land of Israel, their captors, the Babylonians, were conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire. They permitted the Jews to return to Israel. Only a small percentage of the Jews choose to make that journey back to Israel. Most of the Jews remained in the Medo-Persian Empire.
    - ii) For the next 400 hundred years (more or less) the land of Israel was in turmoil.
      - a) First, it was under the jurisdiction of the Medo-Persian Empire.
      - b) Then the Greeks conquered them. For several hundred years, different factions of the Greek Empire fought back in forth, with the territory and nation of Israel stuck in the middle of a war zone.
      - c) Finally, the Romans conquered the territory prior to the birth of Jesus.
  - b) Just where and when Jesus’ ancestors returned to Israel after Babylon is a mystery.
    - i) In fact, there is nothing recorded in the bible about these people between Jeconiah and Mary/Joseph. So how do we know this is correct information?
    - ii) Only outside history gives us a clue.
    - iii) The first century Jews were meticulous record keepers. Even the historian Josephus (a non-Christian Jew, first century, pro-Roman) wrote about how the Jews kept records of their ancestry.
    - iv) One reason they did this was because the Jews were looking for a Messiah. They knew that whoever it was, was a descendant of David. Therefore, they kept very good records of David’s descendants.
  - c) In the year 70AD, about 35-40 years after Jesus death and resurrection, all of these records were destroyed. The Jews were rebelling against Rome and the Romans decided to destroy the Nation of Israel, the temple and from 70 AD until 1948 there was no Jewish state of Israel.
    - i) That is important, because with that destruction of Jerusalem was the destruction of all ancestry records of who was a descendant of David.
    - ii) From the year AD 70, no Jew can prove whether he is, or is not a “Son of David”.
    - iii) Despite the horror of this event where millions of Jews were killed:
      - a) It validates that Matthew was written prior to 70AD.
      - b) It helps to validate Jesus as a direct descendant of David and proof of his “Messiahship”.
      - c) It is another example of how God allows horrible sins to be used for his glory. It doesn’t excuse what the Romans did. They are eternally punished for the crimes they have committed. But God used that event for his Good.

- d) Notice in that set of verses how Joseph is not called the father of Jesus, but just the “husband of Mary”.
    - i) Matthew is emphasizing how Jesus is not a direct descendant through Joseph, but gets his title (via his father’s side) by adoption.
    - ii) Jesus is also a direct descendant of David via his mother. That is covered in Luke Chapter 3.
11. This now wraps up the genealogy section of the Gospel of Matthew. The rest of Chapter 1 focuses on the virgin birth story.
- a) Chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew can also be summarized as two facts:
    - i) 1) Jesus is “fully man” (a “seed of David”) and
    - ii) 2) Jesus is “fully God” (the “virgin birth”).
      - a) In the second section, we read of the “seed of God” being planted in Mary to produce Jesus.
    - iii) You and I cannot fully comprehend how Jesus can be “fully man and fully God” at the same time. It is a mystery as the Trinity is a mystery.
      - a) There are some aspects about Christianity that are beyond explanation. We are simply asked to accept them by faith.
      - b) “A God we can fully comprehend is not a God that is worth worshipping”. (Source unknown).
    - iv) Romans Chapter 5 is a good source for additional reading on this topic. To paraphrase, one man (Adam) was created by God with free will. He brought the disease of sin into this world. Another man was brought into this world who was God himself, incarnate as man. That perfect sacrifice of Jesus was needed as the cure for disease brought into this world.
  - b) One question I pondered for awhile is, “Why not bring Jesus into the world right after Adam and Eve ate the bad fruit? Why all these years in between? Alternatively, why didn’t God wait until the modern era of satellite television for Jesus when he could have worked more effectively?
    - i) That’s a complication question that requires a lot of explaining!
    - ii) The most important reason is through history, we learn of the failure of man on our own to deal with the problem of sin.
      - a) First man tried “without the law” (i.e., prior to the 10 commandments) and failed miserably. God needed a flood to clean up that calamity. ☺
      - b) Then God tried to give a set of rules for a group of people to follow. That was the lineage of Jesus. We read over and over again of their failures.
      - c) A big picture idea of the Old Testament is the failure of man to be obedient to God and the need of a Savior to pay the price of sins.
      - d) We as Christians are no better than the people of those times. We are only better in that we trust in Jesus as payment for our faults.
      - e) Jesus came into the world just prior to the peak of the Roman Empire. The entire “known world” was under one set of rules, one set of roads, etc. By the time of Paul’s first missionary journey, it was the ideal time to travel and spread the gospel.
      - f) As to the last question, of “Why didn’t God wait until modern times?”, I can’t give you a great answer. I suppose the main reason is that God wants to spread the gospel through people, one at a time. Jesus started with 12 guys. When he died, he had 11. It wasn’t until after the resurrection those things got going. Look at all the billions who swear allegiance to Jesus without modern communications. The glory can only go to God and not our modern technology.
      - g) OK, I’ve drifted way off topic. Sorry about that. ☺

12. Verse 17: Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.
- a) Matthew sums up this section by mentioning the fact there are 14 “generations” in each of the major sections.
    - i) Section 1 is Abraham to David
    - ii) Section 2 is David to “Captivity Time”.
    - iii) Section 3 is “Captivity Time to Jesus’ birth”.
  - b) OK, what is so significant about “14 generations”.
    - i) Let’s start by saying bluntly, we don’t know. Matthew does not state any further comment, so it is all speculation.
    - ii) The majority opinion among the commentators is that Matthew was a “mystic”. He wanted to show how God worked in patterns of fourteen’s (14’s).
    - iii) To bible numerologists, this is also significant.
      - a) In Hebrew, every letter represents a number. It is as if to say, “A=1, B=2, C=3, etc.) You can add up the number value of any Hebrew word and get a total number.
      - b) There is a whole study of Bible numerology I won’t get into today.
      - c) The word for “David” has the numerical value of “14”. Therefore, there is a “messiahship” associated with the number 14. This is probably why Matthew did this.
    - iv) Critics of the Bible like to point out the inaccuracies with the patterns of “14’s”.
      - a) They find all sorts of technical faults in the three lists of fourteen generations when comparing these records to other Old Testament records.
      - b) For example, if you look carefully, there are 13 names (i.e., 13 generations) listed from the Babylonian captivity to Jesus. How does Matthew get “14” when there are only 13 generations listed?
        - (a) Here is a solution: “Jeconiah is counted in both lists, since he lived both before and after the captivity. So, there are literally 14 names listed “from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ,” just as Matthew says.” Geisler, N.L., & Howe, T. A. 1992. From the book “When critics ask, a popular handbook on Bible difficulties.” Victor Books”
13. Verse 18: This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.
- a) Now comes the “virgin birth” passage, until the end of the chapter.
  - b) Matthew gives a brief account of this story.
    - i) Luke, who is more of a historian than Matthew gives a lot more details.
    - ii) The way Matthew describes the event of the virgin birth is a little misleading if you’ve never read Luke.
      - a) Matthew says Mary was “found with child” as if it was an accident. ☺
      - b) Luke tells us that an angel told Mary what will happen prior to the event.
    - iii) Remember Matthew’s purpose is to show Jesus as the promised Messiah, not to write a detailed history of Jesus’ life.
  - c) One has to remember Jewish culture at this time.
    - i) Marriages were pre-arranged by the parents. A “pledge to be married” is an engagement period with no sexual encounters that usually lasted around a year.
    - ii) Joseph and Mary were probably teenagers when this event took place.

- d) I always think Joseph never gets enough good credit during Christmas pageants. ☺
    - i) He had a good balance of Jewish righteousness (keeping the law) and mercy.
    - ii) He wanted to keep the law by quietly divorcing Mary and at the same time having mercy by not making a big deal about it.
      - a) That's a good balance for us as Christians. We are asked to be in obedience to Christ, but God also wants us to be a good witness to the outside world.
      - b) Remember Jesus dined with "harlots and tax collectors". Those professions have not improved their reputation in 2,000 years. ☺
        - (1) Yet, there was something about Jesus that these people were willing to listen and hang out with Jesus. He didn't "thump his nose" at them. That's a good lesson when we get "holier-than-thou".
14. Verse 20: But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."
- a) First thing to notice in Verse 21 is that the purpose of Jesus being born in this world is to "save his people from their sins". Notice it doesn't say, "he will be a great teacher or a great miracle worker". Jesus' primary purpose is clearly stated here in Verse 21.
  - b) Many commentators discuss the possibility that Mary did not tell Joseph that she was pregnant. Maybe she was afraid to tell him. That is why the whole "dream" sequence may have been necessary to have Joseph agree to still take Mary as his wife.
  - c) A couple of neat little tidbits to pick up from this section.
    - i) It said, "While he (Joseph) was considering this, an angel of the Lord appeared..."
      - a) That means that God reads our thoughts. It is a support of silent prayer.
      - b) It means God can read all of our thoughts, the good and the bad!
    - ii) I love the fact that Joseph was called "Son of David".
      - a) Remember Joseph was part of the "cursed blood-line" of Jeconiah that I discussed a few pages back. Joseph could never be the father of the Messiah because of the family curse. I am sure everyone of that family was aware they would never be thought of as the father of the Messiah.
      - b) You can see the grace of God in that verse alone when Joseph is called "The Son of David". It is the grace of God prevailing over the law.
      - c) It is a reminder to us that despite our family heritage and our shortcomings, we can still be used by God for great things.
  - d) The other thing to notice from Joseph's standpoint is all of this took place in a dream.
    - i) Joseph didn't wake up and say, "wooh, what a nightmare, better cut back on that late night pizza". ☺
    - ii) He understood that this was from God and obeyed.
    - iii) God is capable of speaking to us at anytime in anyway.
      - a) We don't have to "strain" to hear the voice of God. God is more than capable of communicating to us whenever he wants. He hasn't lost our phone numbers and we don't have to be quiet so God can hear us.
        - (1) The corollary is that we often can do our best praying when distractions are at a minimum, but that is beside the point.
    - iv) So, do we take dreams seriously? Does God still speak to us today through dreams? This is another classic Christian debate.
      - a) Most conservative Christians argue no, because today we have God's word and we don't need dreams for direct revelation.
      - b) Others argue "God can do anything he wants, and if He wants to talk to us in a dream, who are we to say no."
      - c) There, you now have the two main arguments, and you decide. ☺

- d) Personally, I'm hesitant of trusting dreams as being messages of God, especially if they are contradictory to God's Word.
- (1) Can God talk to us this way? Yes, he can. It is possible. I'm just cautious about my dreams. They are too weird to explain. ☺
- e) How did Matthew know all of this?
- i) Well, he spent three years with Jesus. Jesus could have told him. Mary could have related the story as well. The truth is we don't know.
- f) The main point is Joseph obeyed. God gave him marching orders to accept this child as his own, and to call him Jesus.
- i) Remember that Joseph probably expected the Messiah to overthrow Rome. God had to change Joseph's preconceptions of the Messiah as well as the Jews and us!
15. Verse 22: All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us."
- a) Matthew spends a lot of time quoting the Old Testament to show how Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.
- b) It is probably important to bring up the classic "Christian vs. Jewish" debate on this point.
- i) Verse 23 is a quote from Isaiah 7:14. The debate is whether or not Isaiah said a "virgin will give birth" or a "young maiden will give birth".
- ii) Modern Jews argue that this verse is not about Jesus, but about the son of Isaiah.
- iii) They argue that in the surrounding text of Isaiah Chapter 7, Isaiah was making a prediction to King Ahaz. He said that before this "son" is born, the king's enemies would be wiped out. Isaiah then had a son who was born after the king's enemies of the moments were killed.
- iv) Here is where their arguments fall apart. When Isaiah said, "unto you a child is born/given" the word for "you" is plural. It is meant as a sign to the nation of Israel not just the king.
- v) The word for "virgin" in Hebrew can also be translated "maiden" as in a "young maiden will give birth to a son". Further, the ancient Jewish commentators understood that the word for "maiden/virgin" referred to a future event as well.
- vi) First of all, a young maiden giving birth is not a sign from God. The prophecy in Isaiah is about Isaiah telling the king to "ask for a sign from God". Hospitals have young maidens giving births to sons every day. Now a *virgin* birth, that would be a sign from God. ☺
- vii) About two hundred years before Jesus was born, the book of Isaiah (written about five hundred years earlier) was translated into Greek. When the Jews translated this passage into Greek, they used the Greek word *definitely* means virgin.
- viii) Therefore, if you come across an English translation that translates Isaiah 7:14 with the word "maiden", cross it out and write "virgin" there. ☺
16. Verse 24: When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. <sup>25</sup> But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.
- a) Verse 25 is a problem for the Roman Catholic view of the "perpetual virginity" of Mary.
- i) One of the key words to notice in verse 25 is the word "until".
- ii) The word "union" is a polite word for sexual intercourse.
- iii) Joseph did not have intercourse with Mary until Jesus was born.
- iv) Mary went on to have at least five children after Jesus. Two of them became followers of Jesus after the resurrection and wrote epistles (James & John).

- v) Here is a supporting verse:
    - a) “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup>Aren’t all his sisters with us? (Matthew 13:55-56, NIV)
  - b) Again, Joseph does not get enough credit during the Christmas pageant. ☺
    - i) In this dream, God told Joseph to ignore the rules about a virgin wife for the *higher law* of doing God’s will. (If you’re going to break a bible rule, make sure it is God telling you to do so! ☺) For what it is worth, the law of “marrying a virgin” does not carry the same weight as say, breaking one of the Ten Commandments.
17. I want to end this by stepping back and looking at the big picture of this section.
- a) It is amazing to think about the God-the-son, the God who created everything, sent “himself” (See John 1:3 says all things were made by Jesus) agreed to come into the world as a newborn baby.
  - b) Let’s face it, God is God. Jesus come have come into the world as a grown man.
    - i) He could have come in some big flashy show, do some miracles, and then die on the cross.
    - ii) Instead, he came as a newborn, into the trust of a very young Jewish couple.
    - iii) Over and above that, he wasn’t born to a kingly family or a family of the leading priests. He came into the “lowest of lows” for his protection in his early years.
  - c) The creator of the universe had to be dependant upon a poor Jewish family for his safety and upbringing until the day God the Father wanted him to start his ministry.
    - i) I cannot fully explain why God the Father choose this methodology of bringing Jesus into the world, but he did.
    - ii) Matthew’s Gospel emphasizes the miracle of the birth from the perspective of the “virgin birth” and the fact that it was predicted in the Old Testament, but doesn’t go a lot into why God choose this method in the first place.
  - d) Our job as Christians is simply to “believe and obey”. The evidence is out there for us to accept. Matthew takes a lot of time and trouble to explain how Jesus was born “fully man and fully God” throughout the Gospel.
18. With that, let’s close in prayer. Heavenly father, we thank you for sending Jesus in the world. We cannot fully comprehend the mystery behind this divine gift and purpose. We read throughout the bible of necessity of sending Jesus and we learn of him and about him in the Bible. Help us to grow in that knowledge, and more importantly, to apply that knowledge to our lives. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.