

1:1 *Book of the generation*- “Book”, Gk. *biblos*, suggests a formal volume. It could be that Matthew refers only to the genealogy- but in this case, *biblos* hardly seems the appropriate word. The Gospels were transcripts of the Gospel message preached by e.g. Matthew, and as time went on and the Lord didn’t return, under inspiration they wrote down their standard accounts of the good news. The Greek *genesis* translated “generation” is also translated “nature” in its’ other two occurrences (James 1:23; 3:6). If the “book” refers to the book of the Gospel of Matthew, the idea could be that this is a Gospel which focuses upon the nature of Jesus. Related words occur often in the genealogies- people “begat” [Gk. *gennaō*] their descendants, until Jesus was *gennaō* of Mary (Mt. 1:16). Jesus as a person had a ‘genesis’, He was ‘generated’ by Mary as His ancestors had been ‘generated’ by the ‘generations’ of their ancestors- the whole chapter is a huge blow to the idea that Jesus pre-existed as a person before His birth. His ‘generation’ is presented as being of the same nature as the ‘generation’ of His human ancestors.

Son of Abraham- The Roman emperors and Greek heroes sometimes traced their pedigree back to a god- and therefore the genealogy of Jesus, whom the Gospels present as the ultimate Emperor, is quite radical in this regard. For it traces the pedigree of Jesus back to a man, Abraham. The greatness of Jesus was in his humanity.

1:2 *Judah and his brothers*- The fact Isaac and Jacob had brothers is carefully omitted- because the descendants of Ishmael and Esau were not counted as the people of God.

1:3 *Phares and Zara*- Since Jesus was descended through the line of Phares, why mention the birth of Zara- seeing that so many details are omitted in this genealogy, even whole generations, why take space to record this? Perhaps it was because Zara was the first born, but Phares got the birthright. And the genealogies teach us how God delights to work through the underling, the rejected, the humanly weak.

Tamar- A prostitute and adulteress, just like Rahab. See on 1:5.

1:5 *Salmon*- Of the tribe of Judah, because this is the genealogy through Judah (1:2). The two spies who had been faithful the first time when spies were sent out were Joshua and Caleb- of the tribes of Ephraim and Judah (Num. 13:6; Jud. 2:9). It seems a fair guess that when the two spies were sent out, they were from these same two tribes. Salmon was a prince of the tribe of Judah- it’s a fair guess that he was one of the two spies who went to Rahab, and he subsequently married her.

Rahab- A Gentile and a sinner. Jesus was morally perfect, and yet the genealogy shows how He had much against Him spiritually. We can’t blame our lack of spirituality upon our bad background. Note that there was so much intermarriage with Gentiles like Rahab and Ruth throughout Israel’s history; their standing with God was therefore never on the basis of ethnic purity, but rather by cultural identity and God’s grace. Matthew’s genealogy features [unusually, for Jewish genealogies] several women, who had become the ancestors of Messiah through unusual relationships. It’s almost as if the genealogy is there in the form that it is to pave the way for the account of Mary’s conception of Jesus without a man.

1:6 *David the king*- Literally “*the David the king*”. The others aren’t mentioned as being kings. The implication may be that Jesus was the promised descendant of David and the promises of eternal Kingship made to David’s descendant are therefore applicable to Jesus.

Of Uriah- Literally “she of Uriah”. “She that that been the wife of” is added by some translators in explanation, but isn’t in the original. Whilst God ‘forgets’ sin in the sense that He no longer holds it against us, the memory of those sins isn’t obliterated, and His word is full of such allusions to sin which although He has forgiven it and symbolically “blotted it out”, it still remains within Divine history. We too can forgive but ‘forgetting’ isn’t always possible, and is no sign that we have failed to forgive.

1:7 *Roboam... Abia* - Wicked Roboam begat wicked Abia; wicked Abia begat good Asa; good Asa begat good Josaphat; good Josaphat begat wicked Joram. Perhaps the emphasis is that spirituality isn’t genetic, and neither is sinfulness. Jesus was perfect despite being from such “bad blood”; and we likewise can’t blame our failures on bad background. Neither can we assume that the children of the faithful will be righteous.

1:8 *Joram begat Ozias*- Three generations are skipped here. See on 1:17. Perhaps the omission was because Joram married Athaliah, daughter of Jezebel the wife of Ahab, and those generations were idolaters. As we note on 1:12, children who don’t worship the true God are forgotten in the ultimate course of Divine history. In this case, his iniquity was indeed visited upon the third generation (Ex. 20:3-6). We also see here a fulfilment of the prophecy that Ahab’s house would be eradicated (2 Kings 9:8).

1:11 *Jechonias*- The apparent contradiction with 1 Chron. 3:5,6 is solved if we understand this to be a reference to Joachin.

1:12 *Jechonias begat Salathiel*- Therefore the reference to Jechoniah being written “childless” (Jer. 22:30) perhaps means that as Jeremiah goes on to comment “No man of his seed shall prosper”. If our children aren’t spiritually prosperous, it is as if we were childless. Thus we see that the whole purpose of having children is to “raise a Godly seed”.

1:14 *Sadoc- Zadok*. But there was a Levite at this time also called “Zadok” (Neh. 10:21). It could be that this person was descended from both Judah and Levi through an inter-tribal marriage of his parents. In this case he would’ve been a potential king-priest, preparing the way for us to understand Jesus as a king-priest.

1:15 *Matthan*- The genealogies prove that Joseph was a descendant of David, indeed the rightful king of Israel had there been a monarchy at the time of Jesus. Jesus was his adopted son; he was "as was supposed", or 'as was reckoned by law', the son of Joseph (Lk. 3:23). The record in Luke appears to be that of Mary; Joseph being "the son of Heli" was probably by reason of marrying Mary, the daughter of Heli (Lk. 3:23); the Talmud speaks with gross vitriolic about Mary the daughter of Heli going to hell for her blasphemy, referring to Mary the mother of Jesus. This shows that the Jews accept that Mary was the daughter of Heli. Heli's father was Matthat, who can be equated with Matthan the grandfather of Joseph. Thus Mary and Joseph were cousins (hinting at an arranged marriage?), and therefore Jesus was a son of David through both his mother and father by adoption. In the light of this it is evident

that the question mark over the validity of a genealogy through Joseph is an irrelevancy, seeing that Joseph and Mary had a common grandfather. The point has to be made that a humanly fabricated genealogy would be sure to make some glaring errors, especially if it was produced by simple, uneducated men as the Jews claim the New Testament was. The wonder of the New Testament genealogies is that closer study reveals ever more intricate internal evidence for their truth and reliability, rather than exposing more problems.

1:16 Lk. 3:27 describes Zerubbabel as the head / chief / leader. The term Rhesa is incorrectly rendered in many versions as a name. Perhaps Luke's point was that the Lord Jesus was the final Messiah, after the failure of so many potential ones beforehand. 'Zerubbabel the chief' would then be a similar rubric to "David the king" in Matthew's genealogy (Mt. 1:16).

Joseph was actually the rightful king of Israel, according to this genealogy. Yet he was living in poverty and without recognition for who he was- exactly the kind of person God would use for the great task of raising His only begotten Son.

1:17 *Forty two*- This must have some connection with the 42 stopping places before Israel reached Canaan, as described in Num.33:2. Thus the birth of Christ would be like God's people entering the promised land of the Kingdom in some way. It could be argued from this (and other evidence) that it was God's intention for the Kingdom to be entered by Israel at the time of Jesus- it was after all, His intention that Israel accepted their Messiah. But they crucified Him, and therefore the potential didn't come true. This open ended nature of God's prophetic program means that it's impossible to fit together all latter day prophecies into some chronological framework.

The genealogy presented by Matthew doesn't include every generation, there are some gaps (see on 1:8; and Zorababel was Salathiel's grandson, 1 Chron. 3:19, yet 1:12 says he "begat" him). Thus some "begat" their grandson or great grandson. Clearly Matthew had a purpose in presenting the material like this- but expositors have failed to come up with anything convincing. It could simply be that the Gospels were designed to be memorized, as most Christians were illiterate; and the 3 x 14 structure was to aid memorization. One interesting observation is that the last 14 generations from the captivity to the time of Christ amount to the 490 years prophesied for this same period by Dan. 9:25- if we take a generation to be 35 years, which it is in Job 42:16. The numerical value of the Hebrew word "David" is 14, so it could also be that Matthew is eloquently demonstrating that Jesus was indeed the promised seed of David. If indeed six is the number of man and seven represents perfection, then $6 \times 7 = 42$ - the generations culminated in the perfect man, Jesus.

1:18 *Found with child of the Holy Spirit*- The Greek seems to imply she was understood ["found"] to be with a child which had come *ek*, out of, from, the Holy Spirit. This could be implying that Joseph himself believed or perceived that the child was from the Holy Spirit. This would explain why he sought not to humiliate her publically about the matter (1:19).

The descriptions of Mary as keeping things in her heart (Lk. 2:19,52), and the way it seems she didn't tell Joseph about the Angel's visit, but instead immediately went down to Elisabeth for three months... all these are indications that Mary, like many sensitive people, was a very

closed woman. Only when Mary was “found” pregnant by Joseph (Mt. 1:18- s.w. to see, perceive, be obvious) was the situation explained to him by an Angel. It seems His move to divorce her was based on his noticing she was pregnant, and she hadn’t given any explanation to him. She “arose” after perhaps being face down on the ground as the Angel spoke with her, and went immediately off to Elisabeth. And then, after three months she returns evidently pregnant (Lk. 1:39). Mary is portrayed as somehow separate from the other ministering women. It would have been psychologically impossible, or at best very hard, for the mother of the Lord to hang around with them. The group dynamics would have been impossible. Likewise in Acts 1:14 we have “the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus”, as if she is separate from them. She followed Him to Cana, uninvited, and also to Capernaum. Next she is at the cross risking her life, but she isn't among the women who went to the grave. Why not? It was surely natural that she would go there, and that the other women would go with her to comfort her. But she was a loner; either she went alone, as I think I would have tried to, or she just couldn't face contact with the others and simply hid away. And could it be that Jesus, in recognition of her unique perception of Him, appeared to her first privately, in a rightfully unrecorded meeting? But by Acts 1:14, she was in the upper room, as if His death led her to be more reconciled to her brethren, to seek to get along with them... although by nature, in her heart and soul, she was a loner, maybe almost reclusive. A struggler to understand. A meditator, a reflector, who just wanted to be alone, one of those who take their energy from themselves rather than from other people.

1:19 *A just man*- The very same phrase is used by Matthew to describe Christ as the ultimately just or righteous man as He hung upon the cross (27:19,24; Lk. 23:47; 1 Pet. 3:18); the implication is surely that Joseph's just or righteousness played a role in the final perfection of Jesus as the ultimately “just man”. For it was he who would've first taught Jesus the *shema*, emphasizing the word “one” as Jewish fathers did, correcting the young Jesus as He stutteringly repeated it. The same term is used about Jesus now in His heavenly glory (Acts 22:14; 1 Jn. 2:1) and as He will be at the day of judgment (2 Tim. 4:8); the influence of parents upon their children is in some sense eternal. For Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever; we too, as the sum of all the influences upon us, will really be saved and immortalized as persons. And the same was true of Jesus; hence the words and style of Mary's hymn of praise can be found repeated in the later words of Jesus, and also in the words He spoke from Heaven to the churches in Revelation. Joseph had various alternatives open to him; the trial of jealousy of Numbers 5, divorce, seeking compensation from the father, public shaming of the wife, or to stone her. But his justice was such that he sought to show grace and quietly divorce her (see on 1:20 *Take unto you*). Love protects from shame, not as it were covering up sin which needs to be exposed, but seeking to cover over in the sense that God's atonement covers over our sins, as 1 Cor. 13 defines at length.

It was normal that the father of the crucified disposed of the body. But another Joseph, also described as a “just man” as Joseph was (Lk. 23:50), was the one who took this responsibility; remember that Joseph was alive and known as the apparent father of Jesus during His ministry (Jn. 6:42). Likewise one would think it appropriate that the first person to whom the risen Lord revealed Himself would've been to His mother, for she after all was the

channel of the whole marvelous thing, the only one who for sure believed in a virgin birth. But by an apparently cruel twist of circumstance, it was to another Mary, Magdalene, that the Lord first revealed Himself, and it is she and not His mother Mary who takes the message to others. In this context we recall how in His last mortal moments, Christ motioned to His mother that John and not He was now her son (Jn. 19:26), addressing her as “woman” rather than “mother”- an unusual and even rude form of address to use to one’s mother in public. In all this we see a conscious diminishing of the human significance of the Lord’s earthly family, in order to underline that now a new family of Jesus had been brought into existence by the cross. This must have been so hard for Joseph and Mary, as it is for us- to realize that we are but channels, used by God in certain ways at certain times, to the development of His glory according to His program and not our own.

1:20 The descriptions of Jesus as a "man", a human being, have little meaning if in fact He pre-existed as God for millions of years before. The descriptions of Him as "begotten" (passive of *gennan* in Mt. 1:16,20) make no suggestion of pre-existence at all. And the words of the Lord Jesus and His general behaviour would have to be read as all being purposefully deceptive, if in fact He was really a pre-existent god. There is no hint of any belief in a pre-existent Jesus until the writings of Justin Martyr in the second century- and he only develops the idea in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew. The Biblical accounts of the Lord's conception and birth just flatly contradict the idea of pre-existence.

He thought- The Greek *en-thumeomai* could mean to be angry or indignant, for that is how *thumeomai* is usually translated in the NT. His anger and frustration would still be possible even if he correctly perceived that the child was from God (see on 1:18).

Fear not- A common experience of Joseph. The three Angelic appearances to him which are recorded show him immediately responding. Such immediacy of response is typical of God’s faithful servants; delay in these cases is so often an excuse for inaction and disbelief. The Greek *phobeo* is also used of reverence and awe before God. Perhaps he understandably thought that he could in no way marry and sleep with a woman who had been the channel of God’s Spirit to produce His only begotten son. Those thoughts surely did cross his mind, whatever view we take of *phobeo* here. We see here the sensitivity of God to human fears and feelings; He knows our thoughts and fears perfectly, and gives the needed assurance. The message that “that which is conceived of her *is* of the Holy Spirit” would therefore have had the emphasis upon the word “is”, confirming Joseph in his perception (see on 1:18- he had perceived [AV “found] that the child was of the Holy Spirit).

Take unto you- The implication could be that they were about to marry, when it became apparent Mary was pregnant. He immediately married her (:24), seeking to protect her from the shame of the situation, thereby giving the impression that the child was his.

1:21 *Save His people from their sins-* But the mission of Jesus was to save “the world” (Jn. 3:17), to save those enter into Him (Jn. 10:9; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:13). The “world” is ultimately the people of Christ whose sins have been forgiven.

1:22 *Saying*- The present tense reflects the ongoing, living nature of God's word. Otherwise, a past tense would be required. What was spoken is still being spoken to each individual Bible reader / listener.

1:23 *God with us*- God *meta* us means somewhat more than simply "God with us". The idea is also "among". God is now among humanity through we who are the body of Christ.

1:25 *He called his name*- The obedience of Joseph (in this case, to :21) is emphasized. Likewise 2:20,21 "Arise... and he arose".