

waiting...

2.

Matthew 1.1-25

“... how the birth of Jesus came about ..”

[week beginning Sunday 9th December 2018]

You'll be glad that you won't often be engaging in a study which consists mainly of a single genealogy comprising some 40 generations! But it's with this genealogy that the New Testament begins - and in some ways it serves as a deliberate bridge between all that has gone before Jesus' birth and all that will follow. Context is everything!

Matthew, as a one-time tax collector, clearly had the sort of mind and through his work had inevitably developed the particular gifts, which meant he could handle lists like this in his sleep! The 'spacers' he inserts (Abraham, David, exile, Jesus) are not simply convenient, 14th generation, pauses for breath, but have a huge significance in terms of the outworking of God's purpose.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 1, 2, and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Matthew 1.1-25. Bear in mind that Matthew wrote his account of the life and ministry of Jesus for a largely Jewish constituency.

Why does Matthew start his account with this genealogy?

Compare this account of "how the birth of Jesus came about" with the longer account in Luke's gospel (**Lk.1.5-2.20**): what are the points of similarity, and in what ways do they differ?

What do you think Matthew is keen to impress on his readers from the start?

2. Read Matthew 1.2-6. Matthew flags up from the outset (v.1) that Jesus is descended from Abraham.

In the reference to Zerah (v.3), Boaz and Obed (v.5) the mother of the individual is mentioned: why do you think Matthew makes a point of mentioning these three women?

Having started with Abraham in this first section why does Matthew land with 'King David'?

What lessons do you take from these verses?

3. Read Matthew 1.6-11. In tracing the story of God's people from David on down through the list of kings, Matthew is recording the painful story of decline.

In the case of just one individual here in this section there's reference to the person's mother (v.6): why do you think Matthew doesn't name her, but speaks of her as "*Uriah's wife*"?

The exile was the low water-mark in the history of God's people: what do you think is the reason for Matthew's drawing attention to the exile in this opening genealogy?

4. Read Matthew 1.12-17. This last section in the line of descent down to Jesus comprises a list of His post-exilic forbears, whose names are far less familiar for most than those mentioned in the earlier two sections.

What (if anything) do you think we are to read into the 'symmetry' to which Matthew points in v.17?

The people of God had clearly been waiting for 'the Messiah' for generations: what sustained them in that hope?

Why do you think God often keeps us waiting?

5. **Read Matthew 1.18-21.** For the fourth time in the chapter Matthew makes reference to “*the Messiah (Christ)*” (see vv.1, 16, and 17) as he records now the details of Jesus’ birth.

What’s the significance of Joseph being addressed by the angel as “*son of David*”?

How are we to understand the phrases “*pregnant through the Holy Spirit*” and “*what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit*”?

What would you say to someone who asked you about ‘the virgin birth’?

6. **Read Matthew 1.20-23.** Matthew highlights the name which Joseph is to give to the son who’ll be born, and makes reference to the name by which, according to Isaiah’s prophecy (Is.7.14), this son would be called.

What do the two names mean?

What have you learned in this opening chapter about this Person whose life and ministry is being recorded by Matthew?

7. **Read Matthew 1.24-25.** Having had Mary's pregnancy explained, and his own required response made clear, Joseph then did as the angel had instructed him.

What two things was Joseph told to do?

How would you have felt in the face of these instructions if you had been Joseph?

Think of times or situations where you haven't really understood what's going on in God's dealings with your life: what helped you, despite that lack of understanding, to press on and do God's will?