

Return of the King

Matthew 1:1-25

We're starting a new series in Matthew's gospel, one of the four accounts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Matthew begins with a genealogy. To us that seems strange, so why does Matthew do it? Because he is going to tell us who Jesus is, and where he comes from.

Jesus: Who is He?

Psychologists use the inkblot test. There are no right or wrong answers, it's what *you* see in the inkblot. Some people treat Jesus as another inkblot – it's up to you who he is. There are no right or wrong answers.

Matthew sees things very differently. Jesus is the Christ: God's King. He is also the promised son of David, who would rule with justice, forever. But God also promises Abraham an offspring who would bring world-wide blessing. Jesus is not just son of David, but son of Abraham, the fulfilment of God's promises to David and Abraham.

At the time of Jesus' birth, God's promises must have felt further away than ever. The people longed for deliverance. The same can be true for us when we go through hard times: we long for God to do something. Matthew tells us He has done something: the promised King has come. And Christ is the answer to everything we have longed for.

Where did he come from?

Matthew gives us 2000 years of Jesus' family tree. The first section is from Abraham to David, who is the high-point. The next section is to the Exile: the low point. But even in the dark days leading up to the exile, God was at work. He is also at work in our dark days, forming Christ in us. The third section goes from the valley of Exile to the mountain-top of Israel's history. Matthew tells us Jesus is that mountain-top.

But Jesus' family tree is not very respectable! There are not many 'good' people there. He comes into the mess of our world and identifies with people like us. That is especially true of the four women he mentions. They were all gentile outsiders, and three of them knew the shame of sexual sin. This tells us Christ has come for people like us. Joseph thought Mary also must have sinned sexually. It takes the angel to stop him divorcing her. Joseph is a reminder that we must not let fear of others stop us doing what God asks us to.

In Jesus, God joined his divine nature with our human nature. He entered our world and reaches out, and down, to us. That should lead us to worship

Why did he come?

People were expecting the Messiah to deliver them from their enemies. But what enemies? What is the greatest problem you and I face? Matthew tells us it is our sin, and Jesus has come to save us from it. It is the core problem under every other problem.

So the incredible thing is not that Jesus was born of a virgin, but that he was born at all, to come and give his life for us, to rescue us.