

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Matthew 1:17-25

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, March 9, 2014

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, March 9, 2014**, is from **Matthew 1:17-25**. Please Note: Some churches will only study **Matthew 1:18-23**. This commentary is the third part of a three part Bible Lesson that includes Psalms 89:29-37 and Isaiah 9:6-7. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Matthew 1:17-25

(Matthew 1:17) So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon,

fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

Matthew listed fourteen important ancestors of Jesus the Messiah between Abraham and David. God had promised Abraham that one of his descendants would bless all the nations of the earth. God had promised King David, a king after God's own heart, that one of his descendants would be the Messiah. The time period from David to the deportation allowed God to send several prophets (such as Isaiah and Jeremiah) to foretell the coming of the Messiah and give people the assurance that God would keep His promises to their ancestors. While in exile, God gave needed reassurance through prophets such as Ezekiel and Daniel. From the time of their return from exile until about 400 years before the birth of Jesus the Messiah, prophets such as Zechariah and Malachi spoke of the coming of the Messiah and how people could recognize Him.

(Matthew 1:18) Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Matthew's gospel includes a short summary of facts about the birth of Jesus that highlighted important truths: the Messiah was to be named "Jesus;" He was born of a virgin named Mary; He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (not Joseph, who was only engaged to her at that time). Joseph

was not Jesus' biological father, but Joseph took Mary as his wife and adopted her Son as his own. Jesus was sent by God to save His people from their sins. Mary must have told Joseph about the angel's appearance to her; perhaps after she had visited Elizabeth (as recorded by Luke).

(Matthew 1:19) Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

Though Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married and were not living together, the community considered their engagement as binding as a marriage. Perhaps Joseph felt unworthy to become the adopted father of the Messiah and wanted to dismiss her quietly so God could do what was best for Mary and His Son. Perhaps he was afraid (see Matthew 1:20) he would offend God if he went ahead and took Mary as his wife if God had other plans. Perhaps he wanted to open the way for God to care for His Son in the way God wanted without being a hindrance to God.

(Matthew 1:20) But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Joseph had Mary's testimony to him as one fact to consider with regard to how he should proceed. As a righteous man, Joseph lived by faith, prayer, and true love for God and others; therefore, he probably thought he had

made the right decision according to the law of God. In this verse, Matthew reaffirmed through the words of the angel that the adopted father of Jesus was of the line of David. The angel told Joseph that what Mary had told him was accurate and no delusion. Truly, Jesus really had been conceived by the Holy Spirit and Mary and Jesus were holy (both were also wholly within the will of God). Joseph should not be afraid to take Mary as his wife, because God the Father wanted him to raise the Son of God as his and Mary's son. Knowing that Jesus was adopted by Joseph should encourage all who are adopted, and in the Bible all of Jesus' true followers are called adopted children of God.

(Matthew 1:21) She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

The angel said specifically that Mary would give birth to a male child. When Joseph took Him as his son, he was to name him "Jesus," which means "God is salvation." When the Messiah came, His primary purpose was to save God's people from their sins (not overthrow the Roman Empire). Jesus would save God's people not only from the eternal consequences of their sins but also free them from slavery to sin and empower them to love and obey God according to the Bible's teachings.

(Matthew 1:22) All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

What the angel told Joseph would take place had been planned and prophesied for centuries before God scheduled Jesus to be born. Jesus came and throughout His life He fulfilled various prophecies, and He said that He had come to fulfill the law and the prophets. Jesus did what the Scriptures said the Messiah would do, and more remains for Him to do as priest and king in heaven between now and after He returns.

(Matthew 1:23) “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

Mary was more than just a young woman. In fulfillment of the Bible’s prophecies, she had never done anything toward the physical conception of a child before the Holy Spirit overshadowed her as the angel told her and she conceived Jesus. Her Son would be “Emmanuel.” From what Jesus said about himself and did, He convinced people that He was God with them, the Son of God. When God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, God affirmed and endorsed all that Jesus said about himself and did. Jesus, God with us, humbled himself, came to serve us, and saves believers from their sins.

(Matthew 1:24) When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

Joseph believed what the angel told him. He acted in faith when he did what the angel told him to do. Joseph showed

that he was a righteous man when he obeyed God. Joseph did not act only on the basis of what the angel said. The angel referred Joseph to what the Bible said through the prophets and the promises of God. So, Joseph had not only the words of the angel and Mary before he acted in faith; Joseph also had the words of God's prophets. Joseph believed the Bible, the Word of God written, and the Bible confirmed what the angel told him; then, he acted in faith.

(Matthew 1:25) but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

As a righteous man, Joseph did not do anything that might hurt Mary or compromise the birth of the Son of God. The Bible certainly implies that Joseph and Mary maintained a normal, healthy marriage after Jesus was born, and they raised Jesus as devoted parents. Joseph named their Son "Jesus" as the angel commanded, and they raised Him in a devout home (for example, taking Jesus to the temple when He was 12).

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

Since this is the third of a three part lesson series, only 3 of the 5 Study Questions will be asked below.

1. Why was it important for Joseph to be a righteous man?

2. Why do you think Joseph might have been afraid to take Mary as his wife?

3. How did Joseph have assurance that Jesus was the Son of God?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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