

GOSPEL OF THE MESSIAH

Message 6

Text: Matthew 1:18-25

Date: March 2, 2014

INTRO: We are looking at the four NT accounts of the life of Christ and going through them in chronological fashion. The first point we looked at was the introduction of the Messiah to the world. We got that from Luke 1:1-5 and John 1:1-18.

We are presently point two of this series, that I have called the preparation of the Messiah for the world. In this section we will see the conception and birth of both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. After we complete this second point of the preparation of the Messiah for the world, we will go to the third point, *The Authentication Of The Messiah To The World*. In that section we will see evidence upon evidence that He truly was the Messiah. And between the second and third points we will be missing most of the first 30 years of the lives of both John and Jesus.

By this time we have looked at both the conception of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ. John was the forerunner of Christ and was conceived six months before Jesus was. All recorded Scripture that surrounds this part of the Gospels is found in Luke 1:6-56. Luke then told us about the conception of Christ and the birth of John the Baptist. All of this information is only found in the Gospel of Luke. But now we come to the birth of Christ, and this brings us to the first chapter in the book of Matthew.

Now, the birth of Jesus Christ and His coming to earth the first time is one of the most significant events of all of this present earth's history. When He returns to earth, that will be another of the greatest events of all time.

So it is to this great event of the birth of Christ we now go. It is not very often that we look at such portions of Scripture apart from it being Christmas. If it will be possible for me, I will also go through this section rather quickly, since I have covered these passages on Christmas mornings.

So we want to begin looking at the point I have called the birth and early years of Christ.

D. Birth And Early Years Of Jesus Christ

1. Genealogy of Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:1-17)

So, who can tell me to whom it is believed that Matthew wrote his Gospel? (The Jews.) And who can tell me what picture scholars believe Matthew presents of Christ? (As king of the Jews.) And in presenting Jesus Christ as King of the Jews, if the Jews will at all except this book, Matthew knows he must prove that Jesus has a right to be the king of the Jews. So his book begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

So, let us go to Matthew 1 (read 1:1-2). Now note in verse 1 the word 'book'. It comes from the NT Greek word 'biblos'. A biblos was writing material made from the papyrus plant. We get our word *paper* from this plant which was used to make writing material. The word 'biblos' then came to mean a book, and we get our word 'Bible' from it.

The book referred to here is verses 1-16, which is a record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Some messages down the road we will look at another genealogy in the book of Luke and we will discuss both there. But this genealogy traces Jesus' lineage from Joseph, Mary's husband, to Abraham. And though Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus, he was the adoptive father, and this gave Jesus the divine right to be the King of the Jews, or the Messiah by birthright. Luke will give us Jesus right to the throne of David by *bloodline*.

I have wondered how Matthew came about this genealogy. Did he, when He began to wonder if Jesus, the son of the carpenter in Nazareth, was actually the Messiah, go to Nazareth and check out Jesus' genealogy? Or did he do this when he set out to write his book? I suppose that Matthew knew that if the Jews were to read his account of the Gospel, they would first have to know that Jesus Christ actually qualified by birthright to the throne of David, and this would require a genealogy as proof.

Now note in verse 1 that this genealogy begins by stating that Jesus Christ was the son of David. That went back 1,000 years from the time of Christ's birth. And David, it says, was the son of Abraham. That goes back another 1,000 years. And right here we have two of the most important names that could be listed in a person's genealogy who was to qualify as king. David was the first king of the line of Judah, and Abraham was the first Jew. He began the Jewish race.

In verse 2 we have the famous three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now it says Jacob begat Judah and his brothers. But the genealogy will here continue only through Judah. From Genesis 49:8-12 we learn that the kingly line will come from Judah. So immediately after the three major patriarchs we have Judah.

I won't take much time in this genealogy, though there is a lot of interesting information. But let me mention here that women were not usually listed in Jewish genealogies. But in this genealogy we have three mention. Look at verse 5 (read 3, then 5 and 6). Furthermore, Rahab and Ruth are Gentile women. So here, very early in the Gospels we find the Gentiles mentioned in numerous ways.

2. Preparation of Joseph for Christ's birth

Well, Matthew will now give us some verses that are very familiar to most of us in 1:18-25. We have in verses 18-19, Joseph's dilemma (read). Mary, who would become the mother of Jesus Christ, and who was betrothed to Joseph was found to be expecting before she became physically united to her husband. Most of you are familiar with this, but in the Jewish culture a couple was first betrothed. I will talk more about this later. **But betrothal is something like our engagement time, only it is as binding as marriage because the covenant of marriage has been made. Usually about a year after this, when the bridegroom had prepared a place for them to live, they were united in marriage. And so, to Joseph, it was an earth shaking discovery that

Mary was expecting. There was only one answer for this, and we have here Joseph's dilemma. What is he to do?

Well, Joseph had before him two options. First, he could make her a public example and have her stoned (Ex. 22:13-21). Or, he could use the Mosaic exception of Deuteronomy 24:1-3. He could give her a writing of divorcement and divorce her privately. Verse 19 has told us that this is what he had in mind to do.

But, as he is thinking about this, something happens (read 20-21). Joseph, it seems, fell asleep. Maybe he has not slept for a long time and his nerves have been stretched almost beyond endurance, and now, having finally made his decision he can rest and he falls asleep. And in his dream the angel appears to him. It is likely once more the angel Gabriel.

Now the angel has plainly told Joseph that the child Mary, or Mariam, is expecting has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. And he is instructed not to be afraid to take Mary to him as his wife. And so, instead of waiting the usual year, according to Eedersheim, Joseph married her immediately.

So we have had Joseph's dilemma and his dream. Now in verses 22-23 we have the giving of a divine doctrine (read). The prophecy quoted here is found in Isaiah 7:14. When the newer versions were coming out, the doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ was greatly contested. The Revised Standard Version, of which the OT was completed in 1952, translated Isaiah 7:14 like this: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

However, when Matthew translated that verse in his Gospel, he translated it as virgin. The virgin birth of Christ is a major doctrine. If Jesus Christ was not divine, He was not the Savior of mankind either. One of the doctrines that received much attention shortly after Christ

ascended to heaven was the two natures of Christ. He was both human and divine and this caused a lot of study and disagreement. But the facts remain, He was born of a virgin, and He was both human and divine. Throughout the Gospels we will see the two natures of Christ.

Now note Joseph's decision in verses 24-25 (read). Joseph, instead of divorcing Mary, completed their marriage agreement and took her as his wife. For those who understand human nature, one must say of Joseph, he must have been one incredible man.

Now let me make a note here. It says Joseph and Mary, though married, did not unite physically until after Jesus was born. The clear indication is that after Jesus was born Joseph and Mary had other children. The Roman Catholic church, against clear Biblical evidence says that Mary was the 'ever virgin'. She always remained a virgin. That is simply another Catholic heresy. Mark 6:3 says, "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him." And there are a number of other references to Jesus' siblings.

Now I want to take us back to verse 19 (read). I had not originally planned to expand on this verse at this time since I have dealt with it in other messages and in Catechism class. But in thinking it over, I thought I should clarify the meaning of this verse as I understand it. The teaching that allows for divorce and remarriage has stormed the church universally, and it is creeping into our community more and more.

So let me give you a proposition. Here it is: The only divorce allowed for in the OT was in the case of unfaithfulness during the time of betrothal. This is a sin of fornication. There was no divorce permitted for adultery at all.

So now, let me give you the explanation for that proposition which will help us to understand Moses' exception in Deuteronomy 24, Joseph's

option in Matthew 1:19, and Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. In Jewish marriage, there were several stages. There was the selection of the bride, which was usually done by the parents. Then, usually about a year before the couple was joined physically, the contract, or agreement, or covenant was drawn up. This was what is called betrothal. After this covenant was made, the couple was considered to be husband and wife, but they did not yet live together. The husband now went back with his father and prepared a place for him and his wife to live at his parents place. The wife, on the other hand, now prepared to leave home and go be with her husband.

Now this time of betrothal was somewhat like our time of engagement, with this exception. To break this betrothal required a divorce. And, as I understand it, this divorce could only take place for one reason. If unfaithfulness occurred between betrothal and marriage, a divorce was required to break the covenant. It is my conclusion that the requirement for a divorce after betrothal, historically comes from the much debated Deuteronomy 24 passage (read 1-4). I further believe that later, the Jews misconstrued the Deuteronomy 24 passage as allowing for divorce after physical union had taken place. To understand Joseph's options in our passage in Matthew, let me condense the teaching of Moses on marriage. But before I do that, let me say that you will have a very hard time keeping up. For those interested, you will be able to get the notes later from sermonaudio.com/lhec.

So we begin with Moses teaching on this subject. First, if two unmarried persons were unchaste before betrothal, they must marry and they can never divorce. So go to Deuteronomy 22 (read 28-29). Now, why could this couple never divorce? Because they had already been unchaste before betrothal took place. So this case allows for no divorce.

Second, if any man was unchaste with a married woman, both were to die (read Deut. 22:22). So, again there is to be no divorce.

Third, if a betrothed woman was forced by a man, then only the man was to die (Deut. 22:25-27). This case does not allow for divorce either.

Fourth, if a couple was officially married and adultery took place by either partner, then the unfaithful partner was to be stoned (Lev. 20:10). This case, for which most churches allow divorce today, did not allow for divorce either.

Fifth, if a man claimed that his wife had been unfaithful to him during the time of betrothal, which was the sin of fornication, then the case had to be verified. If it was true, the unfaithful woman was to be stoned (Deut. 22:20-21). If the man's claim was disproved, and it became evident he was just trying to get rid of his wife, then he had to pay a fine to the wife's father, and he could never divorce her (read Deut. 22:18-19). Again, no divorce was permitted after this. Why? Because the only ground on which divorce was ever permitted had been disproved.

Sixth, if unfaithfulness happened during betrothal and the husband discovered it after marriage, he was given the option of giving her a divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, rather than having her stoned. This is the Mosaic exception as I understand it.

Now we go to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which we read earlier. This is the most debated passage in all the OT on this subject. So distorted did the teachings of the Jews become that the followers of Hillel allowed for divorce for almost anything. But what is the intent of this passage?

Well, the translation of the KJV has not been a help in understanding this verse. It says, "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house." The command in this verse is that if a man has a wife and she finds no favor in his

sight, that he is to give her a certificate of divorce and send her out of his house.

Now if you are using the KJV it says in verse 1, "...let him write her a bill of divorcement..." But there is no imperative verb here. In verse 3, where the Hebrew construction is exactly the same and it should then read the same, it has now translated it, "and write her a bill of divorcement..." That is the way it should have been done in verse 1 as well and it is an inconsistency of translation.

Let me now read this passage from the NKJV. It says, "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, *if* the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."

The command in the KJV is, "...let him write her a bill of divorcement..." But there is no such a command. In the NKJV the command is that if a woman is divorced by one husband, becomes the wife of another and he too divorces her, then the first husband is not to take her back to wife again.

Now, you may ask, "Do you have any ground for connecting Deuteronomy 24:1-4 with Deuteronomy 22:13-21?" Well, I do. Let me quote here from my notes in the Catechism, "For years, it seemed to me that this 'some uncleanness' of Deuteronomy 24 must refer to Deuteronomy 22:13-21. This speaks of a young lady who had been betrothed but did not tell her husband before marriage that she had

been unfaithful to him during betrothal or even before. But after marriage he discovered that she had been unfaithful before marriage. In 22:14, it says he brings *occasions of speech against her* or *charges her with shameful conduct*. The words 'speech against her' KJV, or 'charges her' NKJV is the word 'dabar'. This is the same word as used in 24:1 'some' (dabar) uncleanness. I propose that the words, 'he has found some uncleanness in her' in 24:1 mean the same as the charges of unfaithfulness in 22:14. That would mean she had been unfaithful during the time of betrothal. In 24:3 this woman had been divorced by one husband, and then married to another, and the second husband made the same discovery as the first husband. Deuteronomy 24:3 says of the second husband that he *hates* her or *detests* her. In 22:13, the *detesting* of the wife by the husband was because the husband claimed he had found her not to be a virgin. The word to 'hate' or 'detest' in 22:13 and 24:3 are the same word. So I believe that this gives ground to see that these two passages speak of the same sin. So the 'some uncleanness' is the same as the unfaithfulness of 22:20-21 and the 'hating' or 'detesting' her are for the same cause, her unfaithfulness during betrothal.

"Now, if that is correct, it raises the difficulty which kept me from connecting these two passages for years. I felt there must be a connection. But because 22:20-21 says such a woman was to be stoned, and 24:1-4 allowed for divorce, this seemed to bring about a contradiction. As I continued to study this problem, it finally dawned on me that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 could be the Mosaic concession. If so, the Mosaic concession spoken of by the Jesus in Matthew 19:8 could be the Mosaic concession of divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to the requirement to stone such a woman in Deuteronomy 22:20-21. If that is the case, the original requirement was to stone a woman who had committed fornication before physical marriage took place. But in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, when some had discovered their wives had been unfaithful before marriage, they rejected them instead of having them stoned.

So Moses, instead of maintaining that they go back and stone the woman, required that the husband at least give her a certificate of divorce. If this is the case, and I believe it is, then this is the Mosaic concession, or the allowance, spoken of by the Jesus in Matthew 19."

To summarize all this in brief then, it is this: A couple who were unchaste before betrothal had to be married with no option for divorce. If a woman was unfaithful during betrothal, she was to be stoned, but with the man being given the option of divorcing her instead in Deuteronomy 24. If unfaithfulness took place after marriage, there were no exceptions. The unfaithful persons had to be stoned. So, for those who found that their wives had been unfaithful during betrothal, they could either have their wives stoned or they were given the option to divorce them instead.

Now we go to Matthew 1:19 (read). Joseph here had the option of making Mary a public example by having her stoned, or he could use the Mosaic exception, and that is what thought he would do until the angel intervened for Mary. Now go to Matthew 5:32 (read). Before I tell you what I think Jesus is saying, let me mention to you that the "but" of verse 32 is not a strong but. The Greek has *kai*, which is *and*, and *alla*, which is a strong *but*, and *de* which is in between the two. What is used here is not *alla*, but *de*. He is not contrasting what Moses said, He is saying what Moses said in a different way. What Jesus is saying in brief is something like this, "Moses said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce', and I will add to that, that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except fornication, as Moses permitted, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced for any reason except fornication commits adultery." Well, I cannot take time for more details here. If you would like more details you can get that on sermonaudio.com/lhec, and find message 4 on divorce and remarriage.

Matthew 19 gives the same teaching as Matthew 5.

What we can conclude is that Moses, Joseph the betrothed of Mary, and Jesus all held to the same exception clause and that it was only for the time of betrothal, not for unfaithfulness after marriage. Divorce was only allowed in the case of fornication, not adultery. Now, think about it, if it had not been for the Mosaic exception of Deuteronomy 24, then OT law would have required Mary to be stoned no matter who the father of the child was. When you think of it in that light, is the Mosaic exception not amazing?

Well, with regard to the life of Christ, from here on, in Matthew's Gospel, he does not tell us more about the birth of Christ until after Jesus has been born and named and Joseph and Mary, for the time being, have moved to Bethlehem. But Luke will tell us about His birth and we will go to that next time.

CONCL: So, let us conclude briefly. Matthew, who will write about Jesus the King, has introduced his book with a genealogy that shows Jesus has a right to this title by giving His genealogy and tracing it back through David to Abraham.

Matthew gives us Joseph's dilemma; his betrothed is expecting. When he comes to a decision as to what to do, and he falls asleep, an angel comes and tells him what is actually the case with Mary and he is encouraged to marry her. We are then given the divine doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ, and Joseph's final decision: He will marry her. This he does, and when the child is born, he calls Him Jesus.

But we explained then how it was that Joseph could come to the decision to divorce Mary instead of having her stoned. This has, as I see it, its roots in the Mosaic concession or the Mosaic exception that a man in such a case could choose to have his wife stoned or he could choose to divorce her. So divorce was permitted in the case of fornication, but not in the case of adultery.