

## The Book of Matthew Study Guide

### Chapters 1-2

#### 1:1-17

Notice that the book begins in v. 1 by identifying Yeshua as both the son of David and the son of Abraham. This tells you that Matthew is going to inform us the significance of those 2 terms. The genealogy of Yeshua is a reflection of the importance of establishing your rights of inheritance in a tribal society. What were those rights? – Land, rule (Judah), service (Levi - priests), and Messiah. So this genealogy shows that Yeshua met the qualification of the Messiah having to descend from a lineage from Abraham, Issac and Jacob, then the tribe of Judah and on through David. This is the genealogy of one who qualified to be king of Israel because kingship was always passed on through the male side. And even though Yeshua was not born from Joseph's seed, he was adopted by Joseph and that was sufficient to serve as king in that culture.

#### 1:18

“betrothed” (KJV – “espoused,” JNT- “engaged”)

In the Jewish culture, this was the second of three phases in the marriage process. It is a process that is very different from our modern practice.:

1. The match
2. Betrothal - that begins with a simple ceremony, that makes them legally married, but they separate themselves so that the groom can provide a place for them to live together.
3. The culmination when the father of the groom sends the son to claim his bride and a big wedding feast takes place. This middle phase of betrothal was known as *kiddushin*, meaning “sanctification or separation.” So that meant there could be no physical contact between them during this time, including intercourse. It was a serious matter – the Talmud states it was a capital offense by stoning (Sanhedrin 7:4).

#### 1:19

Joseph's reaction – his first thought was that Mary was unfaithful with another man, so he was entitled to have her stoned to death. But he chooses not to do that because he was “a righteous man” (desiring to do the right thing, tempered by grace). So he opts for a less punitive option by deciding to divorce her (“put her away secretly”), which was his right.

#### 1:20

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him it is OK, it was not another man but the Holy Spirit who cause Mary to be pregnant.

Is. 9:6 – a son would be born who is the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father.

That means he would be without sin, because God cannot sin. He is always holy and righteous. So the Son, who is eternal, was sinless long before His incarnation here on earth.

1:21 “you shall call his name Yeshua, for it is he who will save his people from their sins.”

#### 1:22-23

Matthew is referring to Isaiah's prophecy made 700 yrs earlier. Read Isaiah 7:11-14. In that passage Israel was about to be taken captive by Assyria. King Ahaz was wavering in his belief in

Adonai. There is no direct declaration in Isaiah that this is a Messianic prophecy. So the *peshat* (plain simple meaning) of this passage in Isaiah is that a sign took place in Isaiah's day that served as a sign to Ahaz that Adonai is God and that He is capable of doing whatever He wills.

The mother and the son of the prophecy are unnamed. Some have suggested that the woman was Avi, the wife of Ahaz, and the son would be Hezekiah. But the problem with this interpretation is that Hezekiah was nine years old when the prophecy was given. So it makes no sense to apply it to the birth of a child that had already been born. Proponents of this position argue that the chronologies in the Bible must be inaccurate. But there is no evidence to that assertion and the Scriptures are very specific in the dates, without contradiction. Others have suggested that the woman is Isaiah's wife and the child would be his son Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz as told in ch. 8. But Isaiah's wife, was not a virgin at the time of the prophecy in 7:14 because v. 3 tells us that she had already given birth to a child. So that doesn't fit either. The most likely explanation is that there was a virginal young woman at the time of the prophecy who later became married and impregnated, then gave birth to a son. And the son would know the difference between good and evil before the kingdoms of Aram and Israel were captured like it says in 7:16.

So how could Matthew interpret this passage as being a Messianic foreshadow prophecy? He used the Hebraic interpretive method of *remez*, meaning hinting, because there were clues in the *Tanakh* that pointed toward a deeper meaning.

1. Jer 32:27 - "I am Adonai, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?"
2. There was a precedent for a miraculous birth. When God promised a son to be born to Abraham and Sarah, was it possible for her to give birth to a child?
3. A virgin had indeed given birth in Isaiah's day.
4. The Septuagint translation used *parthenos* – the Greek word for a physical virgin.
5. The name of the child was Immanuel.

So there were many hints that something much more significant would occur in God's plan for this world that would be consistent with the original event in Isaiah's day. And Matthew was justified in making the connection.

Notice that Matthew uses the word "fulfill" in v. 22 (*pleroo*). This word can have the sense of "completion" or "coming to pass as predicted." But the word picture is a container that is filled to the top or even overflowing. So when you think about the implications of the events, there was some significance about the birth of the child in Isaiah's day, but a far greater significance in the day described in Matthew 1. The container was partially full the 1st time and overflowing with meaning the 2nd time.

Some people claim that "virgin" is a bad translation of the Heb word *almah*. They say it should be "maiden" or "young woman" (*bethullah* is the Heb. word for physical virginity). But there is ample evidence that that is untrue. And we all need to know the facts so we can explain things accurately when others make such claims.

- In the *Tanakh*, the word *almah* never refers to a married woman. Altogether *almah* is used nine additional times in Scripture (Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; 1 Chr. 15:20; Ps. 9:1; 46:1; 68:25; Prov. 30:19; Song of Sol. 1:3; 6:8). In every one of these cases, the passage refers to young women of physical maturity, but none of them are *married*. Thus an *almah* was physically capable, though not yet socially eligible to bear children.
- In the culture of Israel, a maiden was not sexually active.

- The Jewish translators of the Septuagint understood this by using the Greek word *parthenos* to represent the Heb *almah*.

1:24-25 Joseph stays the course with his betrothed wife.

2:1-4

*Magi* = lit. “magicians” – Persian sorcerers and practitioners of astrology and alchemy. KJV softened the meaning to “wise men.” Compare the use of *magos* in Acts 13:6,8 = “sorcerer.” It is likely that the magi were learned in Jewish teachings on the Messiah because of the Babylonian captivity. Daniel made chief of the magicians/wise men (Dan 2:48).

2:5-6

Prophecy from Micah (7 books from the end, between Jonah and Nahum) Read Micah 5:2-5a. In the 2nd temple period, Bethlehem was unquestionably a Jewish town in the land of Judea. Today Bethlehem is an Arab city, a Jewish messiah wouldn’t be born there.

2:9

According to this verse, this is no ordinary star, and thus cannot be explained by simple astronomical phenomena.

2:12-13

Notice the similarities—God tells the magi in a dream to go home, while He tells Joseph in a dream to go to Egypt

2:15

This prophecy is from Hosea 11:1. Read Hos 11:1-5

Clearly the context is not about an individual but about Israel. So Matthew is not employing a *peshat* (plain meaning of the text), but a *remez* (hinting method). The hint is in the way that Hose uses the word “son” in v. 1. Because the Messiah is so intimately associated with the nation of Israel, the Heb *ben*, meaning “son” is used both for the Messiah and Israel in Scripture (i.e. Messiah in Is 9:6-7, Ps 2:7; Prov 30:4; and Israel in Ex 4:22). So the hint is that there would be parallels in the life of Messiah and the history of Israel. Just as the people of Israel went to Egypt to escape potential death by famine Yeshua and His parents went there to escape death by murder. They both came out not of their own accord, but when God called them.

2:16

Herod kills all boys two years old and younger in the Bethlehem area.

2:17-18

Fulfillment of Jer 31:15. That verse deals with the slaughter and captivity of the Northern kingdom by Assyria. So again this cannot be a direct prophecy or a *peshat* interpretation. It is a *derash* – a comparison of the suffering of the mothers in Jeremiah’s day and that of the mothers of Bethlehem.

2:19-22

God speaks to Joseph again in a dream telling him it is safe to return from Egypt because Herod had died, but his son Archelaus was now governing Judea and the implication is that he would similarly dangerous. So God warned him to go to Nazareth in the Galilee region instead.

2:23

This would fulfill the prophecy that the Messiah would dwell in Nazareth. Some commentators have been confused by this statement and claim that Yeshua must have taken a Nazrite vow (cf. Num. 6). But there is no record of that in Scripture. When you employ the *remez* method, however, it becomes clear. The hint is in the spelling of Nazareth: The Heb Natzeret comes from the word *netzer*, meaning a branch, not *nazir*, a nazirite. So Matthew connected that hint to a widely understood Messianic prophecy in Isa 11:1 – “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch (*netzer*) from his roots will bear fruit.” And as we already established, acc to Mat 1:5 Yeshua descended from Jesse.