

Matthew: The Story of Christmas is Rooted in History

Opener: Is there anything in your family history that seems unusual or momentous to you?

Scripture: This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, . . . ⁵Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶and Jesse the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, ⁷Solomon the father of Rehoboam, . . . ¹¹and Josiah the father of Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon. ¹²After the exile to Babylon: Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel . . . ¹⁶and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah. ¹⁷Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But after he considered this, an angel appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet Isaiah: ²³"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). ²⁴When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. . . . Matthew 1 (condensed)

Discussion Questions

1. The Gospel of Matthew was written by one of the twelve disciples. Matthew was also known as Levi, the tax collector. Why did he begin with such a detailed genealogy? Does anything stand out to you about those in the list? For example, who was Rahab? What was Ruth's story? Matthew 1:1-17
2. Is it surprising that God worked through David's greatest sin to put his son Solomon, the wisest king who ever ruled, on the throne? (adultery with Bathsheba and arranging for her husband Uriah's death) Matt. 1:6
3. Isaiah prophesied about 700 years before Jesus was born. Matthew's genealogy and this prophecy provide invaluable context for Jesus' birth. How does seeing the big picture show us God's plan? Matthew 1:22-23
4. The virgin birth is central to our belief that Jesus is truly God incarnate. Put yourself in Mary's place. How would you have reacted to being chosen to give birth to the Messiah? Matthew 1:18
5. What is your impression of Joseph as he tried to combine his faithfulness to the law with his love and compassion for Mary? What did Joseph have to lose by staying with Mary? Matthew 1:19-21
6. Has God ever spoken to you in a dream? If so, how did you know it was really from God? Matthew 1:20
7. There's no record of conversations between Mary and Joseph at this time, but we do know that God communicated directly with both of them. What impact do you think all this had on their relationship?

Wrap Up: The lyrics to *Mary Did You Know* are thought provoking: "Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water? Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new? This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you." She may not have known all that, but what Mary did know was that the virgin birth was not the beginning of the story. It was rooted in history and anticipated in prophecy.