

# The Christmas Story as told by Matthew

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Date: 22 December 2013

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[ 0 : 00 ] So, God is telling us the story of Messiah's birth and we read Matthew's Gospel, chapter 1, verses 1-17, and we had a picture of the generations coming down like this.

I think it's giving the legal family tree of Jesus because it says, Jacob, the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, who is the husband of Mary.

So, it's the legal, the adoptive family that he's born into. I think that's what it's doing here. So, let's look back because Matthew says there are some really important people and he divides up his genealogy into a scheme of 14 plus 14 plus 14.

And he goes back to this person. Anybody tell us who the person right at the back, the far end of the genealogy is? Abraham. Abraham. Abraham. Yeah, Abraham.

Woo! Space. And, I mean, lots of things you could say about Abraham. But, let's just pick on one particular thing about him.

[ 1 : 19 ] He's the man that God used to start off the whole thing of the nation of Israel. And he did it by making him a promise.

A really spectacular promise. And the thing about Abraham was that he, well, he did something with this promise, which is you, which I've put up there, F something something TH.

So, I've picked out one sort of bullet point about Abraham. He was the man of faith. The man of faith. So, Matthew's saying, let's think about Jesus.

Let's think about the things that lead up to him. His family tree is important. This is the sort of group that he was born into. And right at the beginning of it, it says these are people to be marked by faith. If we're to belong to this group of people, we're to be people of faith. And I offer that as an important thing. We're to live lives trusting God.

[ 2 : 24 ] And then he picks out another person. 14 on. Beginning with D. Anybody like to give us this person?

David. Yeah. So, he's there in verse 6. Jesse, the father of David. David, the father of Solomon. And so on. So, I thought just pick out one thing here that's important about David. Because there are, if you think of the Old Testament like a mountain range.

There are some mountains that stick up higher than others. And Abraham is like a mountain on the horizon because he's the man of faith. And David is another mountain on the horizon because he's something, K, I, something, something.

Angel. Well, no, angel isn't the answer to this one. This is David. Oh, NG. Oh, sorry. I thought it said angel. NG, NG.

[ 3 : 32 ] Well, thank you. I do apologise. Yeah, that's a great answer. A king. He's a king with a kingdom. So, that's the important thing about Jesus.

He's born into a royal family. We're talking about authority. We're talking about a group of people who do what the king says. And then he gives us another 14.

And he says that part of the experience of the people that Jesus was born into was this, of exile.

There were people who deserved the punishment of God and were sent away because of that.

And God brought them back. And God brought them back and kept his promises. And that's part of the story of Jesus. That there's such a thing as deserving punishment.

There's such a thing as promises that bring people back. Promises that bring people back. And Zach, please, could you come and read us the next section.

[ 4 : 43 ] So, let's look at what Zach kindly read to us. A bit about dreams comes up. And about names.

So, this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. Verse 18. His mother, Mary, was pledged to be married to Joseph. But before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

So, he's a bit perplexed about that. Joseph, her husband, was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace. And he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. So, all I've got is a little dreaming bubble there. And this is what he's told.

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.

[ 5 : 49 ] So, let's think about that name Jesus. Sometimes people are quite keen on saying that Jesus has a Hebrew name Yeshua. Well, that is the Hebrew equivalent.

Although, in the New Testament it's Yesu. We say Jesus. Yeshua is very similar to the name Joshua. Of course, Joshua is an Old Testament person, isn't he?

Lots of Joshua's in the Bible. And it has a meaning. It means something like God saves or he saves. So, the name of the child is important.

And the angel says this is to be his name. This is to be the words that you connect to his identity. That he saves or God saves through him.

So, that's an important feature. And we're told something about who he saves and what he saves from.

[ 6 : 51 ] Anybody like to tell us? It's in verse 21. Save his people. And what does he save from?

From their sins. From their sins. So, I don't think that's insignificant.

I think that is significant. He's to save his people. The question, are you one of his people? And he saves his people not from poverty.

Not from ill health. Necessarily. But in particular, from their sins. He's a saviour to save us from our sins.

Of course, that poses the question, do you think that's a problem? Do you think you are a sinner? And then if you do think you are a sinner, here's the wonderful remedy for that.

[ 8 : 02 ] Here's Jesus, who's come, especially, to save his people from their sins. So, let's take that on a little bit further. One of Matthew's favourite things to do is to quote the Old Testament.

And to say, this Jesus hasn't appeared from nowhere. With no introduction. So many of the things that he does are referenced in the Old Testament.

And are fulfilled in him. So, in verse 22 it says, All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet. That's the prophet Isaiah.

The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son. And they will call him Emmanuel. Which means God with us. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded.

He took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. So, there is the scroll of Isaiah. And in it it says, it gives the name Emmanuel.

[ 9 : 14 ] The child will be called Emmanuel. Which means, God with us. And, I don't know why I chose that word to ask you to fill in the blanks.

But let's do it. So, the book of Isaiah is fulfilled. Fulfilled. So, Jesus comes in fulfilment.

To fill up the promises that God has made through the Old Testament. I know some of you are reading through the Old Testament. And you might find it a bit of a struggle.

But here's an encouragement. All the Old Testament speaks about Jesus Christ. There's a place where one of Jesus' disciples said, We found the one whom the law and the prophets testify about. And the purpose of the Old Testament is to tell us in advance about Jesus. So, if you're reading through the Old Testament, Jesus is there. He might not be quite where you expect him to be.

[ 10 : 16 ] But he's there. And if you seek, you'll find him. He's the fulfilment of the Old Testament. Now, where have we got to?

Lost my place. Lost my place. Please could Brenda come and read us in Matthew chapter 2, verses 1 to 12.

And then please be seated. So, let's look together at this little section here. There's a lot going on in this section.

So, we begin with these.

After Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judea, in the time of King Herod, magi, big men, wise men, perhaps kings, important people, doesn't tell us how many.

[ 11 : 19 ] So, I've deliberately drawn four of them. Yeah, I am. And so, let's pick out one point here.

One perhaps significant point. So, I've got something there. St. St. St. Two more letters. A and R. St. St. something quite remarkable there.

Somebody who has their own personal star. There are prophecies about that, but I suppose these people from the East, of course, they're not Jews. They don't have the Jewish scriptures.

They wouldn't have known the prophecies, but they would have known from their own, presumably their own magical background, that they were expecting somebody important, connected with this star.

So, on they go. And they make their way to Jerusalem, the king of the Jews, they're looking to see. Now, I have a feeling that Herod might have been a little bit taken aback by somebody coming and saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews?

[13:03] Because he might say, well, you've already got a king. It's me. What a perfectly good king. Well, he wasn't a perfectly good king, but he might have been thinking that. And I think he would have been a bit irritated by them saying, we've come to worship the king of the Jews.

Well, that's me. Well, so there they come, earnestly asking the king, where is the king of the Jews? King Herod heard this. He was disturbed. Let's make him disturbed. So, he's disturbed.

And all Jerusalem with him. What does he do next to find out about the king of the Jews? What does he do next? Yet, he calls together the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he asks them, so where is the king of the Jews, the Christ, to be born?

And where do they go to get the answer? Scripture. Scripture.

[14:24] So, it's interesting, isn't it, that God provides this star to get them so far, but in order to focus more exactly, they need Scripture.

So, things at least work together, and I think I would like to claim that Scripture is the key. And I think it's like that with people.

You find that people come inquiring about Jesus Christ, perhaps motivated by a problem in their lives, or some feeling that they have, or maybe even a dream, or a vision, but in order to focus in on the real Jesus, you can't do it without Scripture, and you come to the Bible.

So, here are the people with the Scriptures, pointing to the Scriptures, saying, this is where it says, You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

So, off they go southwards, from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. And in the meantime, Herod calls the Magi secretly to find out more details, and he says, Go and make a careful search for the child, as soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

[15:50] Do you believe him? No. No. No. He's trying to have them on, isn't he? He doesn't want to worship the child.

He wants to kill the child. So, let's send them on to Bethlehem. Camel. Bethlehem.

And that little bit doesn't come in yet. So, they bring to the Christ, as it says, something beginning with T-R, and something beginning with W-O-W.

Oh, I gave it away, didn't I? W something R. Right. Forget what I just said. What's the first word? Treasure. Treasure. They bring their treasure. And it includes, it says, they opened their treasures, and presented to him with gifts of gold, and of incense, and of myrrh.

So, at least those three gifts. I think that's why people say there were three wise men, but it could have been much more than that. So, they brought their treasure, they brought costly gifts, to the baby, and they bowed down, and then that's where the next word comes in.

[17:13] Worship. So, it's very significant that Matthew's Gospel begins with these foreign kings, brought specially by God, whatever size group it was, to worship Christ, and foreign kings bowed down to him, even as a baby.

But it doesn't stop being complicated. Because in verse 12, having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they return to their country by another route.

So, they're given a vision that says, don't go back to Jerusalem, as he asked you to, but just sneak off by another route. And that's what they did. Let's sing number 387.

This is in chapter 2 from verse 13. So, the child has been born.

It doesn't, although the hymn and perhaps Christmas cards ask us to envisage the shepherds and the wise men all being there at the same time, it doesn't actually say that.

[18:39] So, maybe they weren't there at the same time. There is a timing thing because Herod wants to kill children of two years old and under.

So, that gives quite a wide range over which these events might have taken place. So, Joseph is warned in a dream to escape to Egypt.

When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt and stay there until I tell you for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.

So, Herod is sending his men to kill the babies. Don't get that on Christmas cards very often. It is part of the story. And so, it is a very upsetting part of the story.

This slaughter of the children. Little bit like what Pharaoh did to Israel back in the days of Egypt. Except this is the wrong way round because it's the king of Israel who's supposed to be protecting his people actually turns into their biggest enemy.

[ 19 : 43 ] So, there is this killing of baby boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, two years old and under. And, this too, Matthew says, it's fulfillment of prophecy.

Those tears are tears that were foretold. And actually, if you look in the foretelling, the tears are what happens before the sun begins to shine.

The, the prophecy is saying, you know, here's the, the weeping, but the tears will be wiped away and good things will happen.

That's where the prophecy is going. But it's an unpleasant incident. So, he took, so he got up and took the child and his mother and left for Egypt where he stayed until the death of Herod.

And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet, out of Egypt I called my son. So, they went to Egypt and then they come back out of Egypt. And, Matthew says, this is a fulfillment too.

[ 20 : 55 ] Because if you think about it, part of the history of Israel was that they went into Egypt and then they came out from Egypt and out of Egypt I called my son, says the prophet.

And, Matthew says, well this is the same thing, only, if you like, bigger and better. It's that sort of fulfillment. It's a taking of a pattern in the Old Testament and saying, here it is again in Jesus.

Out of Egypt I called my son and the same thing happens with Jesus. He gets called out of Egypt.

And, verse 19, when Herod died an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in Egypt and said, go back, get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who are trying to take the child's life are dead.

So, back they come but more specifically they're told, in there, there's a baby in a basket here, the baby's a bit older. They're told not to go to the Bethlehem area.

Having been warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. So, Galilee's up north, so go up north. And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth in the Galilee area.

[ 22 : 23 ] I don't know whether Nazareth is actually anywhere near sea but I'll put a little bit of sea that you could look, that you could, you could view. And then, Matthew says, this too is fulfillment.

He will be called a Nazarene. And people have puzzled down through the centuries what it is that Matthew is thinking of was fulfilled because I don't think there is a verse which says he will be called a Nazarene.

Sometimes, the New Testament writers pull together a lot of ideas and put them into one sentence and say, this is the fulfillment of this. There is, in the Old Testament, the promise that the one to come will be called a branch.

He will branch out. He will be like the little stem that when you put it in a dry ground it begins to come up and form a new plant.

There is prophecies about the royal family being cut back and the stem, the root, the stem of David popping up again.

[ 23 : 31 ] And, interestingly, the Hebrew word for the branch is a Nazarene. And maybe he will be called a Nazarene. Maybe that is what Matthew has in mind. He will be Mr. Branch, Mr. Branchman.

Or he could be thinking about Nazareth, which is really out of the way. It was up north, beyond Hull and Grimsby. It was, it says, he withdrew to that place.

It's a rather obscure place. And there's lots of ideas in the Old Testament about the Messiah coming from an obscure situation, somewhere unknown, somewhere where it's hidden, like an arrow hidden in the hand, ready for work at some point.

And maybe that's what Matthew has in mind. But here's the end of this bit of the story. And so was fulfilled what was said through the prophets. He will be called a Nazarene.

Well, let's try and bring that all together. chapter. So what lessons can we learn? So here's the first one, that Jesus' birth fulfilled scripture.

[ 24 : 45 ] So, difficult to get that on a Christmas card because it's saying there's centuries and centuries and loads and loads of streams of understanding and prophecy and patterns and it's all fulfilled in Jesus Christ which makes him such a great and brilliant and rich person.

Jesus' birth is in fulfillment of scripture. He also fulfills Israel. He's, in him is the fulfillment of his nation.

You get that in the genealogy. So he's the from the Jews, salvation is from the Jews. That from them is the Christ who is God over all blessed forever.

So he's not only the fulfillment of prophecies but he's the fulfillment of his nation. And even, you notice in the geography, what Israel did going into Egypt and coming out of Egypt, Jesus re- relives, if you like.

he re- he recapitulates, he goes over again, he embodies the, his nation.

[ 26 : 03 ] He is, if you like, Israel. He is what God had in mind all the time which is a rather wonderful thing to say. We can also say that Jesus is not an ordinary human being.

He is a human being but he's not an ordinary human being. His birth was from God, from the Holy Spirit. He was born supernaturally without a human father, with a human mother but without a human father, without a human biological father.

He had a human legal father so he's fully adopted into his adoptive family, hence the genealogy which places him in the royal family.

so we know those things about Jesus. We're also told explicitly that he came to save his people from their sins.

That's what he came to do, to save us from our sins. That's grace isn't it? It's God saving us.

[ 27 : 09 ] We deserve judgment. We deserve to be sent into exile ourselves but the saviour comes to take people who are unworthy, people who are sinful, people who have failed and to take those people and redeem them and rescue them and save them.

He came to save his people from their sins. We also see that he began receiving the worship of international people, indeed international kings.

And in that, of course, that wasn't the only time he did that. That's what he does now. He continues to be the person whom God says, come and worship him.

Come and worship him from all nations. Come and worship him from Saudi Arabia. Come and worship him from Germany. Come and worship him from China. Come and worship at the feet of Jesus Christ.

He began to do that and he continues to do that. We also learn something perhaps less palatable, that right at the beginning he experienced opposition and threat.

[ 28 : 32 ] That was part of his life almost from the word go. They were trying to kill him even then. And that shadow hangs over his life all the way through, doesn't it? Sometimes the shadow recedes, sometimes a bit closer, and in the end it engulfs him.

That he came under threat and he died under threat. He died under unjust condemnation. They were out to get him and he gave his life.

I suppose his enemies might have thought that they'd won, but we know that in that very moment as he died on the cross. That's his greatest triumph. That's how he saves us from our sins, by his death on the cross.

And we also see something of the manner of his life. Even then he lived in Nazareth. He lived up north. And that's the sort of person he continued to be.

He didn't make a big fuss about himself. himself. He didn't shout from the rooftops. A bruised reed he didn't break. A smoking candle he didn't extinguish.

[ 29 : 44 ] There was something remarkably humble about Jesus. Remarkably selfless about him. He lived in obscurity and humility.

And those things I think we can read off the story without too much difficulty. And that's the way God tells us the story of the coming of Jesus.

That's the way God tells us the story. And I've got three things to ask in our response. Number one is trust. So this is the story of somebody who is trustworthy.

This is the story of somebody who is a saviour. And the response to somebody who is a saviour is to put our trust in him.

So if you imagine that you are drowning at sea and they send a helicopter to rescue you and they drop down the line and there's a winchman at the end of it and he holds out his hand and he says

hang on to me I'll save you.

[ 30 : 55 ] And there is a moment there where you decide whether you're going to trust him or whether you're going to say it's alright mate I'll manage. Don't worry about me.

I can make it on my own. So call whether you're going to do that or whether you're going to say thank you so much you are just what I need. Grab me because I need to be rescued from here. And that is the response of trust. And I want to ask you whether you are prepared to put your trust in Jesus Christ. trust and whether you are prepared to live trusting him.

You might say well actually I can look back in my life and found when I've prayed he has been trustworthy. And I want to say the Christian life is lived by trusting.

It's lived in faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. So that's the first question of trust. Second question of worship.

[ 32 : 03 ] In this story is the worship of the wise men. It's an important part of it. They had the right attitude to the king.

Where is the king? We've come to worship him. Herod of course had the wrong attitude and he tried to kill him. And I want to ask you this morning about your response of worship.

I want to ask you about your response of worship. And I want to put it in terms of a costly laying at his feet precious things.

And I want to say that is the way to respond to the king. To lay if I may say the most precious things we have at his feet.

And I don't want to say that lightly or tritely because that's a lot to do. To take what is most precious to us and lay it at his feet.

[ 33 : 15 ] And what might be most precious? I don't know. We're all different, aren't we? It might be money. You might have got money and you think I'm going to hang on to this. and Jesus says, well I'd like you to lay that at my feet actually.

It might be your hopes for the future and you say, well I'll tell you what, I've really got my heart set on such and such. And Jesus says, well I'm okay, but I want you to lay that at my feet.

Or it might be a relationship that you know, your whole life is, that's your life, that's what you're, and he says, actually I come first.

I want you to lay that at my feet. And as we lay things at his feet, it doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus says, okay, right, got that, and sort of takes them away.

It may be that the Lord says, well now you've laid it at my feet, I'll give that back to you again. But it is important that we lay it at his feet. It's important that we lay it at his feet.

[ 34 : 20 ] So there's a question about worship there. And my third thing is about walk. Because this Jesus is the Jesus who is alive.

This Jesus is the Jesus who is the saviour. This Jesus is the Jesus who commands us to walk with him.

he says walk with me. And walking with Jesus includes things like coming into places where we experience opposition and threat.

We don't always get everybody's approval. And Jesus says, well I never did. Aren't you walking with me? Never promised you anything other than this.

If they rejected me they'll reject you. You have to be prepared for that. About walking with him. And walking with him in humility and perhaps even in obscurity.

[ 35 : 31 ] Jesus said let me just get my sentence right here. Paul puts it this way.

Here's Jesus who being in very nature God did not count equality with God something to be hung on to at all costs but was prepared to relinquish that and to serve and to be humble.

And Paul says that's the mindset that Jesus had and that's the mindset that Christians need to have. That's the mindset that Christians need to have to let go of the claim to fame the claim to be centre of the world everything fits around me to let go of that and to walk selflessly serving others looking upon their concerns and their interests as much as one's own.

That's what he says. So I want to put those three words trust will you decide to live by faith?

Will you even now I'm going to live by faith? Will you be a worshipper of Jesus laying everything at his feet even though that's a costly thing and will you be prepared to walk with him taking the steps that he leads you through going at his speed going where he leads will you walk with the saviour?

[ 37 : 17 ] Let's close by singing number 484