

What's in a Name?

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MAIN VERSES

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This is going to help us this morning on our quest to be like our king. We're in Matthew chapter 1, if anybody wants to follow along in their own translation, if you have one different than the one I use that you like. I'm going to read the entire chapter. It's not long, so just bear with me. Matthew chapter 1, an account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers. Judah fathered Perez and Zerah by Tamar. Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Aram. Aram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nashon. Nashon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz by Rahab. Boaz fathered Obed by Ruth. Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered King David. David fathered Solomon by Uriah's wife. Solomon fathered Rehoboam. Rehoboam fathered Abijah. Abijah fathered Asa. Asa fathered Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat fathered Joram. Joram fathered Uzziah. Uzziah fathered Jotham. Jotham fathered Ahaz. Ahaz fathered Hezekiah. Hezekiah fathered Manasseh. Manasseh fathered Ammon. Ammon fathered Josiah. And Josiah fathered Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. After the exile to Babylon, Jeconiah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud. Abiud fathered Eliakim. Eliakim fathered Azor. Azor fathered Zadok. Zadok fathered Achim. Achim fathered Elihud. Elihud fathered Eliezer. Eliezer fathered Mathon. Mathon fathered Jacob. And Jacob fathered Joseph, the husband of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, who is called the Messiah. So all the generations from Abraham to David were 14 generations, and from David until the exile to Babylon, 14 generations. And from the exile to Babylon until Messiah, 14 generations. The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way. After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Now all of this took

place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet. See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son.

Father, I ask that everyone here would hear what you want communicated today, that I would be clear in what you want communicated, that we would be able to take this first chapter of the first book of the New Testament of Scripture and look at it with your eyes. I ask these things in the name of your Son, Jesus the Messiah. Amen.

What's in a Name?

So I've titled the message today "What's in a Name?" because ultimately what we're going to look at this morning is the name, the name of Jesus, the name given to Yeshua in Scripture here in Matthew. It's a little bit different for me because usually I talk about David, as most of you are probably used to. I just finished doing the early life of David with the teenagers, so I've got all kinds of David material ready to go. To be honest, I was planning to work with the teenagers next on a subject that many of them are actually really excited about. But as I'm standing up here telling you what I'm looking at, it's just kind of funny. It's the topic of violence in the Bible. I will look at that someday, but after some reflection, after a lot of different conversation with a lot of different people, it became clear to me that I have spent a lot of time in the Old Testament, or as I will largely refer to it as the Hebrew Scriptures, and not nearly enough time in the New Testament. Outside of a few chapters in Mark, it's really been two years since I did any of the New Testament books with the kids, so it's time. So you guys are going to get today the first lesson that they will get starting next week, which is the first chapter of Matthew. And as I was deciding what to preach about this week, it just became clear to me that, well, I'm really enjoying studying Matthew. So we will talk about that.

I love to study the Bible. It's such a weird book. In my cultural context, it is so strange. And I love to study it, diving into any given section, trying to understand it the way that the original audience would have likely heard it. Who it was written directly to in the time of authorship is something I really love. And for me, this is a really enlightening way to read Scripture. I will answer that if you want me to. Please don't apologize. I couldn't help it. If anybody's phone rings, if you want to hand it to me, I will answer it right here. P. Wilson.

So it became clear to me, after all this discussion, a lot of which was with my wife, with some other people as well, that it was time to look at a gospel. I've been hesitant to do it for a while because—and I don't know if any of you are like me—but I've been hesitant because I feel like I'm familiar with the gospels in a way that I never had been familiar with the Hebrew scriptures

in my tradition growing up. I grew up in the traditional evangelical church. And for anybody who's like me in that way, you may feel that way, especially about the first couple of chapters in a book like Matthew. Because we grow up—this is the first chapter in what are two chapters of the Christmas story, traditionally—and we grow up with this. We grow up hearing the songs and singing the hymns and doing all of the things every year. And you feel like you're just really familiar with the story. So what is there to gain? To quote the Bible Project, my belief is, has been, and is that the Bible is a unified story that leads to Jesus. It's the story of our Messiah. And I've come to realize that I haven't spent enough time talking about that story. So it's time to do that with the teenagers, but you guys get this first.

So Matthew chapter 1—or like I said, as I knew it growing up—the beginning of the Christmas story. Now I bring this up not because I'm going to look at it from that perspective, but because that is honestly always how I've thought of this section of Scripture. Even today, as I think about it differently than I did as a kid, Christmas for me is still a... It's still a time of year that, as much of my family still celebrates, it's a time of year that is still a powerful thing and probably always will be. And that used to make me a little uncomfortable, but it doesn't anymore. And that's definitely how I engaged with this section growing up. Matthew was the story of Christmas in the beginning, the story of Easter at the end, and some good parables in the middle. And my feeling was that I already knew it. That turned out to be a big mistake as I started studying this. I don't study the Bible by myself. I don't sit down with a Bible and go, "All right, Bible, tell me what you want me to learn." I get a lot of resources from a lot of different people, from a lot of really smart men and women who have done a lot of work before me, and I try to take in all the information. And it was no different when starting to study Matthew. I've got some awesome new books. But I honestly figured, as I did this, the first couple of lessons would be really easy because I was already familiar with the material, and I was wrong.

And I want to look at this today: What claims are being made by Matthew about Yeshua? What decisions do I have to make in response? And what really is in a name? And why on earth is the majority of this a genealogy?

Understanding Ancient Biographies

So I want to get some historical stuff out of the way. I promise I'll be fast, but this is really helpful for me. Matthew has been considered throughout history, since it was written anyway, to be a biography. Ancient biographies don't work the way that modern biographies do, at least not in our culture. They could start in a subject's adulthood, for instance, the way that Mark does, which is also a biography. Ancient biographers had the freedom to rearrange their

material topically. They didn't have to go chronological, and that was considered okay. They could also expand or abridge accounts depending on what they were trying to communicate about the person or persons that they were trying to teach about. This happens in Matthew specifically when he's using Mark as a source, but both Matthew and Luke use Mark as a source. And a lot of those are contained within each book. Now, biographies and histories are different genres in the ancient world, but they had significant overlap. Historians also wrote very differently in the ancient world than we do today—what we consider a history. Where biographers and historians lack definite sources, they would simply construct as reasonable an account as they could. And that was generally considered okay. The point here is that biographers intended biographies to be, while teaching about a specific person, essentially historical works. The accounts with the most potential eyewitnesses to the events were given much more credence than those that didn't. This is largely why we have the four accounts that we do as Scripture today. It's because they were the accounts. There were lots of accounts of Jesus in the ancient world, but these four specifically were considered to be the best accounts with the most eyewitnesses. Many other accounts written after the fact didn't have the authority that the eyewitness accounts did. So anyway, we're not going to do too much more history, but we'll wrap it up. The point here is Matthew was reporting on a historical event. He wasn't making the story up, but at the same time, he crafted it very carefully.

And the evidence for this is overwhelming. Matthew has chosen a few stories to highlight in the first chapter to communicate the claim that he wants to make about Yeshua. And they are all connected to his origins. I think the word origin is going to be a helpful word for us as we go through this. So remember that word, origin, as we go through this.

The Meaning of Origins

And let's look at the first verse, actually the first half of verse, [Matthew 1](#), 1a says, an account of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. I think I can safely assume that most of your translations, does anybody have a Bible out by chance? Just real quick. What is, in whatever translations you have, does it say genealogy there where it does for me? The book of the genealogy, you see, and yours even says Yeshua HaMashiach, which I won't get into that, but it still says genealogy. This is a Greek word that we know. The word in Greek, and by the way, I will butcher it, just like I butchered, I'm sure, all the names in the genealogy. But as I tell the teenagers, just say it. It's—no one else is going to know the difference anyway, except maybe Dave Wilber, and it's all right. Sorry, I couldn't help it. So I'm sure I'll butcher this word too. But the word in Greek is genesios. How do you say that? Do you know how to say that? You

probably do, but I have to show it to you. Which is where we get the word genesis, and what follows is a genealogy.

Now let's jump to verse 18 really quick. In fact, just the first half of verse 18. The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way. For those who have their translations out, does it say birth there? Do you want to guess what word is translated as birth here? That's right. Genesis. So I think the point here isn't that this is just about his birth. And it isn't just about his family tree. It's about his origins.

Now, we use this word in a similar way, which I think is helpful. So my youngest brother, I have three brothers, one older and two younger, and my youngest brother is a therapist. If you were to sit down with my brother Mike and talk about whatever you want to talk about with a therapist, in order for him to help in the way that he is trained to help, he needs some information about your origins, where you come from, maybe some people within your family tree. Where you grew up, how you grew up, childhood, what it was like, all of those things. This isn't just because he likes knowing about people and their private information. It's because we as people are shaped by our whole experience. Not only those in our family tree that came before us, but our birth, how we were raised, who our parents are, etc., etc. Our origin story is important for a therapist to understand so that they can understand who we are in the past and why we do what we do, so that they can highlight what we're doing in the present. Sorry, I won't do that again.

Why Origins Matter

This is exactly what Matthew is doing here. He is going to highlight some stories from the past so that he can communicate who Jesus is now. Matthew wants to present Jesus to you and make you deal with who he is and who he claims to be. By dealing with this fact, we will also learn about ourselves. Matthew is saying, as you and I get to know Jesus, we are going to grow in the knowledge of ourselves. So let's read this story with that in mind.

I want to jump to the end of the chapter now, starting in verse 18. The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way. After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit. So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to name him

Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet. See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son. And they will name him Emmanuel, which is translated, God is with us. Excuse me. When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. He married her, but he did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son and he named him Jesus.

Can we be honest with each other here for a minute that sometimes the Bible is really strange? This is a strange story.

A Scandal and Shame

All right, we're going to jump back into history just a little bit so that we can try and get some background information. Because engagement in the first century Jewish culture was different than how we do it. Mary would have likely been between, brace yourselves, 10 to 14 years old when her parents and Joseph's parents, who, by the way, Joseph was likely between 18 and 20, entered into an agreement of betrothal for their children. This would have been more binding than as opposed to engagement in our context. Engagements typically lasted a year, and they began with paying the bride price, whatever was agreed upon by the parents. At this point, the bride and groom were officially pledged to each other, but had yet to consummate the marriage. Advances towards anyone else at this point was considered adulterous. The penalty for adultery in the Hebrew Scriptures was stoning, and this penalty applied to engagements as well. But by the first century, it appears that this was rarely applied, but it still existed.

Joseph was required by religion to divorce Mary and expose her shame. The text says that because he was a righteous man, he planned to divorce her secretly, and I find that very interesting. Joseph is called righteous for going against what would have been the acceptable thing to do in his religion, not only the acceptable thing to do in his religion, but what they considered to be a requirement. All right, back to the text. It says that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit before Joseph had been intimate with her. So he was going to divorce her, but the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream to tell him not to do that. Sure, thank you. She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. And then he quotes Isaiah saying he will be named Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

All right, lots to unpack here. So let's unpack it. First, if this is just a story, if this is all made up, if this is something that you are making up to try and make Jesus look awesome. Is this really the way that you would start that story? With a total scandal and shame? There's no reason to

tell this story unless it is preserving a real memory or preserving a real story. And that is taking it in light of its ancient context, not what we believe already. Because I can assume that most of us here already believe that. It's not like I have to talk you into it. But taken in its ancient context, there is no reason whatsoever to invent this story. And that is how it would have been received in its first century audience.

Not only that, but Matthew is walking a really thin line here. Because the Greek and Roman world was full of stories of their heroes who began life on earth because one of their parents slept with a god or goddess. And that's how they came into being. These stories were actually really, really popular. That genre at the time was really, really popular. Matthew wants to differentiate his story with those other popular stories... So he mentions twice the divine agent who is responsible for this conception, the Holy Spirit. And that's an important point. Matthew began his story in both places, both in verse 1 and verse 18, by telling us that this is a Genesis story. Can you think of another Genesis story where the Spirit was involved in creation? That's right, all the way back to page 1. So in the darkness of the chaotic waters that are in Genesis chapter 1, who is there ready to create, ready to bring life out of chaos and nothing? The differentiation between this story is not that it was a sexual act that led to a life, but that this was something who is ready to create. It was not about the Holy Spirit having sex with Mary. It was not about how, just like the other origin stories about incredible heroes, it was about creation, generating life where previously it didn't exist. It's about the origin of Jesus being totally unique in human history. And Matthew is trying to communicate that by connecting the birth of Jesus and his origin story to the same place, the very first page of the Hebrew scriptures. And he's going somewhere with this.

Let's continue. Verse 21, she will give birth to a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. Now this is where we get to the good stuff. Notice how all of this story, if you read it carefully, the center of this verse is what they are to name him. His name is very important. His name is very important to God.

The Names of Jesus

So let's look at the names. There's actually two of them here. In Hebrew, Jesus is actually Yehoshua, as I think most of you probably know, which is where we get the name Joshua. In Aramaic, it was pronounced Yeshua. In Greek, Aesios. Probably saying that wrong. From the Greek came Spanish and then the other Romance languages that eventually, because of some weirdness in history, we added a J instead of an I and then you get Jesus.

The meaning of the name Yehoshua in Hebrew is Yahweh saves or Yahweh rescues, but I like Yahweh saves a little bit better. So think about this in terms of verse 21. She will give birth to a son and you will name him Yahweh saves because he will save his people from their sins. So what is the meaning of the name? Yahweh saves. Who is going to save? Yahweh saves. That's right. This is the first claim that Matthew makes about Jesus. He doesn't write a complicated theological paper about how the human and the divine come together. No, what he does is he tells a story where the meaning of his name speaks not only of his destiny, but also of his identity. Who is this human that has no earthly father? Who is this son that was created by the Spirit in the womb of a teenage girl? This is the claim that Matthew puts in front of us.

His Identity and Destiny

All right, so who is he? Can we put that verse back up there? Back to verse 21. Who is he going to save? His people. Who are his people? Israel, which includes at this point in time, the Jews. Now we want the answer to be the whole world because I would assume most of us here aren't Jewish. I want the answer to be the whole world. But it doesn't say that. It says his people. How nice of Matthew to give us this genealogy to explain what he's talking about. Genealogies are interesting in the ancient world. They speak to the origins of a person. They speak to the identity of a person in a way I didn't grow up understanding. So I'm going to tell you what this genealogy says to anybody who is in that culture about Jesus. His people are the family of Abraham, as we looked at in the very first birth. This is the genesis of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham. Now we're all the way back to Abraham, his tribe. What is he saving his people from? Their sins. What about the rest of us? We'll get to that in a minute. Condensed in this genealogy is the entire history of the Hebrew scriptures up until this point.

Understanding Our Story Through Genealogy

It's a story mostly about the family of Abraham, but that isn't where it begins. It began with a story about all humanity, which again is the story that is told on the first page of the Bible, Genesis chapter 1. Humans are made in the divine image, and they are made to reflect the divine image out into the world, and they are made to trust in God's definition of good and evil as they reproduce and make the rest of the world like Eden. How do they do? Fail. That's okay. God's ready. He calls one family, the family of Abraham, who becomes eventually the people of Israel in the storyline of the scriptures. Humanity has failed, so he calls into being a new family, one particular tribe. He rescues them out of slavery in Egypt, becomes their king, gives them the Torah, his express written instruction of what it looks like to renew their humanity and

become a people of justice and mercy and a light to the nations. How do they do? Fail. So God calls one particular line out of the family of Israel, a line of kings that comes from the line of David. The leaders of Israel are supposed to guide the people in following God and being faithful. And how do they do? Fail.

A Pattern That Continues

After the time of the kings, Judah ends up in exile in Babylon, Israel being gone long before that. After exile, you have some more kings that at this point are only semi-autonomous under Persian rule. Then came the Greeks, then the Egyptians, eventually the Romans. None of the handful of kings during this time did any better. And this is how the story of the Hebrew Scriptures ends. That is the story the genealogy is telling. I just decided to tell it in a way that felt more understandable to me, so hopefully it feels more understandable to you. It's an unfinished story, and that's weird. To quote Tim Mackey, the Hebrew scriptures are a story in search of an ending. What Matthew is doing is presenting Jesus as the one who is coming to solve the problem of Israel's sin—his people. He will save his people first, so that what he does for them can then be done for all of humanity. And the way that he does this is by dealing with sin. Now, what do we mean when we say sin?

What Is Sin?

I mean, maybe you've thought about this before. I realize that if you think about anything long enough, you can start doing some mental gymnastics to try and figure out what you actually think about anything. I think sin is definitely one of those words. There's a lot of words used in scripture to describe how humans are screwed up. And sin is one of them. It literally means a moral failure. That's what sin is. It isn't talking about why or how you fail. It's just a word to describe our moral failure. Jesus comes to rescue his people from the failure and the huge mess it has landed us in. He came to rescue his people and therefore all of humanity from failure. The heart of Jesus isn't calling us to be better. He is here to do something for us that we can't do for ourselves. He is here to save us from our failure as a human race. That's the story that the genealogy was telling. God started with the people and they failed, and then he chose another people and they failed, and then he chose another people and they failed. That's the story of human history.

Getting to Know Jesus

Getting to know Jesus should teach us that we also need him to do something for us because just like all of humanity, we have failed. And that's not the best news to hear. But I want to look at that. It's easy for all of us to look out into the world and see how humans are messed up. I don't think I have to belabor that point. In my opinion, it's no worse or better than any other time in human history. But I don't think it's an arguable point that we can look at the world right now, today, and understand that humans are doing terrible things to other humans somewhere in the world, in many places in the world. Why is it that way? Because there is something ultimately wrong with humanity, and humanity needs rescuing. This is the part of the Bible's diagnosis of who we are as a people. On a large scale, that's easy to see. We can look out at humanity and say this giant country is fighting with this other giant country and it's terrible and everybody understands that. But I think something funny happens, at least it does for me, when I start to look at myself through the same lens.

Looking in the Mirror

My own motivations, my own values and moral outlook—all of a sudden it becomes easier to see how easily I end up choosing evil for myself. The lines are really clear when they come to others, but not so clear when they come to me, because I think I'm fantastic. Any of you who know me well, self-esteem is not something I struggle with. I am awesome. I don't think I'm unique. I think you guys understand what I'm saying. The story in Matthew is asking us to admit something about ourselves. It's asking me to admit something about myself. I am in such need of rescue. I am in such a dire state that rescue can only come from somewhere outside of myself, no matter how good I see me. And this illustrates the problem that we have as humanity. I really believe that we often think that if we could just be good to each other, all the problems in the world would go away. In fact, there have been bumper stickers over the years about that—be good to each other, or random acts of kindness, that whole thing. Anybody remember that idea—where you could just do random acts of kindness and the world would be so much better if we did?

Being Good to Each Other

And it's not that it won't be better if we practice kindness. I've definitely taught that before. So many former enemies could be friends if we were just understanding and nice. I'm willing to bet that most everybody here believes in Yeshua. Being good to others is very important to us as believers. Love God, love your neighbor, that's what we do. But I know I have the capacity to be just as evil as I am good. We all do. And it doesn't take a genius to look at history and the

present to see how completely naive that thinking is. It ignores the fact that the most complex problems, the most complex conflicts that we have in the world right now are conflicts of the good. Where you have two sides that both honestly, genuinely believe that they are doing good. My perspective on one side or the other is inconsequential to the belief that both sides think they're doing good. Do you honestly believe that Hamas thinks that they are carrying out evil? And do you honestly believe, from some people's perspective, that Israel's response to that is evil?

Conflicts of the Good

No. It is a conflict of the good. To quote Tim Mackey one more time, this is about the conflicts of goods and the millions of people that die in the midst of the conflicts of goods. This is the hopeless condition of the human situation. Simply telling each other to be good is like giving vitamin C to someone with a broken leg. It does not acknowledge the complexity of the problem. What Matthew is doing in this first chapter of his gospel is showing us that we can read the Hebrew scriptures and find an analysis of everything that's wrong in the world today. And he puts forth Jesus as the one in whom the only hope for salvation can come. And he puts this in front of us in a way that we can't ignore.

We can choose to reject it or accept it, but we can't ignore it. And that's the meaning of the virgin birth. It is the divine and the human come together to save and to rescue. Who is it going to save? Who's going to save? Yahweh or Yahweh saves? The answer is yes. Let's keep reading. Because Jesus has two names in this chapter. Verse 22 and 23. Now all of this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah.

See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son. They will name him Emmanuel, which is translated, God is with us. He's quoting from the prophet Isaiah chapter 7. This is the first of many times in this gospel where Matthew will pause and remind you of a promise that was left dangling in the Hebrew Scriptures. But in Jesus, that promise is fulfilled.

The Divine and Human Come Together

It's a story of an unmarried virgin woman who has a son who will replace the current line of David in its unfaithfulness. It's a story that's being told in Isaiah chapter 7. That promise develops into the hope of the coming Messiah, and his name is Emmanuel, which means God is with us. This second name of Jesus is like a repeat of the first. It makes you ask the question

just like the first one does. Who is going to save? Yahweh or Yahweh saves. Who is God with his people? Who is this baby? Is he Yahweh saves or is he God with us? Yes.

This is the second claim that Matthew makes about the identity of Jesus. The divine and the human come together. In the context of this story, God with us means this God revealed in Jesus is not content to leave humanity as a failed project. All of this will eventually lead up to his death and resurrection on the cross because for God to be with us means that God has bound himself to hopeless, sinful humanity to bring about hope and rescue, to bring about deliverance. That is the God that Jesus reveals to us. And in Jesus, we can be the version of ourselves that God sees in us. Someone he loves and cares for deeply, and he is committed to be with us.

So how do we know that God is real and committed to me? I look to the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus ends this entire story by dying and then raising again, giving us a model to follow, proves that God is real to me. Proves that God is who he says he is.

Joseph's Role

Verse 24 and 25. I think it's really easy to go through this whole story and forget that Joseph's even there, even though the whole thing is told from Joseph's perspective, which is fascinating. And it's easy to forget the last two verses, but I don't want to because there's something important here. We just heard a whole story about Israel, the human condition, what God is going to do about that as we read through the first chapter, and it's an incredible story. But I want to close with my thoughts on Joseph.

We don't know much about Joseph other than he was a carpenter and probably died early-ish in Jesus' life. But I want to mention something that jumped out at me as I was reading through this. I spent many, many hours reading and rereading Matthew chapter 1. And eventually when you do that, meditate on it long enough, things just kind of show up. And if you're like me, often you ignore them because it's just reading it a lot, mental gymnastics with your head. But I think this fits in the context of what we're looking at.

Those Who Believe

It says that Joseph woke up and did what the angel told him. He believed God. In the first verse, we are reminded that the identity, the origin story of Jesus is tied to Abraham, who believed God, and it was credited as righteousness. This might be a little bit of conjecture, but I don't think it's an accident that the text opens and closes with two men who were considered

righteous because they believed. And that's another claim put forth by Matthew. You can choose to accept it or reject it, but you can't ignore it.

There's a decision to be made, and the claim that is being made here is, this is the Messiah that was spoken about from the unfinished Hebrew scriptures. This is the human and the divine come together. This is Yahweh saves and God is with us at the same time, stepped out of the cosmos into our reality to save his people from their sins and then eventually the rest of us.

The definition of righteous is morally right or justifiable. I just think the Bible is so cool. If the definition of sin is morally corrupt, but the definition of righteous is morally right. What Matthew communicates here is those who believe God are righteous. To believe him when he said to do something that went against everything they thought was right. Joseph didn't ignore him. Abraham didn't ignore him. They both got to play a role in bringing forth Yahweh saves and God is with us to humanity so that we can be made into something new.

God's Rescue Plan

One more thought and then we're done. The entire book is a biography of Jesus the way that Matthew wants to tell it, connected to the unfinished story of the Hebrew scriptures and all of the ways that prove that this is the Messiah who has come to save his people. But if you guys remember, the very last sentence of the book is after the resurrection, he is instructing the disciples to go and make disciples of all nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Not only does this chapter open and close with a story about Genesis, but the whole book opens and closes with the story about Genesis. That from the beginning, God's plan, his rescue plan, from the beginning, his desire was for all of humanity to know him and to rule alongside of him in his perfect garden, for us to show his justice and mercy to those Out there. So that they could also become part of the family of God. That is what Matthew chapter 1 is saying to us.

Thank you guys. Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all of eternity. May the Lord bless you and may he keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his shalom, his peace. Hallelujah. We praise you. We thank you, Abba, for this beautiful Shabbat. Please go with your people. Thank you for your protection. We thank you for perseverance. We thank you for your shalom on this beautiful day. Hallelujah. Shabbat shalom. Amen. Hallelujah.

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