

The Origin of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1

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The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Verse 1

Matthew 1 begins by saying, *The **Genealogy** (or Book of the **Generation**) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* The Greek word translated as “Generation” is “Genesis” (G1078) and means “source, origin”.

For some reason, many dismiss the first 17 verses of Matthew and skip right ahead to the account addressing “the birth of Jesus Christ was thus”. However, these opening verses lay the groundwork for that which comes after it, that being *the origin of the Messiah*.

First, it’s important to note that genealogies are always reckoned through the man. (See Genesis 4:17-22; 5:3-32; 10-11; Ruth 4:18-22) Second, the number seven usually denotes a completion of some kind, and we see the author using multiples of seven to lay out this genealogy.

Verses 2-6a

The Old Testament verifies that there were two sets of seven generations from Abraham to the begetting of King David (see Genesis 5:3-32; 21:3; 25:26; 35:23; 46:12; Ruth 4:18-22).

Now there were promises made to Abraham regarding his physical seed (see Genesis 12:7; 13:15-16; 15:17), and in 14 generations it appears that those promises were ultimately met during the reign of King David (2 Samuel 5-7).

Verses 6b-11

And then there were promises made to David regarding his physical seed and an established kingdom (see 2 Samuel 7:8-16; 1 Kings 2:33; 1 Chronicles 17:11; Psalm 18:50 & 89).

And the author presents two sets of seven generations *of kings* from King David up to the Babylonian captivity, however there appears to be missing a few generations according to 1 Chronicles 3:10-14. It seems to me that the author was trying to convey a point by using the number of generations divisible by 7, and that might be the cause for the discrepancy.

Then, with the carrying away to Babylon, it appeared that those promises made to David were dashed and there was an end to the Davidic reign (see Jeremiah 22:24-30). But there was still hope, because restoration was promised through the raising up of a righteous branch for David. (See Jeremiah 23:1-8; 33:14-26; Isaiah 11; Zechariah 3; 6:9-13)

Verses 12-16

Then we’re told there are two more sets of generations from the Babylonian captivity, of men *who did not reign as king on David’s throne*, to the Christ/Messiah (Anointed) Jesus/Yeshua. And verse 16 of this chapter clearly identifies this genealogy is that of Joseph, not of Mary.

Some understand the “Jeconiah” referenced in verses 11-12 as being the same Jeconiah/Coniah cursed in Jeremiah 23, however after careful study I have found that not to be the case. Josiah had *four* sons (1

Chronicles 3:15), three of which sat on the throne, and one of those brothers had a son named “Jechoniah”, a grandson of Josiah (see 2 Kings 23:31-34; 24:5-6). *This* is the Jechoniah that was cursed in Jeremiah.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Verse 18

Matthew 1:18 begins by saying, *Now the **birth** of Jesus Christ was on this wise.* This is not the telling of his *conception*, despite what many believe.

This birth story opens with the revelation, *for his mother Mary having been betrothed to Joseph, before their coming together, she was found with child of holy spirit.*

- To be betrothed or espoused to a man means *an arrangement was made to acquire a woman for marital relations*. (See Genesis 24) So this is saying that Mary *belonged* to Joseph as his woman/wife.
- The phrase “came together” simply means *to have assembled*. There is no example in the Bible of this phrase being used specifically for a marriage ceremony or sexual relations, however I can see it being used as such here.
- Unfortunately, given the grammatical structure of this verse in English, this passage is often misunderstood as if it were saying *Mary was found to be with child **before** her coming together with Joseph* (with the understanding that the *coming together* is a reference to marital union). But, that doesn’t make sense.

The author just got done laying out a physical genealogy linking Jesus/Yeshua back to Abraham, by way of David, *through Joseph*. Naturally, the conception of Jesus would be *a result of* Joseph and Mary coming together. So, an alternate rendering of this verse could simply be saying, *for his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before their coming together*, which makes perfect sense. (See Luke 1:27)

When doing a study of the Greek usage of the clause $\pi\rho\iota\nu$ G4250 ADV η G2228 PRT used in the Textus Receptus of this verse, translated in English as “before”, it seems clear to me that the clause is linking that which comes before the word “before” with that which comes immediately after that word. It is not introducing a new idea starting with the word “before”. (See the Greek usage in Mark 14:30; Luke 2:26; 22:34; Acts 2:20; 7:2; 25:16)

- In the latter part of verse 18 there is no article adjective before “holy spirit” in the Greek, so it should more aptly be translated as “she was found with child of holy spirit”. This is a separate thought from the previous statement.

There is no evidence in the Old Testament of a woman ever conceiving without being known by a man. Every human conception involves a seed from which the flesh/body is formed and a spirit/breath/wind which brings to life. Without the seed, there is no body; without the spirit, there is no life.

Therefore, the introduction to this birth story needs to be properly understood.

The author is not undoing the first 17 verses with a new revelation of a miraculous unnatural conception in verse 18. Rather, he is simply stating that Mary was espoused to Joseph before their coming together, and that now she is with child of holy spirit.

Verse 19

Matthew 1:19 again identifies Joseph as the man/husband of Mary, and since there is no mention that Joseph *wasn't* the father of this child, the natural conclusion is that Joseph *is* the father.

Verse 19 also identifies Joseph as being righteous and not willing to make a show or public display of his pregnant wife; he either privately intended to send her away or intended to privately send her away (the Greek grammar allows for either circumstance), but while he thought on the matter, an angel appeared to him.

- Some English translations paint Joseph's intentions for sending her away with that of shame, but the Greek does not necessitate a negative connotation. The word used just means to make a show or public display. It seems that he simply wanted to keep her pregnancy a private matter.

Keep in mind, when Elizabeth became pregnant with John the Baptist, she hid/secluded herself for five months (Luke 1:24).

- Also, the phrase "putting her away" is not exclusively used in conjunction with divorce. It simply means to release, dismiss or send someone away. So, without corroborating evidence to suggest divorce, I think it prudent not to assume such.

Verses 20-21

When the angel appeared to Joseph, notice that he identified him as being the son of David, as was just demonstrated by the author in the opening of the chapter. Mary's heritage is never given throughout the book of Matthew, let alone throughout any of the texts in the New Testament. This is noteworthy, considering Jesus is commonly understood to be and referred to as the "son of David".

Some English translations say the angel said to Joseph to not be afraid to take Mary *as his wife*, but a more proper rendering of what he said would be that he should not be afraid to *take to himself* Mary, his wife. Mary was *already* his wife. The concern was over *sending her away* or not, not over *getting married* or not. (Plus, we've already ruled out the notion that she was found to be with child before their coming together, so that removes any rationale for the concern to be over *divorcing* her or not.)

The angel then followed up his statement in verse 20 saying *that which is begotten in her is of holy spirit*. Please note there is no article adjective before "holy spirit" in the Greek, and these Greek words are not capitalized in the source text. Also, interestingly, in the Greek Textus Receptus, the verb translated as "is" comes *between* the noun translated as "spirit" and the adjective translated as "holy". So, I think a more apt translation would be: *that which is begotten in her of spirit is holy*.

- To be begotten of holy spirit does not mean the flesh of this child is not formed from the seed of his father. God forms the flesh of us from our father's seed, which is housed in our mother's womb, and gives us each the breath/spirit of life. That which was *fathered by Joseph in the flesh* in Mary's womb was of holy spirit.
- Sadly, the Trinity Doctrine coupled with the many references to "*the Holy Spirit*" as a proper noun in the New Testament (with the highest concentration in the book of Acts) have conditioned us to see this phrase as a reference to a *person*. However, these two references in verses 18 and 20 with the words "holy" and "spirit" in the same verse are *the first of only three other references in the book of Matthew*. (See Matthew 3:11; 12:32; 28:19)

- Also note, the Greek reference in Matthew 3:11 again does not include the article adjective translated as “the”, so that verse has John the Baptist saying, *I indeed do baptize you with water to reformation, but he who after me is coming is mightier than I, of whom I am not worthy to bear the sandals, he shall baptize you with/in holy spirit and fire.*
- The Greek reference in 12:32 *does* include the article adjective, but given the immediate context of that verse, it appears to be referring to the previously mentioned “spirit of God” in verse 28.
- Lastly, the only other mention of “the holy spirit” (which *does* include the article adjective) is found in *the second to last verse of the book of Matthew.*

Given all of this, in conjunction with a severe lack of reference to a specified “holy spirit” in the Old Testament, it seems very unreasonable to apply a trinitarian dogmatic lens to the verses surrounding the conception of the Christ/Messiah.

In verse 21, we’re told the angel then told Joseph that Mary would bring forth a son and he is to name him “Yehoshua” (H3091) in Hebrew (or commonly referred to as “Yeshua”), and in Greek “Iesous” (G2424), transliterated as “Jesus”, because he will save his people from their sins. The Hebrew word that means “to save” is “yasha” (H3467).

- “Yehoshua/Yeshua” is not a unique or uncommon name. It is the same name given to “Joshua” in the Old Testament. (See Exodus 17)

Verses 22-23

Matthew 1:22 says *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet...* This statement is being made by *the author of Matthew*, not by the angel.

That it might be fulfilled can also be translated as *that it might be filled up*. The author is evidently seeing a correlation between what was happening with, or what was being said to, Joseph and *what transpired in Isaiah’s day*. He is not suggesting what Isaiah said was a messianic prophecy.

Verse 23 is quoting directly from Isaiah 7:14. It is important to note the immediate and greater context of that verse *in the book of Isaiah*. Sadly, too many people jump to conclusions without studying this reference out, and their conclusions are preposterous to those who are familiar with the Isaiah text.

- First, there is so much debate over the Greek or Hebrew word translated here as “virgin”, I think the greater point in Matthew is totally lost. *Neither the author of Matthew, nor the angel of the Lord, directly refer to Mary as a “virgin”*, so it really is a moot point. The author wasn’t seeking to draw attention to the sexual status of Mary through this reference. Besides, when one looks back to Isaiah and reads the immediate context, it becomes clear the reference to the “virgin” applies to the prophetess in Isaiah 8:3, to whom the prophet Isaiah went into before she conceived.
- Next, the reference to the son’s name being called *Emmanuel* is obviously *not* what the angel said. The angel said the son’s name is to be called “Yeshua” (or “Jesus”, as seen in most English Bibles), not “Emmanuel”. Furthermore, when one looks back to Isaiah and reads the immediate context, it becomes clear the reference to the “son” applies to the child in Isaiah 8:3, and his name was called “Mahershalalhashbaz”, not “Emmanuel”.

- And then, the reference to the interpretation of the word “Emmanuel” being *God with us* is oftentimes speculated as being a testimony of the child’s *physical nature* as if to say this child *is* God in the flesh, but that makes no sense. Again, when one looks back to Isaiah and reads the immediate context, there is no indication that the child from Isaiah 8:3 was *God* in the flesh.

So, what was the author of Matthew alluding to?

In Isaiah’s day, King Ahaz, the king of Judah, who is of the house of David, expressed fear having received word of a conspiracy between Aram and Ephraim to overtake Judah and set up a king over it. The Lord God said for Ahaz to not be afraid or disheartened; that when God’s wrath was over, He would heal again, and that the conspiratorial plan of their enemy would not take place. Then God gave the house of David a sign to look for. I believe this sign was given to mark the beginning of God’s unfolding “salvation” plan for those living in Isaiah’s day.

And in the case of the events addressed in Matthew 1, the sign was the birth of Joseph’s son, who was to be named “Yeshua”, marking the beginning of God’s unfolding salvation plan for those living in Joseph’s day.

Verses 24-25

And finally, verses 24-25 tells us, *Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS/YESHUA.*

Some look at the reference that Joseph *knew her not till she had brought forth* as being evidence that Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus. However, at this point, Joseph not knowing her is irrelevant, since she was *already pregnant*.

In Conclusion

The author of Matthew tells us that Jesus/Yeshua is the physical seed of Abraham, by way of David, through Joseph, and he was brought forth through Mary his previously espoused wife.

We’re told when Mary was found to be with child of holy spirit, her husband Joseph, being righteous and not willing to make a show of her, intended to send her away. But when he thought on the matter, an angel appeared reassuring him to take unto himself his wife (in other words, to not send her away), for that which was begotten in her of spirit is holy. And he was told that she would bring forth a son and he was to name him “Yeshua”, for he would save his people from their sins.

The author likened this to what the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 7.

So, when Joseph woke from the dream, he did as the angel instructed. He did not send her away, but he knew her not until the child was born, and then he named him “Yeshua”.