

Today  
For you  
A Saviour



## 'At the crossroads'

Matthew 1.<sup>1-25</sup>

### Background

The title of this study is taken from [Jeremiah 6.16](#). The start of a new year provides us all with a chance to pause and consider how our lives are being lived and which way we'll choose to follow in the weeks and months ahead.

The opening chapter of Matthew's gospel is instructive in this regard, in that both through the genealogy of Jesus (vv.1-17) and also in the narrative relating to Joseph (vv.18-25), some key 'markers' are put down for us which will serve us well in terms of recognising what 'the good way' is in which we find rest. (Indeed, it's worth noting that the great exhortation which Jesus gave – *"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest"* [words reported only by Matthew, see [Matt.11.28](#)] – almost certainly owes its origin to that verse from Jeremiah 6.)

Matthew, of course, was writing his record with a distinctly Jewish constituency in view. It's that which explains the very considerable number of quotations from the Old Testament, for instance (he was wanting to draw the lines of connection between the promise of the Old Testament and the fulfilment of that promise in the ministry of Jesus). And it's that, too, which explains the fact that he starts his record with a genealogy. Not perhaps how you would have started your gospel account – but to Jews it would not have seemed either odd or irrelevant: anything but!

The genealogy serves to underline that the coming of Jesus is part of the great, eternal purpose of God, promised long since, and sovereignly brought to completion in a remarkably ordered way through the seeming 'disorder' of history, and fulfilled despite the sin and stubborn defiance of those who were called to be His people. The genealogy serves also, therefore, to underline that *grace* lies at the heart of the gospel.

How are we to respond to the purpose of God in Jesus Christ? That's what the second part of the chapter sets out (vv.18-25) in the example of faith displayed by this young carpenter from Nazareth named Joseph. His response suggests how we best respond: and in considering what factors prompted Joseph to respond as he did, we're given to see what the priorities in our own lives should be as we seek at the start of a new year to enter into the purpose of God. Start with **'days' (2), (4) and (6)**.

## 1) Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January – the purpose of God

Read [Matthew 1.1-6](#)

“.. *This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah ..*” (Matt.1.1)

Happy New Year! Genealogies may not grab your attention, but they’re a reminder that God works in the long-term, down through the generations of history. A stunning promise to Abraham. A sovereign purpose in history. A glorious gift to humanity.

Why does Matthew start his gospel by tracing Jesus’ ancestry, humanly speaking back to Abraham?

What lessons can you learn from these verses about the dealings of God with His people?

**Prayer:** *On this first day of a new year I praise You, Lord, for Your matchless wisdom and knowledge – how unsearchable Your judgments, Your paths beyond tracing out!*

## 2) Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January – the gospel of grace

Read [Matthew 1.6-11](#)

“.. *David was the father of Solomon whose mother had been Uriah’s wife ..*” (Matt.1.6)

Our sin can’t thwart the merciful plan of God! While never condoning our sin, such is the grace of our God in Christ that He works *all* things, including our sin, together for good as He brings His plan to pass. Where sin increased grace increased all the more!

Why do you think Matthew draws attention to the sin of David at the start of this section (v.6) and the shame of the exile at the end (v.11)?

Is it fair to suggest that the sin of David led to the experience of the exile?

If God can take our sin and use even that for good, what keeps us from a casual attitude towards sin?

In what ways can you testify to the way in which, in your own life, the Lord has turned even your sin for good?

**Prayer:** *What riches of kindness You lavish on us, Your blood the payment, Your life the cost. ‘Neath a debt we could never afford, our sins they are many, Your mercy is more!*

## 3) Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January – the privilege of service

Read [Matthew 1.12-17](#)

“.. *and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah ..*” (Matt.1.16)

Mainly this is just a list of names. People you know little or nothing about. Ordinary individuals, most of whom never made the headlines. In our celebrity culture it’s worth remembering that the spotlight falls on the Saviour. We get to be His servants.

Who have been the ordinary, unheralded people whom the Lord has used in your life to bring you to a living and deepening faith in Jesus?

What lessons can you learn from Matthew's drawing attention to the fourteen generations between Abraham, David, the exile, and the Messiah?

*Prayer: Keep me from seeking the attention and acclaim of others, Lord. As an unworthy servant, may I be satisfied always simply knowing that I do Your will.*

#### **4) Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> January – the activity of the Spirit**

Read [Matthew 1.18-19](#)

*".. she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit .."* (Matt.1.18)

God by His Spirit is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or think! Don't limit the Lord by what you think He can do, for with Him nothing is impossible. Hold fast to His Word, but be full of the Spirit as well, expecting the unexpected as He works.

What instances have you known of the Holy Spirit prompting you clearly to take some action which others perhaps thought crazy?

Paul exhorts believers to *'be filled with the Spirit'* ([Eph.5.18](#)): how can you ensure that day by day you are thus 'filled with the Spirit'?

How does God speak to His people, and how have you been aware of His speaking to you?

How do you avoid this being a highly subjective experience?

What will 'faithfulness to the law' look like in your life, and how will you avoid it becoming a sort of 'legalism'?

*Prayer: Help me to serve You, Lord, not by any might or power other than that of Your Spirit: flow through this land 'til everyone praises Your Name once more.*

#### **5) Friday 5<sup>th</sup> January – the calling of believers**

Read [Matthew 1.20-21](#)

*".. you are to give Him the name Jesus .."* (Matt.1.21)

The commission which Joseph was given was simple and clear: and the basic, constant paradigm for all who are believers. Be bold. Do God's will (however counter-cultural that may seem to be). And bear witness to Jesus, as the one who alone can save.

As you ponder God's word today, in what areas of your life do you sense Him challenging you not to be afraid but to be more bold?

Are the opportunities for you to commend Jesus as our only Saviour something for which you might pray daily?

**Prayer:** *You call me to declare Your praises, Lord: and You empower me by Your Spirit to bear witness to You. Grant me daily grace, and daily opportunity, to do so.*

## 6) Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> January – the faithfulness of God

Read [Matthew 1.22-23](#)

*“.. all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet ..”* (Matt.1.22)

The Lord’s way of working involves Him ever flagging up in advance what He’s going to do (without Him ever spoiling the element of surprise!), so that when what He’s promised takes place it will always be clear that this wasn’t chance but His doing.

Read [Isaiah 43.12](#): what does this teach you about the way God chooses to work? Why does He work in this way?

In what ways does the fact that the prophecy of Isaiah about Jesus was given hundreds of years before He was born strengthen your hand when commending Jesus to others?

Why do you think that Matthew makes it clear from the start that the child to be born, the son to be given, was both ‘Immanuel’ and ‘Jesus’?

In what ways are you able to bear witness to a promise of God which has been fulfilled in your life?

**Prayer:** *Great is Your faithfulness, O God my Father! There is no shadow of turning in Thee! All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!*

## 7) Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January – the obedience of faith

Read [Matthew 1.24-25](#)

*“.. he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him ..”* (Matt.1.24)

The simplicity of the story is stunning. Joseph takes God at His word and does what the Lord has told him to do. No argument. No fuss. Just simple, straight obedience in line with the word and the law of God. The obedience of faith – learn to live that life!

What has the Lord been speaking to you about and telling you to do?

What action might you take today as an expression of your worship on this first Sunday of a new year, to demonstrate your resolve to obey the Lord?

**Prayer:** *King of kings, Majesty, how glad I am to bow before Your throne today and offer up my body again as a living sacrifice: here I am, ready to do Your will!*