Matthew

Chapter 1

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MATTHEW
CHAPTER 1

The traditional title "Gospel of Matthew" has its origin from the earliest part of the Christian era. Before the middle of the second century we find the name gospel already given to the accounts of the life of Jesus. Justin Martyr wrote: "The apostles, in the memoirs made by them, which are called Gospels."

The Word Gospel

The word *gospel* went through a number of stages in the history of its usage. In the older Greek authors such as Homer it meant a "reward for bringing good tidings." It was also used to speak of a thank offering for good-tidings brought.

In later Greek the word gospel came to mean "the good news itself" (2 Samuel 18:20, 22, 25 in the Septuagint). In 2 Samuel 9:10 the term is used in its earliest sense as a reward for bringing the good news.

The sense that gospel means the "good news of God" or the "message of salvation that Christ brings" is found in various places in Matthew (4:23; 24:14; 26:13).

Eventually the term came to denote the books in which the good news about Jesus was presented. In the titles of the gospels the word retains the sense of "good news."

The earliest manuscripts of Matthew (*Codex Vaticanus*, *Codex Sinaiticus*) have the title, "According to Matthew," where the word *gospel* is implied. Later manuscripts read "Gospel according to Matthew." However, to call it the "Gospel according to Saint Matthew" is not correct as John Broadus notes:

> To say "Saint Matthew," a practice which the many persons retain from Romanist usage, is useless if not improper. No one thinks it irreverent to speak of Moses or Isaiah without any such prefix (Broadus, p. 1).

Hence the title would have the idea of "the good news written by Matthew."

The English word "Gospel" has its derivation from *God* and *spell* meaning "the message of God."

Matthew's Introduction To Jesus

Jesus' public ministry begins at 4:17. In the preceding chapters Matthew introduces Jesus to his readers by answering such questions as: "Who is He?" "How did Jesus enter this world?" and "Where does He ultimately come from?"

The first two chapters explain Jesus' origin while 3:1-4:16 outlines His preparation before He begins His public ministry. The goal of these chapters is to provide Scriptural proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament. Craig Keener notes that Matthew's introduction of Jesus was typical of ancient biographies:

> Ancient biographies could open with the subject's public vocation, as in Mark, but often began by rehearsing the background of the central character. Such background might include a noble or

prominent ancestry (Mt. 1:1-17), virtuous parents (1:18-25), childhood background that introduces themes relevant to the subject's later public activity (2:1-23), the attestation of others to the person's character (3:1-17), including that of the person's adherents (4:18-25), and qualifying tests through which the person's character was proved (4:1-11). Such introductory comments set the tone for the whole of the work that would follow (Keener, p. 51).

Fulfillment

Matthew's main concern is to show that Jesus is the One whom the Law and the Prophets wrote about—that their ultimate fulfillment was in Him. Therefore, six times in these opening chapters Matthew writes the formula, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" or something similar to that phrase.

The quotations Matthew cites do not relate so much to specific things which Jesus did - they refer to more general characteristics about Him. These include: His name given before His birth (1:22-23), the city in which He was born (2:5-6), His childhood (2:15,17-18,23), and His ministry (4:14-16). The basic framework of Jesus' preparation for the ministry corresponds to the pattern laid down in the Old Testament. Jesus is the true Israel.

Son of God

A second theme that runs through Matthew's introduction to Jesus' ministry is that Jesus is the Son of God. This theme will continue to run throughout the entire Gospel. Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:18,20) and is Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23). His identity as the Son of God is *the* central theme of His testing by the devil (4:1-12).

Thus when the reader comes to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (4:17) he understands who Jesus is - not just a preacher of God's message, or a great prophet, but that He is the Messiah, and that the entire Old Testament looked forward to His coming. Above all this, Jesus is actually God Himself who became a man.

As we have mentioned, Matthew's style of writing goes directly to the point. He gives us only the basic facts of Jesus' birth, the visit of the Magi, and the geographical movements of His family. The references are for a specific purpose - to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament history and prophecy.

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS (1:1-17) [Luke 3:23-38]

A genealogy may seem to us as a strange way to begin a book, but it was very important to the Jews. When the Old Testament is studied it becomes obvious that genealogies were vital to them.

After the children of Israel conquered the Promised Land, it was importance to determine their place of residency. God had already allocated certain land for each tribe, family and each father's house (Numbers 26:52-56; 33:54). If a person settled in a territory other than which they were supposed to they could be called a deserter (Judges 12:4). When property was transferred, under certain circumstances, it was essential that one could establish their genealogy (Ruth 3:9, 12, 13; 4:1-10).

In the kingdom of Judah only those descendants of King David could ascend to the throne (1 Kings 11:36; 15:4).

After the nation returned from the Babylonian captivity anyone who claimed to be a priest had to prove his priestly descent. If not, they were not allowed to hold office.
These searched among their ancestral registration, but they could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood (Ezra 2:62).

To summarize, genealogical material is found in the following chapters in the Old Testament: Genesis 5,10, 11, 22, 25, 29, 30, 35, 46; Exodus 6; Numbers 1, 2, 7, 10, 13, 26, 34; Joshua 7, 13; Ruth 4; 1 Samuel 1, 14; 2 Samuel 3, 5, 23; 1 Kings 4; 1 Chronicles 1-9, 11, 12, 15, 23-37; 2 Chronicles 23, 29; Ezra 2, 7, 8, 10; Nehemiah 3, 7, 10, 11, 12.

All this shows that the genealogies were very significant to the Jews during the Old Testament period. They reminded the people that God was in control of the arrangement of marriages and the children produced from these marriages. Sometimes the genealogy explained why an individual behaved a certain way (e.g. Moses descended from lawbreakers like Reuben and Simeon).

They were also very meaningful to the people living in Jesus' day. The genealogical records, which were maintained by the Sanhedrin, were used by the people to guarantee purity of descent. The first century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus began his autobiography by listing his genealogy. The rabbi Hillel could trace his ancestry all the way back to King David. Herod the Great, who was half Jew and half Edomite, so embarrassed by the fact that his name was not in the official genealogies, ordered their destruction. This, he concluded, would mean that no one could claim a superior pedigree than him!

The fact that Matthew could trace the genealogy of Jesus back to Abraham would have been very important to the Jews. Matthew, writing mainly to Jewish Christians, begins his gospel with Jesus' genealogy to present Him as the Messiah—the Son of David. The genealogy he records does the following:

1.   It establishes Jesus as the long-awaited greater Son of David—the Messiah—by emphasizing the place of David in the genealogy. It was through David that the Messianic king would come (2 Samuel 7:16).

2.   The genealogy also established the link between Jesus with Abraham—the one to whom the promises were originally given. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that in one of the descendants of Abraham the entire world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3).

3.   Matthew traces Jesus' descent from the royal line of Judah showing that Jesus is the rightful "King of the Jews."

4.   Matthew records certain unusual features in the royal line. This sets the stage for Jesus' own unique birth.

5.   The history of the Jewish people is organized into three groups of fourteen generations. Each group marks a pivotal time in the history of the chosen people. At the end of each group of fourteen names, *some important event took place*. The birth of Jesus is that important event in the last list of fourteen. This shows that everything that had previously happened in their history was looking forward to His coming. These three groups, therefore, represent the three great turning points of Israel's history.

Therefore the genealogy is a vital part of Matthew's introduction to the character and mission of Jesus. We should also note that the genealogies in Matthew and Luke are the *only* two existing Messianic genealogies. None other exists.

The references in Matthew and Luke are not the only New Testament references to genealogies (1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9).

The plan of the genealogy is obviously selective, carefully arranged into three groups of fourteen names. It is designed to make three names stand out Abraham, David, and Jesus.

Matt. 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The book of the genealogy or "The book of the history," or "The book of the origin." This contains an allusion to the phrase used in Genesis 2:4; and 5:1 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament). It is translated there as "the book of genealogy of" or "the record of the history of" or something like that.

On these two occasions in Genesis, the phrase does not merely introduce a genealogy; it also mentions both the process of the creation of the universe and the creation of man. It is therefore possible that Matthew begins his gospel with this phrase as a deliberate reference to Jesus - the One who introduces a new era for both mankind and the world.

Furthermore, there is evidence that the word *geneseos* "genesis" (translated here as genealogy) was already used as the title of the Book of Genesis in the Septuagint. Matthew may well have used it as a title of his book in which he would write about the new genesis - the new beginning brought about by Jesus Christ.

One question that arises is, "How do we understand the phrase, "The book of the genealogy?" What does it refer to? Five solutions have been offered:

(1)   It is the heading for entire gospel. Thus it means the, "book of the history of Jesus Christ." The word translated "book" is *Biblos* - the normal Greek word for book. This word was later used to specifically refer to a "sacred book." It is argued that this makes it unlikely it would be used of a short section. Therefore, from the first word, Matthew's gospel is presented almost as Holy Scripture by analogy with the Old Testament.

(2)   It refers to 1:1-4:16 up to the beginning of His public ministry, where it states, "From that time on, Jesus began to preach."

(3)   The reference is to the first two chapters of Matthew which chronicle His birth. Since the superscription is formed on the analogy of Genesis 2:4; and 5:1, Matthew may have intended to introduce the entire account of Jesus origin in chapter one and chapter two by use of this heading.

(4)   The heading refers to the first chapter only which prepares for the birth narrative in chapter two.

(**5**)   The reference is only to verses 1-17 which takes us to the actual beginning of the origin of Jesus' earthly life. The narrative has a different heading in verse 18. Therefore the opening heading refers only to the first seventeen verses.

The best answer to this question seems to be either solution number one or number five.

of Jesus This phrase speaks of the origin of Jesus Himself. *Jesus* is the Latin form of His name. The Greek form is *yaysous*, and the Hebrew is *yeshua*, a shorter form of *yehoshua* meaning, "The Lord (Yahweh) is salvation." It was a fairly common name among Jews in the first century. We find a number of people with that name in the writings of Josephus as well as the Septuagint. The term "Jesus" is only used in narratives about Him. No one in Matthew ever addresses Him by His given name "Jesus."

Christ He is the Christ, the Messiah (the anointed one). This is from the Hebrew word *Meshiach* - one who was anointed by the Holy Spirit for the task of saving His people (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:8; Hebrews 1:9).

Jesus was anointed to be the main prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15; Isaiah 55:4; Acts 3:22; 7:37); the only High Priest Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 10:12,14; and the King (Psalm 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:5; 28:18; Luke 1:33).

According to the Old Testament, the Messiah would be: the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15); a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18), from the line of Judah (Genesis 49:10; and from the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12,13).

This is the only place for certain where Matthew uses the full name "Jesus Christ" (1:18 and 16:21 have variant readings in the Greek text). There is a question whether this is a proper name (Jesus Christ) or a name and a title (Jesus the Christ). The title "Christ" (Messiah) eventually became a proper name because it was so often used by Christians to refer to Jesus. However, this did not occur in Jesus' lifetime.

We should also note that the genealogies of the Old Testament and in Jewish tradition always take their name from the *first* name on the list (as does Luke). Here the emphasis is different, it is on the *last* member of the list, Jesus.

the son of David By the first century, this phrase had become a title for the coming Messiah—the one who would bring in an eternal kingdom based upon righteousness. The Messiah would occupy the throne of David based upon God's promise (2 Samuel 7:14-17). This was known as the Davidic Covenant. Matthew makes it clear that Jesus is *that* promised Son of David.

The term also has the idea of a mighty warrior who would conquer Israel's enemies and set up God's kingdom in Jerusalem. Leon Morris writes, "the militaristic associations may account for the sparing use of the title among Christians" (Morris, p. 20).

Matthew uses the phrase most frequently when people ask to Jesus for help (9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31) but he also uses it in the story of the triumphal entry (21:9,15). This indicates he is aware of the royal association.

The fact that Jesus descended from David is asserted in the New Testament (Luke 1:27, 32; Acts 2:30ff.; 13:23; Romans 1:3, 2 Timothy 2:8; Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

the son of Abraham Jesus is also aligned with Abraham who was the first recipient of the specific promise of a Messianic King. Jesus was Abraham's son *par excellence* (John 8:58) greater than Abraham.

Abraham, by faith, moved out of Ur of the Chaldees to the land of promise. God's covenant with Abraham set the nation Israel apart in a special sense as His chosen people. Therefore, Abraham's name carries the idea of God's promise and His ultimate fulfillment. Jesus, we discover, is the true seed of Abraham where God's promises are fulfilled.

In addition, the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) speaks of the blessing through Abraham for "all families of the earth." In Jesus, through the line of Abraham, that promise is fulfilled. This comes to fulfillment in the climatic passage of Matthew's gospel where the command is given to "make disciples of all nations" (28:19). Therefore, we find universal blessings at the beginning and end of this gospel.

Jesus, therefore, as a "son of Abraham" is a true Jew, and as a "son of David" is the Christ. It is also possible that the phrase "son of Abraham" may have been a Messianic title at that time.
The genealogy goes back no further than Abraham because it was written for the Jews. Luke on the other hand, writing to a Gentile audience takes his genealogy all the way back to Adam—the first man.

The word "son" is used in this verse as a figure of speech called *synecdoche* (the exchange of one idea for another associated idea). This is where one relationship is put for, and includes others. Thus Christ is called the Son of David—the word "son" being used in a wider significance. Hence David is called father (Luke 1:32) though Christ is neither David's son nor is David in any physical sense His father. Other examples of this figure of speech are found in 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30,31; 21:9,15; 22:42.

Matt. 1:2 Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers.

Matthew's first list of 14 names (vs. 2-6a) agrees exactly with 1 Chronicles 1:28,34; 2:1-15) and the list in Ruth 4:18-22.

Abraham The genealogy begins historically with Abraham because he was the first man specially called of God to separate himself from his people. He was the beginning of the salvation history of the nation that would come from his descendants—the man to whom the national promises were first given.

fathered Isaac, The word translated "fathered" simply represents the action of a male parent—it does not necessarily represent literal paternity. Therefore, the next person mentioned after the parent is not necessarily one in the immediate family. The word can be used of any descendant (see 3:9). Hendriksen makes an appropriate comment:

The verb refers here to the father's acquisition of offspring by depositing seed. *Physical* (italics his) descent is indicated, whether from father to son, as in the case of father Abraham and son Isaac, or father via son to grandson or later physical descendant. It must be considered deplorable that elegant modern English has no easy equivalent for the verb used in the original . . . The rendering *begat* (A.V.; A.R.V [American Revised Version]) is definitely archaic. The rendering was the father of (Beck, Williams, Phillips, R.S.V., N.E.B. etc.) shifts the emphasis from the relation of a past *event*, as in the original, to the

description of a past *state* . . . Perhaps the least objectionable renderings into English, though not a single one is completely satisfactory, are the following:

"To Abraham was born Isaac (N.A.S.)
"Abraham begot Isaac" (see, however the footnote on this in Williams' translation).
"Abraham became the father of Isaac," favored by L.N.T. [Lexicon of the New Testament] (A. and G.) [Arndt and Gingrich], p. 154.

Between these three it is difficult to make a choice (Hendriksen, p. 105, note 119).

Isaac fathered Jacob, Though Jacob was the youngest of the twins (Esau was the other brother) God chose the elder to serve the younger (see Romans 9). Appropriately enough, Matthew begins Jesus' genealogy with the record of a supernatural birth - Isaac and end with another supernatural birth—Jesus. They are both supernatural but not identical.

Note that Ishmael is not mentioned, only the Messianic line (Galatians 4:23; Romans 4:19; Hebrews 11:11,12).

Jacob fathered Judah Matthew emphasizes that of the twelve possible ancestors of the Messiah, the royal line was chosen to be only through the line Judah (Genesis 49:10). Why was Judah chosen? Reuben was the firstborn, Judah was the fourth. It is not determined by age or human merit, but by God's sovereign choice (Romans 9:16).

and his brothers. This is the first break in regular rhythm of the genealogy. Jesus is the fulfillment of all that was promised to the twelve tribes.

Matt. 1:3 Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar, Perez fathered Hesrom, Hesrom fathered Aram.

Judah fathered Perez and Zerah The two individuals, Perez and Zerah, are both listed rather than just one of them because Tamar was the mother of these twins born out of wedlock (Genesis 38:27-30). The Old Testament traced the royal line of Judah to Perez (Ruth 4:12,18ff.). The phrase "son of Perez" is a Rabbinical expression for the Messiah.

by Tamar, Tamar was a Canaanite who seduced Judah her father-in-law (Genesis 38) Her name is an addition by Matthew to the Old Testament genealogies. Similar additions by Matthew include: the special reference to Rahab and Ruth (vs. 5) and the wife of Uriah, Bathsheba, in vs. 6.

Tamar is the first of four women to be mentioned in the genealogy (five if we count Mary). The fact that women are listed in the genealogy is an irregularity seeing that they had no legal rights in Jesus' day. Thus the mentioning of them in Jesus' legal genealogy is indeed something extraordinary. Bruce adds:

> Mention of the mother wholly unnecessary and unusual from a genealogical point of view, and in this case one would say . . . impolitic, reminding of a hardly readable story (Gen. 38:13-16). It is the first of four references to mothers in the ancestry of Jesus concerning whom one might have expected discreet silence (Bruce, pp. 62, 63).

The mention of a mother alongside a father occurs in Old Testament genealogies (1 Chronicles 1:32; 2:17-21, 24, 26, etc.) The mention of Tamar is derived directly from 1 Chronicles 2:4.

Perez fathered Hesrom, Except for the mention in Genesis, we know nothing about Hesrom.

Hesrom fathered Aram. "Aram" is the reading of the Greek text and the KJV. It is rendered with the shortened spelling "Ram" in some translations (see 1 Chronicles 2:10 (LXX). Like Hesrom, Aram was unknown to men but important to God.

Matt. 1:4 Aram fathered Aminidab, Aminidab father Naasom, Naasom fathered Salmon.

Aram fathered Aminidab, Aminidab was the father of Elisheba who married Aaron (Exodus 6:23).

Aminidab father Naasom, During the wilderness wanderings Naasom was the leader of Judah's tribe (Numbers 1:7; 1 Chronicles 2:10). They were encamped toward sunrise (Numbers 2:3) as representative of the tribe he would the first to offer a sacrifice (Numbers 7:12-17). His tribe led the march (Numbers 10:4).

The incompleteness of the list is seen that only two names appear between Hesrom and Naasom - a period of 400 years. Therefore each of these four names represent a century.

Naasom fathered Salmon. The Old Testament provides no information as to the remainder of the names in vs. 3-4 (from Perez to Salmon).

Matt. 1:5 Salmon fathered Boaz out of Rahab, Boaz fathered Jobed out of Ruth, Jobed fathered Jesse.

Salmon fathered Boaz out of Rahab, It seems that Matthew writes what the Old Testament does not state—that the mother of Boaz was Rahab the prostitute who hid the spies in Jericho (Joshua 2:1-21). The reference to Rahab has apparently been added to the list by Matthew since she does not appear on any Old Testament genealogical lists (see 1 Chronicles 2:12; Ruth 4:21). If this does refer to Rahab the prostitute, there is a chronological problem, for she appears several generations or two centuries too late. Rahab does figure prominently in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:35; James 2:25). In Jewish literature Rahab is said to have married Joshua.

Some have argued for another Rahab unknown in Jewish literature. However, further support of Rahab the prostitute is seen by the tainted character of at least two of the other women in the genealogy. Our information is insufficient to be certain as to her exact identity.

Matthew leaves some of the names out (see Ezra 7:3; 1 Chronicles 6:7-9). It is clear also from the next two lists. Matthew's interest is in Christology, not chronology.

Boaz fathered Jobed out of Ruth, The woman of faith from Moab (Ruth 1:4) becomes an ancestor to the Messiah. The Moabites were denounced by the prophets Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah. In Deuteronomy 23:3, a Moabite, an illegitimate son, and an Ammonite are forbidden to enter the congregation until the tenth generation.

Jobed fathered Jesse. Jesse was David's father as the next verse will indicate. Isaiah 11:1 says the Messiah would be from the line of Jesse.

Matt. 1:6 Jesse fathered David the king. David fathered Solomon out of the wife of Uriah.

Note on a Variant Reading: After the second time *David* is used in the verse, many manuscripts **(TR, MT)** read *the king***.**

Jesse fathered David the king. Matthew's addition of the word "the king" reinforces the link between David and Jesus. "It serves the same purpose as if David had been written in capital letters" (Bruce p. 63). David was the first rightful king of Israel and the one in whom the line of Judah first achieved royalty.

In both verses 1 and 17 David is emphasized as a key figure in Jesus' genealogy. The royal line of David, which was lost during the exile, is now regained by Jesus the Messiah.

David fathered Solomon At this point, Luke's genealogy passes through Nathan, another son of David. There is a Jewish tradition that seems to have recognized a double line for the Messiah. The Targum (commentary) on Zechariah 12:10 reads: "The descendants of king Solomon of the house of David mourn . . . and the descendants of the prophet Nathan, son of David."

The problem of the genealogy of Jesus is dealt with at the end of this chapter.

out of the wife of Uriah. Matthew deliberately leaves out the name of Bathsheba. Perhaps he does this to call attention to Uriah's righteousness in contrast to David adultery and murder. Bathsheba is mentioned in the genealogy of 1 Chronicles 3:5.

The second list of fourteen names (verses 6b-11) is in exact agreement with 1 Chronicles 3:10-15 except for the omission of three kings.

Matt. 1:7 Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abia, Abia fathered Asa.

Note on a variant reading. Some manuscripts have *Asaph* instead of *Asa*. The same variant occurs in verse 8.

Solomon fathered Rehoboam, This was the beginning of the downfall of the monarchy. Rehoboam followed in the folly of his father Solomon and made unwise decisions that eventually split the kingdom (1 Kings 12:14).

Rehoboam fathered Abia, Abijah (1 Kings 15:2,3) walked in the sins of his father.

Abia fathered Asa From verses 7-12 the list follows 1 Chronicles 3:10-17 and Ezra 3:2. 2 Chronicles 14:11 records Asa's prayer to God.

Matt. 1:8 Asa fathered Jehoshapat, Jehoshapat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Ozian.

Asa fathered Jehosphat, 2 Chronicles 20:5

Jehoshapat fathered Joram, 2 Chronicles 21:6 tells us Joram married Ahab's daughter.

Joram fathered Ozian. Uzziah 2 Chronicles 26:19

Matt. 1:9 Ozian fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Achaz, Achaz fathered Hezekiah.

Ozian fathered Jotham, See 2 Chronicles 27:3,4**.** Three kings are omitted here (Ahaziah, Jehoash, and Amaziah) the reason for which omission is unstated. It is not unusual in genealogies to leave out names (i.e. Ezra leaves out the name of his own father! Compare Ezra 7:1-5 with 1 Chronicles 6:3-15).

However these three descended from Athaliah who attempted to wipe out the Davidic royal line (2 Kings 11).They had a curse put upon them through Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab. She became the wife of Joram and the mother of Ahaziah; if the curse lasted to the fourth generation (as it seems from the narrative in 2 Chronicles 22-25) it would have included the three kings missing from

Matthew's list. The same Greek form is used in some manuscripts of LXX for both Ahaziah and Uzziah (Azariah).
Jotham fathered Achaz, 2 Chronicles 28:22.

Achaz fathered Hezekiah. 2 Kings 19:15-19. Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah were three reformers.

Matt. 1:10 Hezekiah fathered Manassah, Manassah fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah.

Note on a Variant Reading:. Some manuscripts read *Amos* instead of *Amon* (**TR** and **MT**). The same variant is found in verse 11.

Hezekiah fathered Manassah, 2 Kings 21:11-12.

Manassah fathered Amon, 2 Kings 21:9-23.

Amon fathered Josiah. 2 Kings 2:22.

Matt. 1:11 Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the captivity to Babylon.

Note on a Variant Reading. After the words "Josiah fathered" some manuscripts have *Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim fathered.* The addition of these names brings the text of Matthew into harmony with the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:15,16. If this was part of the original text then there would be fifteen names in the second list instead of fourteen. No modern translation accepts these words as original.

Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers 2 Kings 24:9,12, 15. This verse presents a number of problems. One problem is that Jehoiakim is not mentioned. If he were, the genealogy would then equal fourteen in this third list, as in the first two lists. Various explanations have been offered as to why his name does not appear here as it does in the Old Testament genealogies. Begot is linked here with the grandfather.

Another problem is that Jechoniah or Jehoiachin is not listed in the Old Testament as having any brothers (see questions at the end of chapter for possible explanations).

This reference is thought to indicate that after the exile, there was more than one Davidic family which might have inherited the monarchy.

at the time of the captivity to Babylon. This brings us to a major division in the genealogy—the Babylonian captivity. This was the low point in the history of the nation with the destruction of both the city of Jerusalem and the temple.

Matt. 1:12 After the exile to Babylon Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubabel.

After the exile to Babylon After the beginning of the exile, not after the exile was over. Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was the first king to be deported to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15) and receives the title "the captive" (1 Chronicles 3:17).

Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, The Greek text here as well, as the King James Version, reads Salathiel. Most modern English translations use the Old Testament form of the name (see Ezra 3:2).

Shealtiel fathered Zerubabel. Zerubabel is the man who led the people back to build the second temple.

Matt. 1:13 Zerubabel fathered Abioud, Abioud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor.

Zerubabel fathered Abioud, Abioud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor.

Matt. 1:14 Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Akim, Akim fathered Elioud.

Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Akim, Akim fathered Elioud.

Matt. 1:15 Elioud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Mathan, Mathan fathered Jacob.

Elioud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Mathan, Mathan fathered Jacob. We have no known source for Matthew's third group, which apart from the first three names (found in 1 Chronicles 3:17-19, but not consecutively) is completely unknown until the names of Joseph and Jesus. The names from Abioud to Jacob the father of Joseph is not known to us from any other source.

Matt. 1:16   And Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, the one who is called Christ.

Note on Variant Readings: Some Greek manuscripts and the Old Latin version read *Joseph, to whom was betrothed the virgin Mary who fathered Jesus.* This was an attempt to make the virgin birth more precise. The Siniatic Syriac version says *Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the virgin, begat Jesus.* This *could* be used to deny the virgin birth only if begat (was the father of) refers to actual physical paternity and not, as elsewhere in the genealogy, to descent that was *legally* recognized. All modern translations favor the reading above. A few manuscripts read *the Son of God* after *Christ.*

Note that when the RSV was released in 1946 there was a note in the margin that indicates this was a legitimate alternative reading.

And Jacob fathered Joseph Jacob was possibly his adoptive father. The word translated "fathered" can refer to a relationship that is not genetic (see 1 Corinthians 4:15; Philemon 10). The same metaphor of father and son was used of a rabbi and his pupil (cf. Psalm 2:7). Joseph is important in his genealogy, not as the physical father of Jesus but as his legal parent.

the husband of Mary, Joseph is called the husband of Mary though they were not married when Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. She would, however, still be considered his lawful wife during the period of betrothal. Matthew shows that Jesus is the legitimate son of Joseph, Mary's husband, at His birth and thus the heir to the Davidic throne.

of whom The pronoun is unambiguously feminine referring back to Mary not Joseph. Clearly Jesus was born from Mary, not Joseph.

Jesus was born, The fact that Jesus was conceived by a virgin mother without the agency of Joseph is repeatedly stated throughout this section. It is the basis for the introduction of the quotation in verses 22,23.

After Joseph, the regular formula "fathered" is dropped. The nature of the genealogy shows that it is the legal, not necessarily physical descent that it in mind. But when Mary is reached, the formula is altered. It clearly indicates physical birth rather than legal descent.

The virgin conception of Jesus is assumed as a known fact by Matthew. Interestingly, there is no attempt by him to argue for it or describe it.

An apologetic element may be found with the surprise of Joseph at Mary's pregnancy, his abstaining from sexual relations with her before the birth of Jesus, the angel's explanation that Jesus was of divine origin, and the biblical basis for the virgin conception. Twice Matthew will emphasize that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit. The genealogy is intended to be that of Jesus' legal ancestry not his physical descent.

the one who is called Christ. This is not implying doubt but rather showing that His claim was legitimate seeing that He was a descendant of David. Christ is His title. *Christ* is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Meshiach* "Messiah"

Matt. 1:17 Therefore all the generations from Abraham until David are fourteen generations; and from David until the Babylonian captivity, fourteen generations; and from the Babylonian captivity until the Christ, fourteen generations.

Therefore all the generations from Abraham He represents the beginning of the chosen people and the promises of God to them.

until David Until the beginning of the monarchy.

are fourteen generations, We will have this phrase repeated three times.

and from David until the Babylonian captivity fourteen generations; From the monarchy until the exile.

and from the Babylonian captivity until the Christ fourteen generations. From the exile until the Messiah.

Matthew, in verse 17, gives us a brief summary of the preceding 16 verses. The technical name for this figure of speech is *symperasma* (or concluding summary). It refers to an addition of a conclusion by way of summary. It is made up of two Greek words *sun* "together with" and *peraioo* "to carry over" or "across." Therefore the word means "to conclude along with" or "end together." It is used when that which has been said is briefly summed up. Other examples of this figure of speech can be found in John 10:30 and Hebrews 11:39.

This is the first example of Matthew's tendency to arrange his material in groups, (usually in groups of three or seven). As we can see, the genealogy is arranged in three groups of fourteen (two times seven). This would make is convenient for memory in oral use.

The three main points of the genealogy are the three main events of Israel's history - Abraham, David, and the captivity. Matthew's purpose is to emphasize the two major turning points in Israel's history and of David's kingship. His kingship was lost at the Babylonian captivity. Now with the arrival of Jesus, the prophesied Son of David, that kingship has reached its appointed goal. The genealogies show the period of preparation is now complete and the Messiah has come.

Therefore, in the first list we are shown the origin of David's house, the second list the rise and decline of David's house and the third list the eclipse of David's house. However, at the end of this list the fulfillment of the promise to the house of David took place. In David, the family of Abraham attained royalty, they lost it at the captivity, in Christ it was restored.

The different groups are in three unequal historical periods of approximately 750, 400, and 600 years. The reason for the number "fourteen generations" plainly had significance for Matthew, but is not explained for us. This has led to various theories:

1.   There were fourteen High Priests from Aaron to the establishment of Solomon's Temple, and from Solomon's Temple to Jaddua, the last High Priest mentioned in Scripture, the number is also fourteen.

2.   The Hebrew numerical value of David's name, when calculated, comes up 14 (D=4, W=6, D=4). This, however, was probably not what Matthew intended since the Gospel was written in Greek and the numerics of David's name in Hebrew would not be unknown to those reading in Greek. This practice, known as Gematria, has only clear example of it in the New Testament (Revelation 13:17-18).

3.   Some have thought that Matthew devised the concept of three fourteen's when he found fourteen names in the first group. To conform the other two groups to the pattern he simply abbreviated their lists.

Whatever the reason, Matthew intends to show that behind Israel's history is God's design. This is why he has structured the genealogy into three pivotal periods. The genealogy testifies to both the high and low points of the nation.

THE EXPLANATION OF JESUS' ORIGIN (1:18-25)

The genealogy has prepared us for this next section. That which the genealogy implied is now clearly taught. Matthew now explains the supernatural origin of Jesus as well as His purpose for coming to the earth—to save His people from their sins. This section, therefore, is a justification of his genealogy. It shows that while His birth was supernatural, Jesus still can rightly be regarded as the legitimate son of Joseph and thus the heir to David's throne.

The virgin conception, along with the genealogy, answer the charges about Jesus' humble birth and his actual origin (13:57-58; Mark 6:3; Luke 4:22; John 7:27, 40, 41; 8:41,48).

These verses do not relate to the actual birth of Jesus but rather explain His origin (or virginal conception). The story is told from Joseph's standpoint rather than that of Mary (as Luke does). Interestingly, Matthew assumes his readers know who Joseph and Mary are, since there is no attempt to explain anything about them. We will learn two things about the child from this section—The child is Immanuel (God with us) and His name (or purpose) is Jesus—the One who is to save.

Matt. 1:18 Now the origin of Jesus Christ was as follows: After his mother Mary had been pledged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Note on variant readings: Some manuscripts read *Jesus* rather than *Jesus Christ*. There is also a variant reading found in the word translated *origin*. The Greek manuscripts read either *genesis* or *gennasis*. Both terms mean "birth" but *genesis* also means "creation," "generation," and "genealogy." It is the same Greek word found in 1:1. *Gennasis* has a stricter meaning of "engendering." It eventually became the customary word in early Christian literature to refer to the birth of Christ. *Gennasis* is found as the reading of **TR** and **MT.**

Now the origin of Jesus Christ was as follows: The use of the same Greek word *genesis* picks up the idea of "origin" found in 1:1. This suggests that the record of origin now reaches its goal. The position of the words "of Jesus Christ" in Greek makes them emphatic. His birth is the focus of attention.

After his mother Mary had been pledged to Joseph, Matthew records that Jesus' conception took place when Mary was betrothed or pledged to Joseph. Betrothal was a different matter than our western idea of engagement.

Jewish weddings involved three separate phases. First, there was the engagement that was often arranged by the parents while the couple were still children.

The second phase was the betrothal. In Jewish law the betrothal period lasted about a year. It was a formal binding contract entered into before witnesses. Therefore in a restricted sense they were married. It gave the man legal rights over the girl and was terminated only by death (which left the betrothed a widow) or by the formal process of divorce as for a full marriage. If, for example, the girl had been guilty of adultery during the betrothal period she would face the penalty for adultery. In addition, if either of the parties did not want to go through with the marriage a divorce was required (Deuteronomy 22:24). During this period the man was legally called her husband (see verses 16,19,20,24) yet the couple did not live together during the betrothal period and did not engage in sexual relations. Betrothal usually took place when the girl was between 12 and 13. The same word for betrothal is used of Mary in Luke 1:27; 2:5.

The third part was the marriage proper which took place about a year later. The marriage was complete when the husband took the betrothed to his home in a second public ceremony (vs. 24; cf. 25:1-13); thus they came together and sexual intercourse could begin.

but before they came together, The verb used here denotes the consummation of the marriage. There is no evidence that is was used for the marriage ceremony itself in which the bride was brought to the bridegroom. Luke agrees with Matthew that Mary and Joseph did not have sexual relations before the birth of Jesus (see 1:25). This statement again emphasizes that the father of Jesus was *not* Joseph.

she was found to be with child This does not mean that she was "found out." Rather it became obvious to all that she was going to have a baby.

from the Holy Spirit The divine origin of Mary's baby is now asserted. Luke also stresses that the Holy Spirit was the agent in Jesus' conception (1:35). The reference to the Holy Spirit shows that God is about to act through the child.

In the Old Testament the Spirit of God appears as the agent of God's activity, especially in creation and the giving of life (Genesis 1:2; Ezekiel 37:1-14; etc.). The Old Testament idea that God's Spirit will bring in the Messianic age (Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Joel 2:28; etc.) is also in view.

The relationship between Jesus' divine sonship and the Holy Spirit is evident at two other key points in His life (His baptism 3:16-17 and His resurrection Romans 1:4).

The fact that the Holy Spirit is not mentioned that often in the first three gospels underscores the importance of this reference. Just as the Spirit of God was active in the creation of the world, so He is active in its renewal through the Messiah.

Matt. 1:19   Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and yet not willing to expose her to public disgrace, desired to divorce her quietly.

Joseph her husband, Joseph is called her husband though the last part of the process, the marriage ceremony, has not taken place.

being a righteous man, His righteousness is in the sense of him being conscientiousness in his observance of the law. He was "in the right' before the Law (Deuteronomy 22:13-21). The same word is used of Zacharias and Elizabeth (Luke 1:6)

and yet not willing, This phrase could have one of two possible meanings depending upon the translation of the participle.

1.   "and *yet* not willing." As a good Jew he could show his zeal for the law if he made her a public disgrace. Though the law called for this, he decided not to do it.

2.   "and *therefore* not willing." Because he was a righteous man he was not willing to disgrace her. Since he was morally upright he would not shame her.

Though both translations are possible, most commentators feel the first possibility has the most going for it considering the times in which they were living.

His righteousness is set against his own wishes. Joseph as a *just*, or a law abiding man, could have divorced her by an accusation of adultery resulting in a public trial.

to expose her to public disgrace This refers to making the divorce public rather than doing it privately. Joseph was unwilling to put her to public shame (same word as Colossians 2:15 "make a public spectacle"). The word *deigmatizo* means to "expose" or "humiliate." A *deigma* is a "specimen" or an "example."

desired to divorce her quietly. "Her" is in the emphatic position in Greek.

The Mosaic law stated that the man was to divorce his wife if he found something indecent in her (Deuteronomy 24:1). This was Joseph's legal obligation according to Scripture. Though Joseph did not want to expose her as an adulteress neither did he want to marry one who appeared to be guilty of sin. In the Old Testament the penalty for unchastity before marriage was stoning. However, by the time of Jesus, divorce, based on Deuteronomy 24:1 was the rule. Death by stoning was probably not insisted upon in the New Testament era (see John 8:3-11). This led him to consider the alternative of a formal divorce proceeding in relative privacy between two witnesses (see Deuteronomy 24:1). It is also possible that he intended to dispense with the witnesses altogether.

McNeile notes:

> A betrothed girl was a widow if her *fiancee* died and this whether the man had 'taken' her to his house or not. After betrothal, therefore, but before marriage, the man was legally 'husband' (Genesis 29:21; Deuteronomy 22:23) hence an informal canceling of betrothal was impossible: the man had to give the woman a writ and pay a fine (McNeile, p. 7,8).

Robert Gundry has a different idea of what transpired:

> According to common opinion, in ignorance or unbelief Joseph supposed that Mary's pregnancy had come about through fornication with another man after she was betrothed to Joseph . . . Because he wanted to keep the Mosaic law, Joseph considered himself obligated at least to divorce Mary . . . Yet Joseph was magnanimous and possibly retained affection for Mary; so he planned to spare her disgrace by handing her the bill of divorce in the presence of only two or three signing witnesses. If the pregnancy had not yet made itself obvious, they might not even know the reason for the divorce.
> To the contrary the presence and participation of two or three witnesses doubtfully meets the demands of Matthew's "secretly" . . . for two or three witnesses were normally involved . . . Furthermore, the later words of the angel to Joseph "do not fear to take Mary as your wife" (v 20), suggest reverential hesitation to intrude rather than suspicion of unfaithfulness; i.e. Matthew portrays Joseph not as fearing to break the law through failure to divorce Mary, but as fearing to do wrong by taking Mary to wife when she was found pregnant by divine causation. Then the statement in v 18, "she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit does not come as a piece of advanced information to the reader, but bears its more natural sense that Joseph found out the

reason for, as well as the fact of Mary's pregnancy early in the episode (and presumably from Mary; cf. Luke 1:26-45). *That*, not a wrong deduction, left Joseph in a quandary. In deference to the Holy Spirit he decided to divorce Mary. In consideration of Mary he planned to hand her the certificate of divorce without any witnesses at all. The Mosaic law did not require them, anyway. They had become customary to protect a man form a divorced wife's false denial of divorce. But according to Matthew, Joseph intended to waive that precaution. The angel will repeat what Joseph already believed both to assure him of the truth and to provide a basis for the command to marry. Meanwhile the readers of Matthew have no reason to suspect Mary of what not even Joseph suspected her (Gundry, pp. 21,22).

Matt. 1:20 But after he had considered these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not ever fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

But after he had considered these things, There was a struggle between his legal conscience and his love for Mary. But as Joseph was planning to proceed with the divorce he was divinely interrupted. Like Abraham (Genesis 22:11), Joseph was supernaturally hindered from injuring the One in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.

behold, This expression is used a number of times in Matthew. Some modern translations completely ignore it while others always translate it with an English word such as behold, lo, or something like it. The word is used to call attention to the fact that something vivid is about to happen.

the angel of the Lord The angelic appearance to Mary, as recorded in Luke's Gospel, is not the same event that Matthew records. Each of them had a separate visitation from an angel. In Luke 1:19, 26 the angel is named (Gabriel) while in Matthew he is simply called the angel of the Lord here and the other times he appears (2:13,19)

In the Old Testament, the angel of the Lord appeared on several prominent occasions (Genesis 16:17 ff.; 22:11; Exodus 3:2) The word *angel* simply means "messenger" and can refer to a human being (see Luke 7:24) as well as one of God's created "spirit beings" (Hebrews 1:7,14). In the Old Testament it sometimes refers to the Lord Himself in a temporary "theophany" or "activity on the earth." On occasion, the angel of the Lord may refer to the Holy Spirit. F.F. Bruce writes:

> This section of the Philip narrative [Acts 8:26-40] is reminiscent here and there of the story of Elijah, who was apt to be moved from one place to another at short notice by the Spirit of Yahweh; cf. 1 K. 18:12; 2 K. 1:3; 2:16. Moreover, in this section as it is in the story of Elijah, it is difficult to distinguish between the angel of the Lord from the Spirit of the Lord (vv. 29, 39) (F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Revised Edition, Eerdmans, 1990, p. 225).

appeared to him in a dream The communicating of God's instructions in a dream is emphasize repeatedly in Matthew's story of Jesus' birth (2:12,13,19,22). All but one of dreams are given to Joseph (the other is to the Magi). The only other dream recorded in Matthew is to Pilate's wife (27:19).

Three of these dreams involve the angel of the Lord (here, 2:13,19). This same angel appears again at the end of the gospel (28:2). These appearances emphasize that God has supernaturally directed Jesus' birth, childhood and resurrection.

God often used dreams to reveal His will. In Scripture they often appear in clusters— during the period of the Patriarchs, the time of Daniel, and in Matthew's account of Jesus' birth.

saying, "Joseph, son of David, This is the only place in the gospels where this designation is applied to someone other than Jesus. The form in which Joseph is addressed summarizes the purpose of the genealogy—Joseph is legally connected to David. The title also seems to confirm that the genealogy is that of Joseph's rather than Mary's.

It has been observed that Joseph had certain things in common with his Old Testament namesake: both were righteous, both were influenced by dreams, and both were forced to journey into Egypt.

do not ever fear Don't be afraid now or in the future. There should be no hesitating.

to take Mary as your wife, Joseph is instructed to enter into the full marriage relationship with Mary. This would mean going through with the marriage ceremony. It was essential for Joseph to complete the marriage in order to establish legal Davidic lineage for the child about to be born. Jesus would become the legal son of Joseph and would be reckoned as descending from David though Scripture makes it clear that He was not actually Joseph's son.

for that which is conceived in her Note that the Greek word referring to Jesus translated "that which" is in the neuter gender. Grammatical gender is *not* equivalent to personal gender. For example, the Greek word for "Spirit" (*pneuma*) is in the neuter gender while in Hebrew (*ruach*) it is in the feminine gender. Another example of where the neuter refers to things personal include Luke 19:10 '*that* which was lost"—*that* refers to sinners both male and female.

is from the Holy Spirit. The angels imparts to Joseph information that had already been given to Mary (Luke 1:35)—the power of the Holy Spirit is the source of Mary's conception. The idea that a virgin would conceive a child would have been very startling to Joseph for a virgin conception was not something that was part of the first century Jewish belief. The Jews were not looking for their Messiah to be virginally conceived. The fact that the origin of the child is from the Holy Spirit underscores the passive role of both Joseph and Mary in the conception of Jesus. God is the one who initiated all the action. This would have comforted and encouraged Joseph seeing that he could enter into the marriage without assuming Mary had been unfaithful.

Matt. 1:21 For she will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus, for he himself will save his people from their sins."

Note on variant readings: Two manuscripts have *to you* after *give birth.* Instead of *His people* one Syriac manuscript reads *the world.*

For she will give birth to a son, The virgin will give birth while still remaining a virgin.

and you The "you" is singular referring to Joseph. It is *not* the plural form of "you" which would indicate Joseph and Mary. Old English had "thou" and "ye" to distinguish between singular and plural while modern English has only "you."

will name him Jesus. It was important for *Joseph* to name His Son, "Jesus." By doing so he would acknowledge the child as his own son. Therefore Jesus would be the "Son of David."

Male children were formally named at the time of circumcision—on the eighth day after birth (Luke 2:21). The language "You will call His name" reminds us of similar revelations in the Old Testament (Genesis 16:11; Isaiah 7:14). Divinely revealed names are full of meaning. The style is an echo of the Old Testament story in Genesis 17:19 (LXX) where the birth of Isaac is recorded. Hence the birth of Jesus and Isaac are compared in their supernatural character.

The use of the word "name" in this sentence is a figure of speech called a *pleonasm* or a redundancy. It refers to the use of more words than the grammar requires—that is, the sentence would be complete without the use of this word or group of words. Although the use may appear to be redundant, it certainly is not. They are not useless words but rather are necessary to complete the sense.

We find the word "name" seemingly redundant in the phrase "the name of God" which means God Himself. The use of name places greater emphasis than if the simple word God was used. Therefore when we have the phrase "to call upon the name of the Lord" it refers to calling upon the Lord Himself since this expression, by the figure of pleonasm, refers to His character. Thus when Scripture refers to the name of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit, it refers to their person rather than their personal name.

Consequently in the phrase "His name Jesus" it refers to more than just His personal name, it means "that holy one Himself." For another example of this figure of speech see 6:9 "hallowed by Your name"—that is "Let Your Yourself alone be worshipped."

For he himself The "He" is emphatic in the Greek. Jesus Himself, and no other, will bring about this redemption (Luke 1:68; 24:21).

will save Salvation from sins was part of the hope of the Old Testament (Psalm 130:8 LXX; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:24-31). However, it was not the dominant hope of the Jews living at the time of Jesus. The mention of it here would warn them *not* to expect the popular notion that the Messiah would be a national liberator.

In the late 1st century before Christ the work Ps. Sol. 17 expressed the Jewish expectation of a Davidic Messiah who would deliver His people and purify them for judgment. However the idea of saving them from their sins is missing.

There is a play on words here between the Hebrew words to save (*yoshea*) and Jesus (*yeshua*). This may imply there was a Hebrew original behind this verse. The play on words does not work in Aramaic or Greek.

his people This refers to the people of God—the Jews as opposed to the Gentiles.

from their sins He had come to save them from their sins, not to free them from Rome. This was different than the popular expectation of that day. This salvation will be accomplished by the shedding of Jesus' blood (26:28) and will forgive each individual of sin who trusts in Jesus.

Matt. 1:22 But all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts (along with the Syriac Versions) read *Isaiah* after the word *prophet.*

But all this took place, The coming of Jesus was not only a new creation by the Holy Spirit, it was also the last stage in a long-awaited process in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. This is the *first* of Matthew's formula quotations. Verses 22,23 should probably be understood as the comment of Matthew rather than the continuation of the words spoken by the angel.

that what was spoken by the Lord The ultimate source was the Lord.

through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, The prophet was the intermediate source between the Lord and His people. In one half of Matthew's fulfillment quotations the prophet is not named.

Matt. 1:23 "Behold the virgin will conceive, and give birth to a son, and they will call his name Immanuel," which translated means, "God is with us."

Note on a variant reading: A few manuscripts read *you will call* (singular) instead of *they will call.*

"Behold the virgin will conceive, Isaiah 7:14 is the source of the quotation. Luke 1:31 probably also alludes to this verse indicating that both he and Matthew saw its relevance in the birth of Christ. By the middle of the second century (see the writing of the church father Justin) Isaiah 7:14 was an important Christian weapon in defense of the virgin birth of Jesus.

and give birth to a son, Not a daughter.

and they will call That is—people looking back on this event.

his name Immanuel," This is not a personal name. In Isaiah 7:14 it is seen as fulfilled, not in the naming of Jesus, but in the whole account of His origin and naming. It is not that Jesus ever bore the name Immanuel but that it indicates His role, bringing God's presence to man.

which translated means, Matthew now explains to his readers what this phrase means. It is actually a transliteration of the Hebrew into Greek—making a new Greek word from the sound of the Hebrew phrase "God is with us."

"God is with us." This is a statement, not a prayer. The meaning is explained to Matthew's readers. Matthew's use of this term may be understood in one of two ways.

1. "God is with us" describes the nature of Jesus. He is God who has become a human.

2. Matthew wanted to show that the virgin conception was not something new, but that it had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah. God is now with the people to save them as the prophets have predicted. Therefore "God is with us" would not so much describe the exact nature of Jesus, but rather that God has been gracious to His people by sending His Messiah.

Matt. 1:24 And when Joseph rose up from the sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord ordered him, and took her as his wife.

And when Joseph rose up from the sleep, The divine dream is now over.

he did as the angel of the Lord ordered him, Throughout the first two chapters of Matthew, the divine initiative is first described and then followed by human obedience.

and took her as his wife. The marriage was formally completed but not consummated until after the birth of Jesus. In Matthew's explanation of Jesus' birth and infancy, God's initiative is given first, and then it is followed by human action and obedience. "The sole purpose of the hastened marriage being to legitimize the child" (Bruce, p. 69).

Matt. 1:25 And he did not know her until she gave birth to a Son; and he named him Jesus.

Note on variant readings: The phrase *And he did not know her until* is not found in two manuscripts. After *birth* one Syriac manuscript reads *to him.* Many manuscripts (the reading of **TR** and **MT)** have the phras*e her firstborn son* instead of *a son* (this same phrase is used of Jesus in Luke 2:7).

And he did not know her This reemphasizes the fact of the miracle of the virgin conception**.** Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary until after Jesus was born.

until she gave birth to a Son. The Greek expression "did not know her until" suggests that they enjoyed a normal marriage relationship after Jesus' birth and that Jesus brothers (12:46) were subsequently born of Joseph and Mary in a normal way.

It must also be noted, that in the New Testament, whenever we find this Greek word *heos* (translated "until") preceded by a word that negates it, it *always* implies the negatived action did, or will take place after the point of time indicated. Consequently we should assume that Joseph and Mary *did* have a normal marriage relationship after the birth of Jesus. Harold Fowler observes:

> The perpetual virginity of Mary, asserted by many, creates some not indifferent biblical problems, since it seems to be contradicted by clear New Testament testimonies. Such a doctrine obligates the believer to give to the "until" of Matthew a defining sense that is never found elsewhere in Holy Scripture, introducing into it an exception without any sure foundation (Fowler, Volume 1, p. 210).

A.B. Bruce adds:

> Subsequent intercourse was the natural, if not the necessary, course of things. If the evangelist had felt as the Catholics do, he would have taken pains to prevent misunderstanding (Bruce, p. 69).

Furthermore, the verb in the imperfect tense (continuous action in past time) also suggests a normal marriage relationship after the birth of Jesus. There is no biblical warrant for the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary as David Hill notes:

As the text stands, however, the words reiterate the miracle (which was Matthew's concern here) and do not lend support to the idea of the subsequent virginity of Mary, although they do not absolutely deny it. It must be admitted that if the notion of Mary's perpetual virginity had been familiar to the evangelist or to the milieu for which he wrote, he would surely have been more explicit (Hill, p. 80).

And he named him Jesus. Joseph named Him Jesus in obedience to the angel. This also indicates his formal adoption of Jesus and the establishment of his Davidic lineage. Bruce notes:

"He (not she) called the child Jesus, the statement referring back to the command of the angel to Joseph . . . before the Exile the mother, after the Exile the father, gave the name to the child at circumcision (Bruce, p. 69).

Note: If the phrase "firstborn son" is original with Matthew, it does not, in and of itself, mean that there were other sons (or daughters) after Jesus that were born to Joseph and Mary. The term "firstborn" has the idea of preeminence, not Jesus was the first of later- born children. The first may be the "only" (Isaiah 44:6).

SUMMARY TO CHAPTER 1

Chapter one is divided into two distinct parts: verses 1-17 gives the record of Jesus' ancestry and in verses 18-25 the angel appears to Joseph and explains the meaning of Mary's pregnancy—Joseph will be the father of Jesus only in the legal sense.

The story of Jesus' birth records God fulfilling what He has promised in the Old Testament—specifically to David and Abraham. In the genealogy Matthew lists three times fourteen generations. The first series of fourteen show the origin of the house of David. The second fourteen chronicles its rise and decline. In the third list, the house of David ends with the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham and David— the coming of the Messiah.

Matthew's intent is to show that Jesus is the legitimate heir to the throne of David. In listing His genealogy we find various types individuals: women and men, Gentiles as well as Jews, those who did evil and those who did good. The Messiah is the Savior of all races and all classes of people.

The section reveals the virginal conception of Jesus. Joseph and Mary were betrothed but not officially married when she was pregnant. Joseph was going to privately divorce her when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream with an explanation of the circumstances. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that impregnated Mary and that Joseph must take her home to be his wife. Furthermore Joseph must name the child Jesus since He is the one who will save His people from their sins.

Matthew then cites Isaiah 7:14 as the passage that predicts the virgin conception of Jesus. With Jesus' coming to earth He is Immanuel—God with us. God is now dwelling in the midst of His people.

Joseph rises from his sleep and immediately does as the angel commands. He takes Mary to be his wife but does not have sexual relations with her until after the Son is born—whom He names Jesus.

Matthew's account is a mixture of the miraculous with the ordinary, the divine with the human. God brought His Son into the world by means of a virginal conception. Matthew does not focus on the birth itself but on the significance it will play in fulfilling God's plan. The names of the Promised One—Jesus and Immanuel—have significance. They illustrate God has visited His people in order to save them from their sins. The history of the chosen people, which began with Abraham, has now reached its long-awaited goal. The One whom the Law and the Prophets wrote about has finally arrived—God has become human!

QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 1

QUESTION: WHY ARE THE GENEALOGIES OF MATTHEW AND LUKE DIFFERENT?

One of the most-often asked question surrounding the New Testament is the relationship between the genealogy of Matthew and Luke. We note the following differences between the two accounts:

1. Matthew's genealogy works forward while Luke works backwards. Luke's genealogy (3:23-38) starts with Jesus and works back to Adam. Matthew starts with Abraham and works his way forward to Jesus. Therefore Luke goes from son back to father while Matthew goes from father to son.

2. Each gospel has a different end point. Matthew only goes back to the founder of the Hebrew nation—Abraham—while Luke goes back to the first man—Adam.

3. Sometimes Matthew stops and explains the reason for a name (1:2,5) while Luke never does this.

4. Luke's genealogy has seventy-seven names while Matthew has only forty-two.

5. In their common period between Abraham and Jesus, Luke has fifty-six names compared to Matthew's forty-one. Thus Luke adds fifteen extra names for this time period.

6. Of Matthew's forty-one names, Luke has only seventeen that agree with Matthew. Thirteen of them are found in the period between Abraham and David (the only name missing is Ram or Aram),

7. Though there is close agreement from Abraham to David, after David the genealogies diverge. Matthew follows the succession of the throne of Judah from Solomon while Luke's list goes through Nathan, another Son of David. The two genealogies converge only for two names (Shealtiel and Zerubbabel) until Joseph and Jesus are reached.

8. Matthew clearly divides the names into three groups of fourteen. Luke, on the other hand, gives no division of his seventy-seven names. It is possible that he is listing eleven groups of seven but of this we cannot be certain.

9. Matthew lists four women (five if we include Mary) in his genealogy while Luke lists none. This is especially interesting given Luke's attention to women in his gospel.

We do not know what source Matthew used for the period after Zerubbabel, nor Luke's source of the time from David to Joseph. We know that there were public records of genealogies at that time. Flavius Josephus tell us that he traced his own genealogy in "public records" (*Life* 6). But the question remains, "How could these family records be so different?"

Many solutions have been offered to the problem of the two genealogies:

SOLUTION 1.

HARMONY IS NOT POSSIBLE

Many scholars have given up on the idea of harmonizing the two accounts. They argue that the genealogies should be looked at theologically rather than historically. It is true that each account does have a theological connection—Matthew shows Jesus is the king through David while Luke identifies Jesus with all of humanity in tracing Him back to Adam—yet this does not mean they are without historical foundation. The fact-of-the-matter is that there are possible solutions to this problem.

SOLUTION 2.

LUKE RECORDS THE GENEALOGY OF MARY WHILE MATTHEW CHRONICLES THE GENEALOGY OF JOSEPH

This a very old view which has its origin in Annius of Viterbo in 1490. The arguments for this position are as follows:

a.   Luke 3:23 states that Jesus was the supposed son of Joseph. Since Joseph was not the genuine father of Jesus then the following names would not be referring to his family but rather to Mary's.

b.   The absence of the article in Greek shows that Joseph is not a part of the ensuing genealogy.

c.   If Joseph is in the genealogy, then Luke contradicts not only Matthew but also himself where he states that Jesus was virginally conceived.

d.   There is Rabbinic tradition that connects Mary with Heli (or Eli).

If this is the correct view then, through Mary, Jesus would be a physical descendant of David (by Nathan). He would have the legal rights to the throne through his adoptive father Joseph. Hence He would be both the physical and legal heir to David.

This answer, though popular, has its problems.

a.   Luke seems to state clearly that he is giving Joseph's genealogy the "supposed" father of Jesus (3:23). It was not the practice to trace a genealogy through the female line (though females were occasionally mentioned in genealogies). It is true, however, that this genealogy has no human father with which to trace Jesus' ancestry.

b.   The absence of the article in Greek can be attributed to Joseph starting the list, therefore the article before his name would be unnecessary in Greek.

c.   The virgin conception of Jesus through Mary would not prevent the legal rights to be transferred to Jesus seeing that He was adopted by Joseph.

d.   It is unclear whether the Rabbinic tradition applies to this Mary. It does not state that Mary, who comes from Eli, is the mother of Jesus. Another Mary could be in view.

Since Mary is not named in the genealogy the most natural way of reading the text would be assuming that it refers to Joseph. The Greek article that is in front of the list of names is in the masculine gender. If Luke wanted to have Mary in the genealogy he could have named her or else used the feminine article which would have made it clear that he was referring to Mary.

Still, the idea that Luke records Mary's genealogy while Matthew records Joseph's remains a possibility.

Most modern interpreters see both genealogies as Joseph's line. There are, however, sever ways in which they understand the two genealogies relate to one another.

SOLUTION 3.

LUKE IS THE ROYAL OR LEGAL LINE WHILE MATTHEW IS THE NATURAL LINE

This is the oldest known suggested solution to this problem, going all the way back to Julius Africanus (A.D. 225). He argued that Matthew gives Joseph's' natural line while Luke records the royal line. The difference in the two genealogies was due to levirate marriages (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)—marriages where a brother would marry the wife of his dead brother who had not produced any offspring.

According to this view Matthan (Matthew 1:15) had a son, Jacob through his wife Estha. When Matthan died Estha married Melchi (Luke 3:24). They had a son whom they named Heli (Luke 3:23). Heli died without having any children. Thus his half-brother Jacob took his wife by levirate marriage. This would link Jacob's sons to Heli's line. Therefore Joseph could be aligned with both lines: physically to Jacob and legally to Heli. We know that levirate marriages were practiced in Jesus' time (22:24-28), otherwise the question that the Sadducees raised would have been nonsensical.

The problem with this view is that there are two names in Luke's genealogy that are between Heli and Melchi (Mathat and Levi). Since Matthew's list is shorter than Luke's the connection is not impossible, but it is not very likely.

SOLUTION 4.

LUKE RECORDS JOSEPH'S PHYSICAL GENEALOGY WHILE MATTHEW RECORDS THE "ROYAL" GENEALOGY.

This view reverses the previous theory—the royal line is in Matthew while Joseph's physical or natural line is found in Luke. This approach takes note that ancient Judaism argued for two lines for David.

This theory holds that Luke records Joseph's actual physical descendants which go back to David. These descendants of David, through Nathan, were *not* in royal line. Matthew records the royal line of succession to the throne or his "legal descendants." Had the kingdom continued these descendants of David would have ruled.

According to this view, Luke 3:23 records Joseph's actual father (Eli) while Jacob (Matthew 1:16) therefore would have been his adoptive father, or a relative whom Joseph succeeded in the absence of a son of his own. Jacob, therefore, (Matthew 1:15) was childless and Heli was the actual physical father of Joseph.

For this explanation to work there must be another levirate marriage because Matthew 1:16 seemingly has Jacob as Joseph's father, while Luke 3:23 says Joseph is the son of Heli. If Jacob and Heli are brothers then Matthan (Matthew 1:15) and Matthat (Luke 3:24) are the same person. However if these two men are brothers then their father's differ in the two genealogies (Eleazar in Matthew 1:15 and Levi in Luke 3:24). Therefore one must assume *another* levirate marriage or else the line through Eleazar became extinct.

It is not impossible that the two lines would converge at two points (Shealtiel and Joseph) in a period of 1,000 years. This view is possible but as one can see it is very complicated.

SOLUTION 5.

MATTHEW GIVES THE PHYSICAL LINE WHILE LUKE GIVES THE LEGAL AND PHYSICAL LINE.

There is another possibility to harmonize the two accounts by assuming that Jacob and Heli were half-brothers. Matthat and Matthan, according to this view, are not the same person. Joseph, then, is the physical descendant of Jacob (Matthew) by a sister of Heli (Luke) who bears his name. If this view is correct then Matthew gives the physical line and Luke gives the legal and physical line. Luke's line is physical through Heli's sister who has legal claim to the line as the nearest relative to Heli.

The problem with this view concerns how Joseph could be called the son of Heli since Heli would not have been his father and there is no levirate marriage.

SOLUTION 6.

LUKE'S IS THE LEGAL LINE REFLECTING THE ADOPTION OF JOSEPH.

This solution has Mary as the heiress to Eli because she had no brothers. Upon his marriage to Mary, Joseph was adopted by Eli as his son. The Bible speaks of other cases where a father did not have a physical son (Numbers 27:1-11; 1 Chronicles 2:34-35; Ezra 2:61; Nehemiah 7:63). If this solution be the case, then Matthew gives the physical line of Joseph while Luke the legal line.

If Luke does represent the legal line then it would offer a solution to the cursed line of Jeconiah—a name that appears in Matthew's genealogy but not in Luke's. Luke, therefore, would wipe out any recognition of Jechoniah's line from the official royal line because of the curse which was placed upon him (Jeremiah 22:30).

To add to the complicated nature of this issue, there is the statement in Haggai 2:3 that Zerubabel received the signet ring. This may indicate that the curse had been removed from Jeconiah's line.

SUMMARY TO THE GENEALOGY PROBLEM

Any solution to this problem must remain only in the realm of possibility since we cannot know for certain which theory is correct as New Testament scholar, Craig Blomberg, notes, "Knowing which of these solutions is more likely probable is impossible unless new evidence comes up" (Blomberg, pp. 53,54).

John Broadus sums up the proper attitude:

> We are little concerned to show which of them is best, and under no obligation to prove that either of them is certainly correct; for we are not attempting to establish from the Genealogies the credibility of Matthew's Gospel. When the object is simply to *refute an objection* . . . founded upon an apparent discrepancy between two statements, it is sufficient to present any hypothetical explanation of the difficulty which is possible. If the explanation be altogether reasonable and probable, so much the better. And if there be two, or several, possible explanations, these reinforce each other in removing the ground for objection, and it is not necessary to choose between them (Broadus, p. 7).

QUESTION

WHY DID MATTHEW ADD THESE PARTICULAR WOMEN TO THE GENEALOGY?

In Greek and Jewish culture women had few legal rights. They would not inherit property of give testimony in a court of law. It is recorded that in the first century the Pharisees would begin the day by thanking God they were not born one of three things: a slave, a Gentile, or a woman! Therefore it was strange to see women having a prominent part in the genealogy of Jesus.

The naming of women in a genealogy is rare in Jewish lists. The four women usually mentioned in Jewish writings were Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. It is not so much that women are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus, but rather the specific women that are singled out. As we have already mentioned they include: a women who seduced her father-in-law and had twins born out of wedlock, a lying prostitute, a Moabitess (from a cursed people), and the wife of a Hittite with whom David committed adultery and later murdered her husband to cover it up. It is hard to imagine a more unlikely group to be candidates for the lineage of the Messiah! Yet Matthew lists them. It must be also mentioned that they are not in the lineage of the Messiah in the same sense that the men—their names *did not* have to be included. Furthermore Matthew could have mentioned the mothers of all the other kings as well. But he did not. Therefore there must have been some specific reason for including these particular women in the genealogy of Jesus. There are several possible reasons as why these four women (five if we include Mary) are specifically mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. They include:

1.   THE FOUR WOMEN WERE NOTORIOUS SINNERS

One suggestion is that all were specifically involved in sexual sin. The problem is that Ruth was not implicated in sexual sin as the others. All, however, were involved in marriage irregularity and all four were vindicated by God's subsequent blessings.

2.   THE FOUR WOMEN WERE GENTILES

Matthew wants to show that ultimately including Gentiles in God's purposes is not something strange. He does this by showing that the Messiah has Gentiles among His ancestors. It is however, not clear that Tamar and Bathsheba were Gentiles though it is quite reasonable that Tamar, a local girl, was probably a Canaanite, and Bathsheba, the wife of a Hittite, was also a Gentile.

3.   THE WOMEN WERE A TESTIMONY TO THE GRACE OF GOD.

One of the reasons for the inclusion of these women may have been the foreshadowing of the gracious character of Jesus. He invited all to come to Him for rest (11:28) which include the sinful and the miserable. Thus the women mentioned in the genealogy are a picture of the gospel.

4.   THEY SHOW GOD'S SPECIAL PROVIDENCE

A further reason for listing these women is their providential connection in the line of the Messiah. Tamar was the mother of the children of Judah—the one of twelve sons of Jacob who was singled out for the Messianic line. Ruth was the mother in the line that culminated with the first king David. Rahab was connected with the earlier Jesus (Joshua) and Bathsheba was the first mother of the line of kings.

5.   THE WOMEN IN THE GENEALOGY PREFIGURE MARY

Matthew seems to have wanted to disarm criticism by showing that in the Messiah's lineage God worked through some unlikely people. Those who were receptive to His will include Gentiles and a prostitute. Ruth was a virtuous woman though she was from Moab. Rahab, though a prostitute, was saved by her righteous action in hiding the spies. James called her "justified" (James 2:25). She is also listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11:31. Though Tamar and Bathsheba were adulteresses, Tamar was pronounced more righteous than Judah (Genesis 38:26), and Bathsheba bore a son who was named beloved of the Lord (2 Samuel 12:25).

The virgin conception through Mary would also be surprising and seemingly scandalous. However, the women mentioned serve as a reminder that God works His purposes in unusual ways and that we should be prepared for the surprising events. The four provide an impressive precedent for Jesus' birth of an unmarried mother from an obscure background. Furthermore, Matthew closes his genealogy by stating that Mary was his legally acknowledged wife.

QUESTION

WHY DOES THE THIRD SECTION OF MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY CONTAIN ONLY THIRTEEN GENERATIONS, NOT FOURTEEN?

When the names are added up on the last list of Matthew's genealogy it seems there are only thirteen instead of fourteen. There are several ways of explaining why this seems to be so.

Jeconiah Has Two References

The first reference to Jeconiah should be Jehoiakim, who was the son of Josiah and the father of Jehoiachin. The second reference to Jechoniah would be Jehoiachin. Both names (Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin) are spelled the same in Greek. This would account for the fact that Jehoiakim is seemingly missing from Matthew's genealogy as well as have each group equal fourteen names.

We Could Count Jechoniah Twice

Another possibility is that Jechoniah (Jehoiachin) should be counted twice. This is because he lived both before and after the Babylonian captivity. If this is done, then there is no problem with having three groups of fourteen.

It Is A Scribal Error

Some have argued for a scribal error in the manuscripts. The earliest copyists of Matthew accidentally omitted the name Jehoiakim—whose inclusion would make fourteen on the final list.
Others have suggested that the name Asir dropped out between Jechoniah and Shealtiel (1 Chronicles 3:17 LXX).

Mary Is The Fourteenth Name

A simple explanation is to count Mary as the fourteenth person in the genealogy. This would make all of them equal.

The Ancient Method Of Reckoning

Ancient reckoning always included the first and last elements in a series. Therefore we have (1) Abraham to David (2) David to Josiah (the last free king), (3) Jeconiah (the first king of the Babylonian captivity) to Jesus. This would have fourteen names in each division.

It Was Typical Jewish Practice

Writing in the middle of the 17th century, the great Hebraist John Lightfoot offered another possible solution. He noted that it was typical Jewish practice to round off certain numbers.

> Although all things do not square exactly in this threefold number of fourteen generations, yet there is no reason why this should be charged as a fault upon Matthew, when in the Jewish schools themselves it obtained for a custom, yea, almost an axiom, to reduce things and numbers to the very same, when they were near alike. The thing will be plain by an example of two, when a hundred almost might be produced (Lightfoot, Volume 2, p. 15).

After giving several example he concluded:

> They do so very much delight in such kind of conceits . . . So that if a Jew carps at thee . . . Matthew for the unevenness of thy fourteens, out of their own schools and writings thou hast that, not only whereby thou mayest defend thyself, but retort upon them (Lightfoot, ibid., p. 16).

QUESTION

DOES ISAIAH 7:14 PREDICT THE VIRGIN CONCEPTION OF JESUS?

Though Isaiah 7:14 is cited by Matthew as a prophecy of the virgin conception of the Messiah there are a number of objections that arise to his use of this passage.

The Word For Virgin

First, it is argued that Matthew depends upon the Greek word *parthenos* (virgin) to come up with the prophecy of the virgin conception. However, the Hebrew word *almah,* from which it is translated, means only "young woman" who may or may not be a virgin. If Isaiah really wanted to predict the virgin conception then he would have used, so the argument goes, the more specific Hebrew term for virgin, *bethulah*. Matthew, therefore, used a term in Greek that was more specific than the original Hebrew text.

This objection is not as weighty as it seems. First, the word *bethulah* is not that specific of a term as some claim. Old Testament specialist E.J. Young wrote, "The word in question is ambiguous. Does it mean a virgin, a betrothed virgin, or a married woman? I am convinced that it may man any one of the three" (Edward J. Young, article on "The Virgin Birth" in *The Banner*, April 15, 1955, cited by Hendriksen, p. 137).

Furthermore, *almah* is never used of a married woman in the Bible or in any other reference. *Almah* is specifically refers to a young woman, with the implication that she is a virgin. The word is found only 7 times in the Old Testament and is used of both girls or young women, at least two of whom were unmarried (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8). But it is not used elsewhere in connection with childbirth (or even marriage).

Therefore the use of *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 points to some type of unique birth. If merely a normal birth were in Isaiah's mind, he would have used the Hebrew word *issa* (woman, wife) in this context rather than *almah*.

Used Of *Parthenos*

The indication that Isaiah was thinking of a birth outside the normal pattern of childbirth within marriage is what may have led the Septuagint translators to use the Greek word *parthenos* to translate *almah.*

It is clear that the translators of the Septuagint with their use of *parthenos* understood it to refer to more than an ordinary birth. *Parthenos* normally means virgin, the Greek word for "young woman" is *neaneas*. It is possible that *parthenos* could be used for a woman who has lost her virginity (Genesis 34:3) yet this is not the normal meaning of the term. The fact that the Greek translators used *parthenos*, rather than the simple term for young woman, shows they understood there would be something unique about the child's birth.

Therefore, from the Hebrew word that Isaiah chose, as well as the Greek term used to translate it, it is consistent that this woman who conceived the child would be a virgin.

The Context Of Isaiah

The second objection concerns the context of the prediction of this birth (Isaiah 7). It is argued that the promise of the child that will be born (Isaiah 7:14) is specifically referring to the immediate historical situation. Isaiah was speaking about current king of Judah (Ahaz) not about something that would happen in the distant future. The prophet promises a sign to king Ahaz and the entire House of David—the birth of a son. This prophecy may have been fulfilled by the birth of Hezekiah. For it was during his infancy the two kings feared by Ahaz (of Syria and Israel) suffered ruin. Therefore the context is clear that fulfillment is required in the immediate future. Consequently, this prophecy, by its nature, was restricted to the time of Ahaz and has nothing to do with the future.

A Double Fulfillment

This objection is usually answered in one of two ways. The first answer sees a double fulfillment in Isaiah's prophecy, one for the immediate future and one for the distant future. It is argued as follows: although the immediate context of Isaiah is clear, it is also clear from the wider context of Isaiah that there is more than this involved. The fact that the name Immanuel is reintroduced in Isaiah 8:8, 10, and the recurrent theme of a child to be born as deliverer (9:6-7;11:1ff), indicate that 7:14 is to be seen as preparing the way for a developing theme in this section of Isaiah—the Messiah is coming and He will bring in a golden age.

The Context Is Crucial

Furthermore, the surrounding passages speak of the beginning of this promised age where the wicked will be judged and righteous blessed (Isaiah 2:2-4; 9:2-7; 11:1-16). Consequently this passage has wider application than the promise of a son born to Ahaz.

Robert Gundry notes:

> Since Isaiah goes on to speak of the near future, we are to think of his prophecy as having come to pass partly during the youth of Mahershalahashbaz (see Isa 7:15-8:22). But the part of his prophecy having to do with the virginal conception and birth of a divine child awaited fulfillment till Jesus' nativity. The NT distinction between two advents of Christ similarly rests on the phenomenon of partial fulfillment followed at some distance by a completion. Examples abound if we do not deny predictive prophecy out of hand (Gundry p. 25).

Only The Virgin Conception

A second way in which this objection is answered is to see the prophecy of Isaiah referring solely to the virgin conception of the Messiah with nothing to do with the near future in Isaiah's day. The main argument is that the prophecy is that a virgin will conceive a child. This it is argued, can only refer to Jesus, not to some unnamed child in Isaiah's day. William Hendriksen writes:

> As to Matthew's reference to Isa. 7:14, if . . . Isaiah did indeed refer to a virgin, there is no discrepancy whatever between Isa. 7:14 and Matt. 1:23. On the other hand, if Isaiah was thinking

of a young married woman who, with the help of her husband, conceived and gave birth to a child, it is difficult to see how Matthew could regard Christ's birth "of the virgin Mary" to be a *fulfilment* of Isa. 7:14. The *'almah* mentioned in Isa. 7:14 cannot have been at the same time virgin and non-virgin. Moreover, it is clearly as an *'almah* that she conceives and gives birth to a child. The interpreter has no right, as is sometimes done, first to introduce her as an a young unmarried woman, and then surreptitiously, as it were to let her get married before she conceives a bears a son (Hendriksen, p. 138).

Is The Virgin Conception Of Pagan Origin?

There is also the objection that the Virgin conception of Jesus derives from a pagan origin rather than from the passage in Isaiah. It is, so the argument goes, another story of the gods coming down, having intercourse with a woman or a goddess mother, and producing some sort of heavenly offspring. However this objection has no weight when the facts are considered as A.H. McNeile notes:

Several writers have held that the origin of the belief [in the virgin conception] was not Jewish but pagan . . . Pagan myths of goddess mothers whose sons were divine redeemers are easy to collect. But, as these writers admit, the belief produced from such myths could not have taken its rise in Palestinian Jewish circles. The adaptation of pagan ideas must have been the work of Gentile Christians and their incorporation into the Christian tradition must have taken place at a later date. But such a theory is confronted with the difficulty that the narratives of the Nativity are intensely Jewish; the language is Hebraic, and the atmosphere Palestinian. If the portions which deal with the virgin birth are Gentile insertions into an earlier Jewish story, they should present distinctively Greek features; but they do not; they are as Hebraic as the surrounding context. . . This is not only true of Matthew's account but also of Luke 1:34,35. . .
We are thus led to the conclusion that no non-Christian source, written or oral, has been found which satisfactorily accounts for this phenomena of the Gospel narratives. It is impossible to determine how the event of the Virgin Birth was known to Christians. From the nature of the case it would not be common knowledge at first . . . It is often said that Matthew's account must have been derived from Joseph, and Luke's from the Lord's mother; this however cannot be considered proved and must not be pressed, although they were obviously the ultimate authority for the fact. But at least the written narrative was current within the lifetime of the members of the family who were in a position to know the facts and could have contradicted false statements (McNeile, pp. 11-13).

We conclude that the various objections to Matthew using Isaiah 7:14 as a prediction the virgin conception of Christ do not have any weight. Clearly Isaiah 7:14 is a passage that contained Messianic overtones and the surrounding context confirms this.