

The Gospel of Matthew

Ancestry and Birth

Interpreting the Text:

1. How do the unique aspects of Matthew's version of the nativity story reflect Matthew's unique message? Do you find it useful to distinguish between Matthew's version and the one found in Luke?
2. Matthew references prophecies contained in the Hebrew Bible in the first three chapters of his gospel. How do these connections influence how we understand the details of Jesus' birth and John the Baptist's proclamation?
3. John the Baptist preached a message of repentance and chastised the Pharisees and Sadducees for not bearing fruit "worthy of repentance" (3:8). He warned of the coming judgment and eternal punishment for the unrepentant, who are destined for destruction. How does Matthew frame repentance as a part of the "good news" of the Gospel?
4. Matthew's genealogy mentions several women from the Hebrew Bible. Why does Matthew take pains to include these women in his explanation of Jesus' ancestry?

Applying the Text:

1. In the genealogy and birth story, Matthew emphasizes Jesus' Jewishness, but he also includes key examples of Gentiles who are incorporated into God's plan. What are the implications of these features of Matthew's story for today's world?
2. A voice from heaven says Jesus is "my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (3:17). Is this a description that applies only to Jesus, or do you think it also applies to us today?
3. Joseph briefly considers dismissing Mary when he finds out that she is pregnant but changes his mind after the angel's visit. How do you perceive Joseph within the story as Matthew tells it?
4. In Matthew 1 and 2, the author repeatedly affirms each step of the story with scriptural references from the Old Testament. How do these citations affect your understanding of the story?

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