

Matthew 1 Commentary-C H Spurgeon

PREVIOUS

NEXT

MATTHEW 1:1-17 THE PEDIGREE OF THE KING

Matthew 1:1. THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

This verse gives us a clue to the special drift of Matthew's gospel. He was moved of the Holy Spirit to write of our Lord Jesus Christ AS KING — "the son of David. " He is to be spoken of as specially reigning over the true seed of Abraham; hence he is called "the son of Abraham. " Lord Jesus, make us each one to call thee, "My God and King!" As we read this wonderful GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM may we be full of loyal obedience, and pay thee humble homage! Thou art both a King and a king's Son.

The portion before us looks like a string of names, and we might fancy that it would yield us little spiritual food; but we may not think lightly of any line of the inspired volume. Here the Spirit sets before us the pedigree of Jesus, and sketches the family tree of "the King of the Jews." Marvelous condescension, that he should be a man, and have a genealogy, even HE who "was in the beginning with God", and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God"! Let us read each line of "The book of the generation " with adoring gratitude that we have a King who is one with us in our nature: "in ties of blood with sinners one."

Matthew 1:2. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.

With Abraham was the covenant made, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed. The line ran not in Ishmael, the offspring of the flesh, but in Isaac, who was born after the promise; and by the divine purpose it flowed in elect Jacob, and not in the firstborn, Esau. Let us observe and admire the sovereignty of God. Our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe nothing is said concerning the priesthood, that it might be clear that his priesthood is "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." Yet comes he of Judah's royal tribe; for he is King.

Matthew 1:3, 4. And Judas begat Phares and Ezra of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram, begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naamon; and Naamon begat Salmon.

Observe the dash of unclean blood which enters the stream through Judah's incest with Thamar. O Lord, thou art the sinner's Friend!

Matthew 1:5. And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse.

We note that two women are mentioned in this fifth verse: a Canaanite and a Moabitess. Thus Gentile blood mingled with the Hebrew strain. Our King has come to break down the partition wall. As Gentiles we rejoice in this.

Jesus is heir of a line in which flows the blood of the harlot Rahab, and of the rustic Ruth; he is akin to the fallen and to the lowly, and he will show his love even to the poorest and most obscure. I, too, may have part and lot in him.

Matthew 1:6-9. And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; and Solomon. begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; and Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; and Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias.

Well may our hearts melt at the memory of David and Bathsheba! The fruit of their unholy union died; but, after repentance, she who "had been the wife of Uria " became the wife of David, and the mother of Solomon.

Signal was the grace of God in this case, that the line should be continued in this once guilty pair; but, oh, what kinship with fallen humanity does this indicate in our Lord! We will not pry into the mystery of the incarnation, but we must wonder at the condescending grace which appointed our Lord such a pedigree.

Matthew 1:10. And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias .

A line of kings of a mixed character; not one of them perfect, and some of them as bad as bad could be. Three are left out altogether: even sinners who were only fit to be forgotten were in the line of this succession; and this shows how little can be made of being born of the will of man, or of the will of the flesh. In this special line of descent, salvation was not of blood, nor of birth. Specially let us think of such a one as Manasses being among the ancestors of our Lord, as if to hint that, in the line which comes after him, there would be some of the chief of sinners who would be miracles of mercy. Again we say, how near does Jesus come to our fallen race by this his genealogy!

Matthew 1:11. And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.

Poor captives, and those who are bound with the fetters of sin, may see some like themselves in this famous ancestry. They are prisoners of hope, now that the Christ is born of a race which was once “carried away to Babylon. ”

Matthew 1:12-16. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; and Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; and Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; and Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

With one or two exceptions these are names of persons of little or no note.

The later ones were persons altogether obscure and insignificant. Our Lord was “a root out of dry ground”; a shoot from the withered stem of Jesse.

He set small store by earthly greatness. He must needs be of human race; but he comes to a family which was of low estate, and there finds his reputed father, Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth. He is the poor man’s King.

He will not disdain any of us though our father’s house be little in Israel.

He will condescend to men of low estate.

Wonder surpassing all wonders; the Word by whom all things were made, was himself made flesh, and dwelt among us! He was born of a human mother, even of the lowly virgin, Mary. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.” Our hearts would anoint with sweet perfume of love and praise the blessed head of him “who is called Christ”, the Anointed One.

Matthew 1:17. So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

The Holy Ghost led his servant Matthew to adopt a rough and simple method to help weak memories. Here are three fourteens. Let us learn from this to make ourselves familiar with our Lord’s pedigree, and think much of his being born into the world. Specially let us see that he was literally of the house of David, and the seed of Abraham; for many prophecies in the Old Testament pointed to this fact. He is truly the Messiah, the Prince, which was to come.

MATTHEW 1:18-25 THE BIRTH OF THE KING

Matthew 1:18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

A word or two sufficed to describe the birth of all the kings whose names we have read; but for our Lord Jesus Christ there is much more to be said.

The evangelist girds himself up for his solemn duty, and writes: — “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. ” It is a deep, mysterious, and delicate subject, fitter for reverent faith than for speculative curiosity. The Holy (host wrought in the chosen virgin the body of our Lord. There was no other way of his being born; for had he been of a sinful father, how should he have possessed a sinless nature? He is born of a woman, that he might be human; but not by man, that he might not be sinful. See how the Holy Ghost co-operates in the work of our redemption by preparing the body of our Lord!

Matthew 1:19. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

Mary was espoused to him, and he was saddened and perplexed when he learned that she would become a mother before they had been actually married. Many would have thrust her away in indignation, and put her to an open shame; but Joseph was of royal mind as well as royal race. He would not expose what he thought to be the sin of his espoused wife: although he felt that she must be put away, he would do it quietly. When we have to do a severe thing, let us choose the tenderest manner. May be, we shall not have to do it at all.

Matthew 1:20. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.

He could not but feel very anxious, and no doubt he prayed about these things both day and night. God would not leave the honor of the chosen virgin-mother without protection. Soon Joseph had the best of guidance.

From heaven he had the assurance that Mary had not sinned, but had been favored of the Lord. Joseph is reminded of his royal rank, “thou son of David ”, and is bidden to cast away his fear. How he must have been comforted by the Lord’s “fear not ”! He was to take Mary under his tender care, and be a foster-father to the son who would be born of her.

Mary must have been in great anxiety herself as to whether her story of angelic visitation would be believed; for it looked improbable enough. We doubt not that faith sustained her; but she needed much of it. Every great favor brings a great trial with it as its shadow, and becomes thus a new test of faith. The Lord very graciously removed all suspicion from Joseph’s mind, and thus provided for the honor of the mother, and for the comfort of the holy child. If Jesus is born in our hearts, we shall have trouble; but the Lord will witness that Christ is ours, and he will surely bear us through.

Matthew 1:21. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The Lord of glory is born the Son of man, and is named by God’s command, and by man’s mouth, JESUS the Savior. He is what he is called. HE saves us from the punishment and the guilt of sin, -and then from the ill effect and evil power of sin. This he does for “his people ”, even for all who believe in him. It is his nature to do this, as we see in the fact that his very name is JESUS — Savior. We still call him by that name, for he still saves us in these latter days. Let us go and tell out his name among men; for he will save others.

Matthew 1:22, 23. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name \bEMMANUEL, which being interpreted, God with us.

Who would have thought that the prophecy contained in Isaiah 7:14 could have referred to our Lord? One of these days we shall discover a great deal more in the inspired Word than we can see today. Perhaps it is needful to our understanding a prophecy that we should see it actually fulfilled. What blind eyes we have!

It is pleasant to mark that, according to this verse, and the twenty-first, EMMANUEL and JESUS mean the same thing. "God with us" is our Savior.

He is with us as God on purpose to save us. The incarnation of Jesus is our salvation.

To cheer Joseph, and decide his mind, Holy Scripture is brought to his remembrance; and truly, when are in a dilemma, nothing gives us such confidence in going forward as the sacred oracles impressed upon the heart. How conversant was Joseph with the prophets to have their words before him in a dream! Lord, whether I read thy Word when awake, or have it brought to my memory in my sleep, it is always precious to me! But thou, Lord Jesus, God with us, art dearer still; and the written Word is chiefly precious because it speaks of thee, the incarnate Word.

Matthew 1:24, 25. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him a wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Joseph was not disobedient to the heavenly vision in any respect. He did not delay, but as soon as he rose he "did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him." Without delay, demur, or reservation, he obeyed. What holy awe filled his heart as he welcomed the favored virgin to his home, to be respectfully and affectionately screened from all evil! What must he have thought when he saw the Son of the Highest lying on the bosom of her whom he had espoused! He was happy to render any service to the newborn King. Since he accepted Mary as his espoused wife, her child was the heir of Joseph, and so of David; and thus was by right the King of the Jews. Our Lord Jesus had a birthright by his mother; but his right on the father's side was, by Joseph's act and deed, also put beyond dispute.

Let us leave this wonderful passage worshipping the Son of God, who condescended to be born the Son of man. Thus our God became our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. The nearer he comes to us, the more humbly let us adore him. The more true the kinship of our King, the more enthusiastically let us crown him Lord of all!