

JESUS: MESSIAH, SAVIOR, IMMANUEL

Matthew 1:1-25

Key Verse 23

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

The Gospel of Matthew begins with a bold declaration that Jesus is the Messiah promised by God to Israel. This is the premise of Matthew’s gospel and of the entire New Testament. God reigns over human history. God made promises to his chosen people Israel, and God fulfilled them through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. He is our Savior. He is Immanuel, God with us.

I. Jesus is the Messiah (1-17)

The first sentence of Matthew is the first sentence of the New Testament: **“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham...”** These words only have meaning and significance in a Jewish context. The word **“Messiah”** means **“Anointed One.”** In Greek it is Christos, from which we get the word “Christ.” In Jewish thought there were three anointed offices: kings, prophets and priests. Kings rule, prophets proclaim and priests mediate. Jesus is King of kings, who rules with justice and righteousness, grace and truth. Jesus is the Final Prophet, who brought the final message and revelation of God. Jesus is our Great High Priest, the one Mediator between the one true God and the human race (1Ti 2:5; Ac 4:12; Jn 14:16).

Matthew introduces a family tree, a tree that connects Jesus with David and Abraham. To appreciate the history behind this chapter and this gospel requires a good knowledge of the Jewish faith, the Hebrew Scriptures, called by Christians “The Old Testament.” Abraham was the father of the Jewish people. God called Abraham and promised to establish a blessed nation and to bless all nations through him. This was partly fulfilled in the nation of Israel. It was ultimately fulfilled and is being fulfilled still in the person and continuing ministry of Jesus the Messiah. David was the greatest king in Israel’s history. God promised to establish the throne of his kingdom forever. Israel stopped having a king reign over them when they were conquered and exiled to Babylon. But God’s promise did not fail. God fulfilled his promise in Jesus who is called not only Son of David but also King of kings and Lord of lords.

Matthew moves through 14 generations from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the exile to Babylon, and 14 from the exile to the Christ. This was a span

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of about 1800 years. Matthew highlights three more things of note in this genealogy: women, kings and the exile. He mentions three women by name: Tamar, Rahab and Ruth. They were not Jewish women. You can read Genesis 38 for Tamar's story of faithfulness to bear a child for her dead husband in the family line. Rahab was a Canaanite from Jericho. She feared the God of Israel and hid two spies of Israel in her home. Humanly, she betrayed her own people. But she sided with God and his chosen people, and she joined them and was blessed along with them. Ruth was from Moab. She loved her Jewish mother in law, even after her Jewish husband died. She married Boaz and even got a Bible book written after her.

Matthew lists kings of Judah in verses 6-11, beginning with King David. Their stories are recorded in 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles. Some of these kings were wicked and unfaithful to God. Some were God-fearing, following in the footsteps of King David. Mention of the exile points out the unfaithfulness of Israel and God's disciplinary punishment of them.

To summarize, there are 3 important things we can learn from the genealogy of Jesus Christ in verses 1-17. First, God is the God of history. He works on his time schedule, not ours. Second, God keeps his promises. In other words, God is faithful. His faithfulness doesn't depend on man and is not shaken by people's unfaithfulness. Third, God is merciful. Another woman mentioned is Uriah's wife. This is the story of Bathsheba, whom David committed adultery with. David tried to cover up his sin with a murder plot. But it didn't work. Nathan the prophet rebuked David. David should've died for his sin, but he confessed his sin, repented and was forgiven. No one in Jesus' genealogy deserved to be included in his family tree, since all of them were imperfect and sinful. But God in his mercy did not cancel his promises to send the Messiah. God did not include only Jewish people. He included non-Jewish women who had faith. We too don't deserve to be included in God's family. But by his grace we can be included through faith in Jesus the Messiah. This is God's undeserved grace in Jesus Christ, and it is amazing, wonderful, and marvelous.

II. Jesus is our Savior, Immanuel (18-25)

After introducing Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew explains how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. This was a shock to Joseph, since he knew the child was not his. And because he was a righteous man who was faithful to the law, Joseph

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decided to break off the marriage engagement. Actually, Joseph had the right to expose Mary to public disgrace. Any man in Joseph's situation would be justified to be angry and vengeful. But Joseph did not respond in anger or hatred or revenge. He did not want to expose Mary to public disgrace. So, he decided he would divorce Mary quietly. Joseph was a great man who bore the pain and shame quietly.

After deciding this, Joseph had a dream which he knew was from God. In the dream, an angel of the Lord appeared to him 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. 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.”**

The angel revealed two important truths about this baby boy. First, Jesus' origin is from God, the Holy Spirit. Jesus was not conceived by any man, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:35 the angel Gabriel explained to Mary about her coming child: **“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”** (NASB).

Secondly, the angel told Joseph to name the child Jesus. Jesus means, **“The LORD saves.”** Jesus is the LORD, our Savior. What does Jesus save us from? He came to save us from our sins. Some people think that sin is just a psychological term that makes people feel guilty. But Jesus and the Bible clearly teach us otherwise. Sin is a serious, eternal matter, for sin is what separates us from God.

What do you think you need to be saved from? Often times we think it is some earthly problem that we need to be saved from. We tend to think that our most urgent problem is unemployment, or health, or a relationship. These are indeed serious problems and important issues which shouldn't be ignored. It's good for us to try to resolve problems such as these. But these are not the primary reason that Jesus came. These are not the most critical thing to be saved from, for even if these problems solved, a greater problem than these still remains. Who can save us from the power and consequences of sin? Who can give us forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and change us from the inside out?

Only Jesus is able to do this. Jesus will save his people from their sins. “His people” are all who trust in, follow and obey him. Acts 4:12 says, **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”** Jesus is the only one qualified and able to give salvation to all mankind. Again, Acts 10:43 says, **“All the prophets testify**

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about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

In verses 22-23, Matthew tells us: **“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).”** Matthew quotes Isaiah 7:14. In the time of Isaiah the prophet, the land of Judah was under the threat of two enemy armies. Through the prophet Isaiah, God told Ahaz king of Judah, to ask the Lord for a sign of deliverance. Ahaz was too fearful. So God promised a sign, a son to be called Immanuel, which means, **“God with us.”** God would be with his people to rescue them from their enemies. We need a Rescuer.

Jesus is the greatest sign that God is with us. God came to be with us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus rescues the human race from our true enemies: the devil, sin and death. No one in history could defeat these enemies of mankind. Even the innocent first man Adam was no match for the devil. With one temptation from the devil, Adam fell into sin and brought the wages of sin into the world, which is death.

Jesus the Messiah faced the devil one on one and defeated him. Jesus defeated sin by living a sinless life of perfect love for God and man. Jesus defeated the power of sin over us by the new covenant in his holy blood, shed on the cross. Finally, Jesus defeated the power of death by his glorious resurrection from the dead. Jesus is our Rescuer. We are free from sin forever more.

God came to be with us in the person of Jesus the Messiah. Apostle John described his coming to be with us as making his dwelling among us. John 1:14 says, **“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Matthew’s gospel ends with the words of the Risen Christ: **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”** (Mt 28:20). Solving our sin problem is the means to the end. The end or goal is to be with Jesus forever, and he with us.

Sinners cannot be with the perfect and holy God, even as darkness cannot be with light. It doesn’t work. They can’t be together. Sin separates us from the holy God, so we can’t be with God and we don’t want to be. Isaiah 59:2 says, **“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”**

God, who is holy, must punish sin. If he is a just and righteous judge, he can’t simply ignore sin or forget about it, as if nothing happened. Judgment must

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be meted out and real inner change must take place for sin to be cleansed and eradicated. So Jesus died as the perfect Lamb of God to take away our sin (Jn 1:29). Through Jesus the Messiah, we are no longer enemies of God. Punishment has been paid, peace has been made, through the blood of Jesus the Messiah. Now, all who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life (Jn 3:16). All who receive Jesus and believe in his name are given the right to become not only friends of God but children of God (Jn 1:12)! All who believe are new creations in Christ, who live new lives in Jesus, through Jesus and for Jesus the Messiah.

Do you have confidence and conviction that you belong to Jesus the Messiah—that he died not only for sinners, but for your sins? Has he given you a new life in him, a new hope, a new purpose? Apart from Jesus the Messiah, we're living in darkness, emptiness and meaninglessness. Jesus drives away the darkness with his light, the emptiness with the fullness of his Spirit, and the meaninglessness with a meaningful mission and purpose in life.

Don't believe the devil's lies that you are alone, that no one cares, that your life has no purpose, joy or fruit. In Jesus, we have the joy of living, we have great purpose to live in his wonderful light, to declare the praises of him who brought us out of darkness. We can cast all our anxieties on Jesus because he cares for us. We are not alone, for God is with us, through Jesus the Messiah.

I grew up in a church-going home. My church upbringing taught me good morals. I didn't drink, smoke, take drugs or sleep around. Morally, I was a good kid. But my relatively good morals couldn't save me from my sins, like lust, pride and vanity. Moreover, I had no real meaning or purpose of life, because I was basically living for myself—my pleasure, my advancement, my recognition, my dream of wealth and success. One month away from high school graduation, my dad died of a heart attack. I was stung by the power of death. I decided to ignore it and move on with my life. About six months later, someone invited me to Bible study and I accepted. Through the word and Spirit of God, I found living hope in Jesus. Since then, Immanuel Jesus has been with me, sustaining me with hope and purpose in him, saving me from my sins, again and again. Jesus is still my true hope and purpose in life. Every day I live is another chance I have to advertise and magnify the name of Jesus the Messiah, my Savior, Immanuel. He is with me, by his grace. He is with me, cleansing me of my sins, sanctifying me by his Spirit, using me to minister to others in his name.

May the Lord Jesus, our Savior, Immanuel, bless and use us to proclaim the gospel of his salvation and new life. Jesus is the Messiah. He is our Savior. He is Immanuel, God with us.