

“God With Us” (part 2)

Galatians 4:4-5; Matthew 1:1-25

I have read where on average most people are able to mention no more than four generations of their forefathers. This means that if you were to ask most people, they would have absolutely no clue who their great, great grandfather was or what he did. Yet all of us in some way are interested in learning about our ancestry. This perhaps is the reason for the rise in genealogy databases over the last couple of decades. Rather than having to sift through files in some out of the way musty courthouse, you can now search the genealogical record from the comfort of home via the internet.

One such company is Ancestry.com, a privately held Internet-based company located in Provo, Utah. As the largest for-profit genealogy company in the world, it operates a network of genealogical and historical record websites focused on the United States and nine foreign countries and offers a wide array of genealogical related services. As of June 2014, the company provided access to approximately 16 billion historical records and over 2 million paying subscribers. User-generated content tallies to more than 70 million family trees and subscribers have added more than 200 million photographs, scanned documents and written stories.

That means a lot of people are searching to find out where they came from! Some people will be amazed to learn that their record includes kings, statesmen, and well to do people who lived and accomplished much.

Genealogies are important, but they don't always make for the most interesting reading. This is true when we come to those passages in the Bible where we find verse after verse of those hard-to-pronounce names. Yet the Christmas narratives that we find in the Bible are quick to point out the genealogical record of Jesus Christ.

This is important, for it shows us that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but He is also the Son of Man. He is fully God and fully Man!

The apostle Paul encapsulates this truth in Galatians 4:4-5:

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

Christmas is all about God with us, God coming to us, God living among us as one of us, to do for us what we could never do for ourselves.

Isaiah 7:14 - “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

The birth of Jesus Christ is fulfillment of Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy. God became a Man in the unique person of Jesus Christ in an event known in theology as “the incarnation,” which simply means in the flesh, or in human form.

John 1:1, 14 - “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Or as one writer has said:

*The Word became flesh!
God became human!
the invisible became visible!
the untouchable became touchable!
eternal life experienced temporal death!
the transcendent One descended and drew near!
the unlimited became limited!
the infinite became finite!
the immutable became mutable!
the unbreakable became fragile!
spirit became matter!
eternity entered time!
the independent became dependent!
the Almighty became weak!
the loved became the hated!
the exalted was humbled!
glory was subjected to shame!
fame turned into obscurity!
from inexpressible joy to tears of unimaginable grief!
from a throne to a cross!*

The greatest of all miracles is the incarnation, God becoming Man and living among us. The Son of God became the son of man so that the sons of men could become sons of God. It is important that believers understand the theology behind the Christmas narrative.

There are four unique truths about the person and work of Jesus Christ mentioned in these two verses, and we looked at the first truth last week:

Jesus is the PREEXISTENT Son from the Father

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son.”

God made His entrance into the world through the virgin womb of Mary. The Son of God had a birth, but He has no beginning. The deity of Jesus Christ is the undisputed claim of Christianity. He was not simply a man who lived and died, nor was He merely a great teacher or a prophet—He was and is God.

Not only is Jesus Christ God, but He is also Man. This is the second unique truth that we find in these verses.

2. Jesus is the PROMISED Son of fulfillment

“...born of woman, born under the law.”

Though He had always been God, it was here that God became Man. Deity wrapped Himself up in humanity in the unique person of Jesus Christ. He had to be God in order to deliver man from his sin, but He had to be Man in order to die for man’s sin. Thus, He was born into the world fully human.

The promise found throughout the Old Testament is that the Messiah would be God, Man, and perfect sacrifice—Word, Son, and Lamb.

This is why the virgin birth of Jesus is important. As deity, He existed before the world began. But to become human, He was supernaturally conceived in the womb of Mary. He was “born of woman.”

Genesis 3:15 - “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”

Adam's sin plunged the entire human race into sin and alienation from God. Those whom God had created had sinned against Him and violated the terms of their relationship with Him, and in so doing, they became enslaved to Satan and in bondage to sin and death.

- Would God do anything to redeem them back?
- Would there ever be any hope for them to be sons of God again?

The salvation of the human race would depend upon the Seed of the woman. The Seed of the woman will be in conflict with Satan, and when the conflict reaches its climax, the Seed of the woman will only have His heel bruised, but the serpent will have his head crushed!

The promise throughout the Old Testament is that a unique Man will be born, One who will take back the domain of Satan and redeem those who are captive to his power by giving to Satan a fatal blow.

Who is the promised Seed of the woman? In the Old Testament, the promise is narrowed down:

- through Noah
- through Shem
- through Abraham
- through Isaac
- through Jacob or Israel
- through Judah
- through David

Once we cross the threshold into the New Testament, the fulfillment of the promise is realized. To get the details, we turn to the first chapter of Matthew where we find evidence that Jesus is the promised Son that the Scriptures spoke of.

His CREDENTIALS show Him to be the promised Son

Matthew 1:1 - "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham."

The movie “A Knight's Tale,” set in medieval England, tells the story of a young would-be knight named Ulrich. In those days, men had to be descended from noble stock in order to become a knight. But Ulrich does not have a drop of royal blood in him. Even so, he attempts to secure his place in history by winning a famous tournament.

It is customary for the knight's squire to introduce him at such tournaments, usually delivering a grandiose recitation of the knight's royal lineage. In this scene, Ulrich's squire says:

“I cannot look upon my Lord Ulrich, for I weep to see his shining face. My Lord is a gift to your eyes, for we shall never, ever see his like upon this Earth again. I would list his lineage if it served to honor him. Most men here—it's sad, but it's true—they look to their past to prove their worth; they look to the deeds of their fathers. Now, Sir Ulrich has great ancestors, make no mistake about that...but these great, great men pale into insignificance next to him. I do not list them to honor him; I list him to honor them!”

Though you find great names mentioned in this chapter, they all pale in comparison to Jesus.

In these opening verses, Matthew’s purpose is to show how Jesus meets all the necessary credentials as King.

- He is the Seed of Abraham (v. 1-5)

In descending order, Matthew traces the legal lineage of Jesus from Abraham. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise that the Lord God made to Abraham. His saving purpose is set forth in God’s promise to Abraham:

Genesis 12:2-3 - “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

This passage reveals that God will form a covenant people, God will give them a promised inheritance, and God will use them for a global purpose.

Genesis 22:18 - “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

God promised Abraham that through his descendants, specifically through his ‘seed,’ all the nations of the earth would experience great blessing. This promise finds literal fulfillment in

Christ, for the world has indeed been blessed through the gift of the Savior. Salvation is found in Him. This is what prompted the angelic chorus:

Luke 2:14 - “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Matthew 4:16 - “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

- He is the Son of David (v. 6-15)

Here, we are shown that Jesus came from the Davidic line of the kings of Israel. God’s promise to David was that he would never fail to have a descendant seated on the throne.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 - “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”

Though spoken in reference to Solomon, this promise is literally fulfilled in Christ.

Psalms 110:1 - “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

This truth was emphasized by the Old Testament prophets:

Isaiah 9:6-7 - “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom...”

- He is the Savior of Man (v. 16-17)

The passage refers to Him as Jesus, who is called Christ.

“Christ” - *Messiah; the Anointed One*

A variety of backgrounds are represented in Christ’s genealogy. In the record, you will find both men and women, princes and peasants, rulers and shepherds. There are prostitutes, adulterers,

and social outcasts. All in all, this is one crooked family tree! Yet, this was the family tree through which the incarnate Son of God stepped onto the pages of human history.

The genealogical record of Christ is a testament to His grace. He is the Savior of both kings and commoners, and His grace is for those of every social class.

His CONCEPTION shows Him to be the promised Son

The Bible records many remarkable births, such as the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, or the birth of Samuel to Hannah and Elkanah. But none are as remarkable as the birth of Christ.

- His unique nature (v. 18-20)

The conflict that Joseph faced was very real and we often overlook it. In Jewish culture, marriage involved three stages. First came the engagement period, which often was arranged by matchmakers. Then there was the betrothal period, which served as the formal ratification of the marriage agreement. This typically lasted for a year, and was as legally binding as the marriage itself. During this stage, the couple would get to know one another before coming together intimately. The third stage was the marriage ceremony itself, which took place after the betrothal period. It was at this stage that husband and wife would come together in a physical sense.

When Mary became pregnant, she and Joseph were in the second stage, the betrothal period.

Joseph was informed that the Child conceived in Mary's womb was of the Holy Spirit. This is the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, a key and cardinal truth of our faith.

Isaiah 7:14 - "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

Jesus was born of an earthly mother without an earthly father.

Warren Wiersbe - *"Every child born into the world is a totally new creature. But Jesus Christ, being eternal God, existed before Mary and Joseph or any of His earthly ancestors. If Jesus Christ were conceived and born just as any other baby, then He could not be God."*

Without the virgin birth, we have no gospel.

Man had sinned and man was under the curse. Jesus could not have substituted Himself for sinful man on the cross had He not taken upon Himself the likeness of men.

Jesus had to be God to have the power of Savior, and He had to be Man to have the position of Substitute.

- His intentional name (v. 21)

“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

“Jesus” - Greek equivalent of Hebrew Joshua; literally means the Lord is salvation

Notice that the message is that He will save ‘His people’ from their sins, meaning that salvation is kept for those who come to Jesus in faith and receive Him as personal Savior and Lord.

His CONFIRMATION shows Him to be the promised Son

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet...”

For centuries, the Old Testament prophets had been preaching about the coming of the Lord. Specific details are given as to how He would be born, where He would be born, and even to whom He would be born.

In fact, there are some 300 prophecies and promises about the Lord’s coming, and Jesus Christ has fulfilled them all.

What are the odds that one man could fulfill the prophecies fulfilled during the earthly life of Jesus? Peter Stoner was a mathematician and college professor who wrote a book, Science Speaks, in which he examined the statistical probability of the Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled in just one man. Stoner said that by using the modern science of probability in reference to just eight prophecies, ‘we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power.”

That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrated it by supposing that “we take that many silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas.

They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man.”

Stoner considers 48 prophecies and says, we find the chance that any one man fulfilled all 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10 to the 157th power, or 1 followed by 157 zeros.

The truth is, Jesus didn't just fulfill 8 prophecies, nor did He just fulfill 48 prophecies. There are over 300 prophecies fulfilled to the letter in Jesus Christ, just during His first coming. Wow!

The eight prophetic passages from the Old Testament that Peter Stoner considered in his study included:

Micah 5:2 - “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

The Old Testament prophets foretold the place where the Promised Son would be born. Isaiah 7:14 even said that He would enter this world through the womb of a virgin. What mere man ever decided where he would be born and how he would be born?

Malachi 3:1 - “Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts.”

The Promised Son would have a herald who announced His entry, and this was fulfilled in the ministry of John.

Zechariah 9:9 - “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

How would the inhabitants of Jerusalem recognize the Promised Son? He would come to them meek and lowly, riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Matthew 21:1-9 show how Jesus entered

the city of Jerusalem in this very way as the people proclaimed, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Zechariah 11:12 - "So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver."

The Promised Son would be betrayed into the hands of wicked men, and the price for His betrayal would be a mere 30 pieces of silver.

Zechariah 11:13 - "And the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'--that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the house of the Lord for the potter."

The silver that became blood money would be used to purchase a field that belonged to a potter, which was fulfilled to the last detail in Matthew 27:3-10.

Zechariah 13:6 - "And if one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' He will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.'"

The Promised Son would be beaten and scourged.

Isaiah 53:1-12 - "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."

Though the Promised Son was innocent, He would bear in His own body the sins of His people. Stripes would be laid upon His back, and not one word would come from His lips as He stood to be condemned at the hands of sinful men.

Psalms 22:16-18 - "The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots."

With vivid detail, this passage describes the crucifixion scene. Spikes were driven into the King's hands and feet. Roman soldiers gambled and cast lots for the King's robe. Not one bone of the Promised Son was broken.

And yet it was promised that death would not be the end of this Promised Son, for the grave could not keep Him:

Psalm 16:10 - “For You will not leave My soul in death, or let Your Holy One see corruption. You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Jesus Christ defeated death, hell, and the grave, and in so doing, He dealt a head-crushing blow to Satan. This same Promised Son promised that He would one day return!