

December 26, 2020

“Called to Be Heir”
Lesson 1 of Unit

Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17, Hebrews 1:1-5

Intro

Many people ask themselves, at some point in their lives, “Who am I?” One place that we likely look to for some answers is our heritage. There is something satisfying in finding that your ancestors were French or Native American or Norwegian or African. In this grouping, we share a history, an identity, with people who lived long before we were ever born.

Matthew and the writer of Hebrews are both interested in Jesus’ heritage. God used a specific family line to bring Jesus into the world, and yet Jesus’ divine superiority to every human being is related in terms of utmost importance.

Herod, who was king of Judea when Jesus was born, was put in that place by the Romans. Besides brutal things Herod did to destroy Jewish culture, he was hated because he wasn’t Jewish by heritage, thus had no right to be king over Judea. Matthew’s genealogy is more than a list of names; it connects Jesus to David, to a person who had the right to be the king of the Jews.

Read Matthew 1:1-6

1. What were the covenant made between God and Abraham (Gen.12:3) and David (2 Sam. 7:16) (vs. 1)?
In what way is Jesus the fulfillment of those covenant promises?
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2. In what way(s) do the three succeeding generations of sons in vs. 2 (Isaac, Jacob, Judah) inherit and carry on the covenant promise first given to Abraham? What is unusual about Judah’s being given the promise of a royal line (see Gen. 49:8-10, Gen. 29:31-35)?
3. Judah’s line is developed in vs. 3. What is unique about Perez and Zerah (Gen.38:29-30), Hezron (Gen. 46:7-12), and Ram (Ruth 4:19, Ex. 1:7)?

4. Five women are mentioned in Matthew's genealogy: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba ("Uriah's wife"), and Mary. Why these five, when there are mothers of each man named throughout the genealogy? What things did they do, what character qualities did they have, that God wanted to honor by having their names recorded in the genealogy? Tamar (38:6-26), Rahab (Josh. 2:1-21), Ruth (read the whole book—it's short and awesome!), Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12), and Mary (Luke 1:26-38)
5. In vs. 6, with all the faithfulness David showed in his life, what might be God's reason to have Matthew record only the affair with "Uriah's wife" and that she was the mother of Solomon?

Read Matthew 1:16-17

6. The names in verse 16 are connected to the genealogy and Israelite history. Jacob is part of that list, Joseph is a key player in the events of the captivity in Egypt, Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, and Mary is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Miriam, Moses' sister.
7. Matthew uses 14 generations in each of three sections in vs. 17. Our text notes that the three consonants in the name "David" are the fourth, sixth, and fourth letters in the Hebrew alphabet, adding up to 14. So likely these are used as a memory device to help remember the names which Matthew uses. This idea seems especially likely when you compare the lists in Matthew 1 with the one in 1 Chronicles 3:10-16, which has more names which Matthew has left out.

Read Hebrews 1:1-5

8. What method did God use in vs. 1 to communicate with the Jewish nation in earlier times? Why was that his chosen method? What method has God chosen "in these last days" (vs. 2) to communicate? How and why is this second method superior to the first?

9. What is meant when you talk about someone's "being" (vs. 3)? What is being said about Jesus that He is the "exact representation of [God's] being"?
10. What two things has the Son done (vs. 3) which show his God-likeness?
11. What is the writer's purpose in comparing Jesus to the angels in vs. 4-5? For what reason(s) can you see the writer wanting or needing to establish this difference?

Application: These two passages emphasize different aspects of Jesus' heritage. Matthew shows Jesus in his earthly form and work, the one sent by the Father to fulfill all the old and new covenant promises. The writer of Hebrews shows Jesus' divine heritage, the one honored by the Father for what he did on Earth, the one who is superior to all other created beings and equal to God the Father.

At this Christmas season, we are called to see Jesus for who He is in His entirety—the Son of God who is the creator and sustainer of all things, and the Son of Man who came to Earth to fulfill the Father's promises completely.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for sending Jesus as the fulfillment of your covenant promises to Your people. Help us daily to remember that our lives are complete in Him alone, and to live daily in such a way as beings you honor and glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.