



Lesson 27 / November 12, 2017

## JESUS' BIRTH

Matthew 1-2

### Key Verse

“But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’”

Matthew 1:20-21

### Discussion Questions

1. Read the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17. What names and stories do you recognize from the Old Testament?
2. Why do you suppose Matthew includes some unexpected people like Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Uriah's wife? Can you find their stories in the Old Testament?
3. What does the name “Christ” mean? Why is it significant that Matthew applies this name to Jesus?
4. What makes Jesus' conception and birth unusual?
5. Why did Jesus have to be born in such an unusual way?
6. Read Matthew 1-2. How many references can you find to the Old Testament, whether they be direct quotations or subtle allusions?
7. Why would Matthew go to such lengths to connect Jesus to the Old Testament?
8. Do you believe Jesus is the Christ?
9. If Matthew's presentation of Jesus is correct, how should we respond?

### Question 53: How was Jesus born?

Short Answer: *Jesus was born of the virgin Mary.*

Full Answer: *Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, having been miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that he would be our Immanuel, God with us.*

### Question 54: Who is Jesus Christ?

Short Answer: *He is Jesus, who saves us from our sins, and he is the Christ, our Messiah who reigns over us as king.*

Full Answer: *He is Jesus, who saves us from our sins, and he is the Christ, our Messiah who reigns over us as king, and he fulfills all of God's promises to us in the Old Testament.*

## Summary

Do you ever listen to classical music? The greatest composers can weave together themes in a brilliant way that stirs our deepest emotions. For example Tchaikovsky's Symphony Number Four develops themes and builds anticipation through the first three movements, until suddenly the soft stillness of the third movement is interrupted by a startling explosion of sound as the fourth and final movement begins with the entire symphony playing at full volume. If you're not prepared for it, the finale will make you jump in your seat!

When we turn the page in our Bible to the New Testament, we are effectively entering the grand finale. The various themes that have been introduced throughout the Old Testament and the 400 years of silence following Malachi have built great anticipation until the glorious moment when Jesus bursts on the scene.

The first four books of the New Testament are called the "gospels" because they proclaim the good news about Jesus by telling the story of his life, death, and resurrection. The gospel of Matthew appropriately comes first among the gospels, for Matthew pays special attention to the Old Testament and he demonstrates how Old Testament themes weave their way throughout the story of Jesus. As you read Matthew, watch for many direct quotations (there are at least 55 of them!) and countless subtle references to the Old Testament lessons we have already considered.

The first chapter of Matthew introduces us to the person of Jesus by defining three of his names: he is Christ, Jesus, and Immanuel.

First, Matthew shows us that Jesus is the Christ by tracing Jesus' lineage through a "genealogy" (= *genesis* in Greek) that effectively summarizes the entire history of the Old Testament (Matt 1:1-17). The word "Christ" is not merely a second name for Jesus, but it is a very important title connected to the Old Testament. *Christ* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah* that means an "anointed one," and especially one anointed by God as king.

In the Old Testament, God promised to one day send his Messiah who would fulfill God's promises and reign over God's people as their king (i.e. Psalm 2:2; lesson 17). Thus, in the genealogy, Matthew shows that Jesus fulfills God's promises of blessing to and through Abraham (see lesson 6), he fulfills God's promise to David of an eternal king (see lesson 14), and he fulfills God's promises through the prophets to bring restoration and a new covenant to

exiles (see lessons 15 and 20-22). Therefore, Matthew concludes, Jesus is the long-awaited Christ.

Next, Matthew shows us the significance of the name Jesus by telling the story of Jesus' miraculous conception and birth (Matt 1: 18-21). A young virgin named Mary conceives a child not by natural relations with a man but by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Her fiancé, Joseph, is rightfully alarmed to discover Mary is pregnant, but an angel intervenes and provides an explanation. This miraculous conception fits the nature of the son to be born, for he will save his people from their sins. Therefore, the angel says, this son shall have the Greek name Jesus, from the Hebrew name Joshua (see lesson 13), which means "the LORD saves."

Third, Matthew says in 1:22-23 that all of these things happened in fulfillment of the words of Isaiah the prophet, who promised the child would be born of a virgin and would be called Immanuel (Isa 7:14). The word "Immanuel" is Hebrew for "God with us." When Jesus comes into the world, God comes into the world; when Jesus is with us, God is with us. In Jesus, we receive the covenant promise that the LORD will be our God and we will be his people, and he will dwell among us.

Have you been tracking all the Old Testament names and themes that appear just in the first chapter of Matthew? If you read the genealogy closely, you will find even more familiar names. If you read the story of Jesus' childhood in Matthew 2, you will find references to the prophets Micah, Hosea, and Jeremiah, as well as a story of Jesus fleeing into Egypt that reminds us of Joseph (lesson 7) and a story of Jesus departing Egypt that reminds us of Moses and the exodus (lesson 8). It is as if the entire Old Testament converges in the one person of Jesus Christ.

Matthew shows us that God is the greatest composer and director of them all. He has written a symphony on the pages of Scripture, and when God directs Jesus into the world, all the Old Testament stories and promises simultaneously burst forth with the resounding notes indicating the finale has begun. Here is God's most triumphant hour, when he sends Jesus as Christ and Immanuel to save us from our sins and to reign as our king, for he is God with us. May this stir our hearts, lifting us out of our seats in praise of our God and humbling us to our knees in surrender to our king.